# The New Criterion

35th anniversary

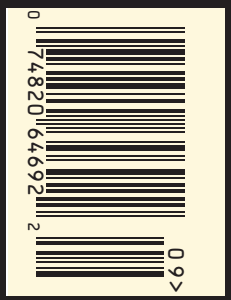
*Special anniversary issue*

*September 2016*

*Volume 35, Number 1*

*Beginning a series on*

*"The perils & promises of populism"*



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# The New Criterion *September 2016*



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# *Special anniversary issue*

SEPTEMBER 2016: VOLUME 35, NUMBER 1

# Notes & Comments: September 2016

## The New Criterion *at thirty-five*

With this special, expanded issue, *The New Criterion* embarks upon its thirty-fifth season. As we've had occasion to point out on previous anniversaries, the longevity of *The New Criterion* is itself noteworthy. Serious cultural periodicals tend not to be long lived. Ones that are as independent-minded and outspoken as *The New Criterion* enjoy an especially parlous existence. Which is to say that three-and-a-half decades is not just notable, it is astonishing. T. S. Eliot's *Criterion*, from which we take our name and whose critical ambitions we seek to emulate, had a run of seventeen years, from 1922 to 1939.

Of course, mere longevity is one thing. Persistent critical vibrancy is something else. It is not for us to comment on our success in that department. We understand that the self-reflection occasioned by anniversaries often shades into self-promotion. We offer instead the testimony of the issue you hold in your hands (or that you browse on the internet): is there any other publication in which you would find such a collection of insightful critical essays and reviews on so broad a range of topics?

While you ponder that, we would like to draw your attention to one anniversary initiative and then step back and say a few words on what *The New Criterion* is all about.

The initiative is a year-long series of essays on the perils and promises of populism, a subject that is much in the public eye not only in the United States but throughout the Western world. The series begins in this issue with a long historical overview of the phenomenon of populism in the United States by the distinguished historian of American conservatism George H. Nash. Among the other contributors to the series will be Daniel Hannan, Roger Kimball, Andrew C. McCarthy, James Piereson, Fred Siegel, and Barry Strauss. All in all, there will be ten essays, which we will collect and publish next year in book form.

What Mr. Nash says towards the end of his essay resonates closely with one central aspiration of *The New Criterion*. "For three generations now," he writes,

> American conservatives have committed themselves to defending the intellectual and spiritual foundations of Western civilization: the resources needed for a free and humane existence. Conservatives know that we all start out in life as "rough beasts" who need to be *educated* for liberty and virtue if we are to secure their blessings.

That pedagogical task has traditionally been the province of many institutions, the family first of all, but also schools, churches, and those multifarious cultural enterprises to which we have entrusted the preservation and transmission of the civilizational values that have defined us. It is one of the oddities of our age that many of those institutions not only have reneged on that trust but also now operate more to challenge and undermine

our cultural patrimony than to preserve it. The virus of political correctness, a protean and multifaceted pathogen, has provided the fuel for that subversion. So thoroughly has political correctness infested our cultural and educational institutions that simply telling the truth about many historical or cultural realties has become a perilous act of dissent. To document this phenomenon, you need only visit your local college or art museum.

This phenomenon, though as yet unnamed, was already on the horizon in 1982 when Hilton Kramer and Samuel Lipman left their day jobs to start *The New Criterion*. The forces of disintegration—what the note to our inaugural issue called "the insidious assault on mind that was one of the most repulsive features of the radical movement of the Sixties"—have since accelerated as many of the more outlandish attacks on culture have become institutionalized, taken for granted as features of the cultural landscape.

From the beginning, our response at *The New Criterion* has been twofold. There was, first, a polemical side to our interventions. If we discovered an emperor without clothes—the absurdities of "deconstruction" in the 1980s, for example, and the many kindred academic and cultural deformations of more recent years—we did not hesitate to describe his nakedness. This is an age that makes the satirist's job difficult: reality outstrips satire with increasing velocity. But that challenge does not mean that the satirist's task is any less essential. Nietzsche once observed that you do not refute a disease, you resist it. In the realm of culture, some of the most effective specifics are condign satire, ridicule, and all the other weapons in the armory of rhetorical invective. These we have endeavored to deploy with apotropaic vigor.

But polemics are only one facet of what *The New Criterion* is about. Another concerns what we have called "cultural amnesia." Santayana once famously remarked that those who are ignorant of the past are condemned to repeat it. Perhaps. But he could have added that those who are ignorant of the past condemn themselves to an impoverishing spiritual parochialism. This is a point made with crisp elegance by the British man of letters David Cecil. "There is a provinciality in time as well as in space," he wrote in *Library Looking-Glass*.

> To feel ill-at-ease and out of place except in one's own period is to be a provincial in time. But he who has learned to look at life through the eyes of Chaucer, of Donne, of Pope, and of Thomas Hardy is freed from this limitation. He has become a cosmopolitan of the ages, and can regard his own period with the detachment which is a necessary foundation of wisdom.

It has become increasingly clear as the imperatives of political correctness make ever greater inroads against free speech and the perquisites of dispassionate inquiry that the battle against this provinciality of time is one of the central cultural tasks of our age. It is a battle from which the traditional trustees of civilization—schools and colleges, museums, many churches—have fled. Increasingly, it has seemed to us, the responsibility for defending those "intellectual and spiritual foundations of Western civilization" of which George Nash spoke has fallen to individuals and institutions that are largely distant from, when they are not indeed explicitly disenfranchised from, the dominant cultural establishment. Leading universities today command tax-exempt endowments in the tens of billions of dollars. But it is by no means clear, notwithstanding the prestige they confer upon their graduates, whether they do anything to challenge the temporal provinciality of their charges. No, let us emend that: it is blindingly clear that they do everything in their considerable power to reinforce that provinciality, not least by their slavish capitulation to the dictates of the enslaving presentism of political correctness.

As Allan Bloom once observed, the net effect of these attacks on what we might call the presence of the past has been to limit freedom in the most effective way possible: "by the impoverishment of alternatives." Edmund Burke once observed that "He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper." But the monoculture and presentism

enforced by political correctness have, in one avenue of cultural life after another, deprived us of such productive antagonists. It is a cruel irony that the gospel of uniformity in our cultural and educational institutions should travel under the banner of "diversity." Is there anything less diverse than the crowd of stultifying social justice warriors, virtue signalers, crybullies, and policers of "safe spaces," "micro-aggressions," and "trigger warnings"? These are imperatives catalogued with definitive astringency by George Orwell in *Animal Farm* and *1984*. The result in our cultural and educational institutions has been to transform what Burke extolled as "antagonists" into heretics who must not be argued with but silenced, publicly shamed, repudiated.

Looking back on *The Criterion* from the 1940s, Eliot noted that he intended it to be partly a means of fostering "common concern for the highest standards of both thought and expression" and partly a means of discharging "our common responsibility . . . to preserve our common culture uncontaminated by political influences." Those desiderata go a long way towards describing our ambitions in *The New Criterion*. The concern for high standards of thought and expression might once have been taken as given, but we well remember the energetic follower of Jacques Derrida who extolled the reader-proof inanities of deconstruction because "unproblematic prose" and "clarity" are "the conceptual tools of conservatism." Really, you cannot make it up.

Eliot's comment about preserving a "common culture uncontaminated by political influences" brings us close to a basic premise and exposes a curious irony. The premise, or perhaps we should say the faith, in a common culture that is worth preserving has in many exalted precincts become fundamentally negotiable these past few decades. That falling away, that existential withdrawal, names a spiritual crisis of large, if amorphous, proportions. At *The New Criterion*, on the contrary, faith in the vitality of a common culture provides the cynosure of our entire critical enterprise.

The curious irony we mention revolves around the affirmation of cultural achievement "uncontaminated by political influences." From the beginning, *The New Criterion* has warned about the politicization of culture, the subjection of culture to political imperatives. The triumph of political correctness represents the perfection of that subjugation. But is not *The New Criterion* a *conservative* organ? And is not the ambition to conserve a sphere of culture "uncontaminated by political influences" itself political? In a sense, the answer is Yes. It is political in the sense that it rests upon the affirmation of a certain vision of the world, a vision according to which we recognize a common culture worth preserving for its own sake, free from the intrusion of the enfeebling provincialism of contemporary political imperatives. The issue, at the end of the day, is not so much the presence of politics in culture as the absence of non-politics. For well nigh thirty-five years, *The New Criterion* has endeavored to stand up for the integrity of our common cultural inheritance, the enabling pressure of its rich and multifarious claims on our allegiance. With this issue, we embark on the next thirty-five.

## *Donald Oresman, 1925–2016*

At the end of May, after our June issue went to press, we heard the sad news that Donald Oresman, a long-time board member of *The New Criterion*, had died. We do not recall exactly when Donald came into the orbit of *The New Criterion*, but in retrospect his presence in our world seems inevitable. There were few serious cultural enterprises in New York in which he was not involved, from the Landmarks Conservancy, on whose board he served for twenty-five years, to the Morgan Library, the Library of America, the Academy of American Poets, and the Roundabout Theatre Company, among many others. Donald took frequent exception to the opinions expressed by the editors of *The New Criterion*, but he was unflagging in his support of the magazine which, with characteristic understatement, he frequently pronounced the best cultural journal in America. Donald was a gruff, amusing, stalwart supporter of our endeavors, and a good friend to boot. We will miss him. *RIP*.

Populism: I

# American conservatism & the problem of populism

*by George H. Nash*

For more than a decade the air has been filled with assertions that American conservatism is in terminal disarray—exhausted, fractured, and no longer capable of governing. The spectacular populist insurgency of 2015–16 appears to many observers to mark the demise of an intellectual and political establishment that has outlived its time.

Is this true? Before we can properly assess conservatism's present predicament, we first need to understand how the present came to be. I propose to do this through the lens of the intellectual history of American conservatism after the Second World War, when the conservative community as we know it took form.

Perhaps the most important fact to assimilate about modern American conservatism is that it is not, and has never been, monolithic. It is a coalition—a coalition built on ideas—with many points of origin and diverse tendencies that are not always easy to reconcile.

In 1945, at the close of World War II, no articulate, coordinated conservative intellectual force existed in the United States. There were, at most, scattered voices of protest, some of them profoundly pessimistic about the future of their country and convinced that they were an isolated Nockian Remnant on the wrong side of history. History, in fact, seemed to be what the Left was making. The Left—liberals, socialists, even Communists—appeared to be in complete control of the twentieth century.

In the beginning, in the aftermath of the war, there was not one right-wing renaissance but three, each reacting in different ways to challenge from the Left. The first of these groupings consisted of classical liberals and libertarians, resisting the threat of the ever-expanding, collectivist State to individual liberty. Convinced in the 1940s that post–New Deal America was rapidly drifting toward central planning and socialism—along what the economist Friedrich Hayek famously called "the road to serfdom"—these intellectuals offered a powerful defense of free-market economics. From scholars like Hayek and Ludwig von Mises in the 1940s and 1950s, to Milton Friedman and the Chicago School economists in the 1960s and 1970s, to Arthur Laffer, George Gilder, Robert Bartley, and the supply-side economists and publicists of the 1980s, and to thinkers like Thomas Sowell and Richard Epstein today, the classical liberal and libertarian conservatives produced a sophisticated defense of free-market economics and exerted an enormous influence over the American Right. They helped to make the old verities defensible again after the long nightmare of the Great Depression, which many people had seen as a failure of capitalism.

In the 1980s the Reagan administration's policies of tax-rate cutting, deregulation, and encouragement of private sector economic growth were the direct product of this rich intellectual legacy. More recently, the Republican Party's agenda for tax-cutting can be traced intellectually to the supply-side orthodoxy that captured that party during the Reagan era and remained ascendant for the next thirty years.

Much of the classical liberal perspective was enunciated in powerful books, such as

Hayek's polemic *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), a book now recognized as one of the most influential works published in the twentieth century. On a more popular level, the libertarian novels of Ayn Rand shaped the minds of many, including the current Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan.

Concurrently, and independently of the libertarians and classical liberals, a second school of anti-modern-liberal thought emerged in America shortly after World War II: the so-called "traditionalism" of such writers as Richard Weaver, Peter Viereck, Robert Nisbet, and Russell Kirk. Appalled by totalitarianism, total war, and the development of secular, rootless, mass society during the 1930s and 1940s, the traditionalists (as they came to be called) urged a return to traditional religious and ethical absolutes and a rejection of the moral relativism that in their view had corroded Western civilization and produced an intolerable vacuum filled by demonic ideologies on the march. More European-oriented and historically minded, on the whole, than the classical liberals, and less interested in economics, the traditionalist conservatives extolled the wisdom of such thinkers as Edmund Burke, Alexis de Tocqueville, and T. S. Eliot, and called for a revival of religious orthodoxy, of classical natural law teaching, and of mediating, communitarian institutions between the solitary citizen and the omnipotent State. Why did they advocate this? In order, they said, to reclaim and civilize the spiritual wasteland created by secular liberalism and by the false gods it had permitted to enter the gates.

In provocative books like Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948), the traditionalists expounded a vision of a healthy and virtuous society antithetical to the tenets of contemporary liberalism. From Russell Kirk's monumental tome *The Conservative Mind* (1953), the traditionalists acquired something more: an intellectual genealogy and intellectual respectability. After Kirk's book appeared, no longer could contemporary conservatives be dismissed, as John Stuart Mill had dismissed British conservatives a century before, as "the stupid party." In books like *The Conservative Mind* the highbrow academics of the 1950s struck a blow at the liberals' superiority complex and breached the wall of liberal condescension.

More than any other single book, *The Conservative Mind* stimulated the emergence of a self-consciously conservative intellectual movement in the early years of the Cold War. Without Kirk's fortifying book the conservative intellectual community of the past three generations might never have acquired its distinctive identity or its name.

Third, there appeared in the 1940s and 1950s, at the onset of the Cold War, a militant, evangelistic anticommunism, shaped by a number of ex-Communists and other ex-radicals of the 1930s, including the iconic Whittaker Chambers. It was also reinforced by exiled anticommunist scholars from eastern and central Europe. These former men and women of the far Left and their allies brought to the postwar American Right a profound conviction that America and the West were engaged in a titanic struggle with an implacable adversary—Communism—which sought nothing less than the conquest of the world.

Each of these emerging components of the conservative revival shared a deep antipathy to twentieth-century liberalism. To the libertarians, modern liberalism—the liberalism of Franklin Roosevelt and his successors—was the ideology of the ever-aggrandizing, bureaucratic, welfare state, which would, if unchecked, become a collectivist, totalitarian state, destroying individual liberty and the private sphere of life. To the traditionalists, modern liberalism was inherently a corrosive philosophy, which was eating away like an acid not only at our liberties but also at the moral and religious foundations of a healthy, traditional society, thereby creating a vast spiritual vacuum into which totalitarianism could enter. To the Cold War anticommunists, modern liberalism—rationalistic, relativistic, secular, anti-traditional, and quasi-socialist—was by its very nature incapable of vigorously resisting an enemy on its left. Liberalism to them was *part* of the Left and could not, therefore, effectively repulse a foe with which it shared so many underlying assumptions. As the conservative Cold War strategist James Burnham eventually and trenchantly put it, liberalism was

essentially a means for reconciling the West to its own destruction. Liberalism, he said, was the ideology of Western suicide.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the three independent wings of the conservative revolt against the Left began to coalesce around *National Review*, founded by William F. Buckley Jr. in 1955. Apart from his extraordinary talents as a writer, debater, and public intellectual, Buckley personified each impulse in the developing coalition. He was at once a traditional Christian, a defender of the free market, and a staunch anticommunist (a source of his ecumenical appeal to conservatives).

As this consolidation began to occur, a serious challenge arose to the fragile conservative identity: a growing and permanent tension between the libertarians and the traditionalists. To the libertarians the highest good in society was individual liberty, the emancipation of the autonomous self from external (especially governmental) restraint. To the traditionalists (who tended to be more religiously oriented than most libertarians) the highest social good was not unqualified freedom but *ordered* freedom grounded in community and resting on the cultivation of virtue in the individual soul. Such cultivation, argued the traditionalists, did not arise spontaneously. It needed the reinforcement of mediating institutions (such as schools, churches, and synagogues) and at times of the government itself. To put it another way, libertarians tended to believe in the beneficence of an uncoerced social order, both in markets and morals. The traditionalists often agreed, more or less, about the market order (as opposed to statism), but they were far less sanguine about an unregulated moral order.

Not surprisingly, this conflict of visions generated a tremendous controversy on the American Right in the early 1960s, as conservative intellectuals attempted to sort out their first principles. The argument became known as the freedom-versus-virtue debate. It fell to a former Communist and chief ideologist at *National Review*, a man named Frank Meyer, to formulate a middle way that became known as fusionism—that is, a fusing or merging of the competing paradigms of the libertarians and the traditionalists. In brief, Meyer argued that the overriding purpose of government was to protect and promote individual liberty, but that the supreme purpose of the free individual should be to pursue a life of virtue, unfettered by and unaided by the State.

As a purely theoretical construct, Meyer's fusionism did not convince all his critics, then or later. But as a formula for political action and as an insight into the actual character of American conservatism, his project was a considerable success. He taught libertarian and traditionalist purists that they needed one another and that American conservatism must not become doctrinaire. To be relevant and influential, it must stand neither for dogmatic antistatism at one extreme nor for moral authoritarianism at the other, but for a society in which people are simultaneously free to choose *and* desirous of choosing the path of virtue.

In arriving at this modus vivendi, the architects of fusionism were aided immensely by the third element in the developing coalition: anticommunism, an ideology that nearly everyone could share. The presence in the world of a dangerous external enemy—the Soviet Union, the mortal foe of liberty *and* virtue, of freedom *and* faith—was a crucial, unifying cement for the nascent conservative movement. The life-and-death stakes of the Cold War helped to curb the temptation of right-wing ideologues to absolutize their competing insights and thereby commit heresy.

Politically, the postwar, Buckleyite Right found its first national expression in the campaign of Senator Barry Goldwater for the presidency of the United States in 1964. It was not long after that election that a new impulse appeared on the intellectual scene, one destined to become the fourth component of the conservative coalition: the phenomenon known as neoconservatism. Irving Kristol's definition conveys its original essence: "A neoconservative," he said, "is a liberal who has been mugged by reality." One of the salient developments of the late 1960s and 1970s was the intellectual journey of various liberals and social democrats toward conservative positions and affiliations. Their migration was manifested in such journals as *The Public Interest*, co-edited by Kristol, and the magazine

*Commentary*, edited by Norman Podhoretz. By the early 1980s many of these neoconservatives (as they came to be labeled) were participating in the "Reagan Revolution."

The stresses that produced this transition were many. In part, neoconservatism may be interpreted as the recognition by former liberals that good intentions alone do not guarantee good governmental policy and that the actual consequences of liberal social activism in the Sixties and Seventies, like the so-called War on Poverty, were often devastating. In considerable measure neoconservatism was also a reaction by moderate liberals to the cultural upheavals of the 1960s, particularly on college campuses, and to the eruption of the so-called New Left, with its tendency to blame America first for world tensions and its neoisolationist opposition to a vigorous prosecution of the Cold War.

To the already existing conservative community, the entry of chastened liberals and disillusioned socialists into its precincts was to have many consequences. One of these was already discernible in the 1970s. Since the days of the New Deal, American liberals had held a near monopoly on the manufacture and distribution of prestige among the intellectual classes. From a liberal perspective the libertarian, traditionalist, and Cold War conservatives of the 1950s and 1960s—the Buckleyites, if you will—were eccentric and marginal figures, no threat to liberalism's cultural hegemony. The emerging neoconservatives, however, were an "enemy within" the liberal camp who had made their reputations while still on the Left and who could not therefore be so easily dismissed. By publicly defecting from the Left, and then by critiquing it so effectively, the neoconservatives helped to undermine a hitherto unshakable assumption in academic circles: the belief that only liberalism is an intellectually respectable point of view. By destroying the automatic equation of liberalism with intelligence, and of progressivism with progress, the neoconservative intellectuals brought new respectability to the Right and greatly altered the terms of public debate in the United States.

Meanwhile another development—one destined to have enormous political consequences—began to take shape in the late 1970s: the grassroots "great awakening" of what came to be known as the Religious Right or (more recently) social conservatives. Initially the Religious Right was not primarily a movement of intellectuals at all. It was, rather, a groundswell of protest at the grassroots of America by "ordinary" citizens, many of them Protestant evangelicals, fundamentalists, and pentecostals, with some Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews as well. While early Religious Right leaders generally shared the foreign policy and economic perspectives of other conservatives, their guiding preoccupations lay elsewhere, in what became known as the "social issues": pornography, drug use, the vulgarization of mass entertainment, and more. Convinced that American society was in a state of vertiginous moral decline, and that what they called secular humanism—in other words, modern liberalism—was the fundamental cause and agent of this decay, the populistic Religious Right exhorted its hitherto politically quiescent followers to enter the public arena as a defense measure, in defense of their traditional moral code and way of life. Above all, the religious conservatives derived their fervor from an unremitting struggle against what most of them considered the supreme abomination of their time: legalized abortion on demand.

In time the Religious Right acquired intellectually influential voices, notably the journal *First Things*. It also gained strength from its organic ties to a growing, evangelical Protestant subculture and by forging an alliance with like-minded Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews—a conservative ecumenical movement without precedent in American religious history.

By the end of President Ronald Reagan's second term in 1989, the American Right had grown to encompass five distinct impulses: libertarianism, traditionalism, anticommunism, neoconservatism, and the Religious Right. And just as Buckley had done for conservatives a generation before, so Reagan in the 1980s did the same: he performed an emblematic and ecumenical function—a fusionist function, giving each faction a seat at the table and a sense of having arrived.

Yet even as conservatives gradually escaped the wilderness for the promised land inside the Beltway, the world they wished to conquer was changing in ways that threatened their newfound power. Ask yourself this question: aside from conservatism, what have been the most important intellectual and social movements in America in the past forty years? As a historian I will give you my answer: feminism, environmentalism, and multiculturalism. Since the 1970s America has been moving Right *and* Left at the same time.

Next, ask yourself this: what has been the most historically significant date in our lifetime? September 11, 2001? Perhaps. But surely the other such date was November 9, 1989, the night that the Berlin Wall came down.

Since 1989, since the downfall of Communism in Europe and the end of what Ronald Reagan called the "evil empire," one of the hallmarks of conservative history has been the reappearance of factional strains in the grand alliance. One source of rancor has been the ongoing dispute between the neoconservatives and their noninterventionist critics over post-Cold War foreign policy. Another fault line divides many libertarians and social conservatives over such issues as the legalization of drugs and same-sex marriage.

Aside from these built-in philosophical tensions, with some of which the conservative coalition has been living for a long time, two fundamental facts of political life explain the recrudescence of these intramural debates in recent years. The first is what we may call the perils of prosperity. In the 1950s and early 1960s the number of publicly active, self-identified conservative intellectuals in the United States was minuscule: perhaps a few dozen at most. Today how can we even begin to count? Since 1980 prosperity has come to conservatism, and with it a multitude of niche markets and specialization on a thousand fronts. But with prosperity have also come sibling rivalry, tribalism, and a weakening of "movement consciousness," as various elements in the coalition pursue their separate agendas. The "vast right-wing conspiracy" (as Hillary Clinton has called it) has grown too large for any single institution or magazine, like *National Review* in its early days, to serve as the movement's gatekeeper and general staff. No longer does American conservatism have a commanding, ecumenical figure like Buckley or Reagan.

Underlying these centrifugal impulses is a phenomenon that did not exist twenty-five years ago: what Charles Krauthammer recently called the "hyperdemocracy" of social media. In the ever-expanding universe of cyberspace, no one can be an effective gatekeeper because *there are no gates*.

The second fundamental fact of political life that explains the renewal of friction on the Right was the stunning end of the Cold War in the 1990s. Inevitably, the question then arose: could a movement so identified with anticommunism survive the disappearance of the Communist adversary in the Kremlin? Without a common foe upon whom to concentrate their minds, it has become easier for former allies on the Right to succumb to the bane of all coalitions: the sectarian temptation. It is an indulgence made infinitely easier by the internet.

The conservative intellectual movement, of course, did not vanish in the 1990s. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that unyielding anticommunism supplied much of the glue in the post-1945 conservative coalition and that the demise of Communism in Europe weakened the fusionist imperative for American conservatives.

One of the earliest signs of this was the rise in the 1980s and early 1990s of a group of conservative traditionalists who took the label "paleoconservatives." Initially, paleoconservatism was a response to the growing prominence within conservative ranks of the erstwhile liberals and social democrats known as neoconservatives. To angry paleocons, led by Patrick Buchanan among others, the neocons were "interlopers" who, despite their recent movement to the Right, remained at heart secular, crusading Wilsonians and believers in the welfare state. In other words, the paleos argued, not true conservatives at all.

As the Cold War faded, paleoconservatism introduced a discordant note into the conservative conversation. Fiercely and defiantly "nationalist" (rather than "internationalist"),

skeptical of "global democracy" and post–Cold War entanglements overseas, fearful of the impact of Third World immigration on America's historically Europe-centered culture, and openly critical of the doctrine of global free trade, Buchananite paleoconservatism increasingly resembled much of the American Right *before* 1945—before, that is, the onset of the Cold War. When Buchanan himself campaigned for president in 1992 under the pre–World War II, isolationist banner of "America First," the symbolism seemed deliberate and complete.

Despite the initial furor surrounding the paleoconservatives, they have remained a relatively small faction within the conservative community of discourse. Still, as the post–Cold War epoch settled in during the Nineties and beyond, they were not alone among conservatives in searching for new sources of unity—a new fusionism, as it were, for a new era. Thus the first term of President William Clinton saw the rise of the "Leave us Alone" coalition, united in its detestation of intrusive government in the form of higher taxes, Hillary Clinton's health care plan, and gun control. Not long thereafter a number of "second generation" neoconservatives associated with *The Weekly Standard* issued a plea for a new conservatism of "national greatness," an adumbration of the muscular foreign policy of George W. Bush. Bush himself, before he became president, championed what he called "compassionate conservatism," in part a deliberate rebuke of the antistatist thrust of the Leave Us Alone movement. For a time after the trauma of 9/11, the global war on terrorism became for most conservatives the functional equivalent of the late Cold War against Communism.

Meanwhile social conservatives have waged a long and increasingly frustrating "culture war" against a postmodern, post-Christian, even anti-Christian secular elite whom they perceive to be aggressively hostile to their deepest convictions. More recently there has been much discussion of "constitutional conservatism," "reform conservatism," "crunchy" conservatism, and "American Exceptionalism," among other formulations of what conservatives should stand for in a new age.

American conservatism, then, remains at heart a coalition. Like all coalitions, it contains within itself the potential for splintering—and never more so than right now.

For as the Cold War and its familiar polarities continue to recede from public memory, new challenges and conflicts have been filling the vacuum. Consider this datum: more people are now on the move in the world than at any time in the history of the human race, and more and more of them are making America their destination. The number of international students, for instance, attending American colleges and universities now exceeds one million per year—more than triple what it was in 1980. More than 800,000 of these students are from China. In addition, the United States is now admitting a million immigrants into permanent, legal residence every year—more than any other nation in the world. And the number of *illegal* immigrants currently within America's borders is estimated as at least eleven million.

This unprecedented, worldwide intermingling, not just of goods and services but of *peoples and cultures*, is accelerating, with consequences (and concomitant trends) that we have barely begun to fathom. Among them: the rise in the past twenty years of a post-national, even anti-national, sensibility among our cosmopolitan, progressive elites and young people. Closely linked to these denationalizing tendencies is the now entrenched ideology of multiculturalism, with its relativistic celebration not of America's achievements and singularity but of its "diversity" defined in racial and ethnic terms. In precincts where "transnational progressivism" (as it has been called) holds sway, the very idea of a permanent and praiseworthy American identity seems increasingly passé if not slightly sinister.

Compounding conservative unease is another trend: a rising tide of amnesia about America's past and animating principles. According to a report by the Bradley Project on America's National Identity in 2008, "America is facing an identity crisis," brought on in part by the failure of the country's education system to impart an adequate knowledge of "our history and founding ideals" to the next generation. As a

result, the Bradley study concluded, "America's memory appears to be slipping away." It seems no accident that Americans under thirty—the demographic most steeped in multiculturalism from grade school to graduate school—adhere less strongly as a group to the tenets of American Exceptionalism than do any other segments of the population. For conservatives of a patriotic/nationalist inclination, it is a disconcerting development indeed.

This brings us to the phenomenon of the hour: insurgent populism on the Left and the Right. In its simplest terms, populism—defined as the revolt of ordinary people against overbearing and self-serving elites—has long existed in American politics. In its most familiar form, populism has been leftwing in its ideology, targeting bankers, wealthy capitalists, and corporations as villains—the "millionaires and billionaires" in Bernie Sanders's parlance. From Andrew Jackson's feud with the Second Bank of the United States to William Jennings Bryan's crusade against the gold standard, from Franklin Roosevelt's appeal to the "forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid" in 1932 to the demagogic theatrics of Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin (in his early days) during the Great Depression, populism has quite often been a leftwing phenomenon, vocalizing the anger of those at the bottom of the economic ladder toward those sitting pretty at the top.

But populism in America has sometimes taken a conservative form as well, particularly since 1945. In the early 1950s Senator Joseph McCarthy and his conservative allies denounced liberal Democratic politicians and pro–New Deal elites as dupes and even enablers of Communist espionage and subversion at home and of Communist aggrandizement abroad. In the 1960s William F. Buckley Jr. famously declared that he would rather be governed by the first 2,000 names in the Boston telephone directory than by the entire Harvard University faculty. In 1969 President Richard Nixon, under fire from a militant, leftwing antiwar movement during the Vietnam conflict, appealed on national television to the "great silent majority" of the American people to support him. Nixon's first vice president, Spiro Agnew, was more colorful. Taking aim at the antiwar Left—much of it based in and around the universities—he thundered: "A spirit of national masochism prevails, encouraged by an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals." Criticism of an allegedly smug and decadent Liberal Establishment became a staple of conservative discourse in the 1960s and persisted long thereafter.

Populism, conservative-style, achieved its greatest success in the 1970s and 1980s under the leadership of Ronald Reagan, who brilliantly articulated a populistic, libertarian aversion to meddlesome and unaccountable government—an aversion long ingrained in the American psyche. Consider these words from Reagan's Farewell Address in 1989: "Ours is the first revolution in the history of mankind that truly reversed the course of government, and with three little words: We the people. 'We the people' tell the government what to do, it doesn't tell us. 'We the people' are the driver, the government is the car. And we decide where it should go, and by what route, and how fast." No conservative has ever said it better.

But notice the crucial distinction between these two manifestations of anti-elitism so long imbedded in our politics. Leftwing populism has traditionally aimed its fire at Big Money—the private-sector elite entrenched on Wall Street. Rightwing populism of the Reaganite variety has focused *its* wrath on Big Government—the public-sector elite ensconced in Washington (and its votaries in Academe). Leftwing populism was most popular in America when powerful financiers and captains of industry appeared to control the nation's destiny. Rightwing populism gained traction when the capitalist establishment was displaced by a competing establishment centered in the ever more bureaucratic and intrusive administrative state.

A few years ago, American conservatives experienced a revival of Reaganite, populistic fervor in the form of the Tea Party movement, with its slogan "Don't tread on me!" In some circles there has been a tendency to dismiss this phenomenon as either the artificial creation of rightwing billionaires or as the ugly expression

of the racial anxieties of white people. The truth is more complicated. Rightly or wrongly, a powerful conviction has arisen among virtually all conservatives that public policy in the United States has in some profound sense gone off the rails since the Great Recession of 2008. Rightly or wrongly, conservatives of all persuasions increasingly believe that ours has become a government not *of* and *by* the people but only *for* the people: government by edict from above. The much criticized "inflexibility" of the political Right during the two terms of President Obama was a direct response to *its* perception of inflexibility and autocratic hubris on the political Left.

The great symbol of this for conservatives is the Affordable Care Act of 2010 and the manner in which it was enacted and implemented. At the time the bill was enacted, a CNN poll revealed that 59 percent of the American people opposed it, and only 39 percent supported it. It passed anyway, by a convoluted parliamentary procedure, on a bitterly divided, virtually party-line vote. No other comparably ambitious, federal economic or social legislation in the past one hundred years was enacted in this way, and the consequences for America's social fabric have been severe. If the polls in 2010 were accurate, the Affordable Care Act was passed *in willful defiance of the majority sentiment of the American people*. To understand the fury and ferment on the Right since Obama took office, historians must take into account this sobering fact.

The leftward lurch of the Obama administration—it soon transpired—was not the only source of Tea Party discontent. The populist-conservative revolt of 2009–10 quickly morphed into a bitter struggle, not only against the perceived external threat from the Left, but also against a perceived *internal* threat from the conservative movement's imperfect vehicle, the Republican Party. Despite massive Republican victories in the Congressional elections of 2010 and 2014, many Tea Party populists felt frustrated and betrayed by what they saw as the inability and, even worse, the unwillingness, of elected Republican officials in Washington to fight effectively for the conservative agenda. Many at the grassroots—encouraged by populist sympathizers on talk radio—began to suspect that some of their elected leaders were not merely craven or inept but essentially on the other side, particularly on the question of dealing with illegal immigration. The mounting anger of "grassroots" conservatives—often derided by their critics as rubes and nativists—became part of the tinder for the firestorm that was about to occur.

By late 2015 the perception that America's governing elites were no longer heeding the will of the people extended far beyond the Tea Party Right. It helped to propel the improbable presidential candidacy of an outright socialist, Bernie Sanders. Early in 2016 a national polling organization asked Americans the following question: "The Declaration of Independence says that governments receive their authority from the consent of the people. Does the federal government today have the consent of the people?" An astonishing 70 percent of the respondents said no.

Until a few months ago, it seemed to this writer that the election of 2016 might become a showdown between these two competing brands of populism: the progressive, anticapitalist form and the conservative, antistatist one. Victory, I thought, would go to whichever political party better explained the causes of the Great Recession of 2008 and the years of malaise that have followed. Capitalism or statist progressivism: which is the problem? Which is the solution? On this perennial point of issue the election would be decided. What I did not foresee before the summer of 2015 was the volcanic eruption of a new and even angrier brand of populism, a hybrid that we now call Trumpism.

Politically, Trumpism's antecedents may be found in the presidential campaigns of Ross Perot and Patrick Buchanan for president in 1992 and 1996. Stylistically, the Trump campaign of early 2016 recalled the turbulence and rough rhetoric of George Wallace's campaign rallies in 1968. Ideologically, Trumpism bears a striking resemblance to the anti-interventionist, anti-globalist, immigration-restrictionist, and "America First" worldview propounded by vari-

ous paleoconservatives during the 1990s and ever since. It is no accident that Buchanan, for example, is thrilled by Trump's candidacy.

But instead of focusing its anger exclusively on leftwing elites, as conservative populism in its Reaganite variant has done, the Trumpist brand of populism is simultaneously assailing rightwing elites, including the Buckley–Reagan conservative intellectual movement described earlier. In particular, Trumpism is deliberately and dramatically breaking with the proactive, conservative internationalism of the Cold War era and with the pro–free trade, supply-side economics ideology that Reagan embraced and that has dominated Republican Party policymaking since 1980. It thus poses not just a factional challenge to the Republican political establishment but an ideological challenge to the separate and distinct conservative establishment, long headquartered at Buckley's *National Review*.

So what manner of "rough beast" is this, "its hour come round at last"? I believe we are witnessing in an inchoate form a phenomenon never before seen in this country: an ideologically muddled, "nationalist–populist" major party combining both leftwing and rightwing elements. In its fundamental outlook and public policy concerns it seems akin to the National Front in France, the United Kingdom Independence Party in Great Britain, the Alternative for Germany party, and similar protest movements in Europe. Most of these insurgent parties are conventionally labeled rightwing, but some of them are noticeably statist and welfare–statist in their economics—as is Trumpism in certain respects. Nearly all of them are responding to persistent economic stagnation, massively disruptive global migration patterns, and terrorist fanatics with global designs and lethal capabilities. In pro-Brexit Britain and continental Europe as well as America, the natives are restless—and for much the same reasons.

Trumpism and its European analogues are also being driven by something else: a deepening conviction that the governing elites have neither the competence nor the will to make things better. When Donald Trump burst onto the political scene in 2015, many observers noticed that one source of his instant appeal was his brash transgression of the boundaries of acceptable political discourse. The more he did so, the more his popularity seemed to grow, particularly among those who lack a college education.

What was happening here? The rise of Trumpism in the past year has laid bare a potentially dangerous chasm in American politics: not so much between the traditional Left and Right but rather (as someone has put it) between those *above* and those *below* on the socio-economic scale. In Donald Trump many of those "below" have found a voice for their despair and outrage at what they consider to be the cluelessness and condescension of their "betters."

Facilitating the Trumpist "revolt of the masses" is a revolutionary transformation of the structure and velocity of mass communication, another facet of the phenomenon called globalization. In the past, upsurges of populist sentiment have often coincided with innovations in communication technology that rendered the voices of the "little people" more discernible and easier to mobilize. The era of Jacksonian Democracy (1828–1860) saw the proliferation of inexpensive urban newspapers that both catered to, and shaped, the tastes and political sympathies of their non-elite readership. The "populistic" 1890s witnessed the dawn of sensationalized, yellow journalism. One of its pioneers was the flamboyant business mogul William Randolph Hearst—a millionaire and Democrat who attempted to become President in 1904. In the 1930s the careers of Franklin Roosevelt, Huey Long, and Father Coughlin (the "radio priest") benefited from the immense popularity of the new medium of radio and from the growing distribution of newsreels that millions of Americans saw every week in movie theaters. In the early 1950s the mass marketing of millions of television sets and the rise of political interview shows on television networks enhanced the visibility and popularity of Joseph McCarthy (though ultimately the new medium helped do him in).

Similarly, in our own time, the spectacular efflorescence of talk radio, cable news networks, the internet, smart phones, and social

media have radically enhanced "the power in the people" and diminished the ability of elites to control and manipulate public opinion. In 2015 and 2016 the success of Donald Trump owed much to his masterful exploitation of these relatively new media, including two—Facebook and Twitter—that did not exist a mere fifteen years ago. It is noteworthy that the three most prominent (and comparatively highbrow) conservative organs rooted in the print journalism era—*National Review*, *Commentary*, and *The Weekly Standard*—have been centers of outspoken resistance to Trump, while some of the most popular conservative talk radio hosts and websites have supported him with zeal.

As globalization accelerates—in cyberspace and elsewhere—it has become plain that the United States is experiencing a potentially profound political and cultural realignment, pitting (in the words of social scientists) "globalist" and "transnational progressive" elites against those who style themselves "nationalists" and "populists." In the past year the tensions on these fault lines have flared into what can only be described as an ideological civil war on the American Right: a struggle for the mind and soul of American conservatism.

As the debate has proceeded, many conservative intellectuals have attempted to accommodate what they see as the valid grievances expressed by Trump's supporters. According to the libertarian social scientist Charles Murray, "the central truth of Trumpism" is that "the entire American working class has legitimate reasons to be angry at the ruling class." Conservative intellectuals in general now seem inclined to agree.

But the problem for conservatives goes much deeper than expressing sympathy for the grievances of the aggrieved. If Trumpism were simply a *cri de coeur* of a sector of the population that feels left behind economically, it would seem possible for conservative power brokers in Congress and the think tanks to hammer out legislation that would begin to address the sources of anxiety. If the Republicans should capture the White House in 2016, one can envisage "deals" on Capitol Hill to strengthen border controls, reduce current levels of immigration, and reform the tax code in ways that benefit the middle and lower sections of the income ladder. One can also imagine legislation designed to stimulate economic growth and thereby assuage the pain of the Trumpist working class.

Two obstacles, however, stand in the path of such an accommodation. The first is that the contest between Trumpism and its conservative critics has become not just a dispute over details of public policy but an all-out war of ideas, one not easily papered over by pragmatic compromise. To many of its conservative critics, Trumpism is little more than a mishmash of protectionist, nativist, and (in foreign policy) neo-isolationist impulses. To the Trumpists, conservative internationalism is a rusty relic of a bygone era, and supply-side economics (with its corollaries of free trade, open border, and uncapped immigration) is an ossified dogma whose real-world consequences have been catastrophic for globalization's "losers."

For many years, during the Reagan era and beyond, the leading exponent of supply-side economics in Washington was the late Representative Jack Kemp. Today Kemp's chief political disciple (who in fact worked for him as a speechwriter) is the Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, a man who shows no sign of moderating his Kempian worldview. Nor does the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*—the ideological citadel of supply-side economics—appear to be yielding to the Trumpian barrage. It is not easy to see how—at the level of high principle and rhetorical advocacy—Kempism and Trumpism can be reconciled, either before or after the 2016 election.

In short, Trumpist populism is defiantly challenging the fundamental tenets and perspectives of every component of the post–1945 conservative coalition described in this essay. In its perspective on free trade, Trumpism deviates sharply from the limited-government, pro–free market philosophy of the libertarians and classical liberals. Despite some ritualistic support for the right to life and religious freedom, Trumpism has shown relatively little interest in the religious, moral, and cultural concerns of the traditionalist and social con-

servatives. In foreign policy it has harshly criticized the conservative internationalism grounded in the Cold War, as well as the post–Cold War "hard Wilsonianism" and distrust of Putinist Russia espoused by many national security hawks and neoconservatives. What Trumpism *has* addressed, loudly and insistently, is the insecurity and disorientation that large numbers of conservatives now feel about conditions at home and abroad. Whether this will be enough to unite the coalition at the polls (and beyond) remains to be seen.

The second hurdle that Trumpism faces may be even more difficult to overcome: the character, temperament, and qualifications of the man who has become its vessel and champion. To conservatives in the "Never Trump" movement who have vowed never to vote for him under any circumstances, Trump is an ignoramus and carnival barker at best, and a bullying proto-fascist at worst. To many on the other side of the Great Divide, it is not Trump but an allegedly corrupt and intransigent conservative establishment that is the threat, and they are attacking it savagely. The ideological tug of war has become personal, and arguments that turn personal are rarely easy to resolve.

Joining the Trumpist effort to reconfigure the Republican Party on nationalist–populist lines is an array of aggressive dissenters called the "alternative right" or "alt-right," many of whom openly espouse white nationalism and white identity politics and denounce their conservative opponents in the most vituperative terms. For many conservatives of the Buckley/Reagan persuasion who have prized their movement as an intellectual edifice built on ideas and enduring truths, the strident ethno-nationalism emanating from the "alt-right" represents a "return of the repressed" with which there can be no rapprochement.

In these stormy circumstances, it would be foolish to prophesy the outcome. Suffice it to say that in all my years as a historian of conservatism I have never observed as much dissension on the Right as there is at present. It is unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

Now some may see in this cacophony a sign of vitality, and perhaps it will turn out to be. But conservatives, more than ever, need minds as well as voices, arguments as well as sound bites, and civility as well as indignation. In this season of discontent, it might be useful for conservatives of all persuasions to step back from the fray for a moment and ask themselves a simple question: What do conservatives want? What *should* they want? Perhaps by getting back, very deliberately, to basics, conservative intellectuals can begin to restore some clarity and direction to the debate.

What do conservatives want? To put it in elementary terms, I believe they want what nearly all conservatives since 1945 have wanted: they want to be free; they want to live virtuous and meaningful lives; and they want to be secure from threats both beyond and within our borders. They want to live in a society whose government respects and encourages these aspirations while otherwise leaving people alone. Freedom, virtue, and safety: goals reflected in the libertarian, traditionalist, and national security dimensions of the conservative movement as it has developed over the past seventy years. In other words, there is at least a little fusionism in nearly all of us. It is something to build on. But it will take time.

For three generations now, American conservatives have committed themselves to defending the intellectual and spiritual foundations of Western civilization: the resources needed for a free and humane existence. Conservatives know that we all start out in life as "rough beasts" who need to be *educated* for liberty and virtue if we are to secure their blessings. Elections come and go, but this larger work is unending.

It is quite possible that in the turbulent months (and possibly years) just ahead, "the beating down of the wise" will intensify, and some conservatives will choose to withdraw from the political arena—recalling, perhaps, these lines from the eighteenth-century play *Cato*:

> When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
> The post of honour is a private station.

But however events unfold politically, conservative intellectuals must remain true to their heritage and rededicate themselves to their fundamental mission of cultural renewal.

# Hopkins's hidden life
## *by Paul Dean*

"He is likely to prove, for our time and the future, the only influential poet of the Victorian age, and he seems to me the greatest." So F. R. Leavis concluded his groundbreaking chapter on Gerard Manley Hopkins in *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932). Leavis proved his claim that "Hopkins belongs with Shakespeare, Donne, Eliot and the later Yeats as opposed to Spenser, Milton and Tennyson." The accidents of publication history favored this ranking. Hopkins (1844–1889) became known only with the appearance, in 1918, of a selection of his poems edited by Robert Bridges, his principal correspondent and by then Poet Laureate. Hopkins was thus an accidental "contemporary" of early Eliot (*Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917) and Pound—indeed he might have appeared *more* modern than the Pound of that pre-*Mauberley* period. He came to notice in the wake of Grierson's editions of Donne (1912) and just ahead of Yeats's collection *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919). Had the selection been published a year or two after his death, he would have appeared alongside Bridges himself, Browning, and Henley. Bridges rendered a real service to English poetry by putting Hopkins's poems into circulation, but, as Leavis repeatedly complained, he also showed himself unable to understand them, taking their originality for incompetence and distorting them by unauthorized alterations. The best subsequent edition of the poems, by Norman H. Mackenzie (1990), is long out of print, as are the standard editions of Hopkins's prose and correspondence. Now Oxford University Press has undertaken to re-edit the complete works in eight volumes. Five of these have appeared, including the volume under review; we still await, among others, Catherine Phillips's edition of the poems.[1]

Lesley Higgins's edition improves on its predecessor of 1959, *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by Humphry House and completed by Graham Storey after House's sudden death, in several ways. It adds previously unpublished drafts for poems, as well as Hopkins's confession notes, which House and Storey judged too intimate to be included, and in any case "of no literary value" (more about this later); the text is given in a diplomatic transcript rather than being tidied up into some hypothetical finished state; digital images of all Hopkins's beautifully delicate drawings are reproduced; there is a detailed chronology, a biographical dictionary of the leading persons mentioned, and annotation of astonishing minuteness. The major losses are two appendices to House and Storey, both still of value: one by John Stevens on Hopkins's musical settings and one by Alan Ward on his philological notes. Yet, extensive as they are, the materials are fragments of what was once a larger whole; many manuscripts were accidentally lost or deliberately destroyed, by Hopkins himself or by oth-

1 *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume III: Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, edited by Lesley Higgins; Oxford University Press, 722 pages, $150.

ers. What survives consists of three kinds of writing, distinguished by Higgins as diaries (running from 1862 to 1866), journals (running from 1866 to 1875), and notebooks (for 1884 and 1885). They thus cover Hopkins's life from his last year at school, for which only one entry survives, to the end of his first year as Professor of Greek at University College, Dublin, with a gap of seven years during which he wrote many of his best poems, including "The Wreck of the 'Deutschland,'" became a priest, and served as a teacher or curate in several places in England and Wales. The months between August 1866 and July 1867, during which he became a Catholic, are also missing. The final two notebooks take up only fifteen pages, compared with around 250 each for the diaries and journals. Fortunately, we have his correspondence for the missing years, included in volumes I and II of the new edition—often we come closer to Hopkins in the letters and poems in these writings, which are supposedly more private.

To compare Higgins's introduction with Graham Storey's is to realize how much the parameters of scholarly editing have shifted in fifty years. Storey warned that his preface was "not used for personal comment on Hopkins, but to give a history of the manuscripts, to explain them in relation to one another and to the poems and letters already published." The preface, which also covers materials now published in other volumes in the new Oxford edition, runs to thirty-two pages. Lesley Higgins takes one hundred and two pages and is quite free with "personal comment on Hopkins," whom she describes as "first and last, a textual being," and, more comprehensibly, as someone for whom writing was "a mode of experience." The diaries are more exploratory than the journals in this respect, being more spontaneous (the journals were apparently written up in a self-consciously literary fashion from earlier notes). They serve as memorandum books in which etymological speculations jostle with records of expenses, botanical observations, notes on architectural history, and lists of sins—a word which Higgins puts in inverted commas, adding that Hopkins was "playing a role, or, more precisely, following a script," since he seems to have been following a printed booklet for self-examination. I do not see why this should entail that he was not being sincere; the use of confession manuals was commonplace and it would be absurd, as well as wrong, to accuse himself of non-existent faults. Admittedly, his definition of a fault was unusually severe; it cannot be denied that someone who can list killing an earwig alongside his nocturnal emissions lacks a sense of proportion, but that is a different matter. Lists of sins do not appear in the journals, in other words after his conversion, although there are frequent references to uncharitable remarks about Gladstone, whom he loathed.

One can see why Leavis wanted to stress Hopkins's modernity, but it has to be recognized that he was also in many respects a Victorian. Until his conversion in 1866, when he was twenty-two, his life is that of many another sensitive, pious youth of the time, with a respectable middle-class background, a Balliol classical education, a High Church circle of friends, and an aesthetic bent that was encouraged by Pater (who was one of his tutors) and Ruskin. But he was also racked with guilt about his homosexuality. Higgins is inexplicably reluctant to accept this plain fact about his character, which is corroborated by numerous confession notes about looking at men and boys. That, as she says, he never apparently acted on such thoughts is irrelevant; he knew from Matthew 5:28 that lust of the heart is a sin. We may agree that he was burdened with an over-active conscience and neurotic scrupulosity, which made him fret even over his exceptionally sensuous response to Nature. "To what serves mortal beauty?" one poem begins, and the next word falls like a portcullis: "dangerous." He admonishes himself at the end of the poem to "leave, let that alone" and seek instead "God's better beauty, grace." To delight in the things of this world was to risk idolatry; to deny himself such delight was the road to holiness.

All these traits are evident in the early diaries. They also contain minute etymological and philological speculations; Hopkins cor-

responded with W. W. Skeat, the editor of an etymological dictionary, who, already overburdened by work, simply replied "I can't discuss." Alan Ward, in the previous edition, pointed out that he was relying on outdated dictionaries; the first volume of the *New English Dictionary* (later the *OED*) appeared only in the year before his death. Yet Ward shows that, even when Hopkins made mistakes, they were intelligent ones. His teaching and pastoral posts (he was shifted around the country as though he were a puzzle to his superiors, as well he might be) brought him into contact with speakers of various English and Irish dialects, whose usages he recorded; in 1874 he came across a Maltese Jesuit and jotted down some notes on that language: "It is mainly Arabic, he said, with a background of Punic." Hopkins attempted to pronounce some words but found the gutturals difficult. Some of his lists would feed into the poems; for instance "shear, shred, potsherd, shard," noted in 1863, will recur to unforgettable effect in 1888 in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire":

> Flesh fade, and mortal trash
> Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire,
> leave but ash:
> In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
> I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was
> what I am, and
> This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch,
> matchwood, immortal diamond,
> Is immortal diamond.

You could not blame someone who thought "mortal trash/ Fall to the residuary worm" was from a lesser-known Shakespeare play. This genius with language was Hopkins's alone, among Victorian poets (Browning has the eccentricity without the talent), and we can see the materials being quarried out in the diaries and notebooks.

Lesley Higgins observes that, even as an Anglican, Hopkins was temperamentally unsuited to following a conventional profession; his tastes were too eclectic and eccentric. His aesthetic sense and cultural interests had to be severely curbed once he became a Jesuit. He could not own books, and his awareness of the controversies of the day was often gleaned from back numbers of periodicals encountered at random. His correspondents—principally Bridges, Coventry Patmore, and the Rev. R. W. Dixon—kept him up to date and provided a channel for literary discussion. In holidays he eagerly visited art galleries where he could see the great masters, but also the Pre-Raphaelites, Alma-Tadema, Watts, and Lord Leighton. He made a point, whenever he could, of viewing the Royal Academy's exhibitions and of visiting the British Museum and the Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum), with its extensive collection of English work, especially that of Turner.

He was fascinated by musical instruments and gemstones, of whose colors he made detailed notes. When he went to the theater the fare on offer was grim, tending to confirm one's suspicions that the English drama died between 1642, when the theaters closed, and the advent of Oscar Wilde. On January 11, 1868 he was at the New Queen's Theatre Royal, where the evening's entertainment comprised a curtain-raiser called *He's a Lunatic*, a three-act "serio-comic drama," *Dearer Than Life*, written by a second cousin of Byron, and, by way of a grace-note, "Mr John Hollinghead's laughable farce of *The Birthplace of Podgers*." (Even when the schoolboys at Stonyhurst, where he taught, put on *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth had to become Uncle Donald because they were not allowed to play female roles.) He came from a musical family, and attempted composition himself, not very successfully according to the Professor of Music at Dublin, who flatly (or sharply) told him, "Nearly everything in your music is wrong." John Stevens, in House and Storey, was more sympathetic, but there is greater music in the poems. He wrote a poem celebrating Purcell (1879), of which he gave an elaborate paraphrase to Bridges. Interest in Purcell was in its infancy at this time—the Purcell Society had just been founded, in 1876, by W. H. Cummings, whom Hopkins later met—but Hopkins had known some of his songs since childhood from an old collection in his family's possession. The poem acclaims

Purcell's "air of angels" and compares the effect of his music to a great sea-bird soaring unexpectedly aloft and displaying its plumage on wide-open wings.

It is important to recognize that Hopkins's aesthetic sense was not, for him, a faculty in isolation but part of his theological view of the universe as revelatory of "the grandeur of God." Only in this way could he justify his absorption in artistic matters. The doctrines of Duns Scotus (John the Scot), the medieval philosopher whom he untypically preferred to the Jesuits' favorite, St. Thomas Aquinas, stressed the uniqueness (*haeccitas*) of every created object—not just leaves, for instance, but what we would call the DNA of every single leaf, even those from the same tree. In the Purcell poem Hopkins is entranced by "the rehearsal/ Of own, of abrupt self," the sound that only Purcell can produce. He coined the word "inscape" ("-scape" meaning "shape," on the analogy of "landscape") to describe uniqueness, and the most dazzling writing in the journals comes when he is trying to wrest language to his purpose of re-creating as exactly as possible his visions of the natural world. Such passages bear out his remark of 1874 that "We must not insist on knowing where verse ends and prose (or verseless composition) begins, for they pass into one another." The best examples are too long to quote, but here is a snippet from 1871, which includes Hopkins's crossings-out and corrections (marked by ^ ^):

> The bluebells in your hand baffle you with their inscape, made to every sense: if you draw yr. ~~hand~~ ^fingers^ through them they are lodged and ~~drag~~ ^struggle/with a shock of wet heads;^ the long stalks rub ^and click^ and flatten ^to a fan^ on one another like yr. fingers themselves would when you ~~pressed~~ passed the palms ~~together~~ ^hard across one another,^ making a brittle rub and jostle like the noise of a hurdle strained by leaning against; then there is the faint honey smell and in the mouth the sweet gum when you bite them. But this is easy, it is the eye they baffle. They give one a fancy of panpipes and of some ~~tr~~ wind instrument with stops—a trombone perhaps.

Prose and verse do indeed "pass into one another" here. House and Storey's transcription left out the signs of erasures and amplifications, but we can see from this what insights they give us into the way his mind worked; they not only make for more precision ("fingers" not "hand"; "click" as well as "rub") but are prompted by assonantal association ("pressed" suggests "passed") or alliteration ("flatten" supplemented by "to a fan"). Then there is the metaphysical yoking together of the bluebells and "the noise of a hurdle" or "a trombone" (and notice that word is begun, then crossed out as a modification occurs to him and delayed to its proper place). The most startling detail, which topples over into unintentional comedy, is Hopkins's biting the flowers to see what they taste like—"But this is easy"! (He was nothing if not an experimenter; elsewhere we find him hypnotizing a duck by drawing straight chalk lines on the ground.) The bluebells duly found their way into a formal poem, "The furl of fresh-leaved dogrose" (1879), where we hear of "a juicy and jostling shock/ Of bluebells sheaved in May."

There are many areas of Hopkins's life about which the journals remain opaque. Lesley Higgins observes that after 1866 "he did not use his diary to rehearse theological or spiritual matters, nor to muse over his experiences—sacramental and emotional—as a Jesuit or priest; and he did not record the minutiae of daily life in community." This seems rather narrow. Hopkins could not go for a walk without having "sacramental and emotional experiences," and he may well have felt a diary was not the place for theological discussion. We have other writings, including sermons, meditations, and retreat notes, which cover those things. Such glimpses as we are given of community life in the diaries are enlightening; for example the kindness of his superior, Fr. Gallwey, when he was ill, or his suddenly bursting into tears when moved by a reading in the refectory one evening. His care for the pupils he taught is also touching, before he went to Dublin, at least, when he was involved with more impressionable, younger boys. The affection which some of them clearly felt for him moved him, while

causing him pain since he could never have children of his own. Like his mentor Newman in some respects—and like George Herbert, whose poetry he admired—he was a strongly emotional man who exerted iron self-discipline. In the poems he could let himself go, and the unrestrained wildness of form and diction can have the impact of a physical assault. The many drafts and fragments of verse which Higgins prints are as much part of the diaries as anything else, and we can only regret that so many of them never passed beyond this tentative stage into completed poems. Hopkins was temperamentally a magpie, easily distracted even though capable of ferocious concentration on the immediate object, and also chronically short of time and energy for occupations he regarded as self-indulgent.

Among the last entries in this edition is this, written on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1885: "He is the patron of the hidden life; of those, I shd. think, suffering in mind and as I do. Therefore I will ask his help." Hopkins was then in his last post, at Trinity College, Dublin, as Professor of Greek and Latin, a high-sounding title for a treadmill of a job which broke his health and spirits. It was in this year that he wrote the first of the so-called "terrible sonnets," which give unforgettable voice to the suffering he speaks of here. Any later diaries are lost, but four years later, and six months before his death, he made some retreat notes, admitting that feelings of self-loathing and hopelessness have brought him to the brink of madness, yet "I do not waver in my allegiance, I never have since my conversion to the Church." This volume, and the series to which it belongs, constitute a sobering reminder that all vocations, whether literary or religious, come at a price.

# The Caliphate's multi-pronged war

*by Andrew C. McCarthy*

"It is now obvious that Islam in Europe has not followed a process of Westernization; instead, the West becomes increasingly compliant to accommodate the religious and political norms of Muslim immigrants out of a fear of social unrest and terrorism."

Well, if that is *now* obvious, even to those who mulishly continue to look away, it is only because there is no safe place, with jihadists besieging the continent in attacks separated by just days—sometimes just hours. But this grim diagnosis of the West's submission to Islam is not a reaction to recent atrocities like the beheading of a British soldier on the streets of London, the mass-murder in Paris's Bataclan concert hall, or the bombings at crowded transportation hubs in Brussels. It is, instead, the perspicacious analysis of Bat Ye'or, the great scholar of *dhimmitude*: the humiliating status of subordination imposed on non-Muslims by Allah's domineering law, sharia—imposed, that is, on those non-Muslims not killed as a consequence of resisting Islamic governance.

Ye'or wrote this passage about a phenomenon that she had already discerned nearly a decade before the international jihadist network now known as "the Islamic State" proclaimed its caliphate. The recent spate of terror was still beyond the horizon. Ye'or could not have known of the 143 attacks by which jihadists aligned with the Islamic State have killed 2,043 people in twenty-nine different countries since 2014 (according to a late July snapshot of CNN's running count). She was unaware that, staggering as that casualty count seems, it does not include the tens of thousands of others killed in Syria and Iraq, the purported caliphate's war-torn territory. She did not know at the time that the attacks in the greater global battlefield outside jihadist-held territory would now be coming at a clip of one every eighty-four hours—and thus that the numbers will surely have swelled by the time you read this.

Nevertheless, Ye'or had a firm grasp on the central truths. She knew the hegemonic yearnings of supremacist Islam, for which implementing sharia is the imperative and jihad merely the violent front line of a sophisticated aggressor force, pressing on every vulnerability of the societies it targets. And she knew the modern West, particularly Europe, in all its fecklessness. That is why *Eurabia* is the title she gave to the book that is home to her prescient passage.

There was no Islamic State then, let alone an ISIS or ISIL, acronyms that stand for the Islamic State of, alternatively, al-Sham (i.e., Greater Syria) or the Levant. Back in 2005, there was the progenitor: al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), perhaps the most ferocious tentacle in Osama bin Laden's global jihad. AQI is the franchise that waged jihad against America and its allies after the 2003 ousting of Saddam Hussein's regime. It has never really stopped, in the interim provoking a savage Sunni–Shiite civil war, the ramifications of which have assured the failure of America's Pollyannish quest to forge a Western-style democracy in an Arab sharia culture.

As is the wont of totalitarian movements, AQI split off from the mothership in a leadership dispute—mainly personality differences and tactical disagreements, but gussied up in Islamist circles as theological debate. The group became ISIS to reflect its main base of operations, which, at its high-water mark in 2014, comprised one-third of the territory of both Syria and Iraq—dominion over approximately nine million people on a landmass larger than the United Kingdom.

The caliphate has since lost about a quarter of its holdings due to stepped up (though still fitful) military operations by the United States, along with Russia's forcible backing of jihadist Iran's fight to prop up its client, the Assad regime. This has hardly been a boon for the West, however. As of this writing, ISIS still controls Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, and important swaths of Syria, including the city of Raqqa, capital of the "caliphate"—in addition to spreading its wings in Libya, an ungovernable jihadist playpen since Obama's disastrous intervention. The Syrian territory that ISIS has lost has been claimed by either the monstrous Assad or other of his rival Islamists, particularly jihadists aligned with al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood; in Iraq, it is Iran's terror cells that fill the void. More imperiling are the many ISIS fighters who come to Syria and Iraq from the West. As the organization is squeezed, Western security agencies detect a jihadist diaspora: potentially thousands of trained, motivated terrorists returning to Europe—and some continuing on to the United States and Canada—to carry out attacks.

The Islamic State is still most familiar to the public as "ISIS," the moniker under which it burst onto the global scene with serial acts of barbarism: decapitations, mass shootings, crucifixions, the torching or drowning of caged captives, mass abduction, and gang rape. These are publicized by the Islamic State's first-rate propaganda and production shop, conjoining fundamentalist doctrine (in social media and *Dabiq*, its widely disseminated magazine) with slick videos of the organization's grisliest depravities—which, sickeningly, make for powerful recruiting tools.

Yet, while often overlooked, the formal abridgement of the name from ISIS to "the Islamic State" is pregnant with meaning. It conveys an outsize appetite to transcend its current borders and stand as the symbol of global Islamic aspirations.

This is what caliphates have historically been. It is what the last one, the Ottoman caliphate, remained until formally abolished in 1924 in a conclusive display of Atatürk's determination to draw the curtain on political Islam. To Mustafa Kemal, the future of Turkey lay in Europe and the West, in secularism and enlightenment. As a Muslim shifting an overwhelmingly Muslim country away from sharia supremacism, he grasped the necessity of driving Islamic law from the political sphere, and even keeping it on a tight leash in private and spiritual life.

That is not today's Turkey. It has taken an elected Islamist tyrant, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, only a dozen years to reverse Atatürk's vision, to return Turkey to *Dar al-Islam*—the realm of the believers, which sharia supremacists distinguish from that of the infidels, *Dar al-Harb* or, tellingly, the realm of war.

The sad irony is that Erdoğan's most effective weapon in re-Islamizing Turkey has been Europe itself: the irrational Islamophilia of its ruling class; its conflation of the ballot box with democratic culture (such that Islamist authoritarianism is preferable to liberty and minority rights, as long as it has got the votes); and its disdain of military participation in political affairs (notwithstanding the constitutional role of the Turkish armed forces as guardian of the secular democratic order). Erdoğan has shrewdly used the mirage of European integration—its demands for religious liberty and subordination of security forces to political officials—as a cudgel against his Kemalist opponents, breaking the bonds that harnessed Islam's congenital aggression. Concurrently, he has banked on Europe's cowardice, confident—justifiably so, it turns out—that the European Union would look the other way as he resuscitated sharia, persecuted dissenters, jailed journalists, and gave safe haven to his

Muslim Brotherhood confederates, including their Palestinian jihadist wing, Hamas.

Like the Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Erdoğan has the would-be caliph's gleam in his eye. Each Islamist pursues the prize through different methods, but the methods are interdependent. They'd both vehemently deny that fact, of course, even as they swerve between de facto collusion and lethal confrontation, just as competing Islamists have done for over a millennium. Each man, moreover, represents a strand of sharia supremacism that seeks the conquest of Europe and, eventually, the United States (the "Big Satan" to Israel's "Little Satan").

At the moment, their side is winning, just as Bat Ye'or foresaw. Even before there was an Islamic State, she would have predicted, for example, that Europe and the United States would rely heavily on Islamist Turkey to combat the Islamic State, notwithstanding that Erdoğan had made Turkey a way-station for arming and training Islamist militants before allowing them to make their way to the jihad in Syria. Ye'or would also have anticipated the European Union and American diplomatic protocols that call for the Islamic State to be referred to as "*Daesh*," the Arabic transliteration of the "ISIS" acronym. This, according to the politically correct substitute for thinking, denies the organization the theological legitimacy conveyed by "*Islamic* State."

What it actually denies is our capacity to know the enemy. Imagine fighting the Cold War with a ban on the study of Karl Marx, or World War II with all mentions of Nazi ideology verboten. Unimaginable, of course. Yet the modern West—almost a quarter century after the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, fifteen years after September 11, over a decade after commuter train explosions in Madrid and London, and in the midst of an unprecedented spate of jihadist strikes—persists in self-imposed ignorance. The ruling class does not wish to know what Islamists and their jihadist shock troops are trying to accomplish, with such fervor that many willingly sacrifice their own lives to take a few more of ours.

Anything to remain willfully blind.

Ye'or has been lonely but not alone among scholars of consequence. Bernard Lewis is the West's authority nonpareil on the history of Islam and its intercourse with what, without smirk, used to be called "Christendom." He envisions a Europe predominantly Islamic in character by the end of the twenty-first century. Startling, to be sure, but the truth is that Lewis may be a decade or three behind the curve. Not for want of grasping the dynamic of the struggle: the nonagenarian academic, sounding positively Huntington-like, warned in a recent interview that the survival of Western civilization requires knowing who our Islamist rivals are and, crucially, knowing *who we are*—with a firm resolve to preserve our way of life, rooted in Judeo-Christian principles and the enlightened dynamic of faith and reason.

But is it still our way of life? Ye'or detected a seismic shift after the 1973 oil crisis. At the urging of France and the Arab League, the European Economic Community sought a convergence between Europe and the Islamic states of North Africa and the Middle East. The resulting collusion between European opinion elites and an increasingly sharia-supremacist Arab-Muslim world was best exemplified by the Euro-Arab Dialogue. The partnership had two overarching results.

The first was the invention of what Ye'or aptly described as "a fantasy Islamic civilization and history." In the context of the American government's Islamophilia, I have dubbed the concoction "an Islam of their very own." As Ye'or discerned, the point was to bleach away the extensive historical record of human-rights violations, especially against women and non-Muslims, under sharia. This fabricated construct immunized Islam, easing the way for European diplomatic, economic, and cultural ventures with dictatorial regimes.

The second was the inculcation into this partnership of contempt for America, Israel, Jews, Christians, and economic liberty. To lay this exclusively at the feet of the Arab-Muslim side would be a gross overstatement. While anti-Americanism in Europe was once assumed to be Soviet-inspired, Ye'or observed, "the collapse of the Communist system exposed other currents of anti-American hatred, manifested

by Third-Worldists [and] neo-Communists," as well as "Islamists reoriented into a powerful jihadist coalition against Western democracies."

Though not representative of the views of most Europeans, the Euro-Arab political alliance punched well above its weight in shaping policy. The phenomenon underscores a theme I explored in *The Grand Jihad* (Encounter Books, 2010): Despite some significant disagreements (on, for example, abortion and the rights of women and homosexuals), supremacist Islam and the radical Left have a great deal of common ground. They are totalitarian, collectivist, hostile to individual liberty, intolerant of dissent, and known historically to cooperate against common enemies—particularly, Western liberalism and Western governments.

The new dominant ideology, euphemistically summarized in a word as "multiculturalism," erodes the culture that made Europe identifiably Western. Naturally, it adopted a transformative open-borders policy that made it a perfect target for supremacist Islam's real conquest strategy: voluntary apartheid.

"We will conquer Europe, we will conquer America, not through the sword but through *dawah*." So said Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the internationally renowned sharia jurist and Muslim Brotherhood eminence in a 1995 speech, the thrust of which he has repeated time and again in the ensuing decades. *Dawah* is Islam's aggressive conception of proselytism. Though he couches it in non-violent terms, it is hardly that. Sheikh Qaradawi, after all, is a champion of Hamas, whose *fatwas* (sharia edicts) have endorsed suicide bombings against Israel and the jihad against American forces in Iraq. The concept is sometimes called "sharia encroachment" or "stealth jihad." Its essence is to leverage the atmosphere of intimidation created by violent jihadism in order to extort concessions to Islam—just as Ye'or put it, the fear of social unrest and terrorism compels accommodation of Islamic norms.

The key to *dawah* is resistance to assimilation. Islamists encourage Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East to integrate into Europe without becoming part of Europe; to cling tightly to their Islamic mores, to compete with the host culture about which Europeans have become so indifferent. The idea of voluntary apartheid is to establish enclaves whose swelling Muslim populations pressure the host government to allow them to conduct their affairs in accordance with sharia and their own culture, irrespective of conflicts with domestic law. The enclaves become difficult if not impossible to govern, to the point that Islamists oppose the power of police, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and other agents of the state to enter.

Gradually, as enclave populations grow to critical mass and resistance to assimilation intensifies, sovereignty is effectively transferred. This is a critical development: in sharia supremacist ideology, once a territory belongs to Islam, it is Islam's forever, obliging Muslims to wage "defensive" jihad against any who would wrest control. In Cologne in 2008, Erdoğan—the personification of the European Union–Islamist partnership—addressed a 20,000-strong throng of mostly expatriate Turks resettled in Europe. "I can understand very well that you are against assimilation," he told them. "One cannot expect you to assimilate. . . . Assimilation is a crime against humanity!"

It was in Cologne this past New Year's Eve that scores of Muslim men, many of them recent immigrants, set upon groups of young women in a series of sexual assaults that the overwhelmed police presence was powerless to prevent. There were similar attacks in Stuttgart, Hamburg, and near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. Such incidents, though rarely spoken of, have become common in Europe. It is aptly described as the "rape jihad," a tactic of war that the Islamic State employs in Syria, and that Islamist militants use on the continent. And for the same reasons: to establish dominance, to force compliance with Islamic standards of female dress and subordination.

In early August, the Pew Research Center reported that Europe had been deluged by 1.325 million refugees in 2015, nearly doubling the prior record set in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The migrant waves have been spurred by European Union leaders, particularly Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, a

close ally of Erdoğan's. They insist, as does the Obama administration in the United States, that the West has a duty to embrace those fleeing Islamic war zones. It apparently makes no difference to the ruling class that there is no way to vet these "refugees," that they include a prodigious number of fighting-age Muslim men, and that the migrant swarms have undeniably been infiltrated by the Islamic State and other jihadist groups, anxious to move their war onto Western enemy territory.

This Pew report broke shortly after the bloodiest of Julys. A French-Tunisian jihadist sped his truck through a crowd celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, killing eighty-four and wounding hundreds. A seventeen-year-old Afghan migrant was lauded by the Islamic State as "a soldier of the caliphate" for "attacking Crusader passengers with an axe and knife" on a train in Germany, wounding five people. Two nineteen-year-old men, the jihadist sons of Algerian immigrants, seized upon an eighty-five-year-old Catholic priest, Father Jacques Hamel, as he said Mass in a small seventeenth-century church in the suburbs of Rouen. They murdered him, slitting his throat while attempting to behead him on the altar.

On the same day as the Pew Report, the Islamic State published *Dabiq* magazine's new "Break the Cross" issue, proclaiming the irrevocable Islamist abhorrence of Christians and Jews. As the jihadists explained in one article, entitled, "Why We Hate You & Why We Fight You":

> Your disbelief is the primary reason we hate you, as we have been commanded to hate the disbelievers until they submit to the authority of Islam, either by becoming Muslims, or by paying *jizyah* [the poll tax for *dhimmis*]—for those afforded this option—and living in humiliation under the rule of the Muslims.
>
> Even if you were to stop bombing us . . . we would continue to hate you because our primary reason for hating you will not cease to exist until you embrace Islam. Even if you were to pay *jizyah* and live under the authority of Islam in humiliation, we would continue to hate you. No doubt, we would stop fighting you then as we would stop fighting any disbelievers who enter into a covenant with us, but we would not stop hating you.

The following day, *The New York Times* reported, based on the substantially corroborated confessions of a defector, that the Islamic State has a special security unit, known as "Emni." It has dispatched hundreds of highly trained operatives to Europe, where they fan out across the continent, establish contact with existing support networks, and plot attacks. They have already had a hand in several atrocities, including those in Paris and Brussels.

The enemy is fighting a multi-pronged civilizational war: the mutual reinforcement of jihad and *dawah* on the battlefield, in legal campaigns, in media blitzes, and in the shaping of popular culture. In an enervated West, where our cultural heritage is in disrepute, there is little zeal to acknowledge—much less defend—the cross that the Islamic State vows to break. The jihad, in its savagery and massive population shifts, stokes pressure for accommodation. The European ruling class, heavily invested for over a generation in fantasy Islam and "moderate" Islamists, submits. The result is ever more immigration without assimilation, leading to more sharia enclaves—the breeding grounds for radicalization and jihadist recruitment. More jihad, and thus more accommodation, and thus . . . still more jihad.

To break the cycle and save the West would require a drastic change of course. The change could be driven only by a will annealed in the belief that we are worth saving. And time is growing short.

# The goulash archipelago
## *by John Derbyshire*

I recently needed to read up on Austria-Hungary, the large and potent state that existed in central and southeastern Europe from 1867 to 1918. With the help of friends, and some internet browsing, I drew up a short booklist and worked my way through it. My list was biased towards fiction and memoir—Robert Musil, Joseph Roth, Stefan Zweig—as I knew the history in sufficient outline and wanted to get the *flavor*, the everyday detail of the place.

Half a dozen books into this project I thought I had been reading too much from the Austrian side. What were the Hungarians up to? Asking around, my attention was snagged, for particular reasons I'll relate in due course, by hearing of Miklós Bánffy's *Transylvanian Trilogy*, a big social-historical-political novel about Hungarian aristocrats in the decade before World War I.[1] I read all three volumes right off, with both pleasure and instruction.

The *Trilogy* has been called "the Hungarian *War and Peace*," but other than by giving a clue to the length of the thing—1,392 pages in translation—this is misleading. There is no war in the story at all until the very last pages. "The Hungarian *Downton Abbey*" would be closer to the mark, except that Bánffy gives us more parliamentary politics and less below-stairs intrigue among the servant classes than does Julian Fellowes's TV show. The *Trilogy*'s overall ethos of aristocratic paternalism is very Downtonian, though. I cannot find any evidence of a TV dramatization, but there must surely be a producer in Budapest yearning to do one.

Miklós Bánffy (1873–1950) was writing about what he knew. He himself was born into the Hungarian aristocracy of Transylvania. He lived a busy and useful life, surviving both world wars. The *Trilogy* was first published in the Hungarian language as three books, each with a different title, between 1934 and 1940. My review is of an English translation made in the 1990s; I cannot read Hungarian.

The events of the novel, and the circumstances of its author, are set in times and places unfamiliar to most educated Americans; so before considering the *Trilogy* itself, I have thought it best to detour through some helpful (I hope) prefatory material of a historical, political, and—if I may be excused—personal kind about those times and places.

Austria-Hungary was a peculiar creation. Whether or not it is proper to call it a state is a matter of fine distinctions. It was certainly not an ethnostate; I wonder if there has ever in history been a political entity that was *further* from being an ethnostate. There were major tensions between Austrians and Hungarians; but those two ethnicities *combined* were only 44 percent of the population. (I am working from the 1900 census numbers given in the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*.) Austrians were a minority in Austria (35 percent), and Hungarians

1 *The Transylvanian Trilogy, Vol. 1: They Were Counted* & *The Transylvanian Trilogy, Vols. 2 & 3: They Were Found Wanting, They Were Divided* by Miklós Bánffy, translated by Patrick Thursfield and Katalin Bánffy-Jelen; Everyman's Library, 696/830 pages, $30 each.

only barely a majority in Hungary (51 percent). The rest of the population was a preposterous salad of Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ruthenes, Slovenes, Italians, Serbs, Croats, Romanians, Szeklers, Gypsies, Jews, Transylvanian Saxons, Greeks, Armenians, and, after 1908, Bosnians.

Both the birth and the death of Austria-Hungary were consequences of military defeat. The death was of course inflicted by the allied powers in World War I, Austria-Hungary having fought on Germany's side.

The birth had followed from Prussia's victory over what was then the Austrian Empire in the Seven Weeks War of June–August 1866. Prior to that war, Hungarian nationalism had been a growing force ever since the Austrian Empire condensed out of the old Habsburg dominions in 1804. There was actually a brief, futile war of Hungarian independence in 1848–49, leading to years of brutal repression by Austria and seething resentment by Hungarian nationalists.

(It is typical of the ethnic chaos of the region that the great figurehead Hungarian patriot of that war, the poet and revolutionary Sándor Petőfi, whose portrait has graced Hungarian banknotes, was only ambiguously an ethnic Hungarian. He was born in Hungary, but his parents were Slovaks.)

The 1866 humiliation of Austria by Prussia brought matters to a head. To preserve the tottering state, Hungary was granted considerable autonomy as a kingdom yoked to the Austrian Empire under a single monarch, the Emperor-King. The granting was formalized in the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867.

This imperial-and-royal arrangement, in German *kaiserlich und königlich*, gave Austria-Hungary the abbreviation by which speakers of German commonly refer to it: the *k.u.k.*, pronounced "kah und kah." Musil, in *The Man Without Qualities*, spoofs this as "Kakania." In English it is often called the Dual Monarchy. The actual monarch for well-nigh the entire existence of the state—all but the last two years—was Franz Joseph of the house of Habsburg, a sensible and effective ruler, one of history's great reactionaries. November 21 this year marks the centenary of his death, which I hope will be noted with proper honors and respect.

And then, Transylvania, the land "across the woods"—from metropolitan Hungary, that is.

(The Hungarians clung to Latin as a public language for longer than the rest of Europe, in part because none of their neighbors could be bothered to learn Hungarian, a Uralic tongue radically different in structure and vocabulary from all the major languages of the continent. The composer Franz Liszt, a German-speaker but proud of his Hungarian ancestry, tried to master the language but gave up after encountering the word for "unshakability": *tántorithatatlanság*. The Hungarian parliament conducted its business in Latin until 1843.)

Transylvania was part of the Kingdom of Hungary from the foundation of that state in the tenth century through to the disastrous first battle of Mohács (1526), when Hungary's army was routed by the Ottoman Turks. Transylvania then lingered under Turkish suzerainty until recaptured by the Habsburg Monarchy after the 1683 siege of Vienna. It was recognized to be part of the Kingdom of Hungary again under the 1867 Compromise.

Hungarian rule over Transylvania ended with the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, when the region was awarded to Romania as part of the post–World War I tidying-up of Europe. Hungarian patriots are still passionately angry about this. Here, for example, is Paul Lendvai, a sober and thoughtful commentator, in his book *The Hungarians* (2003): "A single word, Trianon, sums up for all Hungarians to this day the most devastating tragedy in their history."

After the Iron Curtain disintegrated in 1989 there was serious agitation in Budapest for a war against Romania to recover the lost land, until the U.S. ambassador and others made it clear that Hungary's ambitions to join NATO and the European Union would be annihilated by such action. The present-day radical-nationalist party Jobbik still has the recovery of Transylvania as one of its stated policy goals.

Thus Transylvania appears on today's maps as the northwest quarter of modern Romania, bounded on the east and south by the Carpathian Mountains.

In the modern Western imagination, Transylvania is of course associated with vampires,

and with Vlad "the Impaler" Dracul, a medieval Prince of Wallachia who is supposed to have been one of the inspirations for Bram Stoker's Count Dracula. The first association derives from Carpathian folklore, with which Stoker was familiar. The second is tenuous; Wallachia is not, and never was, part of Transylvania.

Still, the popular connection between Transylvania and matters gothic—in the literary sense of that word: wolf-haunted forests, superstitious peasants, deep ravines, grim castles—is not altogether misguided. I myself hitch-hiked through the region in my 1964 college vacation, aged nineteen. (Thirty years previously, also aged nineteen, Patrick Leigh Fermor had traversed the same ground on horseback, as told in his memoir *Between the Woods and the Water*.) I met only kind hospitality from the people, but the wild, strange Transylvanian landscape—the *Trilogy* has some fine lyrical descriptions—left a strong impression on my mind.

At the risk of triggering a flood of angry letters from Hungarian patriots, I should say that the Treaty of Trianon made some demographic sense. The 1900 census showed Romanians as much the largest of the nationalities in Transylvania, at 56 percent. Hungarians, with the ethnically related Szeklers, were only 23 percent.

Third most numerous in that census, at 9.4 percent, were "Saxons"—descendants of German-speaking immigrants imported by Hungarian kings in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to help defend the kingdom's borders. The Saxons are mostly gone now. The communist Romanian dictator Nicolai Ceauşescu flagrantly sold them to the West German government at so much per head. Most of the rest left after the Cold War. (Although by no means did all do so: the President of Romania at the time of writing, Klaus Iohannis, is a Transylvanian Saxon.)

I am obliged to the Saxons for making my own passage through pre-Ceauşescu Transylvania easier. Knowing neither Hungarian nor Romanian, I carried phrasebooks for both, but in even the smallest towns there was always someone who could understand my high-school German. My main problem was cartographic. The maps I carried showed only Romanian place-names (Cluj, Sibiu), but every town also had a Hungarian name (Kolozsvár, Nagyszeben) and a German one (Klausenburg, Hermannstadt). Transylvania is not a tidy place.

Readers of the *Trilogy* may likewise be baffled by the Transylvanian place-names in the novel, many of them real. They are given in their Hungarian forms, but modern sources often show only the Romanian. Vasarhely, the first town mentioned in the book, is Târgu Moreş in my atlas. (I may as well note here too that the translators of the *Trilogy* have dropped all diacritical marks from Hungarian place and personal names: Vasarhely is more properly Vásárhely.)

The *Trilogy* is precisely one hundred chapters of straightforward third-person narrative, progressing in time from late 1904 to the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914. That Bánffy's literary fame rests on such a traditionalist foundation is slightly odd. He was by no means hostile to modernism, at any rate in music. As director of Budapest's Royal Opera, 1912–18, he promoted and designed sets for Béla Bartók's stage works.

The book's major character, through whose eyes we see most of the action, is Balint Abady, who holds the rank of Count in the Hungarian aristocracy of Transylvania. Possessed of a university education and two years' experience in the diplomatic corps, Balint is twenty-six when the story opens. He has returned to Transylvania "hoping that he could perhaps make himself useful in his own country." Inspired by that hope, he has taken a seat in Hungary's parliament.

Balint is plainly the author's self-impersonation. He certainly shares Miklós Bánffy's nineteenth-century liberal values. Halfway through the second book, Balint recalls an occasion when, as an adolescent, he had thoughtlessly expressed too much pride in his ancestry. His grandfather had reproved him:

> We can be proud that our forebears honestly carried out what was expected of them, that is all. Family conceit because of such things is not only ridiculous but also dangerous to the character. . . . This is the real meaning of *noblesse oblige*!

In pursuit of those values and that ideal, Balint devotes much effort to improving the lives of

the peasants in his domains, establishing co-operatives, and rooting out corrupt officials.

His youthful zeal does not always meet with success. As his secretary observes after one failure: "Count Balint doesn't know enough about human nature." The peasants of Transylvania's mountains and forests lived—perhaps still live—amid an ancient, dense, rooted tangle of ethnic, religious, and customary rivalries not easily penetrated by liberal idealism.

Our author, writing in his sixties, was far more worldly than the young Balint whom he draws so sympathetically. He had himself served as a member of parliament (1900–1906); then he witnessed the catastrophe of World War I and the loss of Transylvania; then he served as Hungary's Foreign Secretary (1921–22). He places Balint's struggles with Carpathian village tyrants in the much larger context of the slow collapse of nineteenth-century liberalism.

A different Hungarian author, John Lukacs, wrote in his book *Budapest 1900*—an excellent background reference, by the way, for the political passages in the *Trilogy*—that the "general crisis of nineteenth-century Liberalism has not yet found its general historian." Supposing Lukacs to have been correct (he was writing in 1988), we nonetheless have some fine detailed views of the elephant from particular angles. George Dangerfield's *Strange Death of Liberal England* comes to mind. Bánffy's *Trilogy*, although fiction, can be considered a contribution to this genre, with many useful insights.

There were two forces working against liberalism in the years before World War I: socialism and nationalism. Both were factors everywhere, though in different proportions, with socialism the stronger factor where industrialization had advanced furthest.

Britain, for example, dismissed its last Liberal government in 1922 and hailed its first Labour ministry two years later: socialism triumphant. The most vigorous *nationalism* in the British Isles was Ireland's, which won a victory of its own in the 1921 Treaty establishing the Free State. Seen from London, this at first looked like a win for liberalism—in fact for Liberalism: Home Rule had been a longstanding Liberal aspiration. History had other ideas, though, and an illiberal clerico-nationalism soon settled in among the Irish.

The 1867 Compromise that created Austria-Hungary was the real liberal thing: Home Rule for Hungarians. The parallels with Britain and Ireland were plain to Hungarians. If Hungary was the Ireland of the Dual Monarchy, however, Transylvania was an Ireland *within* that Ireland. Like the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, Hungarian aristocrats in Transylvania held their estates in a backward, agricultural land whose people were mostly of different religion and ethnicity.

It is therefore not very surprising to find a recurring theme of Anglophilia in the *Trilogy*. Bánffy has some sport with this. One minor character, Isti Kalmuthy, manages via a diplomatic fluke to get himself elected to an exclusive London gentlemen's club. Carried away with this success, he shows up at Transylvania's grandest social occasion in a pink English hunting jacket, with unforeseen and hilarious consequences.

(Readers who have seen that wonderful 1985 movie *The Shooting Party* will recall that the Hungarian aristocracy's affection for England was not invariably reciprocated.)

Bánffy was an eyewitness to the shambolic parliamentary politics of pre–World War I Hungary. He supplies some withering descriptions.

The underlying issues here were, first, aggressive Hungarian nationalism ("1848-ers") *versus* the more irenic upholders of the Compromise with Austria ("1867-ers"); and second, Austria-Hungary's national-minorities problem. That second issue contained two sub-problems, that of the Slavs and that of the Transylvanian non-Slav ethnicities.

The parliament as constituted was not strongly motivated to effect solutions. The franchise was limited to just six percent of the population (in Transylvania, three percent), with no secret ballot, and Vienna of course could veto anything that displeased the Emperor-King.

The can't-we-all-get-along 1867-ers were not helped by the fact that Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the aging Franz Josef until the unfortunate events of June 1914 in Sarajevo, was perceived to be pro-Slav and anti-

Hungarian. (His wife was Czech.) He seems to have wanted to replace the Dual Monarchy with an Austro-Slavic-Hungarian triple version. One of his men, Count Slawata, chases Balint through the *Trilogy* in an effort to recruit our hero to the Heir's cause.

The overall impression Bánffy gives of political frivolity and futility is supported by historians. Paul Lendvai writes:

> The practice of politics in old Hungary was very much like a comic opera with a handful of aristocrats as actors, who changed their political positions on a whim, or as their mutual personal situations determined.

The *Trilogy* is much more than a merely political novel. The proper business of a novelist is to show us the many varieties of human character responding to circumstances. Bánffy does not disappoint.

Balint, for example, is afflicted with romantic love. The object of his desire, Adrienne Miloth, is a rather stiff, well-brought-up young lady who "prefers a waltz to a csardas" (the vigorous folk dance of Hungary). Unfortunately she is married to a different Transylvanian aristocrat. Even more unfortunately, Adrienne's husband has conducted the intimate side of their marriage with brutish disregard for her feelings, leaving Adrienne horrified and disgusted by her own sexuality, unable at first to respond to Balint's advances.

The efforts of Balint and Adrienne to overcome these difficulties are described with a keen psychological insight that never descends into salacity. Bánffy is one of those authors—less common now than eighty years ago, it seems to me—who gives his reader the reassuring impression of being in the hands of a *grown-up*, a person unillusioned yet compassionate towards human weakness.

Bánffy brings these qualities to bear with fine judgment in dealing with his other major character, Laszlo Gyeroffy. A childhood friend and second cousin of Balint's, Laszlo is more sensual and self-absorbed, less the public man. He too is in love. The trajectory of his love is pinned at each end, eight-and-a-half years apart—seventy-two chapters in the *Trilogy*—with fine Proustian precision, by a small blue tote ticket from a race meeting.

The fortunes of Balint, Adrienne, and Laszlo are never far from our attention. They are varied, though, with sketches of many memorable minor characters: a sinister butler, a Machiavellian estate manager, a bird-brained young flirt, a sophisticated woman of pleasure, and so on. I especially liked Balint's stolid, inarticulate cousin Gazsi Kadacsay, whom everyone assumes to have no interest in anything but horses. It turns out at last that Gazsi has been reading Schopenhauer on the sly, with inevitably dire results.

The *Trilogy* is not without faults. There are some purple passages that would not be out of place in a supermarket-bookstand bodice-ripper.

> They looked into each other's eyes for a long time, seriously, not very close, almost at arm's length apart. He did not have to say more, for Adrienne knew at once what he had meant.

I believe one should be tolerant of this kind of thing in translated fiction. A different Hungarian author, Arthur Koestler, wrote ruefully in later life of having been pleased with himself for including, in his first English-language novel, a reference to the "indifferent stars." The phrase was strikingly original in Hungarian, he wrote; he had not realized that to English ears it sounds rather threadbare.

With these slight qualifications, I recommend *The Transylvanian Trilogy* to any reader who enjoys human drama played out on a broad social-historical canvas. Miklós Bánffy died in 1950, penniless and in exile from his Transylvanian homeland, his beloved family estates pillaged and smashed by the Red Army. His world is irrevocably gone, but his thoughts, hopes, passions, and disappointments live on yet in this fine literary masterpiece.

# The house is on fire!

## *by Gary Saul Morson*

Ninety-nine years ago, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated, and, after a few months of weak parliamentary rule, the Bolsheviks seized power. We call that seizure the Russian (or October) Revolution, but it might better be designated the Bolshevik coup d'état. A party of 10,000 people gained control of an empire occupying one-sixth of the earth's land area.

From the start, they made up for their small numbers with outsized violence. If at first their executions of liberals, socialists, workers who showed independence, and peasants from whom grain was seized at gunpoint seemed like a short-term necessity, it soon became evident that the violence would never stop. In fact, it was to grow, with Stalin proclaiming "the intensification of the class struggle" when Bolshevik control had long been total.

Eventually some eighteen countries were to fall under Communist rule. In 1999, *Time* magazine proclaimed Einstein the "man of the century"—the person who "for better or worse most influenced the last 100 years"—but Einstein did not remotely affect so many lives as Lenin. Bolsheviks were never very good at material inventions, but they excelled at political technology, inventing an entirely new system we call totalitarian. As they say today, it went viral. There is still no vaccine.

Of course, lots of conquering groups have annihilated or enslaved other groups—just think of the Trojan war or Tamerlane's mountains of skulls—but no form of government had ever been so brutal to those it regarded as its own people. Soviet Russia was far crueler than its tsarist predecessor, which had long been proverbial as "the gendarme of Europe." Between 1825 and 1905, the tsars executed 191 people for political reasons—not for mere "suspicion" as under the Soviets but for actual assassinations, including that of Tsar Alexander II. In *The Gulag Archipelago*, Alexander Solzhenitsyn remarked that between 1905 and 1908 the regime executed as many as 2,200 people—forty-five a month!—"calling forth tears from Tolstoy and indignation from Korolenko and many, many others." By comparison, conservative estimates of executions under Lenin and Stalin—say, twenty million from 1917 to 1953—yield an average of over ten thousand per week. That's a tsarist century every few days.

Western public opinion has never come to terms with the crimes of Communism. Every school child knows about the Holocaust, Apartheid, and American slavery, as they should. But Pol Pot's murder of a quarter of Cambodia's population has not dimmed academic enthusiasm for the Marxism his henchmen studied in Paris. Neither the Chinese Cultural Revolution nor the Great Purges seem to have cast a shadow on the leftists who apologized for them. Quite the contrary, university classes typically blame the Cold War on American "paranoia" about communism and still picture Bolsheviks as idealists in too great a hurry. Being leftwing means never having to say you're sorry.

In 1997 Stéphane Courtois published (in French) *The Black Book of Communism*, an an-

thology in which experts document, country by country, how many people Marxist–Leninists killed. With suitable academic equanimity, contributors ask whether the deliberate starvation of millions of Ukrainians, or the deportation of all Chechens to central Asia that took the lives of one person in three, qualifies as "genocide." The only sign of real emotional urgency occurs in Courtois's introduction, which breaks intellectual taboos by drawing parallels with Nazism, questioning Socialists' frequent alliances with Communists, and, above all, wondering why intellectuals continue to apologize for Communist murders.

Some figures speak for themselves. The volume's scholars estimate twenty million deaths in the USSR, sixty-five million in China, two million each in Cambodia and North Korea, 1.7 million in Mengistu's Ethiopia and other African countries, and so on, to a total of about one hundred million. (Eerily, the chief revolutionary in Dostoevsky's novel *The Possessed* predicts that the cost of perfect equality will be "a hundred million heads.") So far as I can tell, these estimates are understatements. For example, the most authoritative study of Stalin's war against the peasantry in the early 1930s, Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow*, arrives at a figure twice the one in this volume. The difference between the two estimates—the margin of error—equals the number of Jews killed by the Nazis.

By contrast, Nazi deaths are estimated at twenty-five million. Of course numbers aren't everything, but one might imagine that it would be reasonable to compare the two systems. In intellectual circles, however, such comparisons taint not Communists, but the person who makes them.

Our knowledge of Bolshevik horrors expanded dramatically when, after the fall of the Soviet Union, its archives were opened. Jonathan Brent and Yale University Press brought out volume after volume of chilling documents, but public opinion did not noticeably change. How many readers of *The New York Times* know about its role in covering up the worst of Stalin's crimes and earning a Pulitzer Prize (still unreturned) for doing so?

I understand being so carried away by Communist ideals that one denies or justifies millions of deaths. What amazes me is that people and publications who have done so still feel entitled to criticize others from a position of moral superiority. Courtois offers several explanations for such moral failures, but ultimately gives up.

I first grasped what Stalinist life was like during a course I took with Wolfgang Leonhard, the child of German communists who was brought up in the USSR, defected to Yugoslavia, and wound up teaching Russian history at Yale. His autobiography, *Child of the Revolution*, tells a story, set during the Great Purges, about some families in a communal apartment who are awakened at 4 A.M. (the usual time for arrests) by a peremptory banging at the door. Finally one old man, with less life left to lose, answers, disappears into the corridor, and at last returns. "Comrades, relax!" he explains. "The house is on fire!"

Jörg Baberowski's new book, *Scorched Earth: Stalin's Reign of Terror*, also provides a lot of good material for appreciating Russia under the Great Helmsman, Father of Nations, and Coryphaeus of Science.[1] Delivering a toast on the twentieth anniversary of the Bolshevik seizure of power, Stalin declared: "We will destroy each and every enemy, even if he was an old Bolshevik; we will destroy all his kin, his family. We will mercilessly destroy anyone who, by his deeds or his thoughts—yes, his thoughts!—threatens the unity of the socialist state. To the complete destruction of all enemies, themselves and their kin!" Even when the tsars imprisoned or executed revolutionaries, they never thought of arresting their spouses, children, grandparents, and cousins as well. And note Stalin's insistence that not just wrong actions but improper thoughts merit "destruction." Georgy Arbatov, adviser to five general secretaries of the Soviet Communist Party, observed that "the main code of behavior" was "to be afraid of your own thoughts."

1 *Scorched Earth: Stalin's Reign of Terror*, by Jörg Baberowski; Yale University Press, 520 pages, $40.

The goal was to change both nature and human nature. The Marxist "leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom" meant that everything would be subject to human redesign. At the end of *Literature and Revolution*, Trotsky asserted that "the present distribution of mountains and rivers, of fields, of meadows, of steppes, of forests, and of seashores cannot be considered final." People "will command nature in its entirety, with its grouse and sturgeons." In discussions of Russia's unprecedented environmental degradation, people speak of "grouse and sturgeon" thinking.

The "new man" will also redesign himself. He will "master his own feelings," rendering them perfectly "transparent," and at last create "a higher biologic type . . . a superman." Trotsky's book concludes with a promise that "the average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise."

Is it any wonder that the lives of untransformed people counted as nothing? Apologists for the USSR have often claimed that, however regrettable the cost, the Bolsheviks had no choice if they were going to industrialize rapidly and defeat the Nazis. This excuse is nonsense. To begin with, the bloodiest event of all, the artificially induced famine during the war against the peasants, took place before Hitler came to power, and mass killings of whole groups dated to the regime's first months. It is also hard to see how industrialization was helped by the massive arrest of the "bourgeois specialists," which included just about everyone who understood how specific industries worked. And how was the war effort to be aided by targeting the army officer corps during the great purges of 1936–38? As Baberowski notes, "almost nothing remained" after more than ten thousand Red Army officers were arrested. In April 1938 the head of the "special department" of the Fifth Mechanized Corps dutifully reported that "100 percent of the command personnel in the corps and all its brigades" had been arrested. This was the one sort of production quota that was actually met. Is it any wonder that the Soviet army collapsed when the Germans invaded?

Apologists also suggest that there really were a lot of enemies of socialism. But people were arrested not just for conspiring against (or thinking negatively about) the regime. Quotas were issued for each region—Baberowski concludes that more than a million people were killed by quota—and local officials often filled them either arbitrarily or with the homeless, the blind, and amputees. In March 1938 the NKVD (the secret police) executed 1,160 people in Moscow with physical disabilities. Kliment Voroshilov, who occupied many top positions, argued for arresting abandoned children. "Why don't we have these rascals shot?" he asked. "Should we wait for them to become grown-up criminals?" What's more, two dozen whole ethnic groups were forcibly deported to Central Asia. After Stalin ordered the arrest of all Poles, the Polish section of the Comintern and the Polish Communist party had to be disbanded since they had no members.

Death was not the worst of it. One of Baberowski's leitmotifs is the suicide of officials expecting arrest in order to escape interrogation, which involved torture. When the original Politburo members Zinoviev and Kamenev did not immediately confess to treason, Stalin wrote to his secret police chief: "You are performing poorly, Genrikh Grigorievich. One must torture them so that they finally tell the truth and reveal all their ties." Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin all referred to any squeamishness about such methods as (to use Trotsky's phrase) "the most pathetic and miserable liberal prejudice." Writing to the Kirghiz Party leader, Stalin threatened "extreme measures" if he did not immediately abandon "liberalism towards enemies of the people."

Leonhard reports that some people would confess to palpably absurd crimes in the hope that Stalin would someday order a review of each case and recognize obvious innocence. One person confessed to trying to sink the Soviet navy by throwing rocks into Leningrad harbor, while a chemist admitted revealing an important formula to the Germans, H2SO4, or sulfuric acid.

What did it feel like to someone who was not a sadist to be a mass executioner? Vodka

was provided, but even that could not banish the thought that today's executioners were tomorrow's victims, just as the NKVD chief Yagoda was executed by his successor Yezhov, who in turn met the same fate. Anyone made head of an NKVD branch during the great purges was in mortal danger. Baberowski quotes from the memoir of one proud NKVD officer:

> From my first salary I bought myself a new suit. . . . Our work was no picnic! Whenever someone wasn't dead immediately, he fell over and squealed like a pig. . . . You weren't allowed to eat anything beforehand. . . . You shoot with the right hand, you see . . . I pushed through my demand for a massage of the right arm and the right index finger twice a week with my superiors. We were given certificates. . . . I have a whole cabinet of these certificates, printed on the best paper. . . . Everyone had only one thought: . . . we too. . . . I always had a packed plywood suitcase under my bed . . . and pistol under my pillow. To put a bullet in my head. . . . They will call Stalin a great man someday. The hatchet outlives its master.

For understandable reasons, in Holocaust and Gulag literature, we hear the voices of victims but not of the countless perpetrators. Solzhenitsyn observes that while in stories for children it is understandable to portray evildoers as people who tell themselves "I cannot live unless I do evil!," in real life "that's not the way it is! To do evil a human being must first of all believe that what he's doing is good, or else that it's a well-considered act in conformity with natural law." One of the achievements of Svetlana Alexievich, the most recent literary Nobel laureate, is to capture the voices of perpetrators and let us appreciate the humanness of those who commit inhuman acts. When in her books killers sound like ordinary people, even like ourselves, it is unspeakably sad.

If only Baberowski could think as well as he narrates! In terms of argument, this book is hopeless: usually shallow, sometimes incoherent, often self-contradictory. In his introduction, Baberowksi explains that when Yale University Press asked for a translation of his German study of Stalin, he found himself changing his mind and altering the text so much it was really a new book. Is this why so many passages apparently contradict each other?

Baberowksi contends that to understand the horrors of Stalinism all one needs to understand is Stalin himself. "Stalin gave Stalinism more than his name. Without him it would never have existed." And yet Baberowski gives us ample indication that the brutality dated from the Revolution itself. Long before Stalin came to power, Lenin explicitly instructed local Bolsheviks to "introduce mass terror" to forestall opposition. When the Turks approached Baku, Baberowski notes, Lenin ordered the city burned to the ground and "the fate of the civilian population was not considered." Zinoviev remarked that it was necessary to kill ten million of Russia's hundred million people. In short, Baberowski concludes, "The civil war [of 1918–20] was a dress rehearsal for Stalinism" and "without the violent experience of the civil war there would have been no Stalinism." By the same token, he tells us that Stalin's collectivization of agriculture, which took the lives of millions, "was the last act in a drama that had begun in 1917." If so, the conditions of Stalinism were already there for any unscrupulous leader to exploit.

At one point Baberowski insists that Stalin approved of each and every killing: "he expected perpetrators to seek his permission before killing anyone whose death he had not explicitly ordered." At another he tells us that officials often "anticipated his every wish and committed murders with preemptive obedience." In the Caucasus, such "preemptive violence" entailed wiping out whole villages and exterminating entire clans. On the one hand, Baberowski tells us that Stalin was insane, a psychopath, and on the other that the killing "was by no means the product of a deranged mind. It was all very much calculated" by Stalin.

Baberowski seems to think that sadism testifies to an "emotional indifference" to the feelings of others and an inability to empathize, but the very opposite may be the case. No one takes pleasure in torturing a stone: the whole point is to see another person, someone like ourselves, writhe in agony. The narrator of

Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead*, a novel based on his experience in a prison camp, describes the "thrill" experienced by sadistic guards as a sensation of "unlimited mastery of the body, blood, and soul of a fellow man made of the same clay as himself, a brother in the law of Christ." Conducting purges in the Caucasus, Stalin's henchman Babirov liked to have people tortured in his presence, and Stalin himself told Kamenev that his "greatest pleasure" was "to choose one's victim, make one's plans, exact proper revenge, and then go to bed." That doesn't sound like "indifference" to me.

If there is a core argument to this book, it is that none of this can be blamed on Marxism-Leninism. Believe it or not, such assertions are not a strained attempt to apologize for Marxism. Baberowski believes that no ideas ever motivate violence. "To men of violence . . . ideas are only a means of legitimizing their lust for murder to those for whom violence is not a natural course of action. Neither Stalin nor Yezhov were guided by Marxism or its promises when they had people arrested, tortured, and killed. . . . It had absolutely nothing to do with the writings of European Marxism." For Baberowski, ideas are not just a relatively minor factor, they have "absolutely nothing" to do with what happens. "Reasons and legitimizations play absolutely no role," he insists elsewhere; they are just means of coping with meaningless violence. Since these statements pertain to all violence anywhere, they cannot be derived from the evidence, but represent an advance philosophical commitment.

Then what was the cause of all these killings? Baberowski offers several incompatible explanations, among which are Stalin's upbringing in a culture steeped in "male violence" and a celebration of "robber bands," along with an ethic of loyalty and honor resembling that of the Mafia. "Anyone who was disloyal forfeited his honor because disloyalty was a betrayal of the most important principle of all—the unwavering friendship between men. . . . Brotherhood and the covenant of loyalty became the ideals of the Stalinist order." And yet Baberowski also repeatedly insists that if there was one thing that could not be preserved under Stalinism it was loyalty. Even among Politburo members, everyone was ready to denounce his best friend. In fact, such mistrust was itself regarded as a positive good. Bukharin, Baberowski tells us, insisted that all good communists needed to denounce their neighbors. "We must now all become agents of the Cheka [the first name for the secret police]," he wrote. Across the Soviet Union, school children were taught to imitate Pavel Morozov, a boy who denounced his own parents.

Set aside the fact that the "Mafia code of honor" theory contradicts the one tracing the violence to Stalin's insanity. Male violence and criminal gangs have existed for all of human history, but what happened under Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot was entirely different from what came before. Mafiosi do not engage in random mass murder of the people among whom they live: it's bad for business. Robber bands don't set up forced labor camps or systematically starve masses of people. Surely something else had to be involved!

Solzhenitsyn takes the exact opposite position. Ideology makes all the difference. Why was it, he asks, that Macbeth and other Shakespearean villains killed only a few people, while Lenin and Stalin murdered millions? The answer is that Shakespeare's villains "had no ideology":

> Ideology—that is what gives . . . the evildoer the necessary steadfastness and determination. That is the social theory which helps to make his acts seem good instead of bad in his own and others' eyes, so that he won't hear reproaches and curses and will receive praises and honors.

If so, then to understand Communist atrocities we need to look at its ideology.

To begin with, Soviet Marxism rejected the very concept of human rights. Leninist ideology instructed one to think of classes, not humanity. What race was to Nazis, class was to Bolsheviks, and class origin, like race, was not something one chose. People born into bourgeois, noble, or kulak families had no more right to life than Jews or Gypsies did to Nazis.

Contrary to what liberals might presume, Soviet ethics taught one to overcome, not foster,

natural sympathy for the suffering of others, which might make one hesitate to kill a class enemy. In November 1918, Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, published an article in the journal *Red Terror* in which he instructed:

> We are not waging war against individual persons. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class. During the investigation, do not look for evidence that the accused acted in deed or word against Soviet power. The first questions that you ought to put are: To what class does he belong? What is his origin? What is his education or profession? And it is these questions that ought to determine the fate of the accused.

It was no big step to extend the notion of enemy classes to enemy peoples, like the Cossacks, Chechens, or Crimean Tatars.

No less important was the Leninist understanding of morality. Since the Party was the agent of History itself, it could not be mistaken, and so anything the party did was morally right *by definition*. "Morality is entirely subordinated to the class struggle of the proletariat," Lenin declared. At the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924, Trotsky explained:

> Comrades, none of us wishes or is able to be right against his Party. The Party in the last analysis is always right, because the Party is the sole historical instrument given the proletariat for the solution of its basic problems. . . . I know that one cannot be right against the party. It is only possible to be right with the Party and through the Party for history has not created other ways for the realization of what is right.

By the same logic, truth is what the Party says it is. Georgy Pyatakov, who was twice expelled from the Party and eventually shot, wrote that a true Bolshevik is "ready to believe [not just assert] that black was white and white was black, if the Party required it." In *1984*, O'Brien proclaims this very doctrine—two plus two is really five if the Party says it is—which he calls "collective solipsism."

Is it any wonder that those who reject human rights, treat people in terms of friendly or enemy groups, place no moral limit on action, and are certain that whatever they do is right should wind up committing colossal evil?

The idea that truth and morality have no objective basis but are simply what power says they are, is, of course, also a key tenet of many current postmodernists. Society more and more teaches us to regard each other in terms of good and evil groups. No one seems more filled with hate than those who discover it in others. Could the answer to Courtois's question be simpler than he suspects? Maybe the reason intellectuals often speak more harshly of Reagan than of Stalin is that a substantial portion of them actually prefer Stalinism?

Today one hears that neuroscientists will soon be able to read thoughts from the outside. What would Stalin have done with such technology? Perhaps my training as a Russian specialist distorts my judgment, but as I contemplate the ideas spreading from the academy through society, I fear, a century after the Russian Revolution, a tyranny greater than Stalin's. Comrades, the house is on fire.

# Political vacancies
## *by Conrad Black*

The Western world is inexplicably enduring a prolonged crisis of mediocre leadership, which descended on it like a pulmonary illness shortly after the end of the Cold War: the greatest and least violent strategic victory in the history of the nation-state. Francis Fukuyama famously suggested that there was no higher form of historical development than the Western social democratic state. China, though undemocratic, was less oppressive than in the time of Mao, or even the Tiananmen Square suppression of 1989, and was steadily yielding to the appeal of capitalism. Japan was flourishing so spectacularly that it was widely thought (including by itself) to be on the verge of challenging the United States as the world's greatest economic power. The Soviet Union had disintegrated, but there was much hope for the full assumption of the status of a democratic country by Russia, as well as by many of its former republics. Mikhail Gorbachev, though without a jurisdiction, and his successor, the first president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, were democrats; in the Kremlin and in the former palaces of the Romanovs, only despotism (or totalitarianism) had ruled before.

Germany, reunited at last under a secure democratic political system, an honored associate in a cocoon of friendly economic and alliance affiliates, had been fulfilling the former (1982–1998) federal chancellor Helmut Kohl's call for "a European Germany and not a German Europe." Germany had never before been governed democratically while unoccupied and unfettered by war-guilt. From the founding of the German Empire by Bismarck in 1871, Germany was the strongest power in Europe. Prior to that, as nation-states arose from the Middle Ages, the Holy Roman emperors in Vienna and the leaders of France, most conspicuously Cardinal Richelieu (prime minister 1624–1642) and Napoleon, and the Austrian chancellor in the first half of the nineteenth-century, Klemens von Metternich, the "coachman of Europe," did the necessary to assure that the German states were not united.

Bismarck, like Richelieu, had the insight to know how far he could extend the borders and influence of his country without uniting all of Europe against him, as Napoleon eventually did. Then the Leader of the Opposition, Benjamin Disraeli told the British Parliament on February 2, 1871, as the Prussian victory over France in the Franco–Prussian War was confirmed, that "There is not a diplomatic solution that has not been swept away. You have a new world, new influences at work, new and unknown dangers and objects with which to cope . . . the balance of power has been utterly destroyed." So it had; Germany had become, at last, the greatest power in Europe.

With the cavalier dismissal of Bismarck in 1890, after twenty-eight years as head of the government in Berlin (first of Prussia and then of all Germany), by the thirty-one-year-old German Emperor Wilhelm II, the formation of German policy passed from capable to dangerously incapable hands. The hecatomb of World War I ensued, from which Germany emerged minus Alsace, Lorraine, the Polish provinces, and its overseas empire: a faltering republic

that, without having the time to restore its standing in Europe, eventually floundered into the arms of Hitler. The consequences are too infamous to require retelling. But it was because of the United States, the only one of the post–World War II Big Four that was not afraid of a united Germany, that Germany was resurrected.

When France tried to veto German entry into NATO because the United States refused to use nuclear weapons against the North Vietnamese (though President Eisenhower did give the French a good deal of sound advice, including not to be trapped in Dien Bien Phu), Eisenhower forced West Germany's application through and agreed on arrangements with the distinguished German federal chancellor Konrad Adenauer. (Adenauer consented to limiting the West German army to no more than twelve divisions.)

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the overthrow of the satellite regimes in Eastern Europe, which were all set up and maintained in contravention of Stalin's undertakings at the Tehran (1943) and Yalta (1945) Conferences, and the implosion of the Soviet Union and reversion of Russia's European borders to the extent of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy in the seventeenth century, Germany emerged again as the greatest power in Europe. It did so without having achieved that role, as Bismarck had done, by, in his own words, "blood and iron," much less as Hitler had done, by aggressive war, barbarous occupation, and terror.

All was in readiness for Germany to play the role Bismarck created for it, but it has been hobbled by the fractious divisions of its politics and by the continuing ambivalence of German ambitions. It was a truism before World War II that Germany did not know if it was an Eastern or Western European people, and that it was too late unified and could not assure its own security without destabilizing the security of other countries. Approximately ten million ethnic Germans fled westward ahead of the Red Army in 1944 and 1945, and over 80 percent of Germans were gathered together in the Western-occupied zones, thus establishing that Germany was a Western country. The Western zones were relaunched as the Federal Republic, which has behaved with exemplary responsibility for two-thirds of a century.

Probably the greatest act of statesmanship in the post-war era was Adenauer's rejection of Stalin's offer of reunification in exchange for neutrality. Adenauer carried German opinion in saying that Germany had always sought allies and was now allied with the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, and would remain and be reunified with its allies. Of course this occurred. Germany is now of the West, but it has not entirely surmounted the moral crisis provoked by the hideous enormities of the Third Reich. More than two whole generations have gone by since that time, immense reparations have been paid, and the current chancellor, Angela Merkel, influenced still by that legacy, has weakened her position by rather indiscriminately admitting over a million refugees from the Middle East into Germany. The moral condition of inferiority still afflicts Germany.

The Social Democrats were always divided between neutralists and pro-western factions, initially led by Kurt Schumacher and Ernst Reuter, then by Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, and now the divisions are sharper than ever. Because the reliably conservative Free Democrats, the party of Walter Scheel, Otto Lambsdorff, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, have fallen below the 5 percent threshold necessary to elect members to the Bundestag, Merkel's (and Adenauer's and Kohl's) Christian Democrats have had to form a grand coalition with the divided and almost dysfunctional Social Democrats. Their leader, Frank-Walter Steinmeyer, though sensibly pro-West in his views, is so stretched by factionalism that he recently accused NATO of provoking Russia by holding routine military exercises, as alliances do. The other opposition parties in the Bundestag, the Greens and the Linke (Left), and, outside the Bundestag, the Pirates, are, respectively, militant ecologists, unreconstructed Communists, and cyber-crazed anarchists. The latest polls show the Free Democrats and the German Alternative Party (which resembles nothing so much as the U.K. Independence Party), as

well as the Pirates, all clearing the threshold of 5 percent to enter the Bundestag, which, if it occurred, would necessitate a three-party coalition to govern. It is a precarious situation when only one political party in a great nation like Germany is fit to govern, and must co-exist and to some extent receive support from such a tempestuous group of largely unfeasible legislative blocs. The German political condition has become unstable.

In the circumstances, Merkel, who has been a deft and purposeful leader for much of her eleven-year time as chancellor (a term exceeded only by Kohl and Adenauer among chancellors of the Federal Republic), and who specializes in doing the unexpected, will probably return if she can last to the elections next year, though at present she enjoys the support of only about a third of the voters and is under threat from her Bavarian party affiliates. But if she can hold the Bavarians, she would need the Free Democrats and the Alternative Party or, once more, the wobbly Social Democrats in order to govern. In these conditions, not even Bismarck, Adenauer, or Kohl would be strong leaders, and it is not easy seeing German leadership firming up any time soon. Merkel has been weak on Ukraine and inconstant toward Russia, has joined in Obama's sell-out to a nuclear Iran, and has reserved her strength to squander it in admission of the seething mass of not easily assimilable migrants. She has taken an incomprehensibly long time to realize the danger of this issue.

It is nearly thirty years since the former chancellor Helmut Schmidt said that Germany's conduct of foreign relations can no longer be influenced by the evils wrought under the Third Reich. Yet it is likely going to require another change in government and the accession of a leader from a generation later than Merkel (born in 1954) to ease Germany into her rightful place and to fill the vacuum left open by the implosion of the Russian presence and corresponding withdrawal of the American influence in Europe. Several of Merkel's colleagues, such as the defense minister Ursula von der Leyen, could probably complete the task of interring far-off German war guilt.

France is in a more parlous condition. Charles de Gaulle, having predicted the complete failure of the Fourth Republic, waited with mounting impatience for it to flounder to an end, as it did in 1958, and then resolved the 170-year schism of French political life between the monarchists and republicans, by founding a monarchy, though an elected one, and calling it a republic. (The division between the two factions was such that a monarchy was only avoided after the Franco–Prussian War and the bloody Paris Commune of 1871, when the Bourbon claimant to the throne refused the proposed compromise of having the monarchist fleur-de-lys on one side of the French flag and the blue-white-red bars of the republicans on the other.) The descent of the Fifth Republic presidency from de Gaulle to Georges Pompidou, to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to François Mitterand, Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy, and, for the last four years, to François Hollande, has been a fairly steady decline of the credibility of the occupant of the Élysée Palace. De Gaulle's seven-year renewable term has been cut to five years, and Hollande is the first of this sequence of leaders who never had a serious job before becoming chief of state and head of government.

Hollande had been a long-serving officer of his Socialist Party—apart from the Gaullists or quasi-Gaullists, the only party that has elected a president in the Fifth Republic (just three of ten elections)—and was expected to be nominated as the Socialist candidate in 2007. But he was side-swiped by his glamorous companion and mother of his four children, Ségolène Royal, who won a respectable number of gallant votes, but went down in defeat at the hands of Nicolas Sarkozy, who started out as more effective than Jacques Chirac, his predecessor, but became known as the "waterbug" because of his frenetic involvement in almost everything that came within sight. He fumbled so badly that Hollande defeated him on a far-left platform that has generated outright economic decline in France, and has almost buried the Socialist Party in France. (Though separated, Mlle Royal is now in her children's father's government. Her successor as First Companion abruptly decamped

when it came to light that Hollande's official driver was regularly conducting his excellency on a motor scooter to the home of his new paramour. The president kept his trysts quiet for a while by wearing a visored motorcycle helmet.) Hollande is now running even, at about 13 percent, with the perennial centrist candidate François Bayrou, a French Cincinnatus who leaves his farm in the foothills of the Pyrenees every election year to seek the presidency, and the Communist-anarchist faddist Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The leading former candidates are Marine Le Pen, of the conservative and isolationist National Front, at 29 percent and Sarkozy at 23 percent. The alternate Gaullists and former premiers Alain Juppé and François Fillon run well ahead of Sarkozy, and all three Gaullists run ahead of Le Pen in the second ballot run-off. (De Gaulle was the only president to be elected with an absolute majority on the first ballot.)

Hollande has acted decisively and with the instinct of a leader of a great power to quell civil wars provoked by Islamist extremists in the Ivory Coast and Mali, and was distinguished, eloquent, and universally admired in his responses to terrorist outrages in France last year. The French are legendarily intelligent and cultured but perversely impractical. They periodically become bored with their extremely rich and comfortable country, a land of gourmets and connoisseurs, and rise up on spurious pretexts and hurl paving stones at the police. And though the French are as avaricious as any people on earth, they veer into deeply redistributive socialism, though they are underachievers at actually paying assessed tax. To stir the French out of their cynicism, it is usually necessary to frighten them with the specter of civil disorder that might actually cost them something, or inspire them with a national goal of imaginative grandeur.

De Gaulle took over a France mired in the endless war in Algeria that was also suffering from revolving-door governments and a very soft currency. He gave them a strong government, a new currency, and nuclear weapons; cut loose Algeria; and, with the United States mired in Indochina and the balance of power apparently narrowly calibrated between the USSR and the United States, he made France the third or fourth (depending on current conditions in China) most politically influential country in the world. It has gradually slipped since then, but it remains an admired and naturally important European country. There is room for hope that public opinion will firm up around a serious candidate for the presidency next year. A feline people, elegant, intelligent, cynical, and self-absorbed, the French, in de Gaulle's phrase, "vacillate constantly between greatness and decline, but are revived, century after century, by the genius of renewal." But now la Belle France is saddled with as improbable a leader as she has had since Charles the Bald, Charles the Fat, and Charles the Simple.

It will be no small task selling the French an incentive-based economic system, which will have to peel away, as the Germans did under the Social Democrat Gerhard Schroeder fifteen years ago, some of the Danegeld post-war Europe has paid, for notorious historical reasons, to organized labor and small farmers. Germany has never failed to act on the horror of inflation incurred in the early Twenties under the Weimar Republic. France has never taken appeals to the national interest seriously, unless they were convinced that the enjoyment of their country was both endangered, as it was in the events of World War I (and as they convinced themselves it was not in 1940), and was salvageable by a policy "of unity, energy, and sacrifice," as de Gaulle enunciated after the fact.

That spirit got the country heroically through the First World War but was scattered and corroded in the Second World War. (Napoleon was outraged that the French would not resort to guerrilla war, as the Spanish and Russians had against him.) The French are disturbed at their fraught economic state and the flight of many billions of Euros, but an eminently electable leader has not emerged: Hollande is a "fonctionnaire," one guilty, perhaps, of participating in what Julien Benda called "the treason of the clerisy" (meaning rather perversity and mediocrity than dishonor). Marine Le Pen, though now more palatable because she expelled her eighty-seven-year-old father as a

Holocaust-denier from the party he founded, is essentially an angry and somewhat xenophobic petite bourgeoise, a middle-class, female Donald Trump. The far left are diverting but absurd; Sarkozy is unserious. It is like the Third and Fourth Republics, where apart from a couple of exceptional people, it was all a cavalcade of personifications of narrow echelons of the populace, and no one spoke for France. As de Gaulle wrote of Albert Lebrun, last president of the Third Republic, who did nothing but follow the quavering advice of the senescent eighty-four-year-old Marshal Pétain and the greasy fascist quisling who governed in his name, Pierre Laval: "As chief of state two things were lacking; he was not a chief and there was no state . . . . By the light of the thunderbolt, the regime was revealed in its ghastly infirmity as having no relation and no proportion to the defense, honor, and independence of France." Of course, neither France nor Europe have even begun a descent to such horrifying depths, but there is a rather paralyzing ennui about European politics now.

France is not under great threat, and has a government whose levers are connected to relevant points of authority, but it has not yet developed the talent of most other advanced countries of electing and supporting a capable reform government when the country is not under dire threat. There does seem to be stirring a desire for a competent, moderate government, which will attract investment and proceed with the most humane possible form of accelerated integration of the nearly 10 percent of the French population who are Muslims. The only leader they have had in the Fifth Republic who was actually popular, apart from de Gaulle (who also served in the Third Republic and closed out the Fourth), was François Mitterand, the shady but cultured socialist, who was a good Western ally as president but who spent the war in occupied France, engaged simultaneously in collaboration and resistance, and who attempted to generate greater popularity in the Sixties by staging a fake assassination attempt on himself. He also regarded the establishment of Free France by de Gaulle as a publicity stunt and political trick (though a clever one), and ran for president twice with full communist support. Cultured cynicism goes a long way in France.

An attack on basic economic and sociological problems that is presented soberly and pursued efficiently might be possible, and the country might be ready for it. Fillon, the Anglophile former premier and minister of education, and a less tired candidate than Juppé (who is tainted with the mediocrity of the Chirac regime), could be a strong president. Where Germany has done little to fill the vacuum its diffidence in world affairs has created since its unification twenty-five years ago, France is almost always attempting to assert an influence at least as great as it objectively possesses. And while it still has the instincts of a great power (in responding to terrorist outrages, for example), its weakened economy and the fact that its leader is only endorsed by 13 percent of his countrymen are aberrant conditions likely to be substantially addressed next year.

The United Kingdom has not really had a strong and distinguished leader since Margaret Thatcher was pushed out by her own party in 1990, and the country has been particularly divided over the issue of participation in Europe. When Thatcher entered office in 1979, the country was on daily audit from the IMF, there were strict currency controls, the top personal income tax rate was 98 percent, and the corporate rate was 70 percent for most businesses. Industrial relations were a chaos of capricious work stoppages by union foremen and the country was a shambles of money-losing, publicly owned industries: coal, steel, airlines, etc. After eleven years, almost all the publicly owned businesses and other assets, including government-owned housing, had been privatized and tax rates had been lowered to a maximum personal rate of 40 percent; there had been sharp economic growth, and British stature in the world had risen to its highest point since the Churchillian glories. Mrs. Thatcher threw the Argentinian junta out of the Falklands (and restored democracy to Argentina), and was instrumental, with Ronald Reagan, in bringing the Cold War to a

victorious conclusion (as defined by President Reagan's criterion when asked his preferred outcome: "We win and they lose"). This being the case, it was the most natural development for Margaret Thatcher to be sent packing, as Churchill had been in 1945, Lloyd George in 1922, and Disraeli in 1880. The price of victory in Britain is short-term rejection, especially for Conservatives.

The succession to Thatcher has almost been like the desultory decline in leadership in France after de Gaulle. John Major straddled all issues between Thatcherite Euroscepticism and Euro-integrationism, and between the Thatcherite emphasis on lower taxes and privatization and the countervailing pressure for increased public-sector investment in social and public services. The desire for change elected Labour in 1997 for the first of three terms for Tony Blair. The previous Labour leaders, Neil Kinnock and John Smith, had removed the tether of Labour from the central labor union confederation (TUC), and Blair avoided raising personal and corporate income taxes, although he steadily increased all other forms of taxation and threw money at the teachers' and nurses' unions, while going cock-a-hoop for the most overwrought versions of impending global warming. He also professed entire enthusiasm for Euro-integration, but recognized the absence of a public consensus to enter the Euro-zone (changing the pound for the euro). Blair's was a faddish and extravagant, but not ideologically strident, government. And it was a monument to what Thatcher had achieved as well as to Blair's moderation compared to previous Labour prime ministers (Ramsay MacDonald, Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson, and James Callaghan) that it took three full terms before almost everything Thatcher and Major had built and retained in terms of labor peace, economic growth, and fiscal stability was squandered. (No previous Labour Party leader had won two consecutive full-term election victories.)

Blair's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, finished the stub of Blair's last term, (Thatcher and Blair were the only leaders to win three straight full terms since before the First Reform Act that broadened the electorate in 1832). David Cameron, the fourth Conservative leader since Major, won more MPs than his opponents, the Labour and Liberal Democratic Parties, in 2010, but all three party leaders lost. It was Cameron's election to win, but he was unconvincing, and the relic of the Liberal Party elected enough MPs to join the first British peace-time coalition government since the 1930s. Cameron governed competently, though he had a tendency to go overboard at every stage, making even the most banal utterance sound like the defining moment of his life. He and his chancellor, George Osborne, brought Britain back from the brink of the economic debacle where thirteen years of Blair and Brown had left it. In order to get the Euro-leopard off his back and put it at a distance, Cameron promised, early on, a referendum in 2016 about whether to stay in or leave the European Union. It was considered, until very late, unlikely the country would take such a gigantic step as departure. In the meantime, in last year's general election, the Scottish Nationalists, who had received 45 percent of the vote in Scotland to secede from the United Kingdom the year before, cut Labour off at the ankles in Scotland and cost them fifty MPs, in a Parliament of 630. The U.K. Independence Party (UKIP), ably led by the rabble-rousing RAF veteran and Member of the European Parliament Nigel Farage, took more from Labour than from the Conservatives; the Liberal Democratic coalition partners were eviscerated as neither fish nor fowl, and Cameron's Conservatives gained a little, but the distribution of changes across the electoral map gave him a majority and destroyed as a serious alternative the Labour Party, which was pitchforked into the hands of the eccentric Marxist, Jeremy Corbyn, who makes Bernie Sanders sound like Grover Cleveland.

All seemed safe for Cameron, but it wasn't. In one of the catastrophic career blunders of British political history, Cameron, with his usual hyperbole, promised "full-on treaty change" with Europe, and came back from Brussels with only Europe's promise to "consider" British applications for varied levels of benefit for migrants. Assuming a British vote to quit Europe altogether to be out of the

question, he called the vote. He lost. Cameron and Osborne responded manfully to their defeat and retired at once. The government was suddenly in a difficult position, as the majority of Conservative MPs, and of the House of Commons as a whole, wished to remain in Europe, but a majority of the country—both Conservatives and not—wished to depart the European Union or, at the very least, wind down political integration. In Britain, an incumbent party changing leaders always elevates the foreign secretary, home secretary, or chancellor. Since the chancellor left with the prime minister, and the foreign secretary was new and relatively unknown, Cameron organized the succession for the long-serving home secretary, Theresa May, who was a Remainer but didn't really campaign and was a comparatively conciliatory figure.

The co-leader of the successful Leave campaign, the former London mayor Boris Johnson, saw what had been sewn up in Ms. May's favor, and withdrew, and, after a week of obloquy, was rewarded with the Foreign Office. The new prime minister claims to be negotiating Britain's departure, "Brexit," but the European treaty allows two years of negotiation. Brussels is undemocratic—the European administration doesn't answer to constituent governments or the European Parliament—and will have to be overhauled to avoid the fate of implosion of the Soviet Union. Despite its purposeful statements now, it would be surprising if Brussels didn't make some serious concessions to Britain, as there will be a queue of countries behind Britain also seeking renegotiation or outright departure. Europeans favor a common market and a high level of cooperation and never a return to the internecine European hostility of many centuries. They do not want a government by unanswerable and compulsively meddlesome martinets from little countries playing the British, French, Germans, and Italians off against each other. If Theresa May has the skills of a juggler, she could maintain her office for a long time, and Britain's capacity for moral leadership in Europe will be enhanced, not reduced, by the Brexit vote. Where Cameron talked a blue streak of determination, he was constantly changing lanes and correcting course. May is no Thatcher, but she could have many of Margaret Thatcher's strengths, without the inflexibility that was long one of Thatcher's great assets, but became the cause for her unseemly departure. As the British say, it is all to play for.

This brings a review of Western leadership round to the United States. The Trump phenomenon, so unsuspected, disparaged, underestimated, and now a subject of almost hysterical abuse or denial, is illustrative of the chronic misgovernment that inexplicably has afflicted the United States for about twenty years. In that time, the federal government enacted the housing debt bubble with the issuance of trillions of dollars of worthless debt, in pursuit of the political free lunch of expanded family home ownership. It dealt with the resulting economic crisis, the worst since the Great Depression, by doubling the accumulated debt of 233 years of American independence, in nine years, to buy an economic recovery that in the latest figures is 1 percent economic growth annually. In foreign affairs, the United States has virtually mothballed the Western Alliance and for a decade stranded almost all of the country's ground forces' conventional military capability in Middle East wars that have vastly extended the influence of Iran, have created an immense humanitarian disaster, and have given the Tehran theocracy a green light for nuclear arms in ten years (if it chooses to wait that long). There have been other terrible fiascoes, such as the evaporating Red Line in Syria, and making Iran and Russia allies with the West against ISIS in the remnants of Iraq while opponents in the shambles of Syria, where they are propping up Assad. President Obama and Mrs. Clinton avoid the phrase "Islamist terror." Obama told the Joint Chiefs that climate change was the greatest threat to the country, and he described the San Bernardino massacre to the nation as "workplace violence." Secretary Clinton slept while her ambassador in Benghazi was murdered, apologized to the Muslims of the world, lied repeatedly over the issues created by her improper use of emails, and has not begun to explain the pecuniary relationship between her State Department and the Clinton Foundation.

These have been twenty very unsatisfactory years and the country is angry. It is astounding that Donald Trump came from no political background, never even an appointed public office, like Taft or Hoover, and has taken over one of the major parties—running between five points ahead and ten behind Clinton on a campaign that consists of pure moderation, leavened only by warm polemics about illegal immigration and trade deals that can be represented, whether fairly or not, as importing unemployment, as well as by self-inflicted blunderbuss wounds. In largely self-financing such a campaign, Donald Trump has taken over the Republicans with a wave of anger that is directed at both parties.

One member or other of the Bush and Clinton families held one of the three highest offices in the American government for eight straight terms: 1981–2013. And both families put up candidates for their parties' presidential nomination this year. There has never in the United States been anything remotely like this sustained two-family incumbency. All of the traditional Republicans—Mitt Romney, John McCain, the Bushes, everyone except Robert Dole, of their living former presidential candidates—was absent from the Republican convention and was not mentioned. The Democrats, by contrast, produced a series of speakers (Mr. and Mrs. Clinton, Mr. and Mrs. Obama, and Joe Biden) who have occupied the official residences of the president and vice president for a total of forty person-years. It was the upheaval of change against a self-praising continuity. Neither candidate has high approval ratings, and it often seems that each is only considered electable after contemplating the identity of the opponent.

Coincidentally, there has never in American history been such an interregnum of inept leadership. The three Republican presidents between Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt (Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover) served in times of Prohibition, isolationism, the closing of immigration from Europe, the stock market bubble, and the Great Depression. The twelve years of Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan gave America Dred Scott, Squatters' Sovereignty (meaning a civil war in each territory before it was admitted to the Union to determine whether it would be a slave or a free state), and, ultimately, the Civil War itself, producing 750,000 dead. But that war was a long time coming and can't be laid entirely on the four presidents who preceded Lincoln, and none of them, nor the presidents elected in the 1920s, were reelected. The United States, for the first time since Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, has had three consecutive two-term presidents, but the first group were, on balance, successful presidents, and George W. Bush and Barack Obama have not been.

The United States took a good time to have a leadership gap, after the Cold War and with no serious rivals, but the work force is shrinking, terrorism is spreading, automation is generating wealth reduction as well as productivity increases, alliances are fraying, and historians of the future will wonder what America's leadership groups thought they were doing passively admitting twelve million unskilled peasants into the country illegally. The public education system is defective, the health care system is very uneven, and the justice system is just the imprisonment of anyone a prosecutor takes against, with guilt or innocence being effectively beside the point (99.5 percent conviction rate, 97 percent of those without trial, such is the perversion of the plea bargain).

Donald Trump's acceptance speech highlighted increasing rates of violent crime and insecurity in the world, and mercifully spared listeners the customary vexatious invocations of God, American exceptionalism, the shining beacons, and the overheated bunk about climate change. But it was an angry statement of national resentment at misgovernment by both parties in all branches for many years. And it dwelt with regrettable predictability on reactionary variations of law and order, with little expressed concern for the rights of suspects or the negative aspects of having flooded the country with firearms.

The citizens' anger is justified, however, and while Trump's police-fetishism and protectionism have worrisome aspects and are at best un-

subtle, the volcanic eruption of this rebellion that is moderate in policy terms except for responses to illegal immigration and some aspects of trade is a positive statement that democracy lives and flourishes. Trump raised the Republican primary turnout by 60 percent compared with that of four years ago, and ran up stunning primary vote totals (taking almost as many votes as Clinton and Sanders together in Indiana, and bringing the Republicans up almost to the same totals as Democrats in Pennsylvania). The achievement of the Trump phenomenon has only slightly been approached by outsiders winning nominations when opposed by party elders: by Horace Greeley for the Democrats in 1872 and Wendell Willkie for the Republicans in 1940. On balance, it is a healthy phenomenon, and even if Mrs. Clinton wins, the Democrats have to know that the same old cynical roll of the pork barrel won't work anymore. She had as tortuous a time keeping the nomination from a completely unfeasible self-styled socialist (Sanders) as she did avoiding indictment for her misuse of official emails and untruthfulness about it.

It is the great political irony of current times that the United States is the chief author and engine of the triumph of modern democracy and of the free-market economy in much of the world, but that it is not now one of the world's better functioning democracies. I believe that this is chiefly due to the Watergate debacle, in which an outstanding but neurotic president was destroyed by his opponents with the almost unanimous complicity of the media, for no good reason. The quality of national candidates has declined since then, as the media have never ceased to congratulate themselves on the service they performed, including in jettisoning Indochina into the lap of the North Vietnamese and Pol Pot.

Though not many formulate it in this way, the rise of Trump and the Sanders challenge show that the heavy failings of the Bush–Clinton–Obama joint regency will not be accepted. America, one way or another, but through the ineluctable operation of its unregenerate, patronage-lubricated system, will ultimately reflect and legitimize the public's opinion, no matter how saturated the country is with the misinformation and clangorous superficialities of 95 percent of the media.

We have, in leadership terms, and to quote de Gaulle one last time, been "crossing the desert." (He was, after all, the West's greatest, and most aphoristically talented, political leader since Roosevelt and Churchill.) Perhaps it was inevitable that there would be a let-down after the satisfactory end of the Cold War, with all its tensions, compounded by the strains of reunification in Germany and the consequences of the Watergate upheaval in the United States. The German confidence vacuum will probably start to be filled and the more responsible of the Federal Republic's third parties, the Free Democrats and Alternatives, seem likely to prosper. In France, which never lacks self-confidence but has followed the descending mode of its leadership cycle for nearly fifty years, there are reasonable prospects of a positive turn. The British always muddle through, and the new leader is an unknown quantity and may be capable of much more.

The great American people are the most productive and indefatigably positive nation in history. They have made it clear that they will not stand for declinism, charlatanism, and the humbug in Washington that has so disserved the country these twenty years. When individuals are plunging into public life to make things better, and not just because they decided in elementary school that it would be nice to be president, a renascence will begin; if not this year, soon.

# Letters of a park man
## *by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers*

When you come upon an eight-hundred-page book the size of an unabridged dictionary weighing eight and one-half pounds—meaning that it cannot be read in bed or in an easy chair—you are not inclined to pick it up. But Linda Parshall's masterful English translation of the intriguingly titled *Briefe eines Verstorbenen* (*Letters of a Dead Man*)—an unsuccessful ploy to preserve the author's anonymity—is a page-turner.[1] Although it must be propped on a reading stand or placed on a table, you will find yourself immersed in an engaging and informative travelogue that paints a perceptive portrait of Regency England during the years 1826–1829, a period of unprecedented British prosperity.

The not-so-mysterious and then very much alive author, Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871), was a minor nobleman who is remembered in Germany primarily for a popular dessert known as a Pückler *Eis*, a confection layering chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry ice cream. But Pückler is far more than a gastronomically memorialized aristocrat, or even an observant sightseer and chronicler of British behavior and mores; along with Frederick Law Olmsted he ranks as one of the two most significant figures in nineteenth-century landscape-design history. And, just as Olmsted's social commentaries on Southern slavery in *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* are interlaced with descriptions of the scenery through which he traveled, so too does Pückler's *Letters from a Dead Man* paint the natural and manmade beauty of the English countryside.

As pioneers of Romanticism in the field of landscape design, Olmsted and Pückler each created parks that were more than garden itineraries featuring sentiment-inducing tropes. Their primary aim was to create scenery in which nature pure and simple—albeit carefully composed with alternating views of turf, woods, and water—spoke to aesthetic and moral sensibilities. To further the illusion of nature and design being one, their respective landscape creations—New York's Central Park and Muskau Park on border of Germany and Poland—were designed so as to incorporate distant prospects beyond their borders as well as close-up views. Movement through this sequence of near and unbounded visual experiences was the primary objective of each designer. Such a purpose demanded a circulation system of pathways and carriage drives that guided the visitor through what amounted to a symphony of scenic impressions.

Both Olmsted and Pückler were virtually forgotten by the end of the nineteenth century in spite of their exceptional genius as landscape designers. Olmsted's reputation began to revive with the publication of his voluminous papers beginning in the early 1970s and the founding of the Central Park Conservancy in 1980—an undertaking aimed at rescuing the park from dereliction through

1 *Letters of a Dead Man*, by Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, translation by Linda B. Parshall; Harvard University Press, 800 pages, $75.

an innovative form of citizen partnership with city government, which I helped create. Recognition of Pückler's importance and the recovery of Muskau Park from near ruin had to await the fall of the Iron Curtain following the Eastern European revolutions of 1989. As a reunited Germany began to restore the country's patrimony, the Prince-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau Foundation was established for the purpose of overseeing the rebuilding of Muskau Park and its Schloss, which by then was little more than an ivy-sheathed, smoke-blackened empty shell with gaping windows.

The challenge of reestablishing Muskau's idealized landscape and carefully orchestrated vistas was increased by the fact that the park's coherence had been compromised following the Second World War when the River Neisse, flowing through the heart of the property, was designated the international border between East Germany and Poland. Fortunately, cooperative relations between the German park administrators and officials of the Ośrodek Ochrony Zabytkowego Krajobrazu, the Polish government agency that oversees heritage sites in that country, facilitated the opening up of important view lines across the Neisse that had been obscured by overgrowth and lack of maintenance.

At this point I must admit that I am not an entirely disinterested reviewer of Parshall's translation of Pückler's monumental opus, since it was I who persuaded her to undertake the eight-year-long project of translating *Briefe eines Verstorbenen*. In 2006 we were both invited to deliver papers at a conference hosted by the Muskau Foundation. Hers was titled "Hirschfeld, Pückler, Poe: The Literary Modeling of Nature" and mine "What is the Romantic Landscape?" in which I discussed the parallels between the designs of Central Park and Park Muskau and the goals of their contemporaneous restoration programs. Sitting beside Parshall in the sunshine, enjoying a picnic lunch and gazing toward the newly restored castle across one of Pückler's tree-framed meadows, I complimented her on her 2001 translation of C. C. L. Hirschfeld's *Theory of Garden Art*, an important treatise for landscape historians.

I knew from research for my own magnum opus, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*, that, although it has been surmised that Olmsted could have been influenced by Pückler's style of design, he was probably not aware of the existence of Muskau Park when he and Calvert Vaux prepared Central Park's Greensward plan. When he heard reports later from others who had seen it firsthand, however, he suggested that his protégé Charles Eliot visit the place on a planned tour of European parks. Subsequently, Samuel Parsons, the landscape architect on whose shoulders the mantle of Olmsted and Vaux subsequently fell, visited Muskau. He was so overwhelmed by the similarity between that park's design principles and those that had guided Olmsted and Vaux in forging a new American landscape idiom that he commissioned a translation of Pückler's 1834 treatise *Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei* (*Hints on Landscape Gardening*). It appeared in 1917, two years after a textbook for landscape architecture students by Parsons, in which he quotes Pückler extensively.

After I had an opportunity to peruse the original *Andeutungen* folio, with its lavish lithographs depicting Muskau Park and accompanying how-to treatise, I determined that, under the auspices of the Foundation for Landscape Studies, the organization of which I am president, an illustrated edition of the *Hints* with a new English translation would be a valuable addition to the literature of the field. The result, published in 2014 in collaboration with Birkhaüser, combines a translation of Pückler's text by John Hargraves with a facsimile reproduction of the folio with its stunning color plates, some of which have flaps that can be lifted to compare before and after views, in the manner of Humphry Repton's famous Red Books.

Even before the project of translating the *Hints* was initiated, I was extending my acquaintance with Pückler by reading Sarah Austin's 1832 translation of *Briefe eines Verstorbenen*, which had been published as *Tour in England, Ireland, and France in the Years 1826, 1827, 1828 and 1829 in a Series of Letters by a German Prince*. I was struck by the fact that Pückler's aristo-

cratic title gave him the entrée into British high society, permitting him to satisfy what he called his "parkomania" as a guest in country houses belonging to peers of the realm. Taking in the beauty of Muskau Park in Parshall's company on that sunny June day in 2006, I began to think that not only Pückler's *Hints on Landscape Gardening* but also his *Letters of a Dead Man* should have a contemporary readership. Since she is a German translator who is also a landscape historian, I proposed that she was the natural person to undertake such a task.

A few months after I received the approval of the board of the Foundation for Landscape Studies, Parshall phoned to say that she had thought it over and would agree to translate the latter book. But as she became better acquainted with Pückler's lively personality and vivacious prose, Parshall decided that she would not follow my original suggestion and do an abridged translation as had Sarah Austin. She pointed out that the original German publication had been praised by none other than Goethe, and its four volumes had been bestsellers in Germany. She also explained that, while Austin's expurgated English version was excellent in a literary sense and had enjoyed great popularity with British readers eager to see their country through Pückler's eyes, she had felt it necessary to omit any descriptions of the prince's amorous adventures and critical remarks about English society that might have caused offense. Parshall now urged a complete translation that would be entirely faithful to the original German text. She also pointed out that the work was worthy of being published in its entirety "because it is about a lot more than landscape and there are just too many good things to leave out: dinner parties, theatrical performances, society balls, horse races, visits to Newgate prison and Bedlam hospital, a Christmas pantomime at Covent Garden, and even Pückler's descent in a diving bell to inspect a new tunnel being constructed beneath the Thames."

Still, it was necessary to find a press willing to undertake publication of such a voluminous work. Fortunately, in 2013 as the translation was nearing completion, Jan Ziolkowski, the director of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, an institute of Harvard University, and John Beardsley, the director of the institute's program in Garden and Landscape Studies, realized the significance of the work as a contribution to the humanities and offered to undertake the book's production and distribution. The Prince-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau Foundation thereupon provided a generous contribution in order to make it possible to offer the book at an affordable price. Another grant from the same source was directed toward defraying the Foundation for Landscape Studies' prior investment in the project. I am naturally proud of the result, and I believe that readers more dispassionate than I will agree that Parshall's accomplishment is both magisterial and eminently readable.

Pückler's journey through Germany, Holland, England, Wales, Ireland, and France was motivated by more than the desire to furnish himself with ideas for the further enhancement of Muskau Park. In 1817 he had married the daughter of the Prussian chancellor Karl August, Prince von Hardenberg, Lucie von Pappenheim, who wholeheartedly shared his enthusiasm for transforming their Muskau property into an idyllic landscape. But by 1826, because of the ever-increasing cost of turning Muskau's thin, sandy soil into contoured, fertile ground, diverting the Neisse to form a lake and stream, and removing, pruning, and planting hundreds of trees and shrubs, both Pückler's and her fortunes had dwindled into a pile of debts. At this point the couple hit upon an ingenious scheme to relieve their financial distress and allow them to continue their joint lifework. He and Lucie would get a divorce so that Pückler might go to England, present himself as an eligible bachelor, and marry a British heiress. Presumably, the bride would return with him to Muskau and take up residence there with both Pückler and Lucie, his indispensable confidant and collaborator in the ongoing project of creating Muskau Park.

During a prior journey to England, the year before he married Lucie, Pückler had viewed the picturesquely designed grounds on the estates of the aristocracy and gleaned ideas about how he might create a similar landscape on his

own property in Prussia. He also took appreciative note of the superior luxuries, pleasures, and comforts offered by that country. On his second trip he rationalized that, if he were to succeed as a suitor, it was incumbent upon him to furnish himself with these indulgences, keep a servant, and enjoy accommodations that befitted a wealthy nobleman. His diminished resources therefore did not prevent him from overextending his credit to obtain the outfits of a dandy, a fine carriage, and a valet. But in spite of the elegant figure he cut, the high society with which he mingled, and his dyed hair and mustache to disguise the fact that he was already in his forties, his several courtships proved fruitless. Therefore in early 1829 Pückler returned to Lucie as debt-ridden as before his departure three years earlier. (An excellent account of Pückler's bride-quest is found in *The Fortune Hunter: A German Prince in Regency England* by Peter James Bowman.)

Undeterred, the two concocted a fallback strategy: the publication of Pückler's letters without the passages describing the bride hunt as a revenue-producing travelogue. The deftness with which they accomplished this enterprise, along with Lucie's tolerance of a few remaining licentious passages, resulted in vivid, day-by-day descriptions of almost everything the exuberant and perceptive prince saw and did throughout the course of his tour abroad. Luckily, the hugely successful reception of *Letters from a Dead Man* provided sufficient income for the two to continue creating Park Muskau for several more years.

By 1834, however, Pückler found it expedient to flee his creditors once more, this time staying away for six years, touring Greece, Asia Minor, and Africa. Having established a reputation as a travel writer, he staved off bankruptcy by writing further books in this genre. Although the volumes about the exotic locales he visited found an audience, none could match the popularity of *The Letters of a Dead Man*, and the revenue from them was not enough to prevent further financial disarray. It was therefore necessary at last to face the inevitable: the sale of Muskau. The transaction resulted in the transfer of ownership to Friedrich, Prince of the Netherlands. Ever the parkomaniac, Pückler continued to make landscape improvements even as negotiations were underway. Fortunately, Friedrich's respect for Pückler's achievement was such that work on Muskau Park continued after the sale under the supervision of Pückler's head gardener, Jacob Heinrich Rehder.

Pückler and Lucie transferred their residence to Branitz, his much smaller, 173-acre family estate thirty miles northwest of Muskau. There, he created another park. The manor house at Branitz is now a state-owned historic site containing many artifacts from Pückler's travels as well as the original watercolors by August Wilhelm Schirmer from which the lithographic illustrations for *Hints on Landscape Gardening* were made. Parshall was given access to Pückler's manuscripts and his Memory Albums, which contain numerous fine prints of the places he visited. A valuable record of their appearance at the time, reproductions of these form forty percent of the 126 illustrations in her translation of *The Letters of a Dead Man*.

Pückler and Lucie's mutual endeavor in editing his letters for publication makes clear that, in spite of the motive of his journey, their relations remained as tender as ever throughout the two and a half years of separation. He greets her as "My Precious Friend" at the beginning of each letter; professes unending devotion in closing; frequently refers to her by her pet name, *Schunucke* (little sheep); and signs himself as *Lou* (probably short for *loup*, or wolf). This gives the book the flavor of an epistolary novel— Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Hélöise*, for instance—a literary genre that was popular at the time. Indeed, Lucie is even called "Julie" in the *Letters*, not only shielding her real name, but also possibly referring to the protagonist in Rousseau's famous novel.

In addition, now that it had become possible for more people of means to go abroad, the book became a bestseller in the expanding genre of travel writing. For all of these reasons we may be grateful for Parshall's decision to practice an unabridged translation of *Letters from a Dead Man*, which allows the indefatigable and never boring prince to narrate his adventures in their published entirety. He

describes the balls at the Almack Assembly Rooms, to which he gained entrance throughout the London Season; his sojourns at Brighton, England's fashionable seaside watering place, then at its social apogee after having been popularized by the Prince Regent; and the expensive carriage in which he traveled roads made smooth by John Loudon McAdam's recent invention of a new method of paving. Always with Muskau in mind, Pückler took note of the composition of macadam, as the new paving material became known, and subsequently developed a formula he claimed to be an improvement over it for the carriage drives and paths in his park.

It would be easy to characterize Pückler as egotistical and foppish, but he was much more than a dandy and playboy. A man of his age, he bore the stamp of the Enlightenment and was a true Romantic, as is evident from his love of Byron, sublime scenery, historic ruins, and, perhaps most of all, the design of Muskau Park. An inveterate reader as well as tireless writer, his energy and curiosity appear to have known no bounds. Living on the cusp of revolutionary change, he can be characterized as an aristocrat with liberal sympathies; an intellectual who, like Alexis de Tocqueville, was keenly aware of the post-Revolutionary currents of democracy that were overthrowing the old order to which he belonged.

With aesthetic proclivities and a trained eye, he never missed an opportunity to comment perceptively on the works of art in the private galleries whose walls were graced by Holbeins, Raphaels, and Rembrandts in those days of pre–Downton Abbey glory before impoverished heirs were forced to sell them at auction or give them to the nation to alleviate heavy tax obligations. In this light, art historians who read the *Letters* today may gain useful information about their provenance.

For example, Warwick Castle, now on the Grade 1 list of nationally important ancient sites protected from alteration, is today a major tourist destination owned and operated by Merlin Entertainments. Even in Pückler's time when it was still inhabited by its owner, George Greville, 2nd Earl of Warwick, it was an important stop on the itinerary of a traveler in search of places redolent with British history.

To say that Pückler was impressed by Warwick Castle and the Greville Collection of Old Masters is an understatement:

> *Warwick, December 28th, 1826*
>
> Precious Julie!
>
> By heaven! Now, for the first time, I am filled with tremendous enthusiasm. What I described earlier was a bright, smiling nature augmented by all that nature can provide. Although I have seen such places before, indeed possess one myself, I left it filled with appreciation and even amazement. . . .

After passing through the great baronial hall filled with suits of armor and entering the picture galleries, he rhapsodizes:

> The art treasures are beyond counting. As for the paintings, there is not a single mediocre one to be found; in fact, they are nearly all by the greatest masters and of particular interest to the family, since a number of them are portraits of their ancestors by Titian, Van Dyck, and Rubens. The greatest treasure, and truly priceless, is one of Raphael's most enchanting pictures, the beautiful Joanna of Aragon. . . . There is an inexpressible, magical quality about this magnificent woman! Eyes that delve into the depths of the soul, regal majesty joined with the most feminine receptivity to love, a voluptuous fiery gaze tinged with sweet melancholy. The fullness of the most beautiful bosom; a transparent delicacy of skin; and a truth, radiance, and grace in her garments and the rest of her adornment offer a perfection that only divine inspiration of such a genius could ever create.

On a par with his connoisseurship of art and amorous eye for female beauty was Pückler's informed appraisal of landscapes. His description of the approach to storied Warwick Castle and its Capability Brown–improved landscape is filled with superlatives:

> The carriage rolls with a muffled sound over the flat rock, shaded beneath towering vaults of ancient oaks. Suddenly, at a bend in the road,

> the fortress emerges from the woods, resting on a gently sloping lawn in the open light of the sky, and you find yourself at the foot of two gargantuan towers; between them, the wide arch of the entry gate looks like nothing more than an insignificant doorway. A still greater surprise is in store as you pass through the second gate of iron grillwork and enter the castle courtyard. It is hard to imagine anything more picturesque and at the same time more imposing!
>
> Let your fantasy conjure up an area approximately twice as large as the interior of the Colosseum in Rome, and imagine yourself there overlooking a vast courtyard, surrounded on every side by a lush, romantic forest of moss-covered trees and majestic buildings that, although varying in style, form *one* sublime and cohesive *whole* etched against the sky—sometimes rising, sometimes falling, like the constant undulation of the green expanses on the ground—never betraying symmetry, but rather a *loftier harmony* inherent in the works of nature alone.

Here indeed was inspiration for Pückler's already well-formed concept of Muskau as a unified, picturesque landscape that evoked nature's own sublimity.

The rigors of Pückler's assiduous attendance at balls and opportunistic social calls on young ladies whose fortunes were commensurate with his financial needs were alleviated by occasional moonlight rides in the London suburbs. On July 29, 1827, he wrote to Lucie about previous night's excursion:

> The night was thoroughly Italian, the lights provided so much illumination that I could keep within their range as I rode for several hours through the city and suburbs. A marvelous view unfolded from Westminster Bridge. The many lights on the boats danced like will-o'-the-wisps across the surface of the Thames, and the numerous bridges stretched over the river from one mass of buildings to the other like broadly arched, twinkling garlands.

There were other delightful respites from his courtship routine. In London he enjoyed all manner of theatrical entertainments, ranging from a Punch-and-Judy show to performances of Shakespeare. About the latter, he opined:

> The productions of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello* on today's English stage—all performed with very few omissions and including most of what is presumed shocking, even the obligatory king's trumpeter—all of them left me feeling completely satisfied and content. . . . Next to Shylock, Othello is [Edmund] Kean's finest role. It is amazing what deep human understanding he invests in portraying the jealousy from its initial slumbering through its gradual awakening to the final explosion in a raging frenzy, and also how convincingly he captures the southern nature of the Moor, the so peculiar individuality and makes us shudder, even as it presents us with a sharper view of his monstrous suffering.

During the time he was in London Pückler was fascinated with the reconstruction of Green Park and St. James's Park. With his own work at Muskau in mind, he admired the way in which these parks "following the plans of Mr. Nash are being transformed into delightful gardens and expanses of water." He reported to Lucie that he visited them practically every day in order to learn "a lot of technical details and admire the effective distribution and continuity of the work, the ingenious means of transport, the moveable railroad tracks, etc."

Wanting to analyze other designed landscapes from a practical perspective, Pückler brought Rehder to England at the beginning of 1827 for three weeks of intensive estate touring. Here is what he had to say about Blenheim:

> As you wander through these grounds, you have to admire [Capability] Brown's genius. He is the Garden Shakespeare of England. And his plantings have grown tremendously large; we found, for instance, a massive, dense Portuguese laurel that was two hundred feet in circumference!

He was more critical of Stowe:

> These gardens were laid out long ago and, although very lovely in many respects and distinguished by a wealth of lofty trees, they are overburdened by temples and structures of every

kind. It would be the greatest improvement if ten or twelve of them were torn down.

In addition to these private estates of the landed aristocracy, Pückler visited Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, a haunt for romantic assignations and London's leading venue for outdoor entertainment from the mid-seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. Here is Pückler's description of this famous predecessor of the twentieth-century amusement park in the period of its final brilliance as a place for concerts and such spectacles as tightrope walking, hot-air balloon ascents, and fireworks:

*July 12, 1827*

Yesterday I got my first look at Vauxhall, a public garden in the style of Tivoli in Paris, but far more grand and brilliant. The illumination is exceptionally magnificent, with thousands of lamps that were hanging beneath the trees, the blossoms in red, blue, violet, and yellow, the leaves and stems in green. Then there were chandeliers of a colorful, very nuanced Turkish pattern and a music temple crowned by the royal arms and crest. Several triumphal arches were constructed not of boards as is common, but of seemingly transparent cast iron, which made them just as opulent yet infinitely more elegant.

A year after this excursion, which included more sightseeing, theater-going, and bride-seeking during the Season, Pückler was forced to give up his matrimonial quest. It had become common knowledge that he and Lucie were as close as they had been before their divorce and that she was still living at Muskau, administering the estate, and supervising the ongoing construction of the park. Gossip and English moral standards stood in the way of continued attempts to woo heiresses. Pückler had also lost his motivation to pursue merely pecuniary ends by paying court to young ladies who were boring or unattractive to him.

Disheartened as he was by having to abandon his original objective, however, Pückler was not resigned to returning to Muskau in the role of a prodigal son. His enthusiasm for travel had not abated, and it was another six months before he and Lucie were reunited and he saw his beloved park again. Thus begins another series of twenty-three letters, which are some of his best:

*Cheltenham, July 12th, 1828*

My Precious Julie,

I left London this morning, this time really sick and in a very foul mood, in harmony with the weather, which, utterly *à l'anglaise*, was raging like a storm at sea, the rain pouring down in buckets. But the sky cleared up around eight o'clock and the gentle, swift roll of the carriage allowed me to slumber a little, I found everything refreshed and sparkling like emeralds, while through the open carriage window a magnificent fragrance wafted in from the flowery meadows. And then, within a few moments, your morose friend, so burdened by worry, became an innocent child once again, taking delight in God and the beauty of the world.

Heading west, he went to Wales where amidst the sublimity of mountainous scenery, his Byronic Romanticism was given full rein. Here there was no shortage of crumbling castles to fire his imagination. Yet he did not neglect his interest in modern technology. In the same way he had examined factories in Birmingham and Leeds with curiosity and wonder, admiring manufacturing techniques that testified to Britain's avant-garde industrial achievements, his interest in mines led him to visit a Welsh slate quarry. Here he went so far as to descend into its subterranean recesses, where he experienced a romantic frisson of pleasurable terror:

It was as if you were already in the underworld! The blasted walls of slate, several hundred feet high and smooth as glass, revealed barely enough of the blue sky to distinguish midday from dusk. . . . Miners, looking like black birds, were hanging all over the walls, striking them with their long iron picks, and throwing down blocks of slate with a rumbling crash. But now the mountain seemed to totter, loud shouts of warning reverberated from various sides, and the powder mine exploded high above, a huge slab of rock broke loose in unhur-

ried majesty and plunged with tremendous force into the depths.

Like Wordsworth before him, Pückler would not forego the ultimate Romantic experience the country had to offer, the ascent of 3,500-foot-high Mount Snowdon. With the same determined intrepidity as Humboldt making his perilous ascent of Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador, Pückler set forth in bitter cold weather with no mountaineering gear, clad only in his London promenading boots, stiff cravat, and narrow frock coat. In spite of obvious discomfort, he enthusiastically followed his youthful guide ever upward. Refreshed by a rest stop where he uncorked a bottle of champagne and raised a birthday toast to Lucie, he emerged from the enveloping clouds to find spread before him a view that, if less magnificent than that he would have had if he had achieved the summit, encompassed the Irish Sea in the distance and the infinite sky above. "I had a clear view, like on a relief," he wrote, "of the Isle of Anglesey resting against its shore, and within the many intersecting ravines all around me I counted about twenty smaller lakes, many dark, many so brightly lit by the sun that the eye could barely endure their mirror-like sheen."

Continuing his vigorous itinerary, Pückler arrived in Dublin on August 10, 1828, racked by seasickness from a rough voyage across the Irish Sea. Once recovered, he toured the city and its environs, taking special note of Phoenix Park, "the prater of Dublin and in no way inferior to that of Vienna: neither in size nor turf lovely for riding; nor in the long allées for driving a carriage; nor in its shady walks." After leaving the city, he visited several beautiful, private parks. Of Powerscourt he noted, "It would not be easy for nature to unite greater resources than she has bestowed here with a liberal hand, and these gifts have been deployed with intelligence." He made a circuit of beautiful Irish parks and several natural attractions before returning to England to begin the final, leisurely leg of his homeward journey.

Happy to be back in the land of good inns, substantial breakfasts and dinners, spacious and carefully warmed beds, and polite and deft waiters, Pückler was in no rush to return to London. He would not have wanted under any circumstances to forego the River Wye, popularized by the Reverend William Gilpin and other theorists of the Picturesque as a "See Britain First" travel destination during the Napoleonic Wars when Grand Tourists were not able to visit the Continent.

Here we find Pückler again following in the steps of Wordsworth as he beholds the ruins of Tintern Abbey. He takes note, appreciatively, of the fact that "The buildings have been maintained to exactly the degree that old ruins should be—namely, the debris that would disturb a picturesque and congenial visit has been cleared away, yet nothing has been restored, nor has any of the care taken been allowed to become obvious. A lovely, smooth carpet of grass covers the ground, and large-leaved plants grow rampantly over the stone. Fallen ornaments have been partly used to create a kind of artistic disorder, and a perfect double allée of thick ivy stems (I cannot call it anything else) climbs up the columns and forms a marvelous, lofty canopy of foliage."

As he continues on his way, Pückler misses no sightseeing opportunity. We can read his impressions of the vastly wealthy, eccentric William Beckford's Gothic Revival Fonthill Abbey, by then a fire-gutted ruin called Beckford's Folly; Salisbury Cathedral; and Wilton, the home of the Earl of Pembroke, where Pückler's appreciative eye spotted family portraits by Holbein and Van Dyck as well as a (subsequently reattributed) "highly executed *Entombment* in watercolor by Albrecht Dürer." At Longford, the property of the Earl of Radnor, Pückler claimed that a sunrise and sunset by Claude Lorrain, *Coast Scene with the Landing of Aeneas* (1650) and *Pastoral Landscape with the Arch of Titus* (1644), were superior to all the rest.

En route to Dover on the first day of 1829, he stopped at Canterbury where flags were flying in celebration of the new year. Inside he studied the cathedral's Norman architecture and numerous monuments, taking particular

note of the statues of Henry IV and Thomas Becket. The next day, after a two-and-a-half-hour Channel crossing by packet boat from Dover to Calais, he was on Continental soil once more. As he passed through France and Holland, informative and detailed commentary on everything he saw continued to flow from his fluent pen.

It is interesting to note in passing that Pückler focuses on many of the same works of art and architecture singled out in his countryman Karl Baedeker's famous red-leather-bound guidebooks, which began publication around the same time *Letters of a Dead Man* was released. There is a difference, though. The Baedekers, as they were soon universally called, were written in a third-person voice of expert authority whereas Pückler offered a more idiosyncratic look at the sites of Europe, filtered through the lens of his personality and social class. Readers of Parshall's translation may be pleased to find that, in spite of the excision of the bride-hunt references when Pückler's correspondence was converted into a travelogue, *Letters of a Dead Man* is still spiced with a few concupiscent descriptions of paintings of beautiful female bodies and a prurient account of particularly pleasurable visit to a fair and accommodating young prostitute.

But the letters have their serious side—and saving Muskau from immediate sale was something more than a selfish act of an aristocratic couple obsessed with beautifying their estate. Pückler admired the way in which the liberty-loving British had created landscapes that were symbolically anti-authoritarian in their embodiment of unconstrained nature. Turning to Pückler's final words in the *Hints on Landscape Gardening*, which secured his subsequent reputation as a landscape designer capable of influencing, advising, and directly assisting his fellow aristocrats, we see his liberal ideals come to the fore:

> Once a landowner has begun to idealize his property, he will soon become aware that cultivating the soil is not merely of pecuniary value but can provide true aesthetic pleasure; and he will learn how grateful nature can be to those who devote to her their *love* completely. So only when we do everything in our power unstintingly, and the thousand facets unite easily and beautifully in *a single ring*, can the lovely dream of the Saint-Simonists be realized: the general beautification of mother earth. For this purpose, then, it might be good for us to turn away from gloomy pursuit of politics, which takes everything and gives little back, and pay more attention to the joy of art, whose service is its own reward. The affairs of state cannot be the concern of all, but we can all strive to perfect ourselves and our property in every way. And so one might ask: cannot even that freedom so hoped for be attained more peacefully and safely by this simple means, honestly and straightforwardly, than through who knows how many experiments with theoretical forms of government? For in the end, only he who governs himself can be free.

Both Pückler and Frederick Law Olmsted, whose first book *Walks and Talks of An American Farmer in England* served as an unwitting prelude to his career as a landscape designer, are exponents of Romanticism, the last and arguably the greatest creators of parks in this idiom of picturesque naturalism. Unfortunately, Pückler never traveled to America and therefore did not see how closely his ideal conformed to the creation of a democratic people's park in the middle of New York City. As we have mentioned earlier, however, it was not difficult for the creators of this landscape to adopt him as their predecessor. Furthermore, Pückler's echo of Voltaire's message *il faut cultiver notre jardin* still rings true today, when individual efforts to enhance the beauty and well-being of nature are more important than ever as models for an uncertain future.

# Fear & loathing in Algeria
## *by Anthony Daniels*

Historical novels are always open to the Johnsonian reproach that what is historical in them is not novel and what is novel in them is not historical. They are neither fully works of the imagination nor yet those of scholarship. The detail if accurate may be criticized as pedantic and if inaccurate as detracting from verisimilitude. Severe critics of the genre would say that it is intrinsically hybrid, in the way that the melons and marrows in my vegetable patch once cross-fertilized and produced eye-catching hybrids that were, however, edible neither as fruit nor vegetable. Yet the historical novel remains popular, and often deservedly so.

This year's Goncourt Prize for a first novel has gone to an example of the genre titled *De nos frères blessés* (Of Our Wounded Brothers) by Joseph Andras (a pseudonym).[1] The author, who has made a point of avoiding publicity, refused the prize in the following words addressed in letter to the jury:

> Those who have found some interest in this book are here sincerely thanked. Nevertheless, I cannot accept [the award]: competition and rivalry are in my eyes notions foreign to writing and creation. Literature, as I understand it as reader and now as writer, guards its independence closely and keeps its distance from podiums, honors, and the limelight.

Some might find this smug, superior, and even grandiose, as well as not very well-informed about literary history, in the course of which not every great author has played the role of shrinking violet; moreover, it is a curious fact about the power of publicity in the modern world that its refusal can so easily be turned into apotheosis. Be that as it may, the book has garnered the sales consequent upon the award of the prize without the author having had to soil his hands by accepting it. But this, it goes without saying, is no criticism of the book itself.

The novel recounts the story of Fernand Iveton, born in Algeria in 1926 of French and Spanish parents, and the only man of European descent to have been guillotined in Algeria during the war of independence. This was a monstrous miscarriage of justice, more the expression of lynch-mob mentality than the result of due process, but the times were highly propitious for mass hysteria, and among the keen proponents of resort to the death penalty at the time was François Mitterand, later President and champion of liberal causes, they having in the meantime become electorally popular.

Iveton was employed as a turner in a gas works in Algiers. He was a sentimental communist, a member of the Algerian Communist Party, then a branch of the French Communist Party. He became a communist not because of what Gibbon, in another context, called "the truth of the doctrine itself," but because he saw around him the daily injustice of the colonial regime and dreamed of an egalitarian Algeria in which all could

1 *De nos frères blessés*, by Joseph Andras; Actes Sud, 144 pages, €17.

live together without distinction of race or religion.

Although in surface three times larger than France itself, Algeria was then, officially speaking, merely three *départements* (counties) like any other of the French Republic: legally it was not an overseas territory but as much a part of France as Alaska is today part of the United States. Liberty, equality, and fraternity did not flourish there, to put it mildly, and on November 1, 1954, the uprising that was to become the revolution commenced with eleven simultaneous attacks by nationalists on French installations.

The attitude of the French Communist Party, and therefore of the Algerian also, was equivocal and divided. Its predominant doctrinal attitude was that the uprising was a nationalist deviation from pure proletarian revolutionism, but eventually, the Party, fearing to lose all influence on what was clearly something more than a mere temporary disturbance, allowed its members, as individuals, to act on behalf of the National Liberation Front (FLN).

Iveton, the communist, was frustrated that his party seemed so passive and inactive; he decided to go on the offensive himself to demonstrate to the Algerians that not all the Europeans were on the side of the French army which was trying the repress the nationalist revolt with more and more ferocity. Iveton planned to put a small bomb at his place of work, but in such a place and in such a fashion that the damage would be minor and no one would be killed. His contacts in the FLN would have preferred him to blow up the whole of the gasworks, in what they called another Hiroshima, but Iveton was against the indiscriminate killing (including of Algerians) that this would entail, and with which he strongly disagreed. He therefore intended his act to be more what the anarchists call the propaganda of the deed than a violent revolutionary exploit.

He was caught in the act, however, and his bomb, which experts believed could cause no damage more than three to five yards away, was deactivated before it could go off. Iveton was tortured severely to reveal the names and whereabouts of his accomplices. His trial before a military court was summary and he was sentenced to death to the general applause of the public, composed of *pieds-noirs*, the European ninth of the Algerian population of the time. It was held that his bomb could have killed someone if, as was proved very unlikely, there was someone nearby, and that was enough for the judges to invoke the death penalty.

Appeals for commutation were turned down, both by the committee on which Mitterand sat and by the President of the Republic of the time, René Coty. The reasons for this refusal were probably twofold: first, many Arab or Kabyle Algerians had by then been guillotined, and the government wanted to demonstrate that the guillotine was not just for natives; and second, at the height of the Cold War, the French wanted to demonstrate to the Americans that the real threat in Algeria was that of communism, the better to obtain their support for what might otherwise have seemed to them an unjustified colonial war. Iveton was guillotined on February 11, 1957, having been arrested on November 14 and sentenced to death on November 24, 1956, his trial having lasted less than a day. His defense lawyer, Albert Smadja, who had not volunteered to defend Iveton but had been appointed by the court, was arrested two days after Iveton was guillotined and spent two years in prison.

This is the story of Andras's novel, which also includes that of Iveton's wife, Hélène. She was of Polish descent, her father having moved to France before the war. To escape parental control, she married a Swiss at the age of sixteen whom she then left because of his violence, having had a son by him. In 1948, her father returned to Poland to sort out an inheritance; the communist government never let him return. She and her mother were not well-disposed to communism, therefore, but this did not interfere in any way with her relationship with Iveton, whom she met when she was a waitress. They were touchingly and happily in love for several years; they enjoyed the normal pleasures of life: picnics, dances, the cinema, and so forth. The novel includes some

of Iveton's letters to her from the condemned cell while he was a CAM: a *condamné à mort*.

After her husband's death, Hélène Iveton could find no work in Algeria, had to sell her few possessions, and return to France. Her only son was killed in a road accident there; she lived for forty-one years after her husband's execution, dying in 1998. The burden of suffering in this world is unevenly and unfairly distributed.

Andras tells the story extremely well; one is moved and appalled by turns. I read the book—it is short—at a sitting. Indeed, I found the story so compelling that I decided to read an earlier book devoted to the Iveton case, *Pour l'exemple: l'affaire Fernand Iveton* (To Give an Example: The Fernand Iveton Affair) by Jean-Luc Einaudi, published in 1986.

Einaudi, who died in 2014, was a Maoist of extreme (and absurd) views, but that does not mean his researches into the end of French rule in Algeria are without value, and his book on Iveton is well-documented. He diligently interviewed all the survivors who agreed to speak to him and often quotes them verbatim. Perhaps one explanation of his extreme severity towards the French and his indulgence towards Mao and other tyrants of that ilk was an unacknowledged racism: that only the French (or Europeans) were capable of morality and therefore of immorality. The French acted; the Chinese and others reacted, like tennis balls to tennis rackets.

Reading Einaudi, I sometimes had the strange and completely unexpected sensation of reading Andras's book a second time, though in a much expanded and less literary form. For example, there is a scene in which the police, after Iveton's arrest, go to his house to question his wife Hélène, who knows nothing of her husband's bomb-placing activity but knows that he is likely to fall foul of the police because of his avowed communism. In Einaudi, when the police knock on Hélène's door, she answers them:

> I'm on my own. I don't have to open the door to you, I don't know you. What proof do I have that you are the police?

In Andras, it reads:

> I'm on my own, I don't have to open the door to you, I don't know you, and what proof do I have that you are the police?

Of course, a historical novel has to describe historical events, and Einaudi is the main source of knowledge of those events. Still, the similarity of the terms in which the events are described is often very striking. When the police arrived at the Iveton's flat, for example, Hélène (according to Einaudi)

> decided to play the role of someone who had just woken up from a deep sleep. She undid her hair; she opened the bed.

In Andras:

> Hélène disarranges her hair and unmakes the bed. She opens the window of their bedroom and, pretending to yawn, excuses herself to the policemen, she was asleep . . .

According to Einaudi, the policemen enter the flat and start to search:

> One of them, a little fat man, goes at it doggedly. He empties the cupboard, throws the linen on the ground, the papers also . . . . Another policeman tries to calm the zeal of his colleague. "Go easy," he said to him.

In Andras:

> A fat policeman, more zealous than the others, inspects the canned food minutely. . . . One of his colleagues asked him . . . to conduct the search with more restraint.

Einaudi tells the story of how Hélène, having married Iveton, forbade him to wear a ring:

> Fernand did not wear a ring. Hélène didn't want him to. Once a friend of hers had three fingers cut off by a machine because of his ring. Even if many people, trusting to this sign, did not realize they were married. One evening, at a dance, a woman friend said to him:

"What if we both go to spend the evening by the sea?"

"But . . . it's just that I'm not on my own," he replied.

"Who are you with?"

"My wife."

"Where is she?"

"Sitting next to you."

In Andras we read that a cellmate in the prison asks Fernand why, if he is married, he does not wear a ring.

> It's Hélène, my wife, who forbade me to wear one: one of her friends had his fingers cut off, . . . three I think, by a machine because of his ring. . . . Once, I remember, we were at a dance and a girl came up to me while I was sitting next to Hélène and asked me, having looked at my hand, if we could spend an evening at the beach together.

The similarities are so numerous (I could multiply them if not quite indefinitely, at least many-fold) that I felt that much of Andras's book, whose literary quality I admired, was an elegant précis of the more personal parts of Einaudi's book, with imaginative additions. Even the title, *De nos frères blessés*, is taken from a poem written by an anonymous prisoner after Iveton's execution, and published in Einaudi's book:

> *Rompant nuit, et silence*
> *Cette immense clameur*
> *De vos frères blessés*
> *Blessés, mais révoltés.*

(Breaking night, and silence this immense outcry of your wounded brothers, wounded but rebels.) There is, of course, nothing wrong with this—many titles are quotations or adaptions of quotations—but in view of the fact that the poem is unknown and, to quote Andras, "competition and rivalry are in my eyes notions foreign to writing and creation," I think perhaps some stronger acknowledgment than Andras provides at the end of his book ("These pages could not have been written without the patient work of inquiry by Jean-Luc Einaudi, who, although deceased, is here thanked") might have been in order.

My unexpected discovery set me thinking further about the book, in a way in which I would not have thought about it before. It occurred to me that the author's choice of subject matter, the Iveton affair, was, if not cowardly exactly, at least *safe*: the author risked no possible obloquy for it. It might be true, as Doctor Johnson said, that we more often require to be reminded than informed, and also that the book is genuinely moving; but it is also true that it does not open our eyes or extend our field of vision. The affair with which it is concerned no longer has any ambiguities for us; it is a subject that the French would call *classé*, done and dusted. It would now be as difficult to find anyone who thought that Iveton was guillotined in a good cause as it would then have been difficult to find anyone in the courtroom (other than his wife and father) who thought that he should *not* have been guillotined.

Of course, I am presuming here that ambiguity is to be preferred in a novel than morally unambiguous denunciation of a great wrong; this may not always be the case. But the great wrong denounced should be one that is contemporary, not one that took place sixty years ago and is universally acknowledged to have been such. Indeed, one might interpret Andras's novel as a manifestation of what the editor of the literary pages of *Le Monde*, Jean Birnbaum, called, in the title of his own book, *Un silence religieux* (subtitled "The Left Confronted by Jihadism").

In a very interesting chapter in the book, titled "The FLN Generation," Birnbaum draws attention to the French left's willful blindness to the real nature of the Algerian revolution, both during it and for at least thirty years afterwards. They did not recognize—they *refused* to recognize—the religious dimension of the revolution, inevitable given that 99.99 percent of the non-European and Jewish population was Muslim, and only 0.01 percent of it (if that) was Marxist. But the French Left (and not only the French) saw the world through the distorting lens of their ideology: for them religion was but the sigh of the oppressed, to quote their own sect's Mohammed, a phenom-

enon that, having no real existence independent of oppression, was destined to disappear once the oppression ceased. Unutterably convinced of the universal validity of their own version of the Enlightenment (as were the original French colonists of Algeria, in fact), they believed that the Algerian Revolution was a branch, albeit an important one, of the world socialist revolution and, led willingly by the nose by those leaders of the FLN who knew how to speak their kind of language, blinded themselves to all evidence to the contrary. After independence, the *pieds-noirs* left *en masse*, to be replaced (though not in such numbers) by the *pieds-rouges*, that is to say the fellow-travelers of the revolution who arrived in the hope of assisting the new socialist paradise. They were not welcome, and many of them suffered a long and horrible disillusion, but on their return to France they maintained a kind of *omertà*, relating nothing of their experiences for decades, Birnbaum thinks because they did not want to tarnish the idea of socialism, but also perhaps, as intellectuals, or as intellectually inclined, they did not want to look stupid. This, it seems to me, might make an excellent subject for a historical novel, rather better than that of Fernand Iveton, though it would take a Conrad to write it.

As it happens, last year's Goncourt prize for a first novel was also awarded to a book on an Algerian subject, written by an Algerian, Kamel Daoud, titled *Meursault, contre-enquête* (Meursault, Counter-Report, published in English as *The Meursault Investigation*). It is a brilliant book, as subtle as Andras's book is straightforward, that is sufficient to disprove the widespread belief that the novel is as dead as, say, the seventeenth-century masque. Considering the size of the human population, there may not be many good novelists about, but that is not the fault of the genre itself.

Daoud's story is purportedly written by the brother of the Arab whom Meursault kills in Camus's celebrated short novel *L'Étranger*, first published in 1942. In Camus's book, his hero, Meursault, a man disabused of everything except the sea, the sun, and sex, apparently because the universe has no transcendent meaning or teleology, one afternoon, on the very slightest of pretexts, kills an Arab on the beach at Algiers.

I have read the book several times, because I felt I must be missing something because of my naïve literal-mindedness, but I have never been able to rid myself of the opinion that it is a deeply repellent and indeed evil little book, though very well-written and compelling to read, good as literature if you take the Wildean view that books are either well or badly written and nothing more. Of course, it is an elementary error to identify an author with his character, but nevertheless Camus (some of whose early journalism was written under the name *Mersault*) did see his creation in a positive light. "One would not be much mistaken in reading *L'Étranger*," he wrote, "as the story of a man who, without any heroic attitude, accepts to die for the truth." Camus finds this admirable.

But what is the truth that Meursault is prepared to die for? It does not follow from the meaninglessness of the universe, from the fact, as Hume put it much better than Camus, that the life of a man is not more important to the universe than the life of an oyster, that he, Meursault, has to be indifferent to his mother's death, or that he is entitled to kill a man without excuse and with as little thought as if he had squashed an ant—and this, be it remembered, in the midst of the most dehumanizing war in human history. Try as I might, I can find nothing redeeming about Meursault, or even particularly interesting, except possibly as a case of autism or psychopathy. In *L'Étranger*, the prosecutor's summary of the charge against Meursault is held up to ridicule or irony.

> "There you are, gentlemen," said the attorney-general. "I have put before you the course of events which led this man to kill in full possession of his senses. I insist upon it," he said, "for we are not dealing with an ordinary murder, with an impulsive act in which you could find mitigating circumstances. This man, gentlemen, this man is intelligent. You heard him, didn't you? He knows how to answer. He knows the meaning of words. And one could not say that he acted without knowing what he was doing."

To this Meursault responds:

> I heard and understood that they considered me intelligent. But I don't understand how the attributes of an ordinary man can become crushing charges against an accused.

I admit that my own response to this is entirely conventional—I am a conventional man—but I am with the prosecutor here, and see nothing admirable, or even particularly truthful, in Meursault's reaction, rather the reverse, nor anything of philosophical value either. It doesn't take much to understand that a man's state of mind when he kills is relevant to the degree of his guilt, or that a legal system that took no interest in such matters, even in theory, would be monstrous. Or perhaps the idea is that, if one is philosophically sophisticated enough, then killing a man without good reason is of not great import. I am sure that Camus would have considered me an imbecile—a favorite word of his for those who did not understand what he was trying to say—for not understanding the Nietzschean depths of Meursault's conduct.

No doubt it is imbecilic still to be shocked that Meursault displays no interest in the man whom he kills, not before, during, or after he kills him, and not for a single second. In my career as a prison doctor and psychiatrist I met a few killers like Meursault, who killed with a saurian indifference not only to the victim but to everything else except their ration of tobacco if it arrived late. There was nothing philosophical about this—their behavior was pre-philosophical, as it were—and the only philosophical question that they raised, at least in my mind, was whether they suffered from some neurological deficit that reduced their moral, if not their legal, responsibility.

For Meursault, the victim is simply the *Arab*, and the starting point of Daoud's book is that, while the *Arab* is mentioned twenty-five times, he is not given a name or indeed any human characteristic other than that he is a featherless biped and wears a blue robe. He is invisible to Meursault *as a human being*; and given the subsequent history of the country, this is not without significance.

Daoud gives him the name of Moussa in the counter-enquiry, and his brother, now in his seventies, relates the effect of Moussa's murder to a (significantly) nameless French enquirer into the whole story of Meursault and his murder. The story takes place over several evenings over glasses of wine in a bar in Oran—one of the few still to exist, for freedom has in certain respects receded rather than advanced after independence—from which one is entitled to conclude that the narrator is not a strict Muslim: and indeed, his strictures on the Koran are of a frankness that make the author infinitely more of a truth-teller than Camus. We are very far indeed from the safety of Joseph Andras:

> I leafed through their own book [*they* being the believing Muslims], the Book, and I found in it strange redundancies, repetitions, jeremiads, threats, and reveries that gave me the impression of listening to the soliloquy of an old night watchman . . .

This is not a compliment, all the more so since the narrator's father was a night watchman who deserted his family before leaving the narrator with any memory of him. And of course, Daoud is not to be confused with the character (from whom he is much further in age than was Camus from Meursault) he has created: it is just that I do not think that any believing Muslim could have written that passage (though I may be mistaken).

But Daoud's book is decidedly not a tract. It is, in fact, one of the best imaginative explorations that I have ever read both of the long-lasting after-effects of the murder of a loved one and of what it is like to be considered by others, in this case the French, to be unimportant, invisible, not even fully human, and therefore requiring no names any more than individual ants require names. This is worse than any possible exploitation.

The narrator grows up entirely in the shadow of the murder. His brother's tomb is empty because the body was not returned to the family; finding no explanation of the

killing, his mother closes in on herself. She keeps her remaining son tied to her, at the same time regretting bitterly that he is not his older brother Moussa. This put me strongly in mind of a friend of mine who died of asthma aged sixteen, possibly because of the bureaucratic delay the ambulance service imposed on the mother, insisting on irrelevant details while her son gasped in the background "I'm dying, I'm dying!" (he was right, he was dying). He was a brilliant boy and had an older, feckless and wastrel brother. When I went to see the mother, she said to me, "Why couldn't it have been him instead?" I fled before this lightning flash into the possible depths of human despair.

Daoud's book is like a prolonged flash of lightning, illuminating a whole psychological, cultural, and historical landscape without fear or favor. It is a very necessary book, because in one of my several editions of *L'Étranger*, directed at French schoolchildren aged sixteen or seventeen, the scholarly apparatus at the rear, full of philosophical flim-flam, scarcely mentions the murder of the *Arab* as being of any significance at all, commenting on the fact that he is given no name only that it adds to the *theatricality* of the situation. If I were the French Minister of Education, I would decree that henceforth *L'Étranger* could not be studied in French schools without also studying *Meursault, contre-enquête*. This would do more to foster genuine, which is to say imaginative, understanding than any other single measure I could think of.

# New poems
*by Wendy Videlock & Ned Balbo*

## Wherever there's a rabbit

There's the tale and there's the facts
and there's the mitigating factor.
Wherever there's a rabbit there
is bound to be a raptor. There's

the dawn and there's the pause and then
there is the nervous laughter.
There's the curtain, there's the show
and there's the act and there's the actor.

There's the hymn that changes everything
and then there is the clatter.
There's the service, there's the sorrow
there's the urn and there's the scatter.

There's the spirit, there's the soul,
there's the grief, and there's the matter.

*—Wendy Videlock*

## The Underground Tour

Into the street beneath the street we step,
denizens of Seattle Underground
for now, as purplish light through sidewalk glass
streaks down upon the tour group that we've joined
for kicks, for entertainment, for an hour.
Our guide—voluble, rotund—tells of fire,
a tinderbox laid waste, and city fathers,
patrons of banks and brothels, who rebuilt
the whole place one flight up, the world they knew
submerged in shadow, ill-lit corridors
infested with rats and vice, brief assignations
between supply and human frailty,
neither at risk of ever running out.
You don't look like you're having too much fun,
though I enjoy this sort of thing: the sweep
of great deeds and decay, the roar of time
down history's tunnel past the glass and brickwork,
leaving us, and rubble, in its wake.
Toy settlers trapped in dusty dioramas—
check. A few framed photos of the past
from some high point: a teeming Wild West town,
it seems, fists and saloon doors swinging freely
—*Forward*, our tour guide beckons, into chambers
more like catacombs, the street-glow gone,
replaced by blinding bulbs. I touch your hand.
More tales of opium dens—speakeasies, too—
tactfully sanitized for daytime tours.
Rough concrete yields to nailed plywood planks
and more smashed remnants: shattered wooden pipe,
a teller's cage, wrecked gears the size of bike wheels,
even a round once-scarlet sofa ditched,
bedecked in dust. ("They used it on the set
of some old TV movie filmed down here.")
*Up there's where we'll go next*, you want to say,
and soon, you hope: you've had your fill of news
a century old, façades of storefronts closed
like history itself, a box shut tight
despite the clues it scatters in plain sight.
I'm having fun—an hour's worth of legend,
facts and guesses mixed to give us myths,
our earthly comedy—but, all alone,

I'd never go. The only point's to share
it with someone—with you—who passes by
me with the crowd, nervous before the entry
to another junk-strewn, mildewed grotto
that may hold the key to some lost past,
or only dirt, old plumbing. Left alone,
what would this place be like if some swift blackout
cut the lights? Don't ask. We're not alone—
you're with me, I'm with you, Pioneer Square
unseen above, the Tlingit Totem Pole
that arson torched re-carved with tribal blessings
and resentments tall against gray sky
toward which we'll climb, in time. . . . Finally, the steep
drop of the catwalk's last stretch, more loose boards—
I gently touch your sleeve to hold you back,
and step ahead, decisive, vigilant
that you emerge unhurt, safe from the fears
that made you hesitate, give in once more,
and forge on by my side. . . . "Let me go first,"
I say, and mean it, as you watch me pass.

*—Ned Balbo*

Letter from Athens

# Going south

*by Dominic Green*

It was one of those natural confusions, the sort that occur when the taxi driver doesn't speak much of your language and you speak less of his. When I got into his cab at Venizelos Airport, I had asked for the Hotel Herodion, a tourist hotel at the southern foot of the Acropolis. My intention was to observe the intermingling effect of sunlight and smog on the Parthenon from either or both of the Herodion's rooftop jacuzzis. The driver took me to a slum near the bus station whose residents demonstrated the intermingling effect of state failure, human trafficking, and incompetent border policing. Two men of Bangladeshi mien sat on the step, observing us with the fearful hostility of those whose papers might not entirely be in order.

"No hotel," the driver observed.

I dug out my Rough Guide, and found a map. The jabbing of the finger elicited the slapping of the forehead. How we laughed as we sank back into the coagulated traffic of late afternoon Athens. As he unloaded my bag at the Herodion, he said something which I took to mean, "After all these years of driving a taxi, I can't believe I confused you with them, and this with that." He refused to charge me for the detour, even though it was as much my fault as his. He seemed genuinely pleased to have delivered me into what we both considered to be the good and desirable part of his city, a city of which he could be proud and I enamored.

Over the next two weeks, I experienced frequent variations on this episode. There are two kinds of people in Greece these days, just as there are in every European country, the legals and the illegals. And there are two kinds of encounter, the desired and undesired.

In good times, it takes some effort to obtain an illegal or undesired experience in Europe. You have to go looking for it, by booking a cheap hotel by the railway station, or attending one of those spontaneous urban festivities which culminate around sunset in a little light rioting, or visiting a peripheral neighborhood and telling people that you are Jewish. But these are not good times in Europe, so you never quite know what you're going to get.

Last summer, I took my family to Italy. One morning, my children and I were sitting at a cafe in the Adriatic resort town of Fano. A young African man wove through the tables, and silently inserted a tray of cigarette lighters between my chin and my Americano.

"No, thank you," I said. "I don't smoke."

"How can you treat me like a goat?" he shouted.

Clearly, he was not referring to being petted or milked, or exploited by artisanal cheesemakers in Vermont. He felt like a synecdochal male of the species: the scapegoat, the "goat of sacrifice" in the wilderness, the Satan. He was, as male goats often are, at the end of his tether.

I could see that my children were scared by his anger, and the idea that their father would defy the canons of children's literature, and take people for animals. Fortunately, as the lighter vendor turned to the next table, a much older African man manifested into the same spot, offering collapsible fans with the

crushed courtesy of someone who had grown up in a French colony. I bought three.

He was from Senegal, had cataracts in both eyes, and looked a hundred years old. His vision was so bad and his legs so weak that when he bent down to pick up one of the fans, he nearly fell over. Only after he had shuffled off did we realize that in bending over he had dropped his money.

This time, my children really were upset. We walked around the town until we found him again, sitting in the gutter, his wares laid out on a piece of cardboard. It felt good to give him his money. It made up for the goat business.

I came to Athens alone, to lead a dozen members of the Patrick Leigh Fermor Society on a two-week tour called "In Paddy's Footsteps." We had the sense not to follow the great pedestrian's actual footsteps, so much as stretch our legs while visiting key sites in his legend by air-conditioned coach. The first two days were in Athens. After that, with the exception of Heraklion in Crete, we would be avoiding the cities.

Greece remains a rural and regional society, in economy as in outlook. Sophisticated urbanites refer to "my village," as though they still reside in spirit on an island or a mountainside. Since 2008, while immigrants have swollen London's population to its largest yet, the population of Athens has fallen from roughly 6.5 million to 5.5 million. Some have returned to their families and farms, for lodging and food as the welfare system disintegrates. Others, especially the young and the qualified, have emigrated. I heard the words "lost generation" several times. Lost, that is, in the sense of wasted skills and energy, rather than drifting around Europe like Gerald Murphy.

In the Eighties, Tel Aviv was like Athens without the antiquities. Two old-new cities for the Levant's middleman minorities. Dust and construction drills by day; the massed whine of mopeds at night; thin-walled concrete apartment blocks thrown together for survivors of massacre and refugees from imperial collapse. Now, with high-tech Herzliya generating more money than oranges and avocados ever could, Tel Aviv is rebuilding itself as high-rise apartments and offices, organic restaurants and hip nightclubs. Athens is dirty, and coming apart at the seams.

Shop windows are boarded up. There is graffiti everywhere, reviving the old double act of the swastika and the hammer and sickle. No one wears new clothes: this season's look, as it has been for the last eight years, is Spring 2008. The official unemployment rate has more than doubled since 2008, and is lodged around 23 percent. The employment prospects of young people are catastrophic. Fifty percent of young Greeks cannot find work.

The migrants are not coming in the same numbers as last year. The dubiously legal deal in which the European Union forcibly returns paperless migrants to Turkey has driven the human traffickers to seek alternative routes into Europe. But some 55,000 migrants are still hopelessly stranded here, in camps around the country. The Greek state cannot afford to house or clothe them, and it lacks the administrative capacity to process their asylum applications. The European Union states have committed to accept them, but are doing their utmost not to. Both parties are pushing the problem out of sight.

The pop-up shanty town at Victoria Square in central Athens has been erased, and its inhabitants shunted into camps on the city's periphery. More than two thousand people are living in the Hellenikon stadium, built for the field hockey events of the 2004 Athens Olympics. Others are warehoused at the industrial suburb of Scaramanga. Another depository, a terminal at Athens's old airport, has been emptied, pending the site's redevelopment. While the name Scaramanga may evoke cartoon villainy, the camps have become incubators for the worst kinds of criminality, including the prostitution of children. Early in the morning outside Scaramanga, families of migrants sit on the curb waiting for the bus, to commute into Athens to beg.

The Greek economy is a satire of its former disorder. The fringes of Athens are littered with unfinished buildings, their bare concrete frames poking skywards like upended chairs. On a shabby strip on the old road to

Eleusis, site of ancient Mysteries and modern refineries, the new stock exchange is the only finished building on its block. The expansion of the city stopped overnight in 2008. The stock exchange is stranded in the middle of nowhere, an irrelevant relic, like the Brothers Grimm hunting lodge across the road that Otto of Bavaria built so that he could pretend that Greece was really Germany.

In 1832, the British and French gave Otto the crown of the modern Greek state because he looked like a safe pair of hands, and because the son of a chieftain from the Mani, a lawless peninsula of the southwestern Peloponnese, had murdered the other claimant. Since the crash of 2008, the presidents of the European Union and the ministers of Angela Merkel's government have repeatedly pressed the bill for Greece's debts into the unsafe hands of the Greek government, along with some sharp advice on how to restructure the Greek economy. The optimists in Berlin and Brussels say that Greece will take thirty years to pay off its debts.

This life sentence is euphemized as "austerity," but it is killing Greece. In 2012, Greece made the largest sovereign debt default in history. In 2015, it became the first developed country to default on debt repayments to the International Monetary Fund. By then, Greece's public debt of 323 billion Euros was equivalent to 176.9 percent of GDP—enough debt for each Greek to owe about 30,000 Euros. The state has defaulted on retirees' pensions. The banks limit personal withdrawals to 400 Euros per week. Most of the railway network has been shut down. As for getting the trains to run on time, the crisis has turned the candidly fascist Golden Dawn from a fringe group of street agitators into the Greek parliament's third largest party.

How did this happen? As they used to say at Eleusis, it's a mystery.

The mystery lies less in how it happened, than in how it was allowed to happen.

Greece entered the Eurozone in 2001, under the leadership of Konstantinos Simitis and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). In 2004, Simitis's successor and rival, Konstantinos Karamanlis of the center-right New Democracy party, announced that Simitis's government had falsified its application. Under E.U. law, states using the Euro must keep their deficit to less than 3 percent of GDP. Greece claimed that its deficit was less than 1 percent of GDP. In 2011, an investigation by the E.U. Commission found that Greece had failed to meet the 3 percent condition every year since 2001.

Greece has two economies, the official and the unofficial. The official economy belongs to the state and a clique of oligarchic clients. Between 1995 and 2015, government spending averaged 49 percent of GDP; the opportunities for corruption are extensive. The unofficial economy belongs to everyone else. The state and its clients use the law to limit competition from the unofficial economy, and to force it to pay taxes. The result is that small everyday transactions are challenged by obstruction and stupidity.

A notice at the airport informs tourists that taxi drivers cannot charge more than thirty-eight Euros for the ride to central Athens, and that the meter must run throughout the journey. The second of these provisions suggests that the government is less interested in protecting tourists from being ripped off, and more in taxing the cash income of the drivers. When my driver went to the wrong neighborhood, the meter was at 37 Euros. To get me to the right destination without breaking the first law, the one about not charging me more than 38 Euros, he had to break the second, the one about running his meter.

Everyone, vendors and clients, is in the grip of a hostile system, so heavily legislated as to criminalize both parties. The only way to get things done is to sidestep the law, and enter a parallel world of nods and winks, blatant illegality and legal gamesmanship.

The further you go from Athens, the deeper you get. By the time you reach the southern extremities of the Peloponnese, you are through the looking glass. The shops still post the government mandated notice that customers are not obliged to pay for goods until they receive a receipt, but the receipt is neither offered nor requested. The till is kept open, so that cash can pass through without leaving a trace on the till

roll. You are in the European Union, but you cannot pay for gasoline with a credit card. When I rented a car from a local agency in Rethymnon, Crete, the clerk politely refused my offer of a credit card for security, and asked for cash.

The eccentricities of the Greek economy are no mystery. They are obvious to every tourist. If the experts in Brussels failed to see them, it is because they choose not to look, and preferred to sweep as many countries as possible into the Eurozone, regardless of economic fitness or cultural compatibility.

According to Max Weber, Europe's Protestant northerners manage their pocketbooks with the utmost propriety, while the feckless, lying, sex-mad southerners lounge around in the sun, playing with their credit cards. There is an obvious compatibility here between potential creditors and habitual debtors.

In the Nineties, when the European Union was in its phase of quasi-imperial expansion, the creditors in Brussels and Berlin offered the debtors of Europe's "southern tier" a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to trade in their weak national currencies for the Euro. In those distant days, the Euro was the future, the currency which would become an alternative to the U.S. dollar and return a united Europe to its rightful dominance in world affairs.

The northerners who run the European Union were determined to gobble up as many new provinces as they could. They were, and still are, convinced of their moral superiority to the southerners. Since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which laid the egg of a single Europe, economic collaboration has obliged the northerners to overcome their worst proclivities. Today, France and Germany can no longer go to war. The French can't afford it, and the Germans don't have enough tanks.

The northerners, in their end-of-history vanity, believed that once they had incorporated the southerners into their benign empire, the Euro-elixir would continue its work of moral reform. Prosperity would dissolve national differences. As with Bismarck's *Zollverein*, the European Union's economic borders would become its political ones.

The southerners could not believe their luck. They were being offered entry into a larger economy than that of the United States, and a stake in a major currency with an apparently limitless line of credit. Now, Greece is snared by the small print—the sacrifice of sovereignty, and the obligation to follow Germany's restrictive terms on running a deficit.

"We need a revolution!" Dolores Payas announces.

It is late at night at Kardamyli in the Mani. The tour group is sitting under the vines after dinner. Dolores translated Leigh Fermor's books into Spanish, and wrote a short memoir, *Drinks Time!*, about the experience. She lives between Kardamyli and Shanghai, where her partner works: different time zones, different economies. With the official economy strangulated by Greece's debt schedule, the unofficial economy is seceding.

"We can take 400 Euros out of the bank if we want," she says, "but there's nothing here to spend it on anyway. We live by exchanges, eggs for tomatoes, tomatoes for olives."

That afternoon, we had visited Leigh Fermor's house, a short walk through the olive grove adjoining our hotel. In the early Eighties, Leigh Fermor received an unscrupulous tax demand from the Greek government. He fended it off by bequeathing his house to the Benaki Museum of Athens. The Benaki was to run it as a writer's retreat and conference center. By the time of Leigh Fermor's death in 2011, the Benaki was unable to honor the agreement. In a microcosm of Greece's fatal romance with the Euro, the Benaki had taken on millions of Euros of debt in order to finance a hubristic expansion. Meanwhile, the house decayed.

This summer, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation stepped in to fund the repair of the house. This is the cultural equivalent of one of Golden Dawn's soup kitchens. Greece's institutions are failing. Historically, PASOK and New Democracy are the two pillars of modern Greek democracy. Since 2015, PASOK has fewer seats in the Hellenic Parliament than Golden Dawn. The pillar on the left is now supported by the hard-left Syriza ("From the Roots").

Syriza's name is an acronym derived from *Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás*: the Coalition of the Radical Left. Cometh the hour,

cometh Yanis Varoufakis, the British-educated economics professor who became Syriza's "rock star" finance minister. He wenteth on time too, though it is not yet clear where he is going. Varoufakis trained as an economist in Britain in the Eighties, and has taught in Australia and Texas. His analysis is standard-issue Euromarxist, but his prescriptions are almost Thatcherite.

In July 2015, Varoufakis, who had been leading Greece's debt negotiations with the "Troika" (the European Union, the European Central Bank, and the IMF), resigned after only seven months in the job. Varoufakis had argued that Greece had been insolvent since 2010. If Greece continued to take on new debts to finance payment on the bailouts of 2010 and 2012, it would keep defaulting. The priority had to be restructuring the Greek economy: setting up a development bank, encouraging public-private partnerships, and reducing the power of the oligarchy, which Varoufakis calls Greece's "greatest impediment to growth." None of this could be done without renegotiating the terms of the 2010 and 2012 bailouts, and Syriza had won the January 2015 election on a promise to do this.

The terms of the 2012 loan were due to expire on February 28, 2015. Varoufakis had exactly one month to reconcile Syriza's election promise with the payment demands of the creditors. In late February, Varoufakis returned from Brussels believing that he had succeeded. The northerners had agreed, he said, to extend Greece's credit for another four months. In that time, Syriza's government was to propose alternative solutions for reform and debt payment. He believed that the northerners had acknowledged the reality: Greece was bankrupt, the debt schedule was fantastical, and its economy had to be rebuilt.

If the northerners ever agreed, they changed their mind. The four-month period of grace turned into a sequence of sour negotiations. Although the Troika had different ideas on how to recover the loans, the northerners all agreed that Greece must pay. Germany preferred to fit Greece into a fiscal straitjacket than to risk a Weimar-style madness of hyperinflation. When the Syriza prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, accommodated the Troika, his cabinet split. In June 2015, Tsipras called a referendum, only the second since the 1974 vote to form a republic.

Varoufakis campaigned against Tsipras's deal. Sixty-one percent of voters agreed with him, and defied the European Union, the ECB, and the IMF. Nevertheless, it was Tsipras who stayed in office, and Varoufakis who resigned. Tsipras called another election, and retained Syriza's lead. Greece is still committed to the impossible repayment schedule that Varoufakis calls a "fiscal waterboarding." The biggest loan in history is loaded on the people least able to pay it. The title of his memoir of his brief but instructive time in office says it all: *And The Weak Suffer What They Must?*

"We are prisoners of the Germans," our tour guide says over lunch in Heraklion. "If we don't pay them and do what they say, they will cut us loose. Look at us: we're a small country, next to Turkey. If the Turks see that the European Union won't protect us, they'll open the gates and flood us with refugees. We're alone."

On the last day of the tour, I drive through a pass in the White Mountains, to the southern coast of Crete. The mountains slide into the sea. Stray goats and spindly, windswept olive trees cling to small pockets of soil. On the road near the foot of the Imbros Gorge, an old woman carrying two large baskets waves me down. She climbs into the passenger seat, the baskets on her lap, and starts talking.

Her name is Maria, and her Greek sounds almost Italian. Her dialect is a relic of the four centuries in which the Venetians occupied Crete. She is on her way to catch a bus over the mountains to Rethymnon on the northern coast. Her son is a doctor there, so she is taking a four-hour bus trip to deliver two baskets of cooked food. She tells me to drop her at Frangokástello, a town whose name, "The Castle of the Franks," dates to an earlier occupation. I am on my way to the beach at Rodákino.

"Leigh Fermor! Kreipe! *Bravo*!" she says, and claps her hands.

In 1944, Leigh Fermor, a fellow British officer named William Stanley Moss, and a

group of Cretan partisans kidnapped Heinrich Kreipe, the commander of the German garrison. Dressed as German soldiers, Leigh Fermor and Moss drove the general through twenty-two German checkpoints, then dumped his car and headed into the mountains. Hundreds of ordinary Cretans aided the kidnappers; in remote villages in the Amari Valley, we met old people who as children had risked the lives of their entire village by running messages and food to the fugitives. After several weeks, a Royal Navy motor launch extracted the party and Kreipe from the beach at Rodákino, and carried them to Egypt.

"Brexit?" many Greeks asked when they heard my English accent. "First Brexit, then Grexit!" Their thinking is that the European Union can bully a small economy like Greece, but must accommodate a major one like Britain. I fear this may be too reasonable, and too optimistic. The European Union may well accommodate Britain, but the bully's logic would be to sacrifice Greece, *pour encourager les autres*.

Greece is the Micawber of Europe, perpetually hoping that something will turn up. Nobody I met thought that a democracy can sustain the current limbo of debt and unemployment. Nobody thought that Syriza could repair the ship of state in such heavy waters. Some thought that leaving the European Union was just a question of time, and that it was more dignified to jump than be pushed. There would be a few tough years under a revived *drachma*, but if the *drachma* was priced cheaply enough to pay down the Eurodebt . . . In the last act of a Greek tragedy, there is no clear path forward, only the certainty of more pain.

I drop Maria at Frangokástello, and drive on to Rodákino. In the cafe next to the memorial on the beach, I find the tour party, eating fried anchovies with a retired lieutenant-colonel in the Greek special forces. The sand is hot under my toes, the Libyan Sea a luminous blue. The coast of Africa is three hundred miles to the south, beyond a horizon dissolved by a heat haze. Somewhere on the other side, a smuggler steers an overladen boat into the current that will carry his human cargo to southern Italy. This is the southernmost coast of Europe, and the end of our road. I step into the water.

Washington journal

# The museums we deserve

*by Bruce Cole*

In an era when zillionaires strut their hipness, and boost their investment portfolio, by snapping up the latest follies of Jeff Koons, Tracey Emin, or Maurizio Cattelan, it's good to be reminded that vast wealth is not always synonymous with bad taste.

Consider the case of Paul Mellon (1907–1999), whose visionary philanthropy is now being commemorated by Washington's National Gallery.

"In Celebration of Paul Mellon" features eighty-eight dazzling drawings, watercolors, prints, and books (mostly nineteenth- and twentieth-century French, British, and American) in observance of the museum's seventy-fifth anniversary.[1]

The National Gallery was founded and largely paid for by Paul's father, Andrew, a wealthy banker, the Ambassador to the Court of St. James, and Secretary of the Treasury in the administrations of Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover, the three presidents who, it was said, "served under him."

In 1937, despite the fact that the Roosevelt administration had unsuccessfully prosecuted him for tax evasion, Andrew Mellon gave his important collection of paintings to the people of the United States, along with $10 million to house it in John Russell Pope's brilliant neo-classical gallery (neither Mellon nor Pope, who died twenty-four hours apart, lived to see it completed).

His great act of democratic beneficence was the spark for many other major donations, all carefully overseen by the three visionary leaders of the museum: the founding director, David Finley, his successor, John Walker III, and his formidable protégé, John Carter Brown.

Paul Mellon, unlike his father, sought no public office, nor did he follow him into the banking trade. But like Andrew, he was a major benefactor. He enriched the Gallery with endowments and works of art (over a thousand of them) and served on its board for many years. In an act of philanthropic symmetry, he paid for an I. M. Pei–designed wing just to the east of the original classical building. But, in what was perhaps an act of filial independence, Paul's building is modernist, severe, all sharp angles and devoid of ornament, in stark contrast to his father's classically inspired museum. Unlike the many donors who now give for ego only, the Mellons did not want their names on the buildings of the National Gallery: their gifts were for the nation, not themselves.

A bit of a late bloomer, Paul Mellon was already in his fifties when he started to collect in earnest. He had been interested in English art and literature since his days as a student at Cambridge University, but it was a chance meeting with the art historian Basil Taylor that sent him (aided by Bunny, his second wife) on the path to becoming a distinguished collector, especially of British art. In the 1960s he was the major creative and financial force behind

1 "In Celebration of Paul Mellon" opened at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., on May 8 and remains on view through September 18, 2016.

the Yale Center for British Art, the institution that created an American appreciation of the then-neglected works of our mother country's painters and sculptors.

Paul Mellon had an instinctive sense for quality and very deep pockets. He demanded, and got, superb examples of first-rate works. But, above all, he collected because he loved art. "He never," he said, "bought a picture as an investment, except as an investment in pleasure." He modestly called himself "an amateur connoisseur of art," a statement belied by his brilliant acquisitions, many assembled for his private collection before he gave them to the National Gallery.

Throughout the exhibition, brief wall texts with quotations from Mellon about his collecting link him with visitors, a very nice touch indeed, while the limited number of works allows them to study the choice, small-scale objects (many no larger than a sheet of paper) at leisure.

The curators rightly decided not to hang the works in the usual chronological or thematic order. Mellon bought what he liked. He was not a systematic, scholarly, or dogmatic collector, and the works here are of widely different subjects, dates, and media. Seen side-by-side, the visitors get a vivid sense of the eclectic, highly personal way he collected; this also encourages them to make their own contrasts and comparisons between varying eras, styles, materials, and artists.

Several artists are represented by multiple works. A half-dozen enchanting watercolors by Winslow Homer, especially a shimmering depiction of two boys wading and a luminous, wind-blown scene of berry pickers, are alone worth a visit to the National Gallery. There are multiple sheets by Claude Monet (four) and Pablo Picasso (five), and two glowing watercolors by J. M. W. Turner. The twentieth century is well represented by Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, Giorgio Morandi, and Georges Braque, among others.

Mellon said that he bought portraits because he was fascinated by the "sitter's character, air of intelligence, or hint of humor." Would "he like her or him?"

This interest in character is evident in the many portraits he acquired. Three graphite sketches by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, notably a self-portrait and drawing of the architect Henri Labrouste, portray their sitters' pensive faces with an economy and delicacy of touch that astounds. A pencil sketch (strongly influenced by Ingres) of René de Gas by the young Edgar Degas is one of eleven works by him, including depictions of Lydia Cassatt and her artist sister Mary. Mary's large pastel portrait of a woman in a black hat, a blaze of vivid blue and black, is also here. Self-portraits by Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse further demonstrate Mellon's unerring and eclectic eye.

To get such prizes, Paul Mellon had to be a strong competitor in the art market, an attribute he also brought to sports, especially to his championship fox hunting.

Several sheets in the show reflect his keen interest in competitive sports. There are boxing scenes by George Bellows and Théodore Géricault, and three bold preparatory drawings (one chalk and two charcoal) of jockeys by Degas. Executed with a sure and fluid touch, they must have appealed to both Mellon's sporting and aesthetic interests.

Choice, modest, and timely, "In Celebration of Paul Mellon" is a fitting tribute to him, and to the institution he loved: *si monumentum requiris, circumspice.*

I'd hazard a guess that Mr. Mellon would not be pleased by what's happened just up the street at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery (NPG).

Although the NPG shares the splendid Old Patent Office with the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, it has always existed in the shadow of its bigger sister.

Kim Sajet, who came to the NPG three years ago after a successful tenure at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (despite budgetary woes), is determined to move out of that shadow while casting a klieg light on herself and her institution.

Recently, she told *The Washington Post* that she "thinks bigger" than "she ever did before" and that "big gesture is important. The vision thing, right?" Sajet said that she's "not good at safe," and that she is "very much about

experimentation." "You know," she asserted, "nothing is a sacred cow. Let's look at breaking down the hierarchies, experimenting, and piloting things."

Unfortunately, much of this "piloting" detracts from the museum's mission, which is to collect, exhibit, and explain, carefully and soberly, portraits of Americans from all eras who have made a lasting and substantial contribution to the nation. Instead, Sajet seems fixated with fashion, pop culture, and gimmicky attention-grabbing, star-studded events intended to attract well-heeled donors and promote the museum as "hip"—a word not usually associated with Washington, D.C.

Part of this campaign is the NPG's "Portrait of a Nation Award," whose recipients are represented in the museum's collection. At a 2015 black-tie dinner, which the *Washingtonian* called a "high gloss event," the prizes went to Hank Aaron, Aretha Franklin, Maya Lin, the Medal of Honor winner Kyle Carpenter, and Carolina Herrera, all notable Americans with sterling achievements. Sajet, wearing a borrowed Herrera ball gown, proclaimed that, "in the age of the selfie, we have embraced and changed the meaning of portraiture"—a statement that just might be meaningful to those whose understanding of the ancient art of portraiture extends no further than the tips of their selfie sticks.

Admirably, the event raised over $150 million for the museum, but the fear is that the funds will be used to further the director's cult of contemporary celebrity, so clearly seen in three NPG events.

"Hollywood and *Time*: Celebrity Covers" displays "largely recognizable celebrity images" from Tinsel Town culled from the magazine's famous cover art.[2] A "curatorial statement" informs us that the covers were chosen "based in part on the prominence of sitters and artists, on gender, and on identity" (whatever that may mean in this context). Notice: gender, prominence, and "identity," but not a word about the stars' lasting contribution to the nation. The statement also apologizes for not showing the black Oscar winners Hattie McDaniel and Sidney Poitier because they "like most Oscar winners never appear inside *Time*'s red borders."

The NPG has also launched a new performance art series entitled "Identify." Sajet has asked the artists, according to *The Washington Post*, "to examine issues of race and gender as well as their personal and family histories to present a new kind of active portrait through music, movement and monologue." It's unclear if selfies will be featured.

The second celebrity jamboree at the NPG was "Eye Pop: The Celebrity Gaze," on view last spring.[3] The trendy title is baffling: what exactly is "Eye Pop" (an ocular disorder?), and how does the "celebrity gaze" (whatever that may mean) differ from the gaze of less famous mortals? But none of this matters because the fifty-three portraits of contemporary luminaries "who have been at the top of their fields" are what the NPG hopes would attract attention to "Eye Pop," which, it claimed, "allow[ed] us to question celebrity and peel back its layers."

There are portraits of Barack and Michelle Obama, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Brad Pitt, Eminem, Eva Longoria, Serena Williams, and Kobe Bryant. An entire wall is devoted to a large icon-like painting of the pop singer Katy Perry, herself the garish embodiment of celebrity culture. Most of the wall labels accompanying the portraits are just brief notes in English, and Spanish, on the life and deeds of the sitters. There is little information about the portraitists, and scant discussion of their art.

The third NPG celebrity shindig is a single painting: the British artist Jonathan Yeo's portrait of Kevin Spacey as the evil President Francis Underwood, the star of "House of Cards," Netflix's blockbuster television series.

The over-life-sized image was unveiled in an evening event for an invited audience. Spacey, Yeo, members of the Washington

2 "Hollywood and *Time*: Celebrity Covers" opened at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C., on April 1 and remains on view through September 11, 2016.

3 "Eye Pop: The Celebrity Gaze" was on view at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C., from May 22, 2015, through July 10, 2016.

Press Corps, and other notables attended, and Netflix produced a video of the fictional President Underwood's motorcade arriving at the ceremony. Following the presentation, the audience watched the first episode of the new season of "House of Cards."

Sajet told the audience:

> Now "binge watching" television has put control into the hand of consumers, who can watch their favorite shows at their leisure. Not only does it reflect the impact of popular contemporary culture on America's story but it also exemplifies the fine art tradition of actors portrayed in their roles.

What exactly that means and what it has to do with the NPG's mission is uncertain. It is clear, however, that it's another indication of Sajet's pursuit of celebrities. And one might, of course, also question the propriety of the NPG's promotions of Netflix.

The NPG was authorized by Congress to acquire and display portraits of "men and women who have made significant contributions to the history, development, and culture of the people of the United States."

But evidently the current "mission" of Sajet's museum, as a wall text proclaims, is "to tell the story of America by portraying the people who shape the nation's history, development, and culture."

This shift from the past tense ("have made") to the present tense ("who shape") reflects a 2000 decision by the museum to include living Americans in the collection. This was unwise. A century from now, Condoleezza Rice and the founders of Google will probably be seen as shapers of American life, and thus worthy of a place in the national collection of portraits. But many others enshrined by the NPG, such as the snowboarder Shaun White, the skateboarder Tony Hawk, the dancer and performance artist Dana Tai Soon Burgess, Katy Perry, or even Kevin Spacey, may well be ephemeral figures consigned, if at all, to the dusty corners of the American story. Much of what the NPG is now acquiring is current events (much of it politically correct), not history.

"My aspiration," Sajet has said modestly, "is to turn on its head the traditional notions of portraiture as commemorating the dead, to that of living people recognizing and identifying with the lives of the people they meet through amazing art."

At an event in Georgetown last year, Sajet called a self-portrait made of grains of rice "a kind of fun house full of ideas about how people see themselves, are seen by others, and remembered." And, she added, "there's room almost for everybody."

It may be a fun house, but it's not what Congress voted for or what our citizens deserve.

Reconsiderations

# "The Backwash of War" at 100

*by Malcolm Forbes*

Some of the most famous factual and fictional accounts of the Great War are by those who fought in it, suffered its horrors, and lived to tell their tales. By coincidence or design, many classic works appeared in a clump in 1929, a decade after the Treaty of Versailles: Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*, Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, Frederic Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune* and, possibly the best of them all, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The same year saw the publication of two very different books by two American novelists who drew on war experience of another nature: *A Farewell to Arms* by a former ambulance driver on the Italian front, and *The Forbidden Zone* by Mary Borden, a nurse who ran a French Army field hospital in Belgium—both cases being vital reminders that in war lives can be saved as well as lost.

There was, however, one singular book about the war that was written and published as it raged. Ellen N. La Motte penned the thirteen fictionalized vignettes that comprise *The Backwash of War* between 1915 and 1916 while working at Borden's military field hospital. *The Atlantic Monthly* published some of those sketches separately, and then in 1916 they were collected together in one volume. This year marks the book's centenary—and yet few know it.

For *The Backwash of War* remains something of an overlooked or underappreciated curio. La Motte's current standing is as a minor, marginalized, or downright obscure figure, a pale imitation of better known nurses-turned-writers such as Borden and Vera Brittain. But to ignore her valuable contribution to First World War literature is to be deprived of a graphic, vivid, and incisive portrait of human barbarity and folly, conflict and compassion. One hundred years on, a reappraisal—which for many will be more a case of discovering than revisiting—seems not only apt but also necessary.

La Motte was born in Louisville in 1873 and studied nursing at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. After graduating she stayed on as a supervising nurse, and later moved on to take up nursing posts in both Italy and Missouri. She returned to Baltimore in 1905 to work as an Instructive Visiting Nurse specializing in the treatment of tuberculosis, and it was from here that La Motte's career took off and her reputation spread. By 1913, she was Superintendant of the Tuberculosis Division of the Baltimore Health Department (and the first woman to hold an executive position there); in the same year she took a leave of absence and widened her expertise by reporting for *The Baltimore Sun* on the agenda, and the plight, of suffragettes in London; and in 1914 she combined her writing and medical skills, and consolidated her status, with the publication of her first book, *The Tuberculosis Nurse*.

When war broke out, La Motte became one of thousands of American women who volunteered to help in Europe. She wrote to her friend Gertrude Stein in Paris for advice. Stein gives her a mention in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*: "Ellen La Motte was an ex Johns Hopkins nurse, wanted to nurse

near the front. She was still gun shy but she did want to nurse at the front." Following an unproductive stint at the American Hospital in Paris where she felt her efforts were squandered, La Motte met Borden and decided to join her team at her field hospital. Based just ten kilometers from the front line, La Motte quickly overcame her gun-shyness.

In her introduction to *The Backwash of War* (a book that is dedicated to Borden, "the little boss"), La Motte records the boredom she endured in the hospital during periods of ceasefire and deadlock. "The slow onward progress stirs up the slime in the shallows," she writes, "and this is The Backwash of War. It is very ugly. There are many little lives foaming up in the backwash. They are loosened by the sweeping current, and float to the surface, detached from their environment, and one glimpses them, weak, hideous, repellent." And so La Motte starts as she means to go on. Instead of soft-focus, propagandistic tales of valor she shows us "the other side"—gritty, grainy snapshots of war in all its filth, tedium, and merciless waste.

The book begins with a bang. A soldier, unable to tolerate his ordeal any longer, fires a revolver through the roof of his mouth. But he botches his suicide and, screaming in pain due to a torn-out eye and a bullet lodged in his cranium, is admitted to the *Salle* of the *Grands Blessés* to join other seriously wounded soldiers—the difference being these men are all fighting to survive. In a later sketch we learn of a young pilot who successfully killed himself by flying while drunk. "There is a dirty sediment at the bottom of most souls," La Motte notes. "War, superb as it is, is not necessarily a filtering process, by which men and nations may be purified."

Another sketch, "The Interval," sees La Motte transcribing the cyclical, mechanical rhythm of war. "This is the day of an attack. Yesterday was the day of an attack. The day before was the day of an attack." An endless procession of ambulances and stretcher-bearers deliver fresh supplies of "broken, ruined men" to the operating room. La Motte and her team fall in and work like automatons, slaves to an awful, numbing, uninterrupted routine. When men die they replace the bloody sheets with clean ones and wait for "the next agonizing man." The title of the piece refers not to an eventual lull in hostilities but to the brief stage before a dying breath—a short, messy limbo, a small patch of no-man's land where a floundering man is rendered "gross, absurd, fantastic."

In *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Remarque's ground-down soldiers are gradually dehumanized, to the point where the narrator declares: "We have turned into human animals." In *Parade's End*, Ford Madox Ford makes his soldiers even more inanimate, showing them tossed around "as if they were nuts willfully picked up and thrown over the shoulder by magpies." La Motte employs a different technique. While her nurse—clearly modeled on herself—remains anonymous and unknowable throughout, her patients are named and fleshed out. Though barely breathing, they are duly brought alive. The effect is striking. We witness cannon fodder with a face, a personality, a background. In being presented with a fleeting glimpse of a life, there is a particular poignancy when it is ultimately and prematurely snuffed out.

The book's ragtag cast of shell-shocked, battle-scarred men includes Marius, a Paris taxi-driver in happier days, who pollutes the ward with the stench of his wounds and his foul tirades against anyone in his vicinity, and Rochard ("Little man, gardener by trade, aged thirty-nine, widower, with one child!"), also afflicted with gas gangrene, who dies alone and unloved. Rollin winds down while staring at his medals hanging above him, and Grammont fades out twenty minutes before he is due to receive the *Croix de Guerre*. Only once, in the ironically titled "A Surgical Triumph," do we encounter an unknown soldier. La Motte's focus here, however, is on Antoine, a Paris hairdresser, and his devastation on visiting the hospital and viewing his mangled, limbless wreck of a son.

Not every parent reacts the same way. A ten-year-old Belgian boy is caught in crossfire and bawls for his mother, but when she is summoned to see her dying son she comes reluctantly, annoyed at being dragged away from her family. After giving her son a perfunctory

kiss, she asks to be taken back to Ypres—and with that, La Motte's tragedy in miniature is complete. Other women—wives, lovers—are denied such cameos, for they are deemed bad for the morale of soldiers and so not permitted into the war zone. Prostitutes from Paris are also not admitted, although as La Motte informs us with a rare display of primness, "the Belgian girls made such fools of themselves, the others weren't needed."

In the main, La Motte's tone is simple and direct, bordering on blunt. Her nurse is of the no-nonsense variety, and her duties and her challenges are conveyed starkly, unsparingly, with warts-and-all detail. When cracks appear in the stoic façade and emotion trickles through, it is largely frustration at shoddy conditions and procedures. The dearth of good doctors at the field hospital, all being either too old or too inexperienced, leads La Motte to remark that in order to care for the wounded at all, "it was necessary to furbish up the immature and the senile." On occasion that frustration hardens into disgust. German shells have made the men in her care "ludicrous, repulsive." Many moan pathetically for their "stupid little wives." At one low ebb, while tending to a wounded deserter, she evaluates her "dead-end occupation" and wonders what is more futile: "nursing back to health men to be patched up and returned to the trenches, or a man to be patched up, court-martialed and shot?"

This kind of demoralizing depiction of the consequences of war ruffled feathers once American soldiers began fighting and dying on the Western Front, and in 1918 La Motte's book was banned—or, as she put it, "suppressed"—by the American government. By that point, she was no longer in Europe. Two years earlier, finally exhausted by frontline nursing, she left for China where she saw first-hand the destruction caused by the opium trade. Over the next couple of decades she went on to publish three books on the topic, together with several collections of stories inspired by her travels in Asia. She died in Washington, D.C. in 1961.

If La Motte's books on tuberculosis and opium are learned, meticulously researched manuals on how to alleviate human suffering, then at first glance *The Backwash of War* feels slight in comparison. Rather than an in-depth, far-reaching study, it is a short, restricted, eyewitness testimony—a mere chronicle of chaos. But while La Motte could only do so much, she did it well and charted it powerfully, trenchantly, and memorably. Instead of answers, she gives us insight. Hope is in short supply throughout (no one in the field hospital could have believed this was the war to end all wars), cynicism reigns supreme, and grim scenes are made even grimmer by "the everlasting Belgian rain"—but a century on and the book remains a compelling and original account of the casualties of war.

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## Forthcoming in *The New Criterion*:

Capability Brown: the genius of the place *by Nicola Shulman*
The letters of Bishop & Lowell *by Richard Tillinghast*
Tocqueville's English correspondence *by S. J. D. Green*
The Thomas Blood affair *by Justin Zaremby*
Turquoise Mountain *by Peter Pennoyer*

Theater

# Gray whiskers

*by Kyle Smith*

Were Thomas Stearns Eliot to return to us today, it would be a delight to inform him of the flourishing existence of an honorable successor to his 1922–1939 arts journal *The Criterion*. Other likely topics of conversation would have to be handled more diplomatically.

"So," one imagines the poet asking, "Which of my works has proved the most durable with the public?"

Shifty glances all around. "Well . . . "

"Is it *The Waste Land*? Surely it's *The Waste Land*?"

"Er, not that one . . . "

"*Prufrock* then? Not surprising, really."

"Actually, it was upon the stage that you achieved your widest reach."

"*Murder in the Cathedral*! I knew it!"

*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, Eliot's volume of light verse intended for his godchildren, appeared in 1939, a few months after Eliot shuttered *The Criterion*. The book was a childhood favorite of the composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, who in the late 1970s began setting its poems to pop-rock music. As if on a dare, the unlikely resulting musical *Cats* appeared on stage in London in 1981 and on Broadway in 1982, establishing that an elaborate gimmick could command the imaginations of throngs of theatergoers. For nearly a decade, the show topped the list of Broadway's longest-running productions, but after closing in 2000 it was surpassed by Lloyd Webber's own *The Phantom of the Opera*. It remains fourth on the list.

Now *Cats* has returned to Broadway (at the Neil Simon Theatre), purring with nostalgia. Also returning are the original director (Trevor Nunn), much the same set (a junkyard, a spare tire), similar costumes right down to the leg warmers, and choreography (by Andy Blankenbuehler) that so closely mimics the original that it is credited as "based on the original choreography by Gillian Lynne." Even the logo, once inescapable, is the same. Can we bring back Reagan too?

Not without reason, *Cats* has inspired heaps of critical derision. It is by turns glitzy, manic, maudlin, and jejune. Its sense of humor is broad. Yet the show is so brazenly itself, so dismissive of the ordinary preoccupations and imperatives of the theater, that it should no more be compared with, say, a Stephen Sondheim musical than a hammer should be compared with a tennis racket. Other musicals deploy dancing, sets, songs, and costumes in service of a story; in *Cats* these things stand proudly by themselves, unburdened by narrative. It is in essence a kitty revue, a celebration of the raw elements of theater rather than of Eliot's words, which are not among his finest. It's aimed at children, tourists with uncertain command of English, and the part of the brain that marvels at bright, shiny things.

Those who can't check their minds at the door should steer clear, but as a sense-bomb extravagance, the show is enjoyable enough. Think of it as a ballet performed against a collection of adorable, twinkly songs. The opening number, "Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats," establishes a mood of restrained silliness appropriate for a 1930s kids' book: "Practical

cats, dramatical cats/ Pragmatical cats, fanatical cats," sings the chorus as the dancer-actors frolic up and down the aisles making eye contact with individual audience members, daring them not to be entertained. The dancers' movements—now gymnastic, now sinuous, always fluid—are extravagantly pleasing, as is the tune.

Like a sort of G-rated *Chorus Line*, the show goes on to give each of the principal characters his own song-portrait. Bustopher Jones (Christopher Gurr), for instance, is a tubby, clubby chap (Eliot drops in a reference to P. G. Wodehouse's Drones Club) who cuts a figure about town in his silky black coat. "No common-place mousers have such well cut trousers/ Or such an impeccable back," we learn. Rum Tum Tugger (Tyler Hanes) is a fickle free spirit: "Oh, when you let me in, then I want to go out/ I'm always on the wrong side of every door." In a pas de deux, the almost-identical boy-girl pair Mungojerrie (Jess LeProtto) and Rumpleteazer (Shonica Gooden) sing of their thieving ways. Their wriggling and mewling and shouting marked, for me, the show's most meretricious point but it's all good-humored enough, in the manner of something you'd see at Walt Disney World. Most of the songs are conveyed with much gliding and clambering and scampering about the set, a thoroughly imagined junkyard with ladders and slides and hidden chambers for introducing this or that soloist.

Amid all the ebullience there is a threnody of woe: it connects the patriarchal Old Deuteronomy (Quentin Earl Darrington), no longer his frisky self—he could hardly be otherwise, wearing a gargantuan costume that looks like a diabetic yak—and the lonely, aging Grizabella (inexplicably portrayed by the thirty-one-year-old British pop singer Leona Lewis, who furthermore is making her stage debut). To the extent any plot unifies the show, it's Deuteronomy's search for a cat deemed worthy of ascension to "the Heaviside layer," a reference to a portion of the atmosphere that serves as Eliot's allegory for heaven. Though unmentioned in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, it did appear in a then-unpublished letter Eliot's widow Valerie made available to Lloyd Webber, providing the composer with an idea for a wisp of structure. Eliot also mentioned the Heaviside layer in his 1939 play *The Family Reunion*.

As the evening goes on, Grizabella emerges as the piteous figure who is most in need of graduating to the Heaviside layer, explaining her troubles to us in the indelible (some would say unforgivable) ballad "Memory," heard in both a truncated version at the end of Act I and again in the closing minutes of the show. Based on Eliot's poems "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," the ballad is one of Broadway's loveliest melodies, though its lyrics have well earned their reputation as mawkish fare for self-pitying divas. Eliot's original words did not bathe in sentiment, and despite his widow's blessing it's reasonable to think he would be mortified to learn that these two brooding, sometimes scathing, poems had been transmogrified into great preening anthems of insistent endurance. Eliot's poems, characterized by such thoughts as "The memory throws up high and dry/ A crowd of twisted things" and "A washed-out smallpox cracks her face" have been fed into the Broadway machine to emerge as fully weaponized Barbra Streisand-isms such as

> Daylight
> I must wait for the sunrise
> I must think of a new life
> And I mustn't give in
> And
> If you touch me
> You'll understand what happiness is
> Look a new day has begun.

"Hope? What is all this business about *hope*?" one imagines Eliot demanding. Among Eliot's many readers, some of the most prominent ones evidently possessed more admiration than understanding.

A somewhat more nuanced exegesis of aging, decline, and theoretical renewal is on offer in the excellent *A Day by the Sea* (at the Beckett Theatre through September 24), an agreeably pensive and autumnal play colored by regret but not despair. It identifies at life's midpoint a moment for mental inventory-taking but also for restock-

ing. "At forty it is natural to look back and look foward, to measure progress, to compare past hopes and present realities," wrote the playwright N. C. Hunter (1908–71) in a note accompanying the play. "And if the comparison brings little comfort, there is always this to remember: it is late, but it is not too late. There is still time, at forty, to do what is still undone."

The play is presented by the Mint Theatre Company, a vigorous counter-current to the flow of New York drama. Mint presents only forgotten yet first-rate plays, the ones that remind us that a work need not be new to be fresh. The lambent *A Day by the Sea*, which in its original 1953 London production starred John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, follows Mint's production three years ago of Hunter's *A Taste of Autumn* (1951).

Hunter—decorous, unshowy, yet gently probing—today is remembered by only the few, but he enjoyed considerable success at mid-century, before he and his kind were swept away by the bilious tides of the Angry Young Men. Sixty years later, theater is having itself a think about the relative value of these bolshie playwrights and the drawing-room-Tory dramatists whose tastefully restrained, often ruefully humorous upper-middle-class pieces began to bore certain critics by the late 1950s. *The Observer*'s tyrannical but influential theater critic Kenneth Tynan dismissed Hunter's sort of play as "Fashionable artistic territory where the minor gripes and peccadilloes of the English middle class are interminably pondered and analyzed." (Could such a milieu ever have been fashionable? *Autres temps, autres moeurs.*)

Yet just as the rant-inflected work of John Osborne (*Look Back in Anger*, 1956) has come to seem dated, theater writers have lately been giving a second look to the unashamedly posh Terence Rattigan, author of *The Browning Version* (1948) and *Separate Tables* (1954). Perhaps Norman Charles Hunter, Rattigan's fellow chronicler of muted hopes, can expect a similar uptick in his fortunes.

Julian Anson (briskly played by Julian Elfer) is an intensely focused forty-year-old diplomat who, on a visit to his mother's seaside house for a few days of supposed recreation, proves unable to let go of the job he thinks is far more important than it is. Scowling on the veranda in a dark three-piece suit, he shares some barbed moments with Frances (Katie Firth), a divorced and widowed mother of two who grew up alongside him on the same property, where she was taken in as an orphan.

We know Julian is a blighter from the moment we cast our gaze upon him—Elfer plays him as a clot and a cloud, a man who darkens everything in the vicinity. He has spent a lifetime making a fundamental social error: He is a talentless swot. He works too hard and achieves too little. He emits fumes not of mere mediocrity, which can be tolerable or even agreeable, but of mediocrity achieved strugglingly. Now he is about to discover how peers see him. During the second act's picnic on the beach he arranges a meeting with a visiting superior (Sean Gormley) from the foreign office, who gently but firmly informs Julian that he isn't well-liked and is being withdrawn early from his Paris posting. Gormley's Humphrey Caldwell—gray but not careworn, his eye twinkling with amusement—epitomizes the well-bred success, the man whose brilliance is in his personality rather than his work. In a telling remark, Caldwell explains that most jobs (at least, we are meant to understand, in the civil service) don't require any particular drive or zeal. Simply being bearable can make all the difference to a career trajectory.

Julian's mother Laura (a finely modulated Jill Tanner) has been gently prodding him to mend his personality for some time. As the day limps on and Julian's moribund uncle David (George Morfogen) fades in and out of sleep, it emerges that Frances, a widow and mother of two who is estranged from her second husband, had a terrible crush on Julian the entire time they were growing up together, and that the children's kindly Scottish governess Miss Mathieson (Polly McKie) has designs on David's alcoholic physician, Farley (Philip Goodwin), who tends to deliver gin-induced soliloquies of little coherence. Act III promises several collisions of reality and expectation.

All very Chekhovian, and even in his time Hunter was sometimes brushed off as counterfeit Dr. C.—a knockhov. But does Chekhov hold the exclusive exploratory rights to the

bruised souls and repressed longings of mildly auto-delusional burghers? I say no, and even at nearly three hours (with two intermissions) the play goes by quickly, always resisting the temptation to deliver prodigiously revelatory stemwinders that reliably draw the attention of big-name actors and critics prone to mistaking volume for greatness. Hunter opted instead for grace notes, and played them beautifully.

Reconsidering youth's transgressions with the benefit of accrued middle-aged wisdom isn't necessarily a placid undertaking. An extreme example is provided by *Quietly* (at the Irish Repertory Theatre through September 11). With a desperate, nearly electric urgency, the play seeks to write a concluding chapter to the Troubles in Northern Ireland as personified by two men, strangers, who arrange to converse for the first time in a bar in Belfast in 2010. One, prickly with anticipation and cuttingly funny, is a Catholic named Jimmy (Patrick O'Kane) who, in chatting with the Polish bartender (Robert Zawadzki), shows a curiously precise knowledge of international tournament soccer even as the two watch a televised match between Poland and Northern Ireland. A second patron, Ian (Declan Conlon), enters and receives an immediate but brief summary pummeling from Jimmy. What is the secret here?

It's an irritating tic of playwrights, even great ones, that they tend to expend too much of their ingenuity on concealing from the audience a plain fact known to all of the principal characters. Yet Owen McCafferty skillfully keeps the mistrust simmering as, halfway through his seventy-five-minute one-act play, he begins to unpack the full history of the two men, each the same age—fifty-two now, sixteen when their paths first intersected in 1974. Mostly told in lengthy monologues, the play revels in the precise, loathsome details of the terrorist fever that gripped ruthless sectarians in Northern Ireland for so many years. Even six men gathered in a pub to watch a soccer match in 1974 were helplessly drawn into the vortex.

How foreign it all seems: Catholics and Protestants of similar social class, living in the same city, wantonly murdering one another over perceived affiliation with or opposition to the United Kingdom's government. It was as if a thirty-year-fever gripped the land. Can there be forgiveness after so much bloodshed? Not in every case, certainly, but *Quietly* suggests a hard-won equipoise has settled in. Northern Ireland must learn—has learned—to live with what it did to itself, and each day that passes in peace is a blessing.

As if commanded to misread the play with leftist solipsism, *The New York Times*'s critic Laura Collins-Hughes wrote, "It is difficult to imagine a piece of theater more perfectly suited to our jittery, antagonistic American moment than *Quietly*." This can only mean that the play is about Donald Trump, because to *Times* culture writers every play, opera, sonnet, papier-mâché, and concerto today is about Trump, in much the same way that everything was about George W. Bush in 2004. If Trumpismo acolytes and their Rodhamite opponents have been blowing each other up in barrooms, you and I have missed it, just as you and I missed the Christian theocratic takeover that we were warned would subsume the nation after Bush's re-election, but it is the nature of the *Times* always and everywhere to misread the nature of the times. The *Times* culture writers, like their political team, are defined not by their powers of observation and analysis but by their fear and disgust.

There is an actual religious-based terror movement afoot, it is viciously active on our shores, and *The Times*'s culture writers pretend it isn't happening because to acknowledge it would play into the hands of Trump, who at least is calling attention to the problem, and damage the prospects of Hillary Clinton, who wants badly to allow many more minimally screened military-aged male refugees from the Middle East into the country for no other reason than that the Republicans think this is unwise. What is happening rather quietly, then, is the concurrence of elites to pave the way for more Islamist terrorism in the United States. *Quietly*, with its theme of terrorism exhausting itself and slowly dissipating with much determined rejection of vengeance, could hardly be more ill-suited to an American moment in which terrorists' prospects in the United States appear to be waxing by the hour.

Art

# Nudes from the Prado at the Clark

*by Karen Wilkin*

In 2010, thirty-one paintings by Pierre-Auguste Renoir traveled from the Clark Art Institute, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, to Madrid's Museo Nacional del Prado. In part because French Impressionism is not conspicuously well represented in Spanish museums, "Pasión por Renoir" was immensely popular and heavily attended, earning the Clark a great deal of good will. The result of this act of museum diplomacy can be seen in the Berkshires through October 10: "Splendor, Myth, and Vision: Nudes from the Prado," an extraordinary gathering of twenty-eight sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Old Master paintings from the legendary Spanish collection, twenty-four of which have never before been seen in the United States, embracing mythological, historical, and religious subjects, from both the Old and the New Testament, along with allegorical emblems of the senses, and more.

Collected during the centuries when Spain was the richest country in Europe, thanks to its holdings in the New World, the works on view all declare their makers' fascination with the unclothed human body. The frequently implied, often explicit sensuality and even downright eroticism of these images make them seem unlikely choices for the officially pious Most Catholic Majesties who ruled Spain at the time; so the exhibition, in addition to offering considerable aesthetic pleasure because of its impressive inclusions, and, yes, occasionally titillating attentive viewers, also raises provocative questions. The show's intriguing subtext provides answers by recounting the history of how these surprising works entered the Spanish royal collections and how they were displayed, from the time they were acquired more or less until the present. Jointly organized by an extended team of curators, including Kathleen M. Morris and Lara Yeager-Crasselt, both of the Clark, and Andrés Úbeda of the Prado, "Splendor, Myth, and Vision" is at once the proverbial visual feast and a deeply engaging study of the history of private and public taste.[1] It's also a vivid reminder of just how rich the Prado's collections are, since the museum was able to send so many stellar works to Williamstown without, it seems, creating any noticeable gaps in its permanent installations. All this, and a terrific, information-packed, sumptuously illustrated catalogue with contributions by a phalanx of international scholars.

The focus is on two of Spain's Habsburg kings as collectors of nudes: Titian's great patron Philip II (1527–1598) and his grandson Philip IV (1605–1665), who commissioned major works from Titian's admirer, Peter Paul Rubens. (If you're wondering about Philip III, he seems to have been both pious and priggish; far from commissioning nudes, he banished many of the works his father collected from view; they were reinstated and added to by his more liberal-minded son.) We are presented to the two collector monarchs in an introductory gallery that economically announces the exhibition's theme, with a nod at the players. We meet Philip II in a

1 "Splendor, Myth, and Vision: Nudes from the Prado" opened at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, on June 11 and remains on view through October 10, 2016.

portrait by Titian, a slim, introspective twenty-something, with that Habsburg lip disguised as a full, pouting mouth. Philip IV is introduced by a vivid, brushy likeness by his court painter, Diego Velázquez, made about ten years before the king's death; he stares us down, looking distant and rather arrogant, a narrow white collar above sober black garments, framing that unmistakable Habsburg mouth and jaw. Between the two rulers is Rubens's luminous, full-length, gloriously naked *Fortuna* (1636–38), shown stepping out of a tossing sea onto a transparent sphere to symbolize her unreliable, unstable nature. Part of a vast ensemble of about sixty mythological subjects, mainly inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, commissioned by Philip IV to decorate a new hunting lodge, *Fortuna* is one of the few canvases in the suite to have been executed entirely by the ailing artist himself—as its gorgeous paint-handling attests. And, as if to prepare us for what is to come, this stunning trio is flanked by a large collaborative canvas by Jan Brueghel the Elder, Jan Brueghel the Younger, and two Flemish colleagues. An allegory titled *Sight and Smell* (*ca*. 1618–23), as well as a record of a now-lost group of works presented to Spanish dignitaries, the picture embodies sight as a magnificent gallery covered floor to ceiling with paintings—each artist did the works within his speciality. Prominent among those depicted is a Judgment of Paris with three fleshy nudes. Masses of flowers banking the grand gallery allude to the sense of smell.

"Splendor, Myth, and Vision" is organized thematically, according to rather flexible categories. We first encounter apparently unambiguous Venetian paintings, including a pair of decorative panels by Jacopo Robusti, known as Tintoretto, representing *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* and *Susannah and the Elders* (both *ca*. 1555), subjects that traditionally provide an excuse for voluptuous nakedness—the former an attempted seduction, the latter an exercise in voyeurism. (The panels, oddly stacked above one another, are unfortunately hung too low, as indicated by their perspectives, designed for their original high placement.) The ravishing centerpiece of this gallery is Titian's *Venus with an Organist and Cupid* (*ca*. 1550–55), notable not only because of Venus's frank display, the organ player's even more frank ogling of the goddess, and the play of flesh, velvet, linen, and shiny organ pipes, but also because of the marvelous rhyming of those pipes and the receding rows of trees in the atmospheric landscape seen through the window. The painting becomes even more alluring when we remember that it was one of a group of now-celebrated, sensuous mythological scenes commissioned by Philip II from Titian. These *poesie*, a new type of imagery invented by the Venetian master, included such subjects from antiquity as the abduction of Europa, Danae being visited by Jupiter as a shower of gold, Venus with a mirror, and Diana and the unlucky Actaeon. There are no more of Titian's *poesie* with Venus at the Clark, but there's a half-length Domenico Tintoretto (Jacopo's son) "portrait" *Lady Revealing Her Breast* (*ca*. 1580–90), in which lush fictive textures and delicious color—cream, mauve, dull green-gray—compete with suggestive subject matter.

It all seems straightforward enough: a room full of delectable renderings of seductive bodies, clearly intended to delight. But remembering that these works were in the collections of kings known for their sometimes fanatical religious probity makes us consider the possibility of other meanings. The excellent catalogue's informative entries remind us that such paintings could have originally been interpreted not only as sources of private pleasure, but also as emblems of virtue and vice. Domenico Tintoretto's *Lady Revealing Her Breast*, for example, might also have been read as an expression of devotion and trust, while Titian's seemingly equivocal Venus and her music-making attendant could have symbolized harmony and the senses of hearing and sight. (Of course, it's hard to ignore the organist's fixed gaze on Venus's crotch or the way her foot caresses his back, both of which seem not only slightly comic, but also just plain lascivious.) These multiple interpretations notwithstanding, we are not surprised to learn that such images were kept in special, private rooms known as *salas reservadas*. It's startling, however, to learn that the eighteenth-century Bourbon kings of Spain, Charles III (1716–1788) and Charles IV (1748–1819), wanted to destroy these paintings, fearing, we are told, their corrupting effect on the morals of viewers. (A lot is explained when we remember that Charles IV and his family

are the grotesque ninnies presented in Francisco Goya's presumably flattering group portrait.) The paintings were initially saved by Anton Raphael Mengs, court painter to Charles III. When asked to identify the "indecent" pictures in the royal collections, to earmark them for destruction, Mengs persuaded his patron to retain them, out of public sight, as teaching tools since, he argued, it was safer for aspiring artists to study "a well painted original than to have to denude real women." Threatened with burning by Charles IV, the "indecent" nudes eventually arrived at the Real Academia de San Fernando, the royal academy of art, and were then transferred to the Prado, when the great repository of the royal collections opened to the public in the nineteenth century. Yet between 1827 and 1838, they continued to be sequestered in the museum's *sala reservada*, to which only special visitors were allowed access.

Armed with this fascinating information, we can experience the rest of "Splendor, Myth, and Vision" on many levels. A group of small, densely packed landscapes with small nude figures by Flemish painters such as Brueghel the Elder and Paul Bril reminds us that Spain ruled Flanders—the Catholic southern provinces of the Netherlands—until the early eighteenth century. The most mysterious of these is a landscape by Bril, painted in 1610, originally with St. Jerome in the foreground. Sometime after 1625, Rubens acquired the painting and transformed the penitent hermit into a nude Psyche with Jupiter, disguised as an eagle. No one knows why the change was made.

The history of the period is further brought vividly to life by the presence of Rubens's 1628–29 copy of Titian's great *Europa* (*ca*. 1560–62), now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. When Rubens spent an extended period at the Spanish court, on a diplomatic mission, he profited from his stay by copying the magnificent Titians in the royal collections, to the lasting benefit of his own work. It would have been extraordinary to see the two Europas side by side, but the Gardner doesn't lend. Still, for those of us who've spent hours at the Gardner, it's possible to note differences between them: Rubens's bull seems fiercer than Titian's, the landscape less atmospheric, and the drapery crisper. The effect of Rubens's attentive study can partly be judged from two works from his great commission from Philip IV for his new hunting lodge (in addition to *Flora*, at the start of the exhibition). The copy of Titian's masterpiece is accompanied by a pair of enormous mythological scenes—roughly 6-by-9.5 feet—from the suite, one by Rubens, one executed by his colleague Jacob Jordaens after Rubens's oil sketch, both painted in 1636–38, both filled with large, agile, animated, mostly unclothed figures. The tangles of theatrically gesticulating, fleshy men and women in these opulent canvases make us long to have seen them as originally installed, en masse, in the private pavilion erected solely for the king's recreation and delight. Soon after, Francisco de Zurbarán's more or less life-size images of two of the Labors of Hercules stand in for a suite of ten, commissioned 1634–35, by Philip IV for yet another auxiliary pleasure palace, the Buen Retiro, on the outskirts of Madrid. The bold simplification of the figures, especially the nude, muscular hero, and the clear geometry of the settings, probably functions of the works' having been intended for viewing from a distance, lend them an appealing, almost modern directness.

Elsewhere, there's Guido Reni's rather creepy, deadly pale *Cleopatra* (*ca*. 1640), with an exposed breast framed by the white linen folds of her gown. The asp has just bitten her nipple, as she holds its curled tail delicately between her thumb and forefinger. In best seventeenth-century dramatic style, she throws her head back and gazes upward. So do most of the exhibition's three Saint Sebastians—a subject that justifies and sanctifies male nudity, here made somewhat decorous by carefully disposed drapery. In the versions by Reni (*ca*. 1617–19) and Jusepe de Ribera (*ca*. 1636), taut, half-length male torsos glow against darkness. In both paintings the hunky young protagonists, bound to trees and staring (of course) dramatically upward, seem strangely untroubled by the arrows that pierce them. Reni's Sebastian, who sports a single missile beneath his ribcage, seems to wriggle a bit, while Ribera's martyred saint, who has suffered multiple bleeding wounds, appears implacably calm. Was Sebastian sustained by faith, as the up-cast eyes suggest? Of course, he didn't die

from his arrow wounds; nursed back to health by Irene, he went back to declaring his adherence to Christianity—which had prompted the original attack on his life—and was stoned to death. Juan Carreño's full-length Sebastian (1656), lashed to a tree against a vast landscape, is the most animated of the three, despite the single bloodless arrow in his thigh, an inclusion that appears more like an identifying attribute than an actual weapon. The saint—predictably—gazes upward and stretches in a dance-like pose; the curved arm over his head seems to cry out for castanets. A pile of seventeenth-century armor reminds us, anachronistically, that Sebastian was a Roman soldier—hence the aversion to his preaching Christian doctrine and his eventual martyrdom.

"Splendor, Myth, and Vision" is full of wonderful paintings. The relatively small size of the exhibition and the combined spaciousness and intimacy of their presentation at the Clark allows us to closely study and savor each work. (Miguel Falomir, Deputy Director for Collections and Research at the Prado and a major contributor to the catalogue, told me that he thought the paintings on view looked better in Williamstown than they do in Madrid because they have more room.) Given the abundant riches of "Splendor, Myth, and Vision," it might seem foolish to even think about singling out a particular outstanding work but, *pace* Titian's magnificent *Venus with an Organist and Cupid*, my vote goes to Guercino's (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri) glorious *Susannah and the Elders* (*ca*. 1617). It's a literal show-stopper, placed about three-quarters of the way into the exhibition, so that it is informed by everything that precedes it. On the left side of the canvas, a pair of lascivious, Caravaggesque, bald, bearded old men, shrouded in darkness, spy on the seductive Susannah. She is seated with her back towards them, pale flesh luminous against a distant sky; concentrating on bathing, she is oblivious of what is about to happen. The tension of the moment is diagrammed by the trajectories of the voyeurs' muscular outstretched, gesticulating arms and Susannah's naked, perfect, folded limbs. The variations in how light falls on the various characters' bodies carve out the picture's space; the contrast between the two darkly clad men packed into the left side of the painting and the radiant, harmoniously simplified nude figure of Susannah, on the right, embodies and intensifies the drama. Guercino was still in his twenties when he painted this stunning canvas, which was originally a gift, in 1664, to Philip IV from the former Viceroy of Aragon and Sardinia—Spanish possessions at the time. If we spend some time with this Susannah—there's a bench thoughtfully provided, opposite the canvas—we're as grateful as Philip must have been. But "Splendor, Myth, and Vision: Nudes from the Prado," as a whole, makes us even more grateful that the staff of the Clark and the people who run Spain's great national collection are on such excellent terms.

## Exhibition note

"diane arbus: in the beginning"
The Met Breuer, New York.
July 12–November 27, 2016

Let's get the 800-pound gorilla out of the way. "diane arbus: in the beginning"—the lack of capitalization isn't a typo, but a stylistic choice made by the grammarians at the Met Breuer—is a notable exhibition for a variety of reasons, not least its installation. Viewers expecting a polite array of photographs—arranged chronologically, perhaps, or by theme—can look elsewhere. Nor should they count on continuous wall space. Jeff Rosenheim, the Curator in Charge of the Department of Photographs, has opted to display the work on several rows of floor-to-ceiling panels set apart four feet or so; each panel has a single image displayed on both sides. The placement of photos is catch-as-catch-can, presumably to emphasize the open-ended nature of an artist working at the beginning of her career. This hall-of-mirrors approach is a distraction—what with the back-and-forth of museumgoers and our own shuttling around to get a lone peek at an Arbus picture. If Rosenheim's intent was to establish a museological parallel with the borderline figures to whom Arbus was drawn, well—*point taken*. Still, isn't a curator's job to highlight an oeuvre rather than compete with it?

Arbus will survive the slight. How could she not? The oeuvre is cloistered and complete; it's sharp, stark, and discordant enough to withstand extra-aesthetic intrusions. That's certainly the case

with the Arbus most of us are familiar with: the unsentimental-bordering-on-cruel chronicler of pock-marked patriots, Jewish giants, drag queens, and, in the case of *Child with Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park* (1962), a boy being a boy in the most strenuous of manners. At the Met Breuer, maturity takes a backseat to the artist in formation. The hundred or so prints on display date from 1956–1962 and mark Arbus's shift from commercial artist—she and her husband, Allan, had established themselves, and not unsuccessfully, as fashion photographers—to full-time fine artist. The majority of works are being exhibited for the first time. (Many weren't inventoried until a good decade after Arbus's suicide in 1971 at the age of forty-eight.) The pictures—a promised gift to the Met by the artist's daughters, Doon and Amy—are a significant find and, in the end, not that revelatory. Arbus, we learn, was ever thus. "in the beginning" only goes to confirm a consistent and unseemly vision.

And unseemly the work most assuredly is. If it weren't, Arbus would be a less compelling figure; less popular, too. Rosenheim demurs, excerpting one of Arbus's high-school essays that extols "the divineness in ordinary things." He goes on to mention a list of P.C. nostrums that testify to the artist's continuing relevance. And, sure, matters of "identity, gender, race, appearance and the distinctions between artifice and reality" are decisive components of Arbus's fascinations. But the divine? When Arbus took her camera into Hubert's Museum, a Times Square venue that trucked in human oddities, God's light was the last thing on her mind. The oddball and eccentric, outcasts both voluntary and not—Arbus was drawn to marginal types and catalogued them with unrelenting dispassion. She was equally at home, and just as pitiless, in more respectable climes. Arbus brought the same fierce intensity to a fur-bedecked matron riding a city bus as to Hezekiah Trambles, a Hubert's Museum regular known by his stage name "The Jungle Creep." The lens through which Arbus's eye alighted on the world brought along its own encompassing seediness. Arbus didn't need a freak show to prove how freakish the mundane could be.

The unsavoriness of Arbus's work is offset, at rare moments, by a grudging humanity. The title figure of *Miss Storme de Larverie, the Lady Who Appears to be a Gentleman, N.Y.C.* radiates dignity just as the elaborately tattooed *Jack Dracula at a bar* (both 1961) admits to vulnerability. These particular subjects thwarted the artist's ministrations; the photos aren't failures of aesthetic integrity, but they are exceptions to the Arbus rule. (Some personalities, it would seem, are stronger than art.) In one of her many notebooks, Arbus wrote that "the mistake is to think that people are sealed and absolute." This is what separates her from August Sander, the German documentarian whose goal it was to inventory all strata of society, and whose photos were a pivotal influence. Arbus's art admits to a certain elasticity, particularly when it came to social conventions and unspoken rules of deportment. But like Sander—whose photos, alongside those of Arbus's contemporaries, can be seen in an adjacent gallery—Arbus is, if not a formalist per se, then uncompromisingly formal in her pictorial means. If anything redeems the mercilessness of her vision, it's that kind of know-how. Let's hear it for art for art's sake.

The Met Breuer underlines Arbus's know-how by including, albeit at a distinct remove, *A Box of Ten Photographs*, a suite of photos Arbus compiled and marketed in the early 1970s. A veritable greatest hits of imagery and motifs, the *Box* stands in stark contrast to the main body of the exhibition, primarily by format and focus. What separated Arbus's forays into street photography—that is to say, the corpus of the exhibition—from similar efforts by Walker Evans, Garry Winogrand, and Lee Friedlander was a lack of subterfuge: her subjects *knew* they were being photographed. When Arbus moved from a 35 millimeter Nikon to a twin-lens reflex Rolleiflex, the shift in technology allowed for more meticulous resolution, as well as the signature square format and less spontaneity. The latter attribute, especially, accounts for the queasy stateliness of Arbus's strongest work. No off-the-cuff shooting with the Rolleiflex; deliberation, on the part of both the photographer and her subjects, was called for. Posing—along with the artifice it implies—was key. Self-consciousness powers *A Box of Ten Photographs*, and its persistence is missing, if not absent, from the better part of "in the beginning." As such, the exhibition goes down easier than one might expect, and perturbs all the same.

*—Mario Naves*

# The gifts of Stuart Davis

*by James Panero*

One of the many revelations to come out of "The New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show, 1913," the excellent exhibition organized three years ago by Gail Stavitsky at the Montclair Art Museum, was a small watercolor of a rowboat on a lake. A blond woman leans over the stern, nearly submerging it in water as she seemingly smiles back at us. Behind her, standing on the upturned bow, a man twists on one leg as he attempts to remove his trousers—startled, it would appear, at our arrival.

Immediate, part quick illustration, part louche intrusion, the work may have been as shocking for its content in 1912 as it would be to us, today, for its attribution. Titled *Romance* or *The Doctor*, this watercolor was one of five examples to be put on display in the 1913 Armory Show by none other than Stuart Davis (1892–1964), the American modernist whose work would soon take a bold turn away from such realistic scenes towards angular shapes, flattened colors, and the interweaving of text and imagery.

At the time the promising disciple of Robert Henri and "The Eight," just twenty-one years old, Davis was among those American artists most affected by the radical examples of European modernism that came stateside for the Armory Show's infamous three-city tour—a "masochistic reception," he later recalled, "whereat the naïve hosts are trampled and stomped by the European guests at the buffet."

Yet with his watercolors exhibited alongside eye-opening examples of modernist painting by Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, and Duchamp, Davis also saw the "vindication of the anti-academy position of the Henri School, with developments in undreamed of directions." The awakening was pure Davis, telling us a great deal of how he saw through the surface of style and looked to deeper meaning, always staying independent of trends. At that time, Davis was one of the artists whose interest in saloon life and popular entertainment would earn him the label of "ash can," a term meant as opprobrium for his focus on the underbelly of American culture and the one that came to define the movement of his older contemporaries.

The particular genius of Davis's subsequent modernist direction was how he went on to integrate European stylistic innovation with his unique Ashcan vision. Through the flattening, flickering, fleeting perspectives of modernist composition, Davis did not so much abandon his Ashcan beginnings. Instead he found ways to electrify them, to broadcast the frenetic American century with the syncopation of jazz and to illuminate it with the glow of neon.

Just take his *House and Street* (1931), from the Whitney's collection, where windows, fire escapes, garages, smoke stacks, scaffolding, advertising symbols, and campaign signs all come together like the colorful pieces of a jigsaw puzzle framed by the shadows of an elevated train. Or consider the frenzied cataract of *Ultra-Marine* (1943), a favorite of mine from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where any lingering sense of single-point per-

spective is overtaken by Davis's development of "serial centers" of focus. And then there is *The Paris Bit* (1959), also from the Whitney, a late masterstroke where colors, silhouettes, signs, and shadow lines seem to reassemble not as a single image but as a long-remembered impression—a deep feeling coming together out of forgotten sights.

So the fact that "Stuart Davis: In Full Swing," a major, traveling exhibition now at the Whitney Museum of American Art, would omit Davis's entire early Ashcan development, and instead start its show in the 1920s, would seem to do a curious disservice to both Davis's own achievements and the understanding of the museum-going public.[1]

That this omission of "Davis's decade of apprenticeship" turns out to be a deliberate "interpretive gambit" meant to "depart in significant ways from their predecessors," as the co-directors of the Whitney and the National Gallery explain in their catalogue preface, is a startling revelation of curatorial intent that hints not only at Davis's evolving place in the canon of American art but also at the shifting interests of the contemporary American museum.

We are therefore left with an exhibition that is both required viewing for what it reveals of Davis's American vision but also a flawed, precariously off-balance presentation of that vision. With approximately one hundred works on display, there is, it should be said, much to be thankful for here. Despite the over half-century of Davis research that has followed the artist's death in 1964, a complete chronology has only recently come to light with the publication of his catalogue raisonné by Ani Boyajian, Mark Rutkoski, William C. Agee, and Karen Wilkin in 2007, as well as—finally—the full access to his archives granted by the artist's estate. Through her catalogue essay and wall texts, at least, the Whitney's Barbara Haskell, our most dutiful curator of early American modernism and the co-curator of this exhibition, gives every indication of a deep interest in the full span of Davis's development, including the early history. Her extensive catalogue chronology, starting with Davis's childhood in Philadelphia, where his father was a graphic artist and art editor, on through his life and career at the center of bohemian New York, furthermore offers a singular addition to Davis scholarship.

At the same time, it must be increasingly difficult to propose a major museum survey of a canonical artist that relies on scholarship alone and does not attempt realignment and revisionism. Writing in 1965 at the time of Davis's memorial exhibition, H. H. Arnason of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum summed up the then-established consensus: "Davis is almost the only American painter of the twentieth century whose works have transcended every change in style, movement, or fashion." Such an appreciation only occurs when you consider Davis's development in his own time. Yet in a reversal of priorities that is fast becoming the norm of museums today, rather than allowing history to challenge our present assumptions, the past must now conform to contemporary diktats. In Davis's case, this means understanding the artist not on his own terms but for the movement he inadvertently foreshadowed—pop—the one art movement, it would seem, that is now unquestionably allowed to occupy our own time and place.

There is no other reason to start a Davis survey with his paintings of illusionistic flattened packaging of the 1920s than to frame him as a pop artist. And indeed, "framed" is right, since there is reason here to suspect that Davis has been framed. Calling these paintings of consumer products "Davis's breakthrough," the exhibition narrows Davis's achievements to one that merely "merged the bold, hard-edge style of advertising with the conventions of European avant-garde painting." Forget the fact that this particular imag-

1 "Stuart Davis: In Full Swing" opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, on June 10 and remains on view through September 25, 2016. The exhibition will be on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. from November 20, 2016, through March 5, 2017; the De Young Museum, San Francisco, from April 8 through August 6, 2017; and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, from September 16, 2017, through January 8, 2018.

ery is part of an older tradition going back to the nineteenth century in American trompe l'oeil and might be considered something of a tributary in the main currents of his artistic development. Why not instead look to his more innovative cubist still lifes, also from the early 1920s, and now in the collection of the Vilcek Foundation?

Framing the far end of his career, the exhibition likewise gives disproportionate meaning to Davis's interest in returning to older compositions. The observation that Davis revisited his earlier work is nothing new. In 1965 Arnason noted "how often he experimented with a theme or motif, put it aside, and then years later returned to it and developed it into a major painting or a series of paintings." Yet here this is treated as divine revelation, of what? Pop seriality, and then some.

In creating this exhibition, Barbara Haskell was joined by Harry Cooper of the National Gallery, who gets equal billing. I suspect much of the pop obsession has originated with this co-curator whose credits include a role in the recent Roy Lichtenstein retrospective. Cooper's catalogue essay, titled "Unfinished Business: Davis and the Dialect-X of Recursion," is certainly guilty of blanketing Davis in theoretical cant and, simply put, offering one of the most overwrought examples of art writing I have ever seen—repeatedly exhorting his readers to "let us" join him in his leaps of incredulity. Just *let us* consider, for instance, Cooper's take on the painting *Memo*, a mystical composition from 1956 of angular white lines, letters, and numbers folded into fields of red, green, and black:

> Let us take the final step: *Memo* is a Marxist abstraction . . . the Marxism is present in its absence. (Canceled and preserved: such is Hegel's mind-bending logic.) It has disappeared and keeps disappearing. Marx is a four-letter word beginning with *m*.

"Present in its absence" might describe much of the logic in this essay on Davis's "recursive" imagery, which concludes by again choosing to see what is *not* there in Davis's moving final painting:

> Finally, the loop has a rapport with the spiral, that geometric figure often invoked to visualize Hegel's dialectic in its back-and-forth winding ascent to the far-off goal (in *The Phenomenology*, 1807) of Spirit in possession of itself, outside of time, no longer divided. . . . His last painting, left on his easel at his death and still swaddled in masking tape, includes the word *fin*, possibly inspired by the last frame of a French movie he had been watching on TV. The word is often taken as a premonition of death, but who can say? Another possibility is that the word, like many of Davis's, like the painting itself, is just incomplete, unFINished.

The great shame of this exhibition's pop psychology, or more likely pop psychosis, is how its archival research has indirectly illuminated a more relevant understanding of Davis's methodology. Far from the superficial coolness of pop, Davis was the hottest of artists. He incorporated the visual landscape of popular culture not as pop commentaries but as personal expressions. He deployed modernist innovations such as cubist simultaneity but, unlike European examples, he looked beneath the surface. Mere "visible phenomena," as Barbara Haskell explains, "ignored what he believed was true about perception—that it involves the totality of one's consciousness. He reasoned that if his art were to be truly realistic, it must include his ideas, emotions, and memories of other experiences."

Davis's recursions were part of these personal excavations that folded memory, sound, and feeling into ever-evolving compositions. This means that his *Rapt at Rappaport's* (1951–52), a painting from middle age, could convey the polka-dot paper of the toy store on Third Avenue and Seventy-ninth Street where his parents once shopped—and where he, at one time, could have been "rapt" in its wrapping. The legacy of Stuart Davis is a similar gift, a feeling for the twentieth century wrapped in its own unique, wonderful packaging.

Music

# New York chronicle

*by Jay Nordlinger*

The Lincoln Center Festival staged an opera called *Paradise Interrupted*. It belongs to a familiar category of music: the Chinese-Western hybrid. We have seen a pattern: A boy or girl is born in China. He (let's say) trains there for a while. Then he comes to America, for further study. He stays here, fusing the two traditions he has absorbed, composing those hybrids.

In the past twenty years, I have often spoken of "the Sinification of music." Not long ago, I wrote an essay called "The Twain, Meeting." And I have frequently quoted Lorin Maazel, the late conductor. When I interviewed him in 2009, I asked him about the future of classical music, and the first words out of his mouth were, "Thank God for China."

*Paradise Interrupted* was composed by Huang Ruo, who was born on the island of Hainan. He studied at the Shanghai Conservatory. Then he came to Oberlin, and went on to Juilliard, where he received his Ph.D. The opera's stage director and "visual designer," to quote the program, is Jennifer Wen Ma, who was born in Beijing and eventually earned a master's degree from the Pratt Institute in New York. In 2008, she was one of the wizards behind the pageantry of the Beijing Olympics.

*Paradise Interrupted* is in Mandarin and lasts about an hour and twenty minutes. It is a chamber opera, though its makers have another name for it: "installation opera." In a program note, Huang says, "The word and genre 'opera' is much broader and more inclusive in the twenty-first century than it was in the past."

I'm not sure this is correct. It may be a present-day conceit. Over the centuries, opera has been very diverse, and the name "opera" has been very elastic. Think of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Parsifal*, *Porgy and Bess* . . .

The story of *Paradise Interrupted* is a fusion of Adam and Eve and *The Peony Pavilion*, an important Chinese tale from the end of the 1500s (when Monteverdi, the composer of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, was about thirty). Huang wrote his opera with a singer in mind: not just any singer, but the queen of classical Chinese opera, Qian Yi. It was she who performed in New York.

The opera begins with a piercing sound, as though a microphone has gone haywire. The noise lasts for an uncomfortably long time, and it hurt my ears, literally. Is this any way to begin a piece of music? Relief comes, in the form of those tinklies—those tinkly sounds that have been popular in music in recent years. Huang's score is lightly textured, often Impressionistic. One thinks of Debussy and Ravel, or at least I did. At one point, I thought specifically of the *Chansons madécasses* (Ravel). There is also some Chinese equivalent, I think, of Gregorian chant. And may I say that some Chinese sounds, with their twangs, put me in mind of our own bluegrass?

Qian Yi is a phenomenon—a brilliant performer, vocally and otherwise. She has learned a craft and is an exemplar of it. She sings fearlessly, and, by the evidence, tirelessly. Sometimes the singing is not so pretty. Nor is it meant to be, I believe. I sometimes wondered, "Is this singing or caterwauling?" Qian

Yi demonstrated any number of physical movements—all stylized—and one or two of the arm movements reminded me of the "Callas salute." That salute, in our own day, has been adopted by another soprano, Angela Gheorghiu. I believe Callas would admire Qian Yi a lot (and so would Gheorghiu).

There are only four other singers in the opera, all men, though one of them is a countertenor, who on this evening made some remarkable and powerful womanly sounds.

This is an opera you must give in to. I have often written the same about minimalism, even about *Parsifal*. You must give in to it: its style, its world, its terms. If you do, you're happy. If you don't, the opposite. If the drug takes hold, you are in bliss. If it does not, you're in agony. I think that *Paradise Interrupted* is meant to hold you rapt. If it doesn't—woe betide you.

I know you will know that I'm not contradicting myself when I say the following: On leaving the theater that night, I felt like I had been released from jail. I also admired the work, thinking it an excellent, high example of its genre. *Paradise Interrupted* is an impressive, accomplished thing, whether for me or not.

In October, the composer Steve Reich will turn eighty. The Lincoln Center Festival celebrated this milestone with a series of three concerts, *Reich/Reverberations*. Twenty years ago, I wrote a long piece on Reich, on the occasion of his sixtieth. I said that Reich had become "more a grand old man than the brash, badboy minimalist" who had once scandalized audiences. I also expressed my skepticism about the whole minimalist project—but we need not revisit that at the moment.

The last of the three Reich concerts had two works on it: the Double Sextet, written about ten years ago, and Music for 18 Musicians, written in the mid-1970s. The festival described these as "two dazzling masterpieces at the apex of Reich's genius." Not just masterpieces but dazzling ones. For a contrast with such speech, think of Reich's titles: "Double Sextet" and "Music for 18 Musicians." Think of "Drumming"! These titles are pleasingly plain, to me. And Beethoven did all right with such sexy monikers as "String Quartet in C-sharp Minor."

A word about the Double Sextet, leaving the more famous Music for 18 Musicians to one side: I will say again that you have to give in. To minimalism, to *Paradise Interrupted*, to *Parsifal*, to other things. I can groove with Reich for a while in the Double Sextet. But then, I'm afraid, I lose my groove (while he keeps going). I'm awake—annoyingly awake—when it might be better to be numb.

But I value Reich, and one of the things I appreciate about him is that he dares, if that's the word, to write happily. Dark has been the rage for many years. Light, I suppose, connotes unseriousness, in the minds of some. In about 1930, Harold Arlen wrote one of his hit songs, "Get Happy." You want to get happy? Try Reich's *You Are (Variations)*, from 2004.

I don't know whether Reich himself is content, though I would guess so. There are happy people who write darkly and unhappy people who turn out happy stuff. This is an interesting subject in arts and letters.

One guest of the Lincoln Center Festival was the National Ballet of Canada (whose artistic director is the great ballerina, or ex-ballerina, Karen Kain). The company danced *The Winter's Tale*, composed by Joby Talbot and choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon. Both men are English, and they have developed a collaboration.

Not before has there been a ballet on this Shakespeare play. Nor has there been an opera, to my knowledge. There has certainly been an opera—more than one—on another Shakespeare play that features jealousy, and its destructiveness: *Othello*.

Talbot is an eclectic composer, or a versatile one, if you like. His pieces include pop arrangements, TV scores, an opera about Mount Everest—and, intriguingly, an additional movement for Holst's seven-movement suite, *The Planets*. How about *The Winter's Tale*? I'll tell you what I heard.

Act I has, among other things, Orientalism. Or snaky chromaticism. I thought of *Le Coq d'or*, the Rimsky-Korsakov opera (also made into a ballet). Furthermore, Talbot creates an air of antiquity, and he does this without being hokey.

His score includes something like minimalism—a running line, providing a musical

motor. Much of the music is "shimmeringly tonal," as I think people say. Yet it is also off-kilter. Talbot queers his tonality. He creates suspense, especially with rhythm. And he does a fine job of depiction.

What he depicts is the King's jealous madness, the dizzying loss of mind, with everything spinning out of control. He also depicts Hermione's desperation. Shakespeare conjures up chaos, confusion, and evil, and Talbot follows suit. When shepherds appear, Talbot has them pipe, a little cornily. But this perhaps cannot be helped.

I'm always complaining that new music is busy: busy busy busy. Talbot's score is ever active, but, amazingly, it does not seem busy. There are not too many notes for notes' sake.

Altogether, Talbot is bold, confident, and sure-footed. He gives the sense of composing unafraid, not overly concerned with what other composers may think.

He uses the whole orchestra, availing himself of anything and everything. The instrumentation includes the sarrusophone, the heckelphone, the flugelhorn, and the Wagner tuba. There is a great deal of soft percussion, in the modern fashion. And Talbot uses it effectively. You have bells, chimes, marimba, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibes . . .

I spied, or heard, some influences, although perhaps these were my imagination. It seemed to me that Talbot had spent a fair amount of time with Mahler. And that he knew *Boléro*. I also thought of Bernstein's score for *On the Waterfront*. And of another movie score, written some forty years later: Jerry Goldsmith's, for *Basic Instinct*.

In Act I, Talbot is telling a story, or supporting a story. In Act II, he is supplying dance music. It is gay, festive. There is lots of flute playing, and it occurred to me that Sir James Galway would like to participate. But the music also struck me as a little monochromatic, for stretches. In time, things in the story go wrong, and Talbot goes atonal. They all do this, don't they? All composers employ this gambit.

In any case, Joby Talbot has written a commendable score, and it was gratifying, to me, to applaud something new. It was gratifying, after Act I, to look forward to Act II. It is gratifying to look forward to seeing this ballet again. Incidentally, could there be a suite from it? An orchestral suite, for concert purposes? I don't see why not.

*Di Goldene Kale*, or *The Golden Bride*, was a hit of 1923. A Yiddish operetta, it was composed by Joseph Rumshinsky, who was born near Vilnius in 1881 and died in Kew Gardens, Queens, in 1956. The show played at Kessler's Second Avenue Theater on the Lower East Side. (Kessler was David Kessler, himself a leading light of the Yiddish theater.)

*The Golden Bride* has been revived by the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene, and it has played at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, not on the Lower East Side but as low as you can go and still be in Manhattan: Battery Park City. You could row just a few strokes to Ellis Island.

Speaking of that: the story of the opera is fairly typical. A beautiful girl grows up in a shtetl. She is an orphan, cared for by another family. Suddenly, she comes into a fortune. Everyone wants to marry her. First, though, she insists on finding her mother. She sails to America, and . . . At any rate, the ending is happy, as is the show at large.

Seeing it was like going to a museum of anthropology, right? *The Golden Bride* is an unearthed fossil, right? I didn't find it so. I found it fresh and winning, not particularly bound by time—or place, for that matter.

I have called the show an operetta, but you could call it a musical, too. It is, in any case, a specimen of the Yiddish lyric theater. Rumshinsky's score has traces of the Strauss family, klezmer, jazz, and more. In order to make certain points, he interpolates a popular song or two, such as "Over There." And this show includes one hit—a hit single, if you will: the song "Mayn Goldele."

The cast in Battery Park was a mixture of classical and Broadway singers. The performance I saw had *esprit*, and *esprit de corps*. Neither singers nor instrumentalists gave any hint of slumming. They relished what they were doing as much as anyone in the theater. My complaint is a complaint I have about America in general: the singers were miked, and everything was too loud—far too loud for the

size of the theater. Ridiculously, and unmusically, loud. I have written frequently about "the overamplification of American life," as I call it. Nobody listens to me—perhaps because they can't hear me over the amped-up noise?

The golden bride herself was a proper opera singer, Rachel Policar, a soprano from Seattle. She was accurate and graceful, and, in some of her coloratura, she sounded like Snow White. I don't mean this as a putdown: I have no doubt she was singing Rumshinsky's tra-la-la's just the way he wrote and meant them.

I wonder how many in the audience knew Yiddish. I can tell you that one man sang along to a tune—probably "Mayn Goldele," I don't remember—during the overture. The show includes a lot of talking, in addition to singing—which leads me to my next point.

Maybe this was wrong of me, but I expected the singers to have Yiddish-speaking relatives: to be the children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, and grand-nephews of Yiddish speakers. Surely some of them were. But equally surely, some were not. (I think in particular of Cameron Johnson, the leading man, whose ancestors never saw a shtetl, I can all but guarantee.) They learned the show—speaking and all—the same as they would learn any other show in a foreign language.

People sometimes say that a show is "feel-good," and they don't mean this as a compliment. *The Golden Bride*, for me, was a feel-good experience. And it felt good, I can tell you, to feel good.

This summer, the Mostly Mozart Festival celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. It kicked off the celebration with an evening dubbed *The Illuminated Heart*. Huh? This is a production of hits from Mozart operas: arias, duets, and ensembles. A program of excerpts from Mozart operas seems obvious. Strangely—maybe I should get out more—I had not attended one, that I can remember.

There are sixteen items in *The Illuminated Heart*, beginning with the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*—it's hard to beat that—and ending with the ending from the same opera. (So, those are nice bookends.) Onstage at Mostly Mozart were nine singers: some of them famous, some of them little known, and some of them in between. Indeed, most were in between. Leading the concert was Louis Langrée, the French conductor who has been the festival's music director since 2002.

Netia Jones is responsible for the production end of *The Illuminated Heart*. Her bio describes her as "a British director/designer and video artist." Her Mozart show has a clean look, but at the same time it is not skimpy. It is smart, and in accord with Mozart's pieces. Surtitles—if that's the right word—appear on a back wall. There is no bowing or applause from one number to the next, making the show neat and swift. Which is welcome.

One cast member was Marianne Crebassa, a French mezzo who is known in Europe but less known here. She sang "Parto, parto," from *La clemenza di Tito*, and she sang it creditably. Her partner in this aria was the fine clarinetist Jon Manasse. Her partner in "Ah perdona al primo affetto," the duet from *Tito*, was Nadine Sierra, an American soprano. This duet is one of the most melting things in Mozart, and therefore in music. On this occasion, sadly, there was no melt.

Toward the end of the program, Christine Goerke, the dramatic soprano, sang Elettra's dramatic aria from *Idomeneo*. Her singing was not always pretty, but it was powerful and effective, and Goerke added some high notes to the end. That, I had never heard.

Outstanding in this show was Matthew Polenzani, who, with his back against the wall—literally—sang "Dalla sua pace," from *Don Giovanni*. His tenor was sweet but substantial, and, with Maestro Langrée, he shaped the aria impeccably. A "Dalla sua pace" that is not overslow and warped is a pleasure.

Speaking of pleasure, I have a memory from 2006: the whole year. This was a big "Mozart year," marking the 250th anniversary of the composer's birth. The music world was saturated with Mozart. Like others, I made some snarky comments about this at the beginning of the year, or even starting in 2005. I stopped snarking in about mid-2006. It was marvelous, and edifying, to hear so much Mozart, and by the time New Year's Eve rolled around, I loved him all the more.

The media

# The end of the news

*by James Bowman*

Since I first learned to read, I have loved newspapers. When my infant hands first became capable of forming letters that looked a bit like typescript, I eagerly produced for the delectation of my closest relatives a single sheet of something I called "The Bowman News." It was modeled on our small-town daily paper at which my great-aunt worked as an editor, proofreader, and occasional reporter. She would sometimes take me to see the presses and the linotype machines and the "hot metal" being cast, one slug of which was produced with my name on it in eighteen-point headline caps, which I then used with a stamp pad in order to see my own name in print for the first time. What a thrill I thought it to join, even in such a small way, the company of those I thought of as the journalistic immortals—now, alas, long forgotten, even by me.

In all the years since that time, I have never been without at least two newspapers delivered to my house every day, and during the years of my adulthood the number has more usually been four or five. Since the translation of print into online versions, I have continued to "take in" (as people once said) a couple of printed papers for old times' sake, even though I now rarely consult them, preferring to race through their cyber counterparts for an hour or so each morning to earmark those few stories that I might want to go back and consult some day, in the unlikely event that I will ever have the leisure to do so.

The number of such stories has lately been considerably reduced, since more and more of those on my screen fall into one of two categories of the Great Unreadable; either I know already what they have to say or I don't believe them. Or both. And both are a result of uncontrolled bias. During most of my life-long love affair with newspapers, I have been well enough aware of their biases, both in what they choose to cover and, more importantly, what they choose not to cover. How can one not be? But, like most people, I have usually found it no great hardship to make allowances for these biases in choosing what to believe and what not to believe in what I read. It is—or, rather, was—like making a calculable allowance for wind speed in ballistics or the weight of one's clothes when getting on the scale.

Older journalists, at least then, had a conscience about such things, having been trained to keep themselves and their opinions out of the news, even if they weren't always overscrupulous about doing so. There might, in those days, even have been the occasional Republican among them. Then, too, the reader could always counter-program, as it were, and read one or more of the little, out-of-the-way journals which had a different set of biases from those of the newspapers—and which acknowledged these biases as well as those they were answering. These fringe publications might also give attention to matters that the rest of the media ignored as ill-fitting with their "narrative."

That "narrative," however, turned out to be the agent of corruption, or what the poet Tennyson called

the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And, ever widening, slowly silence all.

Tennyson was writing about mistrust in love, and how the smallest amount of the former can destroy the latter. But the media's narrative imperative also gives rise to a species of mistrust—since you know in advance that everything in the narrative is there for its sake and not because it is either true or important or genuinely new—and it has destroyed my love of the papers along with the very idea of "the news."

To be sure, the end of the news has been a long time coming, but the current presidential campaign has finally put the pillow over its face and finished it off. To call the constant, open, and unrelenting hatred of the media for Donald Trump a bias is to be guilty of the grossest sort of understatement. Even much of the anti-media made up of conservative and other fringe publications has joined in what amounts to an orchestrated hate campaign—on the grounds, presumably, that Mr. Trump "objectively" deserves to be hated.

Whether he does or does not, however, is beside the point. The hate-Trump trope has become just another media narrative into which all other information about the candidate can and must be funneled—and off of which he can legitimately play to his own advantage by citing it as evidence of how he is hated by the country's elites and self-appointed moral arbiters. Conservatives, of all people, should beware of mimicking the self-conceit of their one-time adversaries in the mainstream press and purporting to speak on behalf of objectivity and truth in properly non-factual matters, merely because of who they are.

Such arrogance ought to make the famously bumptious Mr. Trump look almost humble by comparison, but it doesn't because we are now so used to it. Our political culture as a whole, led by the self-righteous media, has been plunged into one of its periodic fits of moralizing—out of which, at least on this occasion, it is hard to see any good coming. On the contrary, I would argue that it is no accident that this moral fever coincides with the nomination of not one but two of the most morally compromised candidates ever to seek the country's highest office. What else should we have expected from the constant devaluation of our own moral stock?

We have grown so used to the flinging back and forth of moral calumny between candidates of different parties, and now, even between candidates of the same party, so fierce in disputing the title to the moral high ground that none but the most fanatical of the combatants even believes in the existence of such high ground anymore. In the view of most voters, the imputation of immorality and corruption has been detached from the reality and become no more than the cost of doing political business. For this, too, we have the media and its long obsession with scandal to thank. So assiduous have they been in seeking out anything that can pass for wrongdoing, particularly on the part of Republican candidates (remember Mitt Romney's putting his dog on the roof of his car?), as the only salient feature of their candidacies, that when real wrongdoing comes along it only looks like politics as usual.

To the dwindling number of us who believe that the moralization of politics is not only ill-advised but also—and especially since being mistaken has become tantamount to "lying" (see "Lexicographic Lies" in *The New Criterion* of October 2012)—socially and intellectually destructive of the ties that normally bind us together in one polity, even in one family, this lamentable development has made truth all but inaccessible. It is now already the case that one can hardly believe anything one reads in the papers, because the political agenda that has produced it has become so obvious and unashamed—and not only when it comes to Mr. Trump. Thus when we read in *The New York Times* that some gaggle of "experts" has proven perennial budget deficits to be good for us, or to make, presumably irrefutably, "The Case for More Government and Higher Taxes," we must wonder if even those who already devoutly believe in such things can be quite unashamed to cite such experts, knowing that they have been led out of academic

obscurity and given a public forum to tell the media and their devoted consumers just what they want to hear.

Nor is it just a question of political bias. When I read in *The Washington Post* now that "science" has discovered flossing your teeth to offer no benefits to dental health, or that "Millennials" are no longer "having sex" as much as previous generations did, I automatically assume that these things are untrue in any meaningful sense—since the words "science" and "Millennials" in them (not to mention "having sex") are journalistic constructs designed precisely to be the vehicles for stories like these. They have found their place in our prescribed information diet because they promise the reader privileged access to information at odds with what everybody else knows, or thinks he knows, not because anybody really knows them to be true.

They are what is known as "clickbait" and they function only by virtue of the vast ocean of information now available to journalists, as to everybody else, from which a cup or two of evidence can be ladled out for almost any proposition that promises to shock the reader—or to confirm his prejudices. And it is, of course, the latter which must be the motivation of those, if there are any, who continue to read the political coverage of the mainstream press, since such coverage never shocks or surprises anymore but only sticks to the narrative on either side and tells us over and over again what we are meant already to know about the two candidates: that Mrs. Clinton is a "flawed" but "highly-qualified" and "historic" candidate for the office of president, whereas Mr. Trump is a very bad man as well as a stupid ignoramus who is entirely "unfit" to occupy that office—to use the word chosen by its present incumbent.

There's an internet shorthand abbreviation, "MRDA," that can describe this would-be barb. It stands for "Mandy Rice-Davies Applies." Miss Rice-Davies, you may remember, was one of two famous good-time-girls (as they used to be called) in the Profumo scandal in Britain in 1963 who, when told that Lord Astor had denied having an affair with her, notoriously replied: "He would, wouldn't he?" Well, MRDA now, up and down our political culture, and as a result we never need pay attention again to anything either a politician or a journalist has to say. So long as we know which side he's on, we already know what he thinks, and the question of Mr. Trump's (or anyone else's) fitness for office becomes insusceptible to serious discussion.

Is it possible to see this political feeding-frenzy, apparently encouraged by Mr. Trump himself, as an example of the man's strategic genius? Could it be a kind of rope-a-dope strategy by which the media and others opposed to him are invited to wear themselves and what remains of their credibility out by flailing away at the candidate until he is in a position to turn the tables and point to the obvious truth of his own claims of bias against them? If so, it is a high-risk strategy. On the eve of the 2012 election, Charles Moore wrote in the London *Daily Telegraph* that "It is Mitt Romney's 'gaffes' that should win him the election"—because "what the media see as a 'gaffe' is often, in reality, a challenge to the dominant orthodoxy." That's true enough, but it turned out in that case that a majority preferred the dominant orthodoxy. For all the upsets Mr. Trump has already caused to that orthodoxy during the past year, it is hard to see how his own gaffes, so much more spectacular than Mr. Romney's, are going to produce a different result, even though he has cunningly undertaken to supply so many of them that no individual gaffe can be expected to have much effect.

A possible exception is the affair of the family Khan, which was a perfect example of what R. R. Reno, writing in the August number of *First Things* well before it happened, called "bigot-baiting." It's such an obvious trick that you almost might expect it not to work. You simply get someone distinguished by race, religion, "gender," sexual orientation, or moral unassailability through suffering to attack your alleged bigot—in this case Donald Trump—and, when he hits back (as Mr. Trump seems incapable of not doing), you point to his counter-attack as an example of his bigotry. Mr. Khan had three of the five qualifications

going for him, being Muslim, Arab, and the father of a serviceman killed in Iraq, and so obligingly flushed out the pantomime (or pro-wrestling) villain when the latter issued on the fly an unusually obtuse response.

Substantively, the thing was an entirely empty gesture. Mr. Khan criticized Mr. Trump for not having "sacrificed" as he had—which was not only irrelevant but equally true of the candidate he was ostensibly supporting—and for ignorance of the Constitution, even though he himself apparently thought there was a provision in that document, as there is not, which would have prevented the exclusion of Muslim immigrants. If he had felt that he had to say anything at all, the target of his criticisms might have pointed these things out—not that it would have precluded the inevitable attacks on his bigotry. Instead he made it easy for the bigot-baiters by comparing, absurdly, Mr. Khan's sacrifice to his own in the "hard work" that had been required to build up his businesses and create thousands of jobs.

How could Mr. Trump not have seen the trap that had been laid for him? How could he have walked straight into it? Well, maybe that was part of the plan. Maybe he thought the trap so obvious that even the dullest-witted of his would-be supporters could see it and resent the media's scandal-machine for setting it more than they resented him for falling into it. Giving the public that much credit seems pretty dubious to me, but then I suppose I must count as one of those elitists, resentment against whom Mr. Trump has long been courting.

This does not prevent me from reflecting, however, that if there has been no other benefit to the Republic from Donald Trump's candidacy, it has shown us the extent to which our political culture is now based on what the British have lately come to call "virtue signaling" but which our forefathers had a shorter and ruder word to describe: namely, "cant"—the ostentatious parade of one's own goodness or holiness (or sacrifices) as a reproach to one's putative moral inferiors.

The media, so alert to hypocrisy in every other way, are blind to this hypocrisy, because it is their own—as well as that of the elite that they represent and that Donald Trump has remained remarkably, perhaps suicidally consistent in running against. His willingness to play the villain or "heel" in this factitious moral drama can be read as a protest against that hypocrisy and empty virtue signaling. I wonder if I can be the only one who, though I would prefer a virtuous president (in default of a merely gentlemanly one), wishes him well for this reason alone. Or this and the off-chance that he might shame the media into reporting the news again, instead of their ever-loving narrative.

*We mourn the passing of*
*William Craig Rice (1955–2016)*
*A valued contributor to* The New Criterion

Books

# Two cheers for democracy

*by James Piereson*

The recent decision by voters in Great Britain to leave the European Union has provoked some probing questions about the virtues of democracy among writers and editors at various mainstream publications like the *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *The Times* of London, *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, and many other like-minded newspapers and magazines. Are voters really capable of making decisions about issues as complex and far-reaching as whether Britain should leave or stay in the European Union? Should a decision of this complexity and magnitude ever be turned over to voters to decide in a national referendum? Is it possible in any case to discern what voters were trying to express when they cast those ballots to leave the European Union? Might the blunt results of the referendum be overturned by Parliament or by some official body whose members truly understand the issues at stake? Democracy, they seemed to be saying, is generally a good thing, but it is also a blunt instrument in need of being checked or refined by institutions that reflect a more sophisticated understanding of the common good. In this case, they agreed, majority rule yielded a result that contradicted the views of experts and was likely to do great damage to Britain's standing in the world.

Little did these critics realize that their skeptical views about democracy and majority rule are not much different from those expressed by philosophers and statesmen through the ages going back to the time of Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece. Up until recent times, Democracy was thought to be an inferior form of government, subject to disorder, mob rule, abuses of power, and civil wars, and for these reasons incapable of sustaining itself for any considerable period of time. This was the view of the great Greek philosophers just mentioned, of Cicero in ancient Rome, of Christian theorists through the centuries, of early modern theorists such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke, and even of the founding fathers of the United States. As James Madison wrote in *The Federalist*, in a comment on popular assemblies in ancient Athens, "In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever character composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob." Democracy, in his view, and in the view of his fellow members of the Philadelphia convention, was a perverted form of popular government. The goal of the convention was to create a republic in which public opinion would be filtered through representatives and checked by courts, deliberative bodies, and constitutional guarantees of individual liberty.

It is only in very recent times that democracy has been held up as the ideal form of government and the standard against which all regimes should be measured and judged. The great wars of our time have been "wars for democracy," while important political decisions and movements are now assessed in terms of their contribution to the onward march of democracy. This is one reason why the reaction

to the "Brexit" vote has been so interesting: it runs against the grain of the conventional wisdom of our era.

In this ambitious and comprehensive new volume, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought,* James T. Kloppenberg shows how the concept of democracy evolved over the course of three centuries from roughly 1600 to 1900 from a term of abuse to a widely shared governing ideal.[1] As his title suggests, Kloppenberg, a professor of history at Harvard University, views modern history in terms of an ongoing and never-ending struggle in the direction of a democratic ideal. He focuses for the most part on three countries—Great Britain, France, and the United States—and on the popular revolutions that took place in those countries between the middle of the seventeenth and the middle of the nineteenth centuries. In doing so he goes over intellectual terrain already well covered by other historians—most recently by Sean Wilentz in *The Rise of American Democracy* (2005) and by R. R. Palmer in his classic work, *The Age of Democratic Revolution* (1959). Kloppenberg's study differs from these in its focus on the intellectual and philosophical debates—rather than the historical events—that partly drove and then developed out of the popular revolutions of this era. The great value of this volume lies in its comprehensive and generally astute coverage of these debates and of the ideas of the philosophers and statesmen who participated in them—from Locke and Milton in the seventeenth century to Rousseau, Montesquieu, Madison, John Adams, and Jefferson in the eighteenth, and finally to Mill, Tocqueville, and Lincoln in the nineteenth century. Though there is little in this coverage that is new, it does have moments of originality—as, for example, in Professor Kloppenberg's discussion of Adams and his differences with Jefferson and in the role he assigns to Mill as a transitional figure in the evolution of liberalism with his emphasis on educational and cultural reform as a means of uplifting the common man. If the book has a weakness, then it lies in its length—nearly 900 pages of text plus endnotes—and in its frequent digressions into theorists and political movements of marginal importance to the story Kloppenberg tries to tell.

Professor Kloppenberg hits upon a couple of broad themes that were important in the rise of popular government but which are not sufficiently appreciated today. The first is the link between the Protestant reformation and the rise of popular government and of the mutually reinforcing spread of these two movements from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. He emphasizes the connections between the Christian virtues of benevolence, simplicity, and reciprocity and the rise of democracy. As Benjamin Rush, one of the American founders, wrote in a letter to John Adams: "The precepts of the Gospel and the maxims of republics in many instances agree with each other." Jefferson described Christianity as the religion "most friendly to liberty, science, and the freest expansion of the human mind." Still, Christianity dominated the European continent during the twelve centuries from the conversion of Constantine to the Protestant reformation without provoking any movements in the direction of democracy. It was the specifically Protestant interpretation of Christianity, with its various emphases on congregational government, the disestablishment of religion, the authority of individual conscience in matters of religion, the literal interpretation of the Bible, and the corruption of the Roman Church, that ignited the movements in Europe and North America toward popular government and away from monarchy and theocracy. The cause was strengthened in America by the fact that many of the early European settlers were Protestant refugees from religious oppression, though very little of it came from Roman sources. Professor Kloppenberg deftly follows the religious thread all the way through this period showing how Christian ideals—usually Protestant interpretations of those ideals—found secular expression in movements for popular rule.

1 *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought*, by James T. Kloppenberg; Oxford University Press, 892 pages, $34.95.

A second theme in the book is the central roles played by revolutions and civil wars in the rise and eventual triumph of the democratic movement. The three great revolutions of that era—the English, American, and French—provide ample evidence for that point, as does the American Civil War, which Professor Kloppenberg sees as a culminating event in the three-century struggle for popular government. Perhaps it was inevitable, as he suggests, that a novel movement in the world had to make its way forward through revolution and civil war. At the same time, as he also emphasizes, the hatreds and lingering resentments that flowed from these events also slowed the further march of democracy in all three countries. His point about violence is entirely accurate, and one that he might have pressed further. After all, the rise of democracy as a governing ideal in our time would have been inconceivable absent those victories in the three great wars for democracy between 1861 and 1945—the American Civil War and the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century. In view of this, it is a good question why Professor Kloppenberg ended his narrative with the U.S. Civil War instead of developing it further to take account of the world wars that proved so decisive to the triumph of democracy in the twentieth century.

*Toward Democracy* is an important and finely crafted book, but there is a muddle at the center of it. What is democracy? Professor Kloppenberg never provides a clear definition of what he means by it, or how his understanding comports with or departs from the traditional understanding according to which democracy is a flawed form of government. He does attempt a definition of sorts when he writes that democracy rests upon the pillars of popular sovereignty, equality, and autonomy, though this seems incomplete and unsatisfactory as a definition. The fact remains that none of the great popular governments of our time would qualify as a democracy as that term has been traditionally defined. The authors of the United States Constitution did not create a democracy but a constitutional republic based upon representation and formal checks on the power of majorities. In terms of present-day politics, it is quite a stretch to call the United States a democracy when most of the far reaching political decisions in the country since 1950 have been handed down by a nine-member Supreme Court, or when the party in power can use the taxing authority to harass and intimidate opponents, or when somehow we have empowered administrative agencies to issue edicts that affect millions or hundreds of millions of citizens with very limited popular oversight. No doubt this short list of departures from democratic or popular rule could be supplemented at great length. We do not have a good term to describe the form of government under which we live today. It is not a democracy; perhaps it no longer even qualifies as a republic. The founders and theorists of popular government from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries associated it with limited government or government of strictly limited powers in the belief that large establishments are incompatible with liberty and popular rule. Were they wrong about this? That is a good question, and one that more people should be asking in our era of "unlimited government."

Paul Cartledge poses a similar question to Professor Kloppenberg, but arrives at a much different answer in this provocative and unconventional new volume, *Democracy: A Life*. Cartledge, an emeritus professor of Greek Culture at the University of Cambridge and a widely published scholar on the ancient world, agrees that the ideal of democracy fell on hard times for millennia after its disappearance in Greece in the third and second centuries BC, but he disputes the claim that we now live in an age of democratic resurgence.[2] In fact, he argues the reverse—that by the democratic standards of ancient Athens and hundreds of other smaller city-states on the Greek peninsula, the popular systems of today look less like democracies and more like oligarchies of one kind or another. Professor Cartledge would dispute the claim that modern history is moving in a democratic direction.

2 *Democracy: A Life*, by Paul Cartledge; Oxford University Press, 383 pages, $29.95.

He views Athenian democracy as an ideal that unfortunately fell out of favor in the ancient world and was never afterwards able to recover its vitality. The term "democracy" comes from the Greek term *demokratia*, a combination of *demos* (the people) and *kratos* (power)—thus a system in which the people exercise political power. In ancient Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries BC, this ideal was taken seriously. There, an Assembly of the people, defined as free adult males, met frequently in mass meetings to decide public matters large and small, frequently extending to controversies that today we decide in courts of law (the trial of Socrates being an example of such a controversy). These were large meetings, much larger than the political conventions of our era, since he estimates that there were around 20,000 free citizens in Athens at that time. Of the 700 or so public offices in Athens, nearly all were filled by annual lotteries. A Council of 500 served as an executive committee for the Assembly, preparing agendas for meetings and overseeing the implementation of the Assembly's decisions. Membership on the Council was also decided by lottery, and no one was permitted to sit as a member more than twice. The Assembly met as often as weekly or bi-weekly, and the Council sat for roughly 300 days out of the year. This was, as the author writes, "participatory democracy with a vengeance." He maintains this view even as he acknowledges that Athenians owned slaves and did not permit women to participate in these assemblies.

*Democracy: A Life* is thus an extended brief in favor of ancient democracy and against the heritage of thought that judged it to be a cause of injustice and instability. He sees Aristotle as the main source of the anti-democratic heritage due to the lasting influence of his critique in the *Politics* where he wrote that democracy is a perversion of the ideal mixed or middle-class constitution and, further, that democracies are unstable because they are prone to the influence of demagogues who rally the poor to plunder the rich. Aristotle did not make this up: he witnessed or read about episodes of mass violence and lower-level conflicts between rich and poor in Athens and elsewhere. The Roman republic evolved under a mixed or balanced constitution under which the Senate, representing the wealthy, enjoyed a preponderance of power. Much later, when ancient thought was rediscovered during the Renaissance, Machiavelli and the civic humanists of that time looked to Roman rather than to Greek models in politics and political philosophy—and thus to the Roman republic rather than to Athenian democracy. In a similar vein, the Enlightenment, which gave rise both to the American and French revolutions, and to the U.S. Constitution, was far more focused upon Rome than upon Greece, and in any case rejected the Greek form of face-to-face democracy in favor of representative systems. Professor Cartledge takes issue with Madison's attack on Athenian democracy as mob rule in the quotation reproduced above, calling it a "classically Roman rhetorical trope." This is the tradition of popular government that he says is still dominant today—that is, representative democracy rather than what he calls "pure, ancient Greek–style democracy."

Is Professor Cartledge engaging in a pipe dream in his call for a revival of ancient democracy in modern times? Of course he is—and he at times in his book seems to recognize this. There are good reasons going well beyond Aristotle's strictures why Greek democracy collapsed in the ancient world and was not revived in the modern era of popular politics: it is thoroughly impractical as a form of government, especially in the modern era of populous and geographically extended systems. Madison was undoubtedly correct about this. In New England, town meetings have proved workable as a form of government since colonial times, but only in the local arena and for towns of no more than a few thousand people. It would be difficult today to find many Americans who would look forward to gathering every few weeks with several hundred or a few thousand of their fellow townsmen to debate the budget to repair the local sewer system or to decide which company should get the contract. They are happy to delegate those decisions to representatives, while keeping the option of voting them out of office if they do not like

what has been done. For cities of any large size, let alone for nation states composed of tens of millions of citizens, face-to-face democracy is an impractical ideal. Some have recommended the wider use of national referenda via computers, much like the recent vote in Great Britain over the European Union, but such mechanical expressions of popular opinion seem like poor substitutes for the forms of direct democracy in use in ancient Athens. On a more sobering note, direct democracy is rarely employed even in small or modest-sized organizations where it might prove practical, such as in schools, labor unions, trade associations, corporations, or colleges and universities. In nearly all of these organizations, decisions are made by representatives rather than directly by members themselves in face-to-face meetings.

Benjamin Constant, writing a few decades after the French Revolution, drew an important distinction between ancient and modern liberty. For the ancient Athenians, liberty was understood as an obligation of citizenship that involved ongoing participation in civic affairs. Ancient liberty was a burden and a responsibility made possible by the work of slaves who provided citizens with the leisure time required to attend to their civic obligations. It was workable, moreover, only in relatively small and homogeneous polities. Much in contrast to this, modern liberty is based upon private liberties and a strict separation between the public and the private spheres. It is made possible by the spread of commerce, the division of labor, and in turn a focus among citizens upon private concerns like family, work, and the accumulation of wealth. In modern circumstances, liberty led to the concept of representation to save citizens from the burdens of ongoing political involvement, and to geographically extended polities of the type described by Madison in the *Federalist*. The great error of the French revolutionaries, according to Constant, was to attempt to impose an ancient form of liberty in the modern world where very few wanted or even understood it, such that repeated failures led them to embark upon more extreme measures until the revolution collapsed.

Modern liberty is thus bourgeois liberty—private liberty—and requires republican or representative government, a principle that Madison, Hamilton, and other of the American founders understood very well. The fundamental objective of republican government, in their view, was to preserve liberty, not to perfect democracy—a principle that few seem to appreciate today, including the authors of these two otherwise excellent volumes.

## Of Sybarites & Spartans

*Nigel Spivey*
The Classical World:
The Foundations of the West and the Enduring Legacy of Antiquity.
Pegasus, 288 pages, $27.95

*reviewed by Daisy Dunn*

In around 720 B.C., Greek colonists settled on the Gulf of Taranto, in the foot of Italy, in a place called Sybaris. The Sybarites, as the colonists are known, quickly earned notoriety for cultural excess. Partial to boisterous all-night drinking parties—not to mention dancing horses and rosy-cheeked pipers—they were also said to be so fond of sleep that they banned roosters from their city. With no dawn chorus to wake them from their slumbers, they could go about their days at leisure, bathing and then partying into the small hours.

After Sybaris was destroyed by a neighboring colony, the Athenians helped to found a comparatively sober site nearby. Thurii, the new foundation, consisted of a smart network of streets laid out on a grid plan. In the fifth century B.C., Herodotus, the father of history, found it pleasant enough an environment to retire there. Sybaris had as good as been "civilized"—only to say that would be to deny Sybaris its place in the history of "classical civilization."

"Civilization" is a broad and slippery term, as Nigel Spivey, a lecturer and fellow in Classics at the University of Cambridge, acknowledges at the beginning of his book. His "survey of classical civilization" proceeds chronologically

through ten cities, each so different from the last that you soon long to append an "s" each time the word "civilization" occurs. Flowing from Troy to Constantinople via Athens, Sparta, Syracuse, Alexandria, Pergamon, Rome, and Ephesus, the book repeatedly testifies to the idea that one man's custom is another man's folly.

In Sparta, for instance, an altar of the goddess Artemis used to be stacked high with cheeses, which whip-wielding priests would gather round and viciously defend from ravenous youths. The boys, Spivey recounts, would surreptitiously approach the fragrant cheese, testing their resilience to pain in the process. A priestess would stand nearby holding a cult image of the goddess, and whenever she lowered the image, the boys would be whipped harder. Boys bled, boys died, but still the competition continued. Other Greeks might have considered these altar struggles strange, but Spartan boys were tough and determined, put through the rigors of military training and self-denial from the age of seven.

Boyhood in Periclean Athens was very different, the focus being on rhetoric over ruggedness. The two city-states, Spivey says, "cultivated a sort of oppositional development, with each city apparently striving to be the antithesis of the other." Not that this precluded some Athenians from admiring certain aspects of Spartan life. Plato, who came from Athens, incorporated several Spartan ideals, including communal property, into his Republic. Our continuing fixation with Athens—particularly Periclean Athens—as the pinnacle of Greek civilization has certainly hindered us from appreciating the breadth and significance of other thinking about what constituted civilization in the ancient world.

The notion that civilization reached its peak in Periclean Athens and then simply declined is indeed one of the most damaging to persist today. Spivey subtly apportions blame to the usual suspects, including Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century German antiquarian who viewed democracy as essential to artistic prowess. As Spivey paraphrases, "It followed, therefore, that as the democratic city-states of Greece—notably Athens—yielded to rule by Macedonian autocrats, this flower must wilt." Spivey also points his finger at Tenney Frank, an influential twentieth-century scholar from Missouri, who found an explanation for the fall of the Roman Empire in "Roman disintegration," that is, increased racial diversity.

In a sense, however, the hunt for what we might call "the ultimate civilization" is a legacy of antiquity itself. Consider the following two anecdotes from Spivey's book. The first, retold from Herodotus' *Histories*, concerns the discovery in the Peloponnese in the sixth century B.C. of some enormous bones. Supposing that the bones proved the theory that heroes of old were bigger than their descendants, an onlooker declared that the remains of Agamemnon's son Orestes had been found. Knowing as we do now that this part of the Peloponnese was once an Ice Age basin, we might assume the bones belonged rather to a mammoth.

Thousands of years later, in the late nineteenth century, Heinrich Schliemann excavated five magnificent graves in Mycenae. Much like the onlooker in the Peloponnese before him, Schliemann proclaimed that he had found the graves of Agamemnon and his relatives. Later, it was revealed that the graves were in fact 500 years older than Schliemann realized.

We may be predisposed to value glorious civilizations of the distant past over unestablished or emergent cultural ideas, but, as Spivey shows, "new" rarely means "inferior." As Greek and Roman civilizations spread across the world through colonization, migration, and intermarriage, they grew stronger, not weaker. Indeed, "If Greeks had not migrated during the eighth to sixth centuries BC, there would be very little by way of 'classical civilization.'" For Spivey, the history of the Greco-Roman world is therefore more a story of continuity than change. Hence, in his account, the rise of Christianity did not lead to a breach with pagan civilization; Cicero and Virgil remained important patrons of style and virtue in the Christian world.

Such emphasis on continuity lends Spivey's book a pleasing fluency and momentum, which is broken only by an odd chapter in the middle "inadequately entitled" "Utopia."

After explaining that "utopia" could be understood as *eutopia* ("good-place") or *outopia* ("no place"), Spivey proceeds to offer a kind of potted history of ancient philosophy. One might have expected instead a more constructive excursus on civilization as an unachievable ideal. Myths such as those of the Golden Age and the Isles of the Blessed, mentioned only in passing elsewhere in the book, played a significant role, after all, in shaping ideas about foundation and civilization in antiquity.

Spivey is at his strongest when discussing the role of art in civilization. His observations on public sculpture and ways of viewing it are particularly well woven into his text and help to transport us into the worlds he evokes. The "Tyrannicides" Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who were praised for helping to establish democracy in Athens, are described as "heroically stripped and stepping forward with their weapons, poised to strike: whoever admires them from the front plays the part of their victim." Although there is no image of the sculpture in this book, we can well imagine ourselves standing before it, contemplating the might of the two men. In the chapter on Alexandria, Spivey explains the challenges that faced the artist who hoped to make a portrait of Alexander the Great. The visual image was important because Alexander had around thirty different ethnic groups among his subjects after taking over the Persian Empire. Official art had to cross cultural barriers; Alexander's portrait artists "played upon cross-cultural appeal," emphasizing his long-haired, leonine, Homeric head and gaze. Digressions like these on the art and architecture which shaped and were shaped by civilization make *The Classical World* feel rich and well-rounded.

As engaging as Spivey's book is, however, in its form it is far less original than it might have been. Its structure, ten cities in ten chapters, recalls not only Professor Edith Hall's *Introducing the Ancient Greeks* (2014), also in ten chapters, but also more particularly Professor Paul Cartledge's *Ancient Greece: A History in Eleven Cities* (2009), both of which constitute more comprehensive surveys of Greek civilization. Both these books might have found a place in the fifteen-page "Further Reading" section at the end of Spivey's *The Classical World*, as might the recent edition of Richard Jenkyns's *Classical Literature* (2015).

A history of civilization told principally through the development "Greece–Rome–Christianity" also feels slightly outmoded at a time when classical scholars are looking increasingly at the influence of "other" cultures on the development of the Western world. Many historians now feel that the history of "the West" can no longer be studied in isolation from that of "the East." The newcomer who seeks a roughly chronological overview or a starting point for further foray into antiquity will, however, find Spivey's book clear and accessible. It is a concise guide to the myriad events that helped to shape our culture.

## A cautionary tale

*Adolf Hitler*
Mein Kampf: A Critical Edition.
Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2,000 pages, €59

*reviewed by David Pryce-Jones*

The only really meaningful issue in post-war Europe has been what to make of Adolf Hitler and the Germany he left behind. Granted the character of the people, the day would surely come when Germany was certain to be once again more powerful than all the neighbors put together. That could not happen in the days of the Cold War and the Berlin Wall, when the country consisted of two politically incompatible halves. François Mauriac became famous not for his novels but for saying that he so loved Germany that he was glad there were two of it. Sustained attempts have been made to atone and serve justice to all those who have to answer for crimes committed in the war. A court has just sentenced to prison a former S.S. concentration camp warder although he is in his nineties.

Germans have been the first to agree that they should be constrained for fear that history repeats itself—put another way, they have not been willing to trust themselves. The law in Germany controls what may be said and

published about Hitler. The generation that had lived through the Hitler years could not explain the moral collapse. Although these Germans had voted for him and fought his wars on the grounds that his ambitions were also theirs, they spoke of him casting a spell, drawing them into a magnetic field of unreason. Concealing until the end of his life that he too had been in the S.S., Günter Grass became the country's representative author when he hit upon an imaginative literary formulation for this magnetic field of unreason and spells.

At the political level, nationalism was considered the root cause of the last war, and likely to cause the next. Abolish the nation-state, it followed, create a homogeneous continent under one flag and one law, and distinctions between Germany and its neighbors would evaporate. Hitler had seen it differently. Nations might indeed fight nations, but for him history was a permanent Darwinian struggle between races. Jews were not a nation; they were a race which he accused of debasing the pure German race. For him, the German nation was merely a weapon, the means to achieve desired ends, namely the supremacy of his supposed pure German race. Defeat on the battlefield was proof that the Germans were an inferior race, and he gave orders to Josef Goebbels and Albert Speer, his two most faithful ministers, to destroy everything the nation would need for survival. His Germans had let him down, and the race deserved nothing but annihilation. By definition, people of a different nationality could not possibly identify with German nationalism; it is as a racialist that Hitler has entered the European blood stream.

*Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) is Hitler's racialist manifesto. He wrote it in 1923 when he was in prison after mounting a putsch that failed. When he became Führer, the book was a best-seller from which he and his publisher made fortunes. Had things turned out otherwise, the book would have been at best a historical curiosity. An autodidact evidently deprived of systematic education, Hitler rants with the monotonous intensity of a soapbox orator. His bile, his animus against Jews, in fact all his points of view, pass on provincial prejudices common to the masses in the Habsburg and Hohenzollern twilight. In such circles, ruthless diplomacy and the use of force were natural means of obtaining what they wanted.

The Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich is the foremost center of research into Hitler and the years of Nazism. The Institut took the view that there is a wide demand for *Mein Kampf* and decided to republish it. This critical edition is in two outsize volumes totalling together almost two thousand pages, far too heavy and unwieldy to read without some kind of lectern in support. Right-hand pages have Hitler's text in bold type, with a marginal column in smaller type containing all the various changes, mostly stylistic, that Hitler made to successive editions, all duly examined, compared, and dated. Left-hand pages consist of the notes, commentaries, and criticisms of the four editors. Specialists in the field, they do not wear their learning lightly. To give a sample chosen at random, one among many footnotes about anti-Semitism refers to separate but similarly deranged pamphlets that Hitler will have drawn on, published in 1919 by an unknown Bavarian folk-poet called Franz Schrönghamer-Heimdal and an equally unknown Paul Bang, with references, quotations, and cross-quotations from other publications.

On the crucial issue of racialism, Hitler could not be more clear, writing, "Was nicht Rasse ist auf dieser Welt ist Spreu" (race is what counts in this world and everything else is chaff). The editors reveal a lot about themselves by describing this sentence as "senseless," redrafted by Hitler and anyhow derived from half a dozen sources ranging from Disraeli to modern historians.

If Germany were a person, he or she would by now be in hospital in intensive care. A poll recently carried out at Leipzig University found that 12 percent of those questioned thought Germans were by nature superior to other people, 8 percent thought Nazism had its good side, and 6 percent held that Hitler would have gone down in history as a great statesman were it not for the genocide of the Jews. The German Ugo Voigt sits in the European Union parliament as the sole member

of the National Democratic Party (NPD in the German acronym for stormtrooper-types who are neither national nor democratic). Other members of that parliament seemingly do not object to his proclaiming in a newspaper interview that Hitler was "a great statesman." Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) has a specifically anti-Islamic platform, and in the two years of its existence has already become the third largest political party. PEGIDA, short for Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West, is a mass-movement that takes to the streets. This state of mind is no respecter of borders. Anders Breivik, the Norwegian who shot and killed seventy-seven people, opened court proceedings by giving the Hitlergruss, or straight-arm Nazi salute, going on to claim that reading Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is the only thing keeping him alive. Hitler himself observed that Jews had no intention of building a state in Palestine, "but they only want a central organization of their international world cheating." Arab and Muslim countries, Iran in the lead, treat Hitler's book as though it were an exposé of truth otherwise hard to obtain, and constantly refer to it as authority for their own racialism. At demonstrations in European cities, Muslims and their sympathizers hold up placards that proclaim "Jews to the ovens" or "Hitler was right."

Germany has a Muslim population of nearly six million, including the million migrants from the Middle East whom Chancellor Angela Merkel admitted on her own responsibility in 2015; another million are due in 2016, at an overall cost to date estimated by the Finance Ministry at $105 billion. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the country's domestic intelligence agency, 950 members of Hezbollah and 300 members of Hamas are at clandestine action stations in the West, and there are four terror alerts on average every day. A quotation from Imre Kertész, an Auschwitz survivor, is more immediate than the novels that earned him his Nobel Prize: "Europe has produced Hitler, and after Hitler the continent stands there with no arguments: the doors are wide open for Islam."

Only specialists will be reading these two volumes, but at a moment when this century looks as uncertain as the previous, there the volumes stand, monumental, exhaustive, and cautionary.

## A house full of loons

*Juliet Nicolson*
A House Full of Daughters.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 326 pages, $26

*reviewed by Brooke Allen*

"The habit of writing down the story of our lives has long been a tradition in our family," comments Juliet Nicolson in her new book, *A House Full of Daughters*. True enough. Her famous grandfather, the diplomat Harold Nicolson, was a prolific author; his thirty-seven books of history, biography, and fiction were not particularly personal, but his three volumes of *Diaries and Letters*, edited by his son Nigel (Juliet's father), reveal a great deal about this wildly unconventional family. His wife, Vita Sackville-West, wrote repeatedly about her predecessors both in memoirs and, thinly disguised, in her novels, particularly *The Edwardians* (1930). Vita's mother Victoria produced copious diaries and wrote a book of reminiscences. Nigel Nicolson devoted a substantial portion of his literary career to his colorful parents: his books include the aforementioned *Diaries and Letters* of his father, editions of his parents' correspondence, Vita Sackville-West's *Selected Writings*, and his own memoir, *A Long Life*. He also wrote a book about Sissinghurst Castle, his parents' home, and a short biography of his mother's lover, Virginia Woolf. His most notable work, though, is the 1973 *Portrait of a Marriage*, in which he revealed, memorably, just how strange the Nicolson/Sackville-West marriage actually was.

Juliet Nicolson, the author of two readable works of social history and a historical novel, *Abdication*, is the latest of the family chroniclers, and she has chosen to concentrate on the women of her family: seven generations

of them, from her great-great-grandmother Pepita, born in the slums of Malaga in 1830, to her own two-year-old granddaughter Imogen. "By considering the group of individuals who were responsible indirectly and directly for my existence, I thought a great deal about the one relationship that every woman has in common," she writes. "We are all daughters." An obvious point, perhaps, but during the course of her chronicle Nicolson gives serious thought to what it means to be a daughter, and specifically to the mother–daughter dynamic—that intense, emotional, and occasionally destructive and devouring bond. "I began to see how daughterhood can trap as well as enhance lives," she recalls. "If there is any truth in the old saying that 'a daughter is a daughter for life, a son is a son until he takes a wife,' parents have always had different expectations of their sons and daughters. . . . A daughter's attempt to break free from the parental bond can become an act of rebellion against an assumption that submission is not only expected but integral to the relationship."

The trajectory of this line of women during its first three generations makes a remarkable tale. Pepita, the daughter of a Malaga barber who was killed in a brawl when she was six and a gypsy washerwoman named Catalina, lived a fantastic rags-to-riches story. Catalina's intense love for her beautiful and gifted daughter fostered an atmosphere of "stifling dependency." Wanting the best for Pepita, she picked a husband for her—Pepita's attractive ballet teacher—but once the pair was married she proceeded to break up their marriage by indicating to each that the other had been unfaithful.

As a dancer, Pepita rose to international stardom, enchanting "sell-out auditoriums in Bordeaux, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Berlin, Stuttgart, Vienna, Budapest, Prague, and then triumphantly in Paris and at Her Majesty's Theatre in London." In Paris, she made a conquest of the twenty-five-year-old Lionel Sackville-West, an attaché at the British Legation in Germany: a son of the Earl De La Warr, he was also brother and heir to the childless Lord Sackville, owner of the great estate of Knole in Kent. Pepita and Lionel fell in love and embarked on a lifelong partnership, though it had to remain unofficial as Pepita was still married; divorce would not become legal in conservative Spain until 1932.

Lionel set Pepita up in various grand establishments including what became her ultimate home, the Villa Pepa at Arcachon in the south of France, not too far from Madrid, where Lionel was posted. She bore him five children. The Villa Pepa was grandiose, the family's way of life remarkable for what would later come to be called "conspicuous consumption," but "the lavishness of the property neither fooled Pepita's Roman Catholic, lip-curling neighbors nor endeared her to them. They had learned of the dubious marital arrangement of the new occupant of the Villa Pepa and they did not approve."

Pepita died in childbirth 1871. Her eldest child, Victoria, was only eight. Catalina, left behind in Malaga, had not profited materially from her beloved daughter's rise in the world: she and a second husband, now elderly, still sold groceries out of a room in the backstreets of Malaga.

Lionel chose not to take his children to his new posting in Buenos Aires, but farmed them out to boarding schools. Victoria was sent to the convent of St. Joseph in Paris, an establishment whose rigors, Nicolson writes, "could freeze the soul." She received only two visits from her father during the seven years she was there; nevertheless, she maintained a cheerful correspondence with him. It was not until a decade after Pepita's death that she rejoined her father, taking on the responsibility of acting as his hostess in Washington, where he had been made British Minister to the new administration of President Chester Arthur. Queen Victoria somewhat surprisingly made no objection to a young, illegitimate, half-Spanish girl being chatelaine at the Legation, and the young Victoria assumed her new role with enthusiasm, discovering that in Washington her background inspired fascination rather than the social prejudice that had hounded her and her siblings throughout their childhood in France. Her social gifts attracted many guests to the Legation, and her startling beauty won many suitors, including a disappointed Robert

Browning. But she saw no reason to marry quickly; she enjoyed her role in her father's house. In any case, "sex had been responsible for her mother's social ostracism and the consequences of sex had been responsible for her mother's death. Sex alarmed Victoria."

When an indiscreet letter in which Lionel outlined his personal political views—a fatal step for a diplomat, who is supposed to practice complete neutrality—was leaked to the press, Lionel's diplomatic career came to a dramatic close. At this moment, however, his brother died and he inherited Knole and the Sackville title. Being mistress of Knole—an Elizabethan/Jacobean "calendar house" with 365 rooms, fifty-two staircases, twelve entrances, and seven courtyards—turned out to be even more to Victoria's taste than reigning over the Washington Legation: there was "the fun of having the Sackville jewels to dress up in for dinner in the grandeur of a bedroom which had once belonged to Archbishop Cranmer," "finding an unknown Gainsborough in the attic," or playing hostess to the likes of the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Keppel, the Astors, and John Singer Sargent.

When the heir to the estate, Lionel's nephew—also called Lionel Sackville-West—fell in love with Victoria, she did not initially succumb. But the attractions of such a match, even excluding Lionel's definite sexual allure, were obvious: there would be "a respectable legal contract with an English aristocrat; the legitimate right to stay in the house she now adored; and guaranteed cohabitation with her father, the man to whom she had always felt most loyalty and with whom her sense of identity was bound up." She gave in to what seemed the inevitable, and married Lionel—now dubbed Young Lionel to differentiate him from his uncle—in 1890. The couple embarked on an orgy of sexual pleasure that lasted until the birth, two years later, of their daughter, also named Victoria but quickly nicknamed Vita. The birth was a difficult one and Victoria, who remembered all too well her own mother's death in childbirth, decided to preclude such an eventuality by ending sexual relations with her husband—a decision that had predictable results when he found satisfaction in the arms of another.

How does Nicolson know all this, one might ask? It's a question that pops up frequently during the perusal of this book. For a while I suspected her of embroidering or even inventing sections of her narrative, but so far as one can gather she adhered closely to extensive diaries and correspondence from the key players. (An extraordinarily explicit letter she quotes from Lionel to his brother bears out this idea.) It would have been helpful, however, if she had cited her sources, for that question in itself is of great interest: these Victorians appear to have written with the utmost frankness about sex. Nicolson's choice of illustrations, too, leaves something to be desired. There is lots of talk about Victoria's bewitching beauty, but the photographs she has selected don't give any idea of it. Why did she not include the portrait by Paul Helleu, or the sculpture of her head by Rodin, now in the Rodin Museum?

"She loved me as a baby," Vita Sackville-West recalled of her mother later in life, "but I don't think she cared for me much as a child," and in writing of this particular mother–daughter team Nicolson describes "suffocating love alternating with disproportionate levels of control." While Young Lionel consoled himself with his long-term lover Olive Rubens, Victoria entered into an equally lengthy, but apparently sexless, relationship with Sir John Murray Scott, affectionately known to all as Seery. Seery, immensely rich, owned a house in Mayfair, an establishment on the rue Lafitte in Paris, and the Chateau de Bagatelle, originally built for Marie Antoinette, in the Bois de Boulogne. He also owned the Wallace Collection, which had been left him by a friend. "Of all human beings," recalled Vita of this avuncular figure of her childhood, "he was the most kindly, the most genial, the most lovable and the most grand-seigneur." At his death he left Victoria many works of art from the Wallace Collection, most of which were sold to pay for Knole's upkeep.

As the lives of Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson have already been so richly chronicled, Juliet Nicolson wisely does not spend too much time on them in her

book. She concentrates, as she does throughout, on the mother–daughter axis. Victoria, as she aged, was unable to cope with her strong-willed and highly unconventional daughter. "Authoritative and yet irresponsible, passionately loyal and compulsively unfaithful, generous and selfish, briefly sociable and latterly reclusive, [Victoria] was a woman riddled with the contradicting afflictions of a movie star—ego, self-doubt, and neediness." She was an impossible mother, and Vita, who was carrying on a passionate affair with her school friend Rosamund Grosvenor even as she was planning her wedding to Harold Nicolson, must have been an impossible daughter.

Juliet Nicolson's account of Vita's later elopement with Violet Trefusis, the two women's flight across the Channel, and their husbands' procurement of a rudimentary airplane in which to pursue them, does not escape the note of ludicrousness that one found in *Portrait of a Marriage*. During the course of her marriage to Harold (who himself enjoyed flings with handsome young men) it is estimated that Vita had affairs with some fifty women. "She was predatory," her granddaughter writes, "her compulsive habit necessarily fed by constant change, her behavior that of the addict for whom instant gratification is by nature transitory. Her sexual voracity included poets, journalists, butch women, feminine women, neighbors, and even her own sister-in-law."

It is probably fortunate that Vita had no daughter. Even to sons, she was not an easy mother. She didn't pretend to be interested in children, and Ben and Nigel "sensed that she felt obligation rather than love towards them. . . . Neither of them had any experience of what it was like to be nurtured by or indeed to nurture a woman." Nigel's marriage at the age of thirty-six to Philippa Tennyson d'Eyncourt, Juliet's mother, was blighted by this lack of experience, and from the fact that Philippa, too, had received little maternal love during her life.

The first half of *A House Full of Daughters* is always of interest, but it is at this point, when the author enters into the realm of her own memories, that it becomes truly fascinating. Juliet Nicolson has a wickedly observant eye, and her pen-portraits of the key players in her own early life—Philippa's county-snobby, martini-quaffing parents, the sleazy café-society circle Philippa frequented during her long and habitual absences in the south of France, and her chilly second husband, the construction king Robin McAlpine—are rendered in ruthless detail.

The central mother–daughter relationship of the book is, inevitably, that between Juliet and Philippa. Pretty, tractable, brought up to have no ambitions beyond a suitable marriage—and that as quickly as possible—Philippa came to Nigel's attention not because of her own attractions but because Nigel was a Member of Parliament who, at the age of thirty-six, was badly in need of a wife. Although he conducted a conventional courtship, complete with a polite progression of love letters, real love did not enter into the equation: "In an unpublished memoir written years later he admitted that he had decided to propose mainly because the acquisition of a wife would do him a lot of good in his constituency." Nigel was deeply confused by sex, a fact that is not surprising when one considers his upbringing. He had remained a virgin until the age of thirty-one when, desperate, he sought advice from his business partner George Weidenfeld, who set him up with a complaisant actress. He never quite got the point of it all, and by the time of his marriage he still thought of sex as "nasty, something one was obliged to do only occasionally, almost like going to the loo." He was unable, obviously, to provide Philippa with the sexual awakening that might have helped bridge the gaping intellectual divide between this unlikely pair. Years later, when Philippa felt the need to disclose the facts of life to Juliet, she could not bring herself actually to endorse the act. "'What I am going to tell you, this thing about what a man does to a woman to get a baby, sounds disgusting,' she said, crossing her legs as she lit a Benson & Hedges and exhaled the smoke with force. 'And it is.'"

As much as anything, *A House Full of Daughters* is a chronicle of changing times for women.

> My mother, Philippa, was unlucky. She arrived in the world at a bad time to be a daughter. She was brought up after the carnage that destroyed such a high percentage of male youths during the First World War and which had made boys matter so much more than girls. As a child she was shunted away from home to avoid the bombs of the Second World War, and later her presence was obscured by the post-war gloom that preoccupied adults in the late 1940s. As a young woman she had the desire to escape from the dullness of home life, making her ready to compromise in the 1950s. A decade on she had become tethered by marriage and motherhood and it was too late to take advantage of the youthful emancipation of the 1960s.

As an American reader, I was forcibly struck by how different the experience was for American women of the same generation: my own mother, born at the same time as Philippa, looked at all the social upheavals of the twentieth century as opportunities for adventure and liberation; anything and everything was possible. If Philippa was to a great extent a victim of national and class circumstances, her passivity and lack of education finally doomed her. Essentially abandoning her family to drift in the south of France with a pack of rich and idle drones, then marrying the ultra-wealthy McAlpine, she succumbed to alcoholism at the age of fifty-eight. "My poor unloved mother had herself never learned how to love," reflects Nicolson. "So I left her alone, not mourning her, and never wishing for her return."

Opportunities for women had changed by the time Juliet, born in 1954, came of age. Her early schooling was conventional enough for a daughter of the English upper class: at boarding school, "our physical deportment was refined by walking up and down the classroom with books piled on top of our heads. We had embroidery, cooking and knitting lessons. . . . We learned that the correct direction in which to shave a leg was from ankle to knee, to do the Scottish reels and the waltz." She even went through a rite of passage that by the 1970s had become somewhat farcical—a debutante year. Still, things were different for Juliet than they had been for her mother. She left boarding school to study for A-levels at a London crammer and won a place at St. Hugh's College, Oxford. Her father urged her to accept it; her mother, she writes, "did all she could to discourage such ill-advised folly. Maybe she truly believed that I would be hurt by the probable rejection. More likely I think she was jealous, and also a little fearful. . . . In some ways she was a generational casualty of the incremental progress of female emancipation, a woman confused, no longer able to apply the rules and restrictions of her own upbringing to her daughter."

Nicolson writes with sensitivity and rue of her own uneven performance as a mother to two daughters. She was determined not to repeat her own mother's mistakes, but in this she was only partially successful. Living in New York City with husband and daughters during the 1980s, she took a job in publishing and found her frequent work-related absences from home uncomfortably reminiscent of her own mother's absence. Like Philippa, she descended for an extended period into alcoholism: "I felt I was genetically woven into repetitive surrender and did not know if I had the courage or the strength to snap the thread and interrupt the pattern." As had not been the case with Philippa, the intervention and support of family and friends helped Juliet become sober and establish a new and richer relationship with her daughters. The book closes in 2015, with Nicolson contemplating her two-year old granddaughter. "I am grateful," Nicolson writes, "to be living at a time when much, though not all, of society considers the admission of vulnerability to be courageous. In so many ways I benefit from a kinder, more compassionate society than was available to my mother, to Vita, to Pepita."

Nicolson admits that to a large extent her book is an attempt to learn from the mistakes of the past and not to repeat them. If it is hard to be a good daughter, it is infinitely harder to be a good mother. While the Sackville-West/Nicolson women are certainly unique, each woman who reads about them will find herself making connections with her own mother, her grandmother, her daughters,

herself: the bids for freedom, the "patriarchal bargains," the frequently painful efforts to give and receive love.

## When Right is wrong

*Jon A. Shields & Joshua M. Dunn Sr.*
Passing on the Right: Conservative Professors in the Progressive University.
Oxford University Press, 239 pages, $29.95

*reviewed by Paul Hollander*

It is among the baffling and paradoxical developments of the last few decades that the huge volume of rhetoric about the great benefits of "diversity" has been compatible with, indeed conducive to, the rise of narrow, dogmatic, and self-righteous views of the social world. These politically correct conceptions of "diversity" have been limited to demands for the proportional representation, in all walks of life, of certain racial and ethnic groups and women. The institutionalization of these notions of diversity resulted in the predominance of remarkably homogenized and standardized views of the social world and freely expressed intolerance of those outside the boundaries of the prevailing tenets of moral rectitude.

Support for these stunted and stultifying conceptions of "diversity" has been especially enthusiastic in academic communities earlier thought to be bastions of tolerance and free expression, upheld by academics many of whom look upon the Sixties as the golden age of revolutionary idealism, sometimes of their own idealistic youth.

Not surprisingly, in the same period, the number of conservative faculty members in the humanities and social sciences has dwindled as they have became an isolated minority. *Passing on the Right* seeks to shed light on the disposition and prospects of this minority. It is the first empirical study I know of that aims at providing specific, data-based information about conservative academics in departments of economics, political science, sociology, history, philosophy, and literature. In addition to interviewing 153 conservative professors, the authors made good use of existing studies of the political attitudes of American academics. It is notable that the authors, and most of those they interviewed, do not favor affirmative action for conservatives in departments where they have been so obviously underrepresented.

The major objective of this study was to find out why there are so few conservatives in the humanities and social sciences, as well as to address the educational, intellectual, and political consequences of this state of affairs. Most striking about these disparities is that they emerged and persist at a time when it has been the endlessly repeated conventional wisdom (embraced even by the highest judicial authorities) that the type of "diversity" advocated is essential for the life of the mind and integral to fruitful learning experiences.

Correspondingly, it has been the reigning hypocrisy of the prevailing academic-intellectual discourse that "diversity" in the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of students and faculties assures diversity of outlook, belief, and cultural disposition. As one of the conservative academics interviewed for this study summed it up: "all too often faculty and administrators want people of different races, ethnicity and gender thinking the same things."

This study provides some answers to the question of why and how political correctness came to be a major determinant of academic life. Self-selection has been a major factor: those on the left (including numerous former Sixties activists) gravitated to the humanities and social sciences, while conservatives avoided such positions, increasingly aware that they were not welcome. The discipline of sociology spearheaded these trends, attracting those seeking far-reaching social transformations, "even revolutionary change" rather than "a disinterested understanding of the social world." This spirit was captured by the 2012 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, organized around the theme "Real Utopias." On the same occasion, "the lead plenary session on 'Equality' featured a 'thirty-minute spoken word performance on social justice' by performers from the First Wave Hip Hop and Urban Arts community from

the University of Wisconsin." It was a fitting symbol of blending entertainment with political instruction—an orientation bequeathed by the Sixties. Anthropology has been similarly radicalized, its practitioners perhaps even more profoundly alienated from insufficiently communitarian, capitalist mass societies. Yet, as this study shows, economics and political science have tolerated greater diversity of outlooks and theoretical orientations.

Somewhat unexpectedly, this judicious and fair-minded study also found that discrimination against conservatives already in academic institutions has not been as widespread and intense as many critics of political correctness outside academic institutions believe.

Even so, about a third of those sampled "tended to conceal their politics prior to tenure." Of further significance is the fact that, as Stanley Rothman and Robert Lichter found, "social conservatives teach at less prestigious colleges and universities than their publication record would predict"—a finding that suggests discrimination.

The authors believe that the major justification of the academic under-representation of conservatives is the dubious idea that conservatives lack the appropriate cognitive and psychological traits academic work requires, and are less open-minded than liberals.

But few academic liberals or leftists would admit that conservatives are discriminated against for any reason, either in hiring or promotion. Thus the anti-conservative bias resembles other, earlier prevalent racial, ethnic, or sexist biases, which too were always vehemently denied.

For their initial list of conservative academics the authors used an online directory of libertarian professors, former fellows at Princeton University's James Madison Program, and those who published in conservative academic journals such as the *Intercollegiate Review* and the *Claremont Review of Books*. It is far from clear why they did not use for the same purpose *Academic Questions*, the flagship publication of the National Association of Scholars, or for that matter a sample of members of that association, which has been the major and most active organization of conservative and libertarian academics over the past three decades.

The central problem of this study is that it is often not clear to what extent the findings and generalizations based on the small sample apply to conservative academics in general. While the authors discuss at some length how they went about identifying conservative academics and chose particular academic disciplines, they do not explain why they ended up with such a small sample, or how many subjects would have been required for a more representative sample. At the same time the sample seems representative in its choice of academic institutions which include Ivy League and major state universities, as well as small private colleges and community colleges, a total of eighty-five institutions.

While this is an informative and well-written study, the key question remains why, over a long period of time, the majority of academic intellectuals (in the humanities and social sciences) have been irresistibly drawn to left-wing ideas and causes.

# Pure pulp

*Mark Kurlansky*
Paper: Paging through History.
W. W. Norton & Company,
416 pages, $27.95

*reviewed by Carl W. Scarbrough*

In Alex Gibney's 2015 documentary *Steve Jobs: The Man in the Machine*, a number of technology whizzes—Jobs included—make solemn pronouncements about how they expect Apple products to change the world. The validity of these remarks is arguable: much as I like my iPhone and would not want to go without it, I would not claim that it has changed my life so much as it has simplified tasks that I previously handled in different, less efficient ways. The comments in the movie stand as instances of the technological fallacy: the idea that technologies inevitably alter the development of the societies that employ them.

Mark Kurlansky is an ardent opponent of that idea, and he spends a goodly portion of

his new book, *Paper: Paging through History*, refuting the proposition and demonstrating the means by which societies have adapted technology, in this case paper, writing, and printing, in the course of their evolutions.

Like the invention of written language, the development of paper and the means by which it took hold as a substrate for written communication and record-keeping is the subject of a good deal of conjecture. We can be fairly sure that paper was first made in quantity from about 105 AD onward in China, where it was quickly adopted to serve the functions of a burgeoning bureaucracy, though also to fill a multitude of other needs: packaging, currency, and ritual offerings in temples and tombs. As China exported its culture throughout Asia, paper went along, conveying institutional principles and Buddhist sutras to new populations.

Paper subsequently moved west, slowly displacing papyrus and parchment in the Arab world and eventually in Europe. Paper mills were established in New Spain by the late sixteenth century to support a growing ecclesiastical printing industry in Central America. Imported paper and books forestalled the institution of paper manufacturing in English-speaking territories. No paper mills were established in North America until 1690, but by the late nineteenth century, the continent's woodlands were being felled to feed increasingly large mills, thanks to the development of wood-pulp-based papers and mechanized papermaking.

As Kurlansky tells it, societies adopted paper and learned and advanced its manufacture as they developed increasingly sophisticated systems like double-entry bookkeeping and began to explore new ideas in science, astronomy, mathematics, and the arts. Less expensive than parchment and more durable than papyrus, paper was ideal for doodling, testing calculations, and working out new ideas. Leonardo da Vinci stands out as an artist and inventor whose material realizations were few, but whose theoretical works—embodied in thousands of paper pages—enriched the store of human ingenuity immensely.

*Paper* is on surest ground as it lays out the arc of this primary narrative. The story is consistently fascinating as Kurlansky describes the sheer volume of paper manufactured—laboriously, one sheet at a time—in ancient cultures, during the Renaissance, and up to the era of the Fourdrinier machine. His description of the use of paper (or paper-like materials, of which little has survived) in pre-Columbian culture is especially satisfying: paper filled important ceremonial functions in Mesoamerica, not to mention its use in books of astronomy, history, and genealogy. Kurlansky makes an excellent point about the wanton annihilation of Mayan written culture by Spanish colonizers and the near-miraculous survival of a handful of their books.

It feels churlish to write negatively about the author of *Salt* and *Cod*. He is such a companionable writer, his books so enjoyable, and his scholarship so wide ranging that he seems an unimpeachable source of information and enlightenment. We come to *Paper* with high expectations, and on the surface it has the feel of vintage Kurlansky: the genial voice, the globe-trotting research, the abundant nuggets of insight. A reader with little knowledge of the subject will find the book entertaining, but on closer inspection it reveals itself as a frustrating muddle.

Factual errors blur the narrative and will surely distract an alert reader. To suggest, as Kurlansky does, that no printer in the early decades of printing thought to mark his work is both wrong and illogical. Despite the hostility of the scribal community and the disdain of collectors of manuscript books, early printers took pride in their work and sought credit for their labors. It is baffling to read that Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Sanctæ Peregrinationes* (1486) was the first printed book to bear a colophon when the Mainz Psalter (1457) bore both a typographic colophon and a woodcut printer's device. Perhaps the point is that the later book was the first book printed *on paper* to bear a colophon, but this seems unlikely and the distinction is not suggested. Equally confused is a retelling of the well-known story of the destruction of Michelangelo's cartoon for *The Battle of Cascina*: Kurlansky refers to this highly finished, wall-sized drawing as "a sketch" that "had a variety of other sketches

on it," and so thoroughly misquotes Vasari's examination of its dismemberment that I went back to his *Lives* to make sure I knew what was really under discussion.

Still more careless is a discussion of early printing in America in which we see him marshaling his facts without quite getting them lined up. Kurlansky ends his story of the 1663 Eliot Bible, the first Bible to be printed in the colonies, with the comment, "The second Bible printed in America was printed nearly a century later, during the Revolutionary War, in English." This simple statement is erroneous on two fronts: the first English-language Bible was printed in 1782, *over* a century after the Algonquin-language Eliot Bible; more important, though, is that the second Bible to be printed in North America was printed in German in 1748. (Compounding the error, the author contradicts himself less than twenty pages later when he mentions a 1776 German Bible.) These points are covered succinctly in the span of a few pages in Joseph Blumenthal's *The Printed Book in America*, a title that appears in *Paper*'s bibliography, which leaves us to wonder how carefully the author consulted it.

Instances of unfocussed writing and inattentive editing are frequent. Kurlansky's descriptions of the operations of paper mills and working conditions in rag-sorting rooms become repetitive. Later chapters about industrial manufacturing and Japanese *washi*-making seem overly technical and do little to amplify the book's thesis. His discussion of the early history of the printed book in Europe is particularly diffuse. Printing terminology is frequently misused, and processes are poorly described: in a section about the establishment of printing in England, the word "edition" appears where "printing" (or even "copy") seems more appropriate, as does "publisher" where "printer" would serve better. To read that William Caxton "published 103 known editions" of Chaucer is perplexing when we know that the tally of Caxton's printed works runs to approximately 100 items, of which perhaps six were works by Chaucer.

Intriguing lines of thought surface only to be left incomplete. Kurlansky neatly links the burning of Don Quixote's fictional library to the destruction of Mayan books deemed heretical by the *conquistadores*. It would seem natural to continue with a discussion of censorship and book-burning in reactionary societies like prerevolutionary France and authoritarian cultures like Nazi Germany. While it is interesting to read that publication of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* was nearly derailed by an insufficient supply of paper (the story veers off to consider Dutch paper-finishing techniques), it would have been more valuable to discuss official and ecclesiastical interference with its publication, not to mention the printer/publisher André le Breton's unilateral censorship of potentially seditious content. Disjointed passages like this last one stall discussions that could have been far more incisive and constrain explorations of the innumerable ways that paper supported the advancement of art and science, the economic boon it provided to ancient and modern cultures, and the amazing variety of papers and paper products that make our lives more productive, comfortable, and pleasurable.

I have hesitated to mention the graceless design of *Paper* and its poorly chosen illustrations, but both elements contribute significantly to my dissatisfaction with the book. Many of the illustrations seem to be beside the point, and discussions of works of art on paper, in particular, demand abundant reproductions. Too frequently advances in book illustration and the fine arts are not illustrated, leaving the reader to guess what is innovative in Turner's watercolors, or how Braque and Picasso exploited laid-finish papers in their Cubist drawings.

The book comes to life whenever it returns to the interplay of culture and technology: Kurlansky writes most forcefully when he considers phenomena as diverse as the development of Mesoamerican written languages and accounting systems, Luddite attacks against Jacquard looms, and the applications of paper in arms manufacture. These discussions contain the most engaging writing in the book, and when Kurlansky hits his stride—as he does in passages about the multiple roles of paper in the American Revolution—we can glimpse the much more consistently impressive book he might have written.

# The Empire's crown jewels

*Clive Aslet*
The Age of Empire: Britain's Imperial Architecture from 1880–1930.
Aurum Press, 192 pages, $55

*reviewed by David Watkin*

The author of this fascinating book has adopted a thoroughly new approach to its subject, one which the reader might not expect from the title, because it might suggest that the architecture described will be that built in the far-flung foreign territories of the Empire, rather than in Britain itself. In fact, though there are passing references to buildings in the Empire, notably in India, Africa, and the Dominions such as Canada and Australia, the section devoted to them is the final thirty-three pages of the 189-page text (less index, bibliography, and picture credits). For Aslet, much of "Britain's Imperial Architecture" is the monumental buildings that gave a new grandeur to many towns and cities between 1880 and 1930 throughout the United Kingdom, including Dublin, Belfast, Glasgow, Liverpool, and, above all, London. Proud domes and commanding clock towers were frequently the hallmarks of these costly buildings. Aslet includes in this Imperial category a refreshingly wide range of buildings such as theaters, churches, museums, libraries, clubs, shops, ships, and even airplanes and airports. This is in contrast to one of the comparatively few books which touches on aspects of this theme, *Imperial London: Civil Government Building in London, 1850–1915* (Yale University Press, 1995), by M. H. Port, who explains that "this is the story of civil governmental buildings in London in the period when London was being rebuilt to equip it for its role as the capital worthy of a world-wide empire. That rebuilding was in great measure a rebuilding of the financial and commercial districts."

The far more varied buildings selected by Aslet all share an ebullience and confidence that he traces to the new mood of the people of the United Kingdom, which dated back to the 1880s. He explains that "Before 1880 Britain had long possessed colonies but did not consider them to be an essential part of her own DNA. That changed with the New Imperialism of the 1880s, a political movement that coincided with a surge of popular enthusiasm for the Empire which became nothing short of a rage." Vital to this was the creation in 1877 of Queen Victoria as Empress of India. This is usually attributed to the colorful Prime Minister and novelist Benjamin Disraeli, but Aslet records that in January 1873 the Queen had told her private secretary that she was already "sometimes called Empress of India," and asked "Why have I never officially assumed this title? I feel I ought to do so and wish to have preliminary enquiries made." Aslet claims that "to have her wish granted was a stroke of genius which showed the understanding that the Queen, though retired from the public gaze, had of her people. They loved Empire, and so did she."

One of the finest of the many superb color plates in this book is that facing the introduction, which shows a giant bronze statue by George Frampton of the Queen Empress in front of the Victoria Memorial Hall in Calcutta. Her voluminous robes spread out extensively on either side, creating an uncanny echo of the huge dome of the Victoria Memorial Hall rising behind her, an effect which Aslet does not note, though he does claim elsewhere that, "Like the Queen's own girth, the Empire expanded ever outwards." The Memorial Hall was conceived in January 1901 by Viscount Curzon, the Viceroy of India from 1899–1905, in response to what he described as "such an outburst of feeling from all classes of the population of India" on the death of the Queen Empress early in that month.

The Victoria Memorial Hall, built in Calcutta, then the capital of the British Raj, is a vast, classical palace, serving as an imperial museum. Designed by Sir William Emerson, it is dominated by a superb monumental dome of polished Indian marble. Curzon claimed that it was "erected by the contributions of the Princes and Peoples of India—both European and Indian." It was not opened until 1921 by the Prince of Wales, the future King-Emperor, Edward VIII, who was to abdicate in 1936.

Lord Curzon, the greatest of all the British viceroys, was passionate about architecture and was responsible for the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act to restore many of the historic buildings throughout India which had been allowed to fall into decay. He wrote in 1903 to the Secretary of State for India in London that "I really think that almost the most lasting external effect of my term of office will be the condition in which I shall leave the priceless treasures of architecture and art which we possess in this country."

Another great domed building in Calcutta shown by Aslet is the General Post Office with three colonnades and a dome at the angle. Less distinguished than the Victoria Memorial Hall, this was built in the 1860s by Walter Granville, who had been charged with the design of important buildings in Calcutta. Turning to the great city of Bombay, we are shown the Victoria Terminal, an enormous neo-Gothic railway station which was the largest building in the sub-continent when it was opened in 1888. Its architect, Frederick William Stevens, is not mentioned by Aslet, though he rightly notes that its pointed arches "are combined with Gujarati trelliswork; surfaces bristle wirh crocodiles and monkeys as well as heraldic shields." No less importantly, he claims that "bringing the railway was one of the greatest of the Raj's achievements in India." Indeed, it might be said that this gigantic network still helps to sustain the economy of the whole country.

Also in Bombay we see the famous Taj Mahal Hotel, designed by an English architect in a partly Indo-Saracenic style but with a dome improbably inspired by that of the Duomo in Florence. Nearby is the more emphatically Indo-Saracenic Gateway of India, designed by George Wittet to commemorate the landing of the King-Emperor George V and Queen Mary in 1911 on their way to the Durbar at Delhi, which marked the transfer of the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi. Aslet describes it as "combining a European triumphal arch with Indian decoration," and notes that, "finished in 1921, it became the exit of the last British Troops at Independence, little more than a quarter of a century later." Compare that to when Prince William, second in line to the British throne, recently stayed with his wife in the Taj Mahal Hotel and visited the Gateway to India. They received a rapturous welcome from the inhabitants of Bombay (now known as Mumbai).

India was always seen as "the jewel in the crown of the Empire," but there are fine buildings in British South Africa by the distinguished architect Sir Herbert Baker, who emigrated in 1892 to the Cape Colony where, with a number of others, he was appointed an architect to Cecil Rhodes. The Doric columns and hillside setting of Baker's Rhodes Memorial, Capetown (1909), on the shoulder of Cable Mountain, recall ancient monuments such as the Altar of Zeus (first half of the second century BC, now in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin) on a high terrace at Pergamon. But Baker's masterpiece is the Union Buildings of 1909–13 in Pretoria, housing the parliament of the Union of South Africa, which united four colonies in 1910. Baker chose a valley near

the city of Pretoria which he saw as a "natural site for an acropolis." He set his buildings on a narrow platform half-way up, where he created what he called "a semicircular theater as the Greeks knew it." He surrounded this at the top by a hemicycle consisting of a long colonnade of coupled Ionic columns with at each end a tall dome-capped tower, reflected in the pools below, and inspired by Sir Christopher Wren's towers in a similar position over colonnades at his Royal Hospital, Greenwich. The stunning effect of Baker's merging of architecture and nature on a vast scale is well shown in the double-page plate in this book, so I am surprised that Aslet finds that "The deliberate lack of any central emphasis . . . might be criticized as Mannerist." For me, the whole scene is perfect.

Baker invited his friend, the architect Edwin Lutyens, to the Transvaal, which led to Lutyens designing the War Memorial and Art Gallery in Johannesburg. Even more importantly, Lutyens recommended Baker to share with him the task of designing the new government buildings at New Delhi. In 1912–14 Lutyens was busy making varied designs for the Viceroy's House at Delhi, a palace larger than Versailles, yet with surprising modesty always known as a house and never a palace.

Baker was designing at this time two Secretariat blocks, each as large as the Houses of Parliament in London which, with their domes and columnar pavilions, flanked the approach to the Viceroy's House. As Robert Grant Irving observed of the Secretariats in his *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi* (Yale University Press, 1981), "Thirty-foot-wide flights of red stone stairs set at right angles to the King's Way evoked visions of imperial Persepolis and the approaches to its sanctum." Aslet writes sympathetically of the Viceroy's House that Lutyens "adapted the Western classical tradition to the climate of the East . . . the overwhelming impression is one of controlled majesty"—a perfect summary of a building that I would choose if I were asked to name the greatest building in the world!

Aslet reminds us that "While the First World War ended the German, Hapsburg, Ottoman, and Russian Empires, it left the British Empire bigger than ever. Its possessions now stretched in an unbroken line from the Suez Canal to Singapore and from Cairo to the Cape." He stresses that, "For the public at home, the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 showed what fun it was to run a quarter of the world's landmass; but the reluctance of some Indian states to participate sounded a warning note."

Moving back to Britain proper, Aslet recounts the procession for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887: "Foggy, soot-blackened London looked dowdy—almost provincial—beside Paris and Vienna whose glittering boulevards were lined with exuberant buildings . . . [thus] London applied itself to improvement in the grand, formal style of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts." A huge new street, Aldwych, proposed in 1889, included Australia House (1913–18) and India House (1928–30) by Herbert Baker, the latter's interiors beautified by Indian details. Baker also built South Africa House (1930–33) in Trafalgar Square.

The ceremonial heart of London was transformed with the giant Queen Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace, which was given a grandiose new façade in a French style by Sir Aston Webb in 1913. In the center is the famous balcony which makes possible appearances of the Queen and the Royal Family. A grand processional route to the Palace from Trafalgar Square was also created, beginning with the Admiralty Arch of 1908–11 by Aston Webb, a triumphal arch with three openings on a giant curve.

In cities outside London, grandiose public buildings invariably had domes, of which one was often not enough. Aslet interprets these as "the equivalent of Elgar's more sonorous passages, bespeaking imperial self-confidence," as in Belfast City Hall (1899–1906) with four domes, hinting that Belfast was one of the richest cities in the Empire. The Port of Liverpool Building (1903–07) has a central dome and "also four sub-domes at the corners of the main building, like tent-pegs to stop it from blowing away."

I prefer Cardiff City Hall and Law Courts (1897–1906) by H. V. Lanchester and Edwin

Rickards, an admirer of the Austrian Baroque who brought lively sculpture to the building, which is also enlivened by the exuberant tower, unusually placed asymmetrically. Equally magnificent is their Wesleyan Central Hall, Westminster (1905–11), not illustrated here but overflowing with dynamic Viennese splendor, much carving by Henry Poole, and a breathtakingly theatrical staircase. That such a worldly building should commemorate the founder of austere Wesleyan Methodism marks the victory of Imperial Baroque.

Aslet laments that in the 1970s appreciation of the buildings he loves was at a nadir, but welcomes the fact that "Now a different public response can be seen from the care with which both Admiralty Arch and the old Port of London Authority are being turned into hotels and residences." He rejoices that "People still dine beneath the mosaics of the Criterion Restaurant in Piccadilly" and that "The buildings persist, long after the Empire has gone." His dazzling book similarly deserves a long life.

# Officers & gentlemen

*Dominic Lieven*
The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution.
Viking, 448 pages, $35

*reviewed by Paul du Quenoy*

Early in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the cynical Lord Henry Wotton visits his uncle, a world-weary retired diplomat, to learn more of the novel's beguiling title character. Among the uncle's complaints about the decaying *fin-de-siècle* universe he inhabits is the new meritocratic procedure of hiring British diplomats. "But I hear they let them in now by examination," he mourns in disgust, adding "if a man is a gentleman, he knows quite enough, and if he is not a gentleman, whatever he knows is bad for him."

The First World War somberly ended this transitional world—which Wilde chronicled with such devastating wit—and spelled doom for continental Europe's traditional elites, who had resisted the professionalization of diplomacy. Ever since, historians have wrestled with the question of who was responsible and why. Blame has often fallen on the last generation of Old Regime diplomats, whom most standard interpretations dismiss as aristocratic amateurs dangerously entrusted with the management of complex "modern" problems they could neither solve nor even understand. Benefitting from undisguised patronage, outrageous nepotism, and inexcusable hereditary privilege, they held positions far above their levels of talent and intelligence and made a mess of the whole world.

Dominic Lieven, or, if he will pardon the indiscretion, His Serene Highness Prince Dominic Lieven, has greeted the conflict's centennial with a contradictory explanation. In short, it turns out that the old-world diplomats—temperate men of polish, balance, style, and rectitude—were just fine. It was the rising class of chattering "policy professionals"—arrogant men of careerism, ambition, vulgarity, and impetuousness—who loused things up and plunged Europe and the world into the bloodiest conflict known until that time. In a horribly ironic twist, the war cemented the professionals' collective permanence in leadership at the expense of the "amateurs" they either supplanted or reduced to quaint anachronisms. Nowhere was this worse than in Russia, Lieven's area of expertise, whose tsarist-era officials often paid with their lives for their political marginalization.

Even without our present age's dour egalitarianism, Lieven's argument is an uphill one. Until the archives of the Imperial Russian Foreign Ministry opened in the 1990s, the best sources on Russia's involvement in the First World War were limited to three heavily biased sets of data. First, Trotsky, in his new role as People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, selectively published the most damning of his predecessors' diplomatic documents to embarrass them and discredit the values they represented. Unsurprisingly, the pre-revolutionary diplomats come off as stark-raving-mad imperialists whose excesses had only naturally led to a disaster that communist revolution would rectify. Next came the blame game of

memoirs by tsarist officials lucky enough to survive the revolutionary chaos. Neither the memoirists nor their dead colleagues—and especially not their murdered tsar—emerged unscathed. Finally appeared the recollections of Allied diplomats who interacted with these officials, refracted through the prism of bitter disappointment over Russia's lackluster military performance and early departure from the war. These calamities had seriously imperiled their own countries' military efforts, burdened their eventual victory with a heavy expense that might otherwise have been avoided, and presented them with the unwelcome challenge of the world's first communist dictatorship.

The archives, however, tell a different and more objective story. Beginning with the solid premise that "Russia was neither as unique nor as exotic as either its admirers or its detractors claimed," Lieven seeks to explain the origins of the First World War from Russia's perspective but within an international context. He correctly reminds us that the challenges faced by the Russian Empire—aggressive nationalism, the emergence of an activist civil society, and the unanticipated toll of modern warfare—were shared by all combatants and that Russia's three immediate neighbors and principal enemies (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire) also succumbed to them. To an extent, the book is an update of Lieven's 1983 study, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War*, which did not benefit from Russian archival materials but nevertheless anticipated his general arguments here. Unlike the earlier study, however, his new analysis reveals a much more intricate picture at the heart of Russia's policymaking establishment and offers an original explanation of how the tsarist government really worked. Above all, he provides a remarkable vindication of the role of individual personalities, for better or worse, in making history.

There can be no question that Russia's prerevolutionary diplomatic establishment would have appealed to the sensibilities of Lord Henry's uncle. As Lieven's valuable personal vignettes attest, its ranks brimmed with spoiled sons, favored nephews, convenient cousins, and reliable brothers-in-law. Much of it was not even particularly Russian. Count Alexander Benckendorff, the Russian Empire's longtime ambassador to the United Kingdom, was a Baltic German Roman Catholic who spoke Russian poorly and rejected higher positions because he enjoyed the English gentleman's way of life more than anything Russia had to offer. In 1914 he awkwardly counted the German and Austrian ambassadors in London among his cousins just as his country was sliding into war with theirs.

Nevertheless, these were men who knew who they were, where they came from, and what they and their countries stood to lose from ill-considered conflict. To virtually anyone at the highest level of Russian politics in 1914, war with Germany—a fellow authoritarian monarchy with a much larger economy and in many ways both a natural and historical ally—was "suicidal madness." As a result, an odd paradox at play among the Russian elite was that the more reactionary an official, the less inclined he was to endorse war. Probably the best expression of this entrenched caution was the high-ranking statesman Peter Durnovo's distillation of numerous internal discussions in a brief but extraordinarily prescient memorandum circulated in February 1914. One of the era's most revealing documents, it repeated three essential points about Russia's likely fate in a general European war: that it would probably lose, that victory would only bring more restive ethnic minorities under already unpopular Russian rule, and that the strains of conflict would cause a massive revolution that would destroy Russia's state and society. Durnovo was no liberal—in the decades before 1914 he had built a career as a nasty secret police chief and Interior Minister devoted to upholding the tsarist order (his early career in high officialdom was nearly undone when it was discovered that he used police spies to steal his mistress's letters to a rival). But he was absolutely right about what a general European war would do to the Russia he served.

As Russia's leaders edged toward their reluctant decision to go to war in the wake of the July Crisis, Old Regime reactionaries filed report after report denouncing the idea. Those who eventually accepted war as unavoidable

did so against their better judgment. And even that had consequences Lord Henry's uncle would have cheered. When one minister veered toward favoring war in the days leading up to mobilization, he and the adamantly pacifist yet arch-reactionary Interior Minister Nikolai Maklakov nearly fought a duel over it. To add irony to insult, the staunchly anti-war Maklakov was one of the first tsarist ministers to meet his end at the hands of the Bolsheviks.

Just why did Russia's leaders end up in a war almost none of them wanted? In the absence of firm documentary evidence, the standard explanations long painted them as victims of the very forces of modernity that their backgrounds supposedly prevented them from mastering. Interlocking alliances, dizzying arms races, and fierce imperial competition possessed a logic of their own, one that mere mortals could never hope to contain. Studies of the social factors further placed the Old Regime diplomats in an outmoded honor culture that precluded sensible solutions. But Lieven presents a much more banal culprit few scholars have ever suspected: civil society. Russia did have one. Particularly after the unrest of Russia's "first" revolution in 1905, civic activity exploded as legal restrictions on expression and association almost completely vanished.

It may seem surprising that this should have led to a devastating war that claimed millions of Russian lives and ended in an unspeakably violent revolution that claimed millions more. In our relentlessly liberal age, one usually expects that broadening civil society will automatically engender more responsible government. In a mournful irony, Lieven's study proves that Russia's war fever was not inflamed by the expected cadre of reactionary lunatic warmongers, but rather by two phenomena that students of modernity are practically inoculated to trust: the independent media and the allied professional meritocracy. Yet at every step in the years leading up to 1914, many of their representatives shamelessly championed war over peace, nationalism over internationalism, and conflict over conciliation.

As the reactionary "amateurs" sought to avoid hostilities, they were brutally assailed at every turn by a newly empowered group—a functional middle class—of journalists, editors, academics, parliamentarians, and even professionalized meritocrats who had risen within government circles, all passionately urging them toward war. In an era of mass media in which public opinion truly started to matter, they found their natural caution and reserve broadsided by opinionated critics happy to indulge their lack of government experience with the absence of any practical limitations on what they could say in the public sphere. The critics also roamed free of the cosmopolitan sensibilities and "Olympian Majesty" for which they derided their stunned betters in the halls of the Foreign Ministry. As the documentary record unambiguously shows, the beleaguered government officials suddenly had no choice but to devote time and energy to the new and unfamiliar concept of "spin"—reacting to public opinion, shaping policy to accommodate it, and, very often, simply admitting that it lay beyond their control. "The deep irresponsibility of the Russian press," Lieven writes, shattered Europe's peace more assuredly than any tsarist martinet in court dress. In its final decade Imperial Russia emerges not as a divine-right autocracy but as a disturbingly modern society in which media and information elites arrogated unelected and unaccountable power to themselves.

Once they rounded on Russia's well-known diplomatic reversals in the years beginning with the Bosnian Crisis of 1908, there could be no going back if they felt the country's prestige had been bruised. Opposing them promised danger at least as great as going along with them. Thus could Nikolai Hartwig, Russia's self-made middle-class career minister to Serbia, buck up his host government—to the disgust of his nobly born colleagues—with confident assurances that public opinion alone would force Russia to go to war to defend it in its brewing conflict with Austria-Hungary. Hartwig's allies in the media even relished their corrosive role: "All your arguments will be to no avail," one Russian popular journalist mocked a diplomat. "Our purpose now is to destroy the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." In sending Russia into a spiral of crisis that

toppled its dynasty, unchecked public opinion was as effective as Bolshevik firing squads. As Vladimir Putin cracks down on freedom of expression and association a century later, we might at least credit him with a sardonic ability to learn from history.

## Acts of faith

*Darío Fernández-Morera*
The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain.
ISI Books, 376 pages, $29.95

*reviewed by Thomas F. Madden*

On June 4, 2009, in a speech delivered in Cairo, Egypt, President Barack Obama informed his largely Muslim audience that "Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia . . ." He was not speaking of the southern region of Spain that bears that name today, but rather the Caliphate of Córdoba, known as al-Andalus, which flourished between 756 and 1031. In the last century or so, this period in Spanish Muslim history has been celebrated as a time of enlightenment and tolerance, set against the Dark Ages of bigotry and violence that characterized the Christian West. Such black-and-white characterizations of peoples and cultures are rarely accurate. Medieval al-Andalus was a product of its times, adhering to norms found in other Muslim kingdoms that were just as intolerant (to use an anachronistic term) as Christian ones. The "paradise" of *convivencia* that is so often invoked by politicians and popular authors is indeed a myth, and the world needs a good book to replace it with a dispassionate analysis of the evidence and a clear description of the people and events.

This is not that dispassionate book. It is instead a blistering indictment of the Umayyad Caliphate and its Muslim successors in Spain, as well as the modern academics who produced the myth. It begins by describing the eighth-century conquest of much of the Iberian peninsula by Muslim warriors, who wiped out what the author describes as a vibrant Christian Visigothic culture. He rightly criticizes academic historians who have soft-pedaled or denied altogether the religious nature of this war. The Arab and Berber invaders waged vigorous jihad to expand the *Dar al-Islam* at the expense of the infidel *Dar al-Harb*. The author rejects the popular notion that jihad was first and foremost an inner struggle for medieval Muslims to live an exemplary life. Instead, virtually all of the legal and religious texts from the period describe jihad only in terms of holy war—an obligatory duty for all faithful men.

Very little evidence survives from the short-lived Visigoth kingdom. Nonetheless, based on a treasure horde, the author concludes that it was "magnificent." Scholars who do not share this view are not merely contradicted, but scorned. For example, the distinguished historian Thomas F. Glick of Boston University is accused of "antipathy to anything connected to Christian Spain" because he noted, based on the testimony of Isidore of Seville, that mining activities declined in pre-Islamic Spain, suggesting a similar decline in the overall economy. The author counters this assertion with the judgment of the "historian Emmet Scott," who discounts Glick's reasoning, chalking it up to "bad faith." Yet Mr. Scott is only a "historian" if one's definition includes people who like to write about history. Unlike Glick, Scott is not a trained historian but, according to his publisher, "an independent writer and researcher." It is perhaps unsurprising that he rejects Glick's view on the late seventh century, since in his book, *A Guide to the Phantom Dark Age*, Scott claims that the years between 615 and 915 never happened at all.

Maliki legal commentaries, commonly used in Muslim Spain, suggest that, far from a tolerant paradise, the Caliphate's norm was to treat subject Christians as impure inferiors. Although elites might cross religious lines, common people stuck to their own neighborhoods. Women in Muslim Spain, Fernández-Morera contends, were treated poorly by modern standards, and even by medieval Christian standards. At times, though, the accusations outpace the evidence. Female circumcision was described in Maliki commen-

taries as unnecessary, albeit honorable. There is no clear evidence concerning its practice in Spain, yet the author still takes to task those scholars who have "prudently tiptoed around" the issue. Professional historians are trained to approach topics cautiously when evidence is lacking. This author, however, insists that female circumcision was "probably" practiced widely. His evidence: "how many fathers (or mothers) do not want their little girl to grow up to be an honorable woman . . . ?"

Since many of the practices that the author attributes to Muslim Spain were not specific to it, he draws liberally from events well beyond the peninsula. Major Christian churches, for example, were usually destroyed or converted into mosques after a Muslim conquest—hardly an act of tolerance. In Córdoba the church of St. Vincent was demolished to make room for the construction of the fabulous Great Mosque. Ranging far afield, the author describes the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque in Constantinople in 1453 as a "desecration." He complains that the building, today a museum, has large medallions bearing Muslim prayers and a mihrab "to remind all visitors to the 'secularized building' that this is a Muslim, not a Christian site." Drawing comparisons to a church captured centuries later by Turks seems a stretch. And a fair description of Hagia Sophia would note that a mosaic of the Virgin and Child towers over that offending mihrab, while mosaics of Christ and the saints are scattered throughout the former church. Given the scorn the author heaps on these conversions it is startling to hear Ferdinand III's transformation of the Great Mosque of Córdoba into a Christian church described not as a crime, but "poetic justice." Indeed, the author complains that tour guides still refer to it as a mosque "quite contrary to the fact."

Names and naming are an important theme in this book. The author rejects the oft-used "Iberia," since it is ancient rather than medieval. It has become popular among intellectuals, he believes, because it "avoids offending non-Christian sensibilities." Why "Spain" is more Christian than "Iberia" is not clear, but the author is certainly correct that the latter is an anachronism. The author also believes that, in a "standard colonialist move," Muslim conquerors renamed places, as a means of eradicating the previous cultures. Thus Spain became al-Andalus, a practice repeated with countless place names across the peninsula and the Muslim world. Yet each of the examples the author provides, including "Istanbul," was either a foreign hearing of the original name or an attempt to translate the original name into Arabic or Turkish. Even al-Andalus was likely derived either from the Greek for Atlantis or from a reference to the Vandals, who conquered the peninsula before the Visigoths. In either case, it appears that the Muslims were attempting to retain current names, or at least thought names generally unimportant.

As one may have gathered, this is a book only partially about medieval Spain. It is also a powerful condemnation of modern scholars individually and the culture of the academy

in general. Professional historians, the author maintains, have willfully distorted the facts, transforming a brutal conquest of Spain into a "migration" or "exertion," and an oppressive culture into a society of tolerance and wisdom. All of this is "an academically sponsored effort to narrate the past in terms of the present and thereby reinterpret it to serve contemporary 'multi-cultural,' 'diversity,' and 'peace' studies, which necessitate rejecting as retrograde, chauvinistic, or, worse, 'conservative' any view of the past that may conflict with the progressive agenda." It is certainly fair to note that most academics, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, identify themselves as "progressive." Similarly, one may assume that this disposition colors some of their approaches to history, leading to a magnification of the sins of the West, while downplaying those of everyone else. The antidote to these prejudices, though, is a solid analysis of surviving material and a reasoned narrative that contextualizes Muslim Spain into its own period, rather than ours. Many of the raw materials for such a project are here. But they are often lost in the currents of a polemical treatise that seems as focused on unearthing modern conspiracies as it is on setting the medieval record straight. The author believes that "money from Islamic nations has compromised Islamic and Middle East studies in Western universities," presumably because scholars in those fields do not agree with him. Yet, if academics are already blinded by their "Christianaphobia," as the author also contends, is it really necessary to bribe them as well?

This is a book that will change few minds. Professional scholars will dismiss it as an angry screed, unworthy of serious attention. Readers who already take a dim view of Islam and its history will have that view confirmed. Those few academic historians who happen to be conservative—like myself—will delight in the pointed jabs against left-wing politics in the academy, but I suspect will also remain unconvinced by the conspiracy theories. Like most myths, that of the Andalusian paradise will resist all attempts to excise it. What is needed is a finely honed scalpel, expertly wielded—not a blunt mallet.

# Poor Richard abroad

*George Goodwin*
Benjamin Franklin in London: The British Life of America's Founding Father. Yale University Press, 352 pages, $32.50

*reviewed by Michael Taube*

Benjamin Franklin had an astonishing life and career. Not only an author, scientist, inventor, and newspaper editor, he also served as an early President (now Governor) of Pennsylvania, the first U.S. Postmaster General, and the first president of The Academy and College of Philadelphia. Add to that minister to Sweden and, most famously, France.

Yet, for all that we know about Franklin, it appears our understanding of his time living in England may be surprisingly incomplete. George Goodwin's well-written book *Benjamin Franklin in London: The British Life of America's Founding Father* tackles the long-standing myth that Franklin was a political outsider in this great city. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

The talented historian and author in residence at London's Benjamin Franklin House wrote, "Franklin had all his life considered himself to be British." He was inspired by British writers, philosophers, and ideas. "It was because of his British influences, not through a rejection of them," writes Goodwin, "that he was so willing to put the British government to the test of his 'Prudential Algebra.'" At the same time, "Franklin was then prepared to become" what the Earl of Sandwich "had already believed him to be: 'one of the bitterest and most mischievous Enemies [Britain] had ever known,' and at great personal cost."

Franklin's first taste of British society occurred between 1724 and 1726. Still a teenager, he traveled on the "well-named *London Hope*" based on a false promise by Sir William Keith, Pennsylvania's Lieutenant Governor, to help him finance a newspaper. Franklin would get the satisfaction of a "small revenge," however, when in a remarkable twist of fate, he convinced the ship's captain to open the Governor's mail—revealing a letter from

Riddlesden, a "crooked attorney," detailing a "secret scheme against [Andrew] Hamilton that involved Keith."

He stayed in London for a year, working at the established London printer Palmer's. He read an extraordinary number of books, and wrote "one pamphlet of note," *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain*. He even won over some colleagues, who "gave up their breakfast of beer and joined Franklin in eating the far more wholesome porridge, sprinkled with pepper and breadcrumbs and with a bit of butter added."

It may have had an inauspicious start, but Franklin's first London trip ended up being a rather gratifying experience.

The most illuminating sections of *Benjamin Franklin in London* occur during his next, and more extensive, stay in London. For nearly two decades (1757–1775), Franklin lived, studied, and politicked in the Square Mile.

Much had changed for him since his last visit. He had acquired wealth and social standing, aided by his successful *Poor Richard's Almanack*. The famous 1752 kite experiment, and his revolutionary work with electricity and the lightning rod, had also made Franklin a household name. He became "the first Briton from outside the British Isles" to be awarded the Royal Society's Copley Medal in 1753. "As a provincial outsider, Franklin had been treated with scepticism by the scientific establishment," Goodwin noted, "but the support of the French" and "championing" of the botanist Peter Collinson and the physician John Fothergill, along with "proofs" from his fellow Copley Medal winner John Canton, "had won the day."

Franklin took up residence on Craven Street near Trafalgar Square. It was "not far from Parliament and the houses of the aristocracy in Mayfair." Hence, he was situated in the most ideal location: right near the main corridors of power.

In turn, Franklin moved in eminent social circles. "Far from being 'treated coldly,'" Goodwin explains, "Franklin was welcomed with open arms by those interested in (natural) philosophy and science, whether they were aristocrats or commoners." His admiration for the "ideal club" in the old *Tatler* journal, combined with great English prose he devoured in *The Spectator*, was a perfect fit for the Royal Society Club and other organizations. This is, again, another example that counters the notion of Franklin as an outsider. With only a few exceptions, including the Earl of Sandwich's devious 1768 attempt to take away Franklin's role as Deputy Postmaster, he had far more friends than enemies in London.

That being said, the "First American" had returned to British soil as a colonial representative. He fought for freedom and liberty for his beloved Pennsylvania and, after an exceedingly brief period of cordial relations, firmly against the province's proprietors, the Penn family. (He once described Thomas Penn, the son of the original founder, as "proud, avaricious, and despicable.") He reached the conclusion that "Pennsylvania must throw off the Penns and become a Crown colony," and aimed to help the Assembly achieve this lofty goal.

It was a precarious position to defend. The Whigs, who held political power in England, "shared the view that the colonies had claimed too much for themselves." Franklin was therefore unsuccessful in early attempts to build relationships and wisely devised a new approach. He had to "lobby government at a lower level . . . the workhorse under-secretaries who acted as both administrators and political advisors to their aristocratic superiors and could provide or deny access to them." This strategy was the "long game," as Goodwin correctly notes, but it worked and he gradually gained access.

The book also examines Franklin's role in the turbulence surrounding Stamp Act between 1764–1766. The American colonies were understandably furious at this measure, which "did not just tax correspondence but all stamped documentation." The Act "extended right across both business and pleasure," and was, in effect, "a tax on living." Goodwin points out "the Stamp Tax would be lower in the colonies than its long-standing British equivalent, but it was the fact of the tax rather than its original amount that was the cause of colonial objections."

Alas, Franklin "was both out of touch with popular feeling and did not yet understand its strength." He originally felt the Stamp Act should be regarded as a "fait accompli" and

the "lesser of two evils," believing "resistance to it would harm their efforts in resolving the greater problem," the proprietors. Stern letters, and the threat of burning down his Philadelphia house, taught him an important lesson. He reversed course, and helped bring the Stamp Act down.

The final years in London were difficult ones. The native Bostonian was displeased about a particularly raucous tea party, even "suggesting that reparation be made to the East India Company." He lost his role as Deputy Postmaster after a difficult meeting at Whitehall Palace in the room known as the Cockpit, and became "persona non grata" in Massachusetts, although it "actually clarified Franklin's political position as a clear representative of colonial interests." He sent out "what could only be construed as a threatening letter" to Lord Dartmouth days before he left the city, which led to a warrant for his arrest being served "when he was at sea."

History teaches us that Franklin's return to America led to a new chapter in his life. He became a Revolutionary hero, a Founding Father, and he even won over French hearts and minds. Yet, as Goodwin writes, "he still retained a small part of his dream of a British American confederation," albeit an "American-centred one." An American in London he was, and would always remain.

# Dante politicus

*Marco Santagata, translated by Richard Dixon*
Dante: The Story of His Life.
Belknap Press, 496 pages, $35

*reviewed by Kyle Skinner*

Good history requires responsible speculation. Marco Santagata's most recent book on Dante hints that it will engage in some speculation in its very title, *Dante. Il romanzo della sua vita*, literally "Dante: The Novel of His Life" (*Dante: The Story of His Life*, as Richard Dixon's new translation has it). The book reconstructs Dante's activity chronologically while also dividing it geographically into two parts: half a life climbing the social and political ladder of medieval Florentine society and half a life spent in itinerant uncertainty after being banished from his hometown.

Chronicling the life of a man who was born more than 700 years ago and not to a noble family leaves us with scarce documentation and thus requires a great deal of guesswork. The extent of Santagata's bibliography and explanatory notes—which take up more than a quarter of the text—can give the reader some reassurance that speculation, when it does occur, announces itself promptly and is justified by the secondary literature. Without these moments of creativity, one might be tempted to read the book as merely a long synthesis and reordering of the seemingly endless historical scholarship on Dante.

An Anglophone readership may be less forgiving of the book's occasional if necessary dryness given our much lesser appetite for Dante relative to an Italian audience, though Santagata's writing is clean, simple, and occasionally even humorous. This biography will be most useful and enjoyable to those who already have a familiarity with the *Comedy* and want a more nuanced view of its place in Italian history. It is likely that only specialists will find some of the more precise historical speculations of much interest (at which points Dante cohabited with his wife Gemma, to what extent he interacted with the Florentine philosopher and statesman Brunetto Latini, whether he was in communication with Henry VII of Luxembourg's attorneys while writing the *Monarchia*, etc.), but some of the more imaginative claims are sure to capture the casual reader (for example, that the fainting spells described in Dante's early work of prosimetrum, the *Vita Nuova*, provide evidence for a medical diagnosis of epilepsy).

The necessity of such speculations comes both from the typical challenges of historical work and from Dante's own efforts to mythologize himself. The poet's elaborate self-fashioning as a prophet through the careful manipulation of his personal history makes the labor of the biographer a difficult one. To make the prophet Dante, the person Dante is reduced and subsumed by his own literary

creation. In some ways this is what all good autobiographical writing does; it merges lived experience with an idea, a generation, or a historical moment and thereby elevates the author while also reducing him to the status of an avatar. In the first pages of the book, Santagata describes how Dante spent nearly his entire life crafting this narrative. He was baptized Durante, but the poet never used that name. Medieval thinking held that the proper reading of a name (*interpretatio nominis*) would reveal the fate of a person. Dante's name, though simply a contraction of Durante, suggests a false etymology from the Italian *dà* (third person singular of *dare*, "to give"), as if to indicate that Dante's work will be a prophetic gift. At some point in his middle age, the poet was present in the Florentine baptistery when a child fell into one of the terracotta amphorae filled with holy water. Dante broke the containers, which may have been considered a sacrilege. It is Dante's particular gift that he was able to read into this occurrence a prophetic sign: his smashing of the amphorae recreates a scene from the life of the prophet Jeremiah, who breaks an amphora to proclaim that Jerusalem will be destroyed. By reading his life as a refiguration of Jeremiah, who—like Dante—railed against his contemporaries (in Jeremiah's case, idolatrous Jews), the poet turns his life into art.

There is some deflating irony in the project of understanding Dante as a man and not as part of his own fiction. Santagata's work is to reverse carefully the poetic alchemy that makes a prophet of a man, hopefully without detracting from our enjoyment of the poem. Scholars have long made a sometimes murky distinction between *Dante poeta* (Dante the poet, who authors the work) and *Dante pellegrino* (Dante the pilgrim, protagonist of the Comedy). Santagata is interested in how one Dante forms the other. Far more important, though, is the way in which Santagata creates a new version of Dante through which we can read, a *Dante politicus*. Behind Dante the fictional character there is Dante the poet, but behind Dante the poet there is also Dante the politician, whose allegiances and needs shift over time while he writes. Dante wrote the *Comedy* over a long period of time, and occasionally circulated parts of the poem well before it was completed. As a result, the *Comedy* sometimes expresses ideas and attitudes that would change over the course of the poet's life. Only by coming to know Dante the politican and historical figure can we understand, to give just one example, how the appearance of Henry VII on the political scene explains what Santagata describes as "an almost complete volte-face" between the inconsistent rhetorics of empire contained in the *Inferno* and those in *Purgatorio*. Santagata sums his project up nicely somewhere near the middle of the book:

> The author's biographical journey, his shifts in position, his contradictions, are all recorded in the book, which takes the form of a prophetical reading of human history and, at the same time, an autobiography. But it is a most unusual autobiography since it records the actions and thoughts of the protagonist, destined to be a man with the exceptional gift of prophecy.

Much—and much of the most beautiful—Dante criticism takes either a vaguely New Critical approach, viewing the poem as a single aesthetic object, or a vaguely historicist approach that nonetheless considers the poem as an indivisible literary monument. Santagata shows a different way of reading Dante, focusing on how his thoughts are historically contingent, resulting in a poem that sometimes contradicts itself just as Dante did when his philosophical insights changed or his political allegiances shifted. Santagata's book is a catalogue of contingencies, which will both introduce the reader to the political situation of the Italian peninsula in Dante's time and show how that context assists us in reading the poem.

Notebook

# Geoffrey Hill, 1932–2016

*by William Logan*

Geoffrey Hill was the major English poet of the last half of the twentieth century. Hill's intransigence, his clotted difficulty, his passion for the redolent fineries of English landscape—he eyed the woods and fields like a plant hunter—have stood in magnificent solitude. Among the poets long set for A-level examinations in Britain, Thom Gunn and Ted Hughes, good poets in their way, had neither the depth nor the irritating brilliance of Hill—both Gunn and Hughes seem poets of their day, with the manners of that day. That's the fate of most poets—for many, their highest aim. Hill was never on the syllabus.

That Hill from the start was trying to escape his time—perhaps to wrestle his way out—was apparent in the coiled syntax and lush imagery of his first books, *For the Unfallen* (1959) and *King Log* (1968):

> The Word has been abroad, is back, with a
> tanned look
> From its subsistence in the stiffening-mire.
> Cleansing has become killing, the reward
> Touchable, overt, clean to the touch.
> Now at a distance from the steam of beasts,
> The loathly neckings and fat shook spawn
> (Each specimen-jar fed with delicate spawn)
> The searchers with the curers sit at meat
> And are satisfied.
>
> ["Annunciations"]

These were the poems of a young man at odds with the Movement, but the influence of the Metaphysicals (and of poets as rarely embraced, at least on such terms, as Southwell and Blake) showed that Hill had set himself tasks that made most of his contemporaries look like the pale imitations they were.

The death of a great poet leaves a gap, even an abyss. (It's remarkable how many poets once considered great end with a period, not an ellipsis. What afterlife has de la Mare enjoyed, or John Masefield, or Stephen Vincent Benét?) In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot famously remarked,

> the existing monuments [of art] form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered.

As of literature, so of poets. After a death, those remaining form a new order, their relation to each other forever changed. Indeed, it is by sensing that alteration that we realize greatness has passed—like the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus that marked the presence of an unknown planet.

Which deaths over the past century have had such effect? The modernists, of course, though their careers ended long before they died—before obituaries were written for Eliot, Pound, Moore, Frost, and Williams, their absence had been calculated and digested. (Stevens died closer to some of his major work, but perhaps after a certain age a poet writes

posthumously.) Who else, then? Yeats. Auden. Lowell and Bishop, certainly. Heaney, of a generation younger. Now Hill. (In a more minor register, Larkin. Plath, after the publication of *Ariel*. Berryman, perhaps, though his influence was fatal to poets who tried to form a School of John.)

Hill's father was a police constable in the market village of Bromsgrove. The poet came, certainly in the private myth of his making, from the old stock of nailmakers. Similar stock once provided the bowmen at Agincourt, their skills passed through families, with nothing ahead but a twisted spine, muddy death, some gristly pride. Hill's hardbitten splendor was a wound in the blood, in other words.

> Autumn resumes the land, ruffles the woods
> with smoky wings, entangles them. Trees shine
> out from their leaves, rocks mildew to moss-green;
> the avenues are spread with brittle floods.
>
> Platonic England, house of solitudes,
> rests in its laurels and its injured stone.
> ["An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England"]

His poetry was recognized even at Oxford, where he took a first in English, as exacting and formidable—forged not in new language, but in an older language still glorious, but indrawn, out of key with his time (in Pound's phrase), and in key with times long past, as if Donne or Vaughan had been drummed out of the seventeenth century and into the twentieth. Indeed, in *Mercian Hymns* (1971) Hill hauled the ashes of King Offa from the Dark Age of the Midlands to dump them in the Dark Age of modern England. The poetry of stony certitudes, glistening with primal ardor, fertile but intellective, yet often dry (though not so dry as late Eliot), had only a small clutch of readers from the start.

Hill wrote "memorable speech," Auden's definition of poetry, which like all such definitions casts a net too broad. (Pilfering the phrase from Arthur Quiller-Couch, Auden left out "set down in metre with strict rhythms.") Hill created his own world—or the rhetoric and style that required a world. If you wished to enter, you had to accept its terms—the contract demanded a measure of punishment. It was hard for him to imagine a poetry that did not tax the reader's intelligence. He armored the poems against loss of attention and therefore made them hard to attend to. For poetry that often left a touch of religion at the edges—Christianity variously rejected, scolded, hedged—some sacrifice was necessary. His second wife, an Anglican rector, said that her husband knelt at the altar, "communicant but resentful."

> The wise men, vulnerable in ageing plaster,
> are borne as gifts
> to be set down among the other treasures
> in their familial strangeness, mystery's toys.
> ["Epiphany at Saint Mary and All Saints"]

After the age of sixty, we all live in penalty time—but his gift allowed Hill to remake himself at the outset of great age. When the clockworks of most poets are winding down, Prozac proved a specific against throttling depression, releasing him from the trammels. He became what earlier he might have sneered at—industrious. We are rightly suspicious of poets who pour ink onto the page, yet the fluency of Byron is very different from the fluency of Southey. Wordsworth had workaday grace when young but only facile and disastrous ease in old age. Shakespeare—well, Shakespeare. Yet with Hill, even when he wrote rapidly, the poems seem dragged from the depths. (Recall that line from bad police-procedurals, "Order the men to drag the harbor.") I imagine that he reacted to the onset of the late work with some elation, and some alarm—he was the sort to feel that every silver cloud had a lead lining.

> Above Dunkirk, the sheared anvil-
> head of the oil-smoke column, the wind
> beginning to turn, turning on itself, spiralling,
> shaped on its potter's wheel. But no fire-storm:
> such phenomena were as yet unvisited
> upon Judeo-Christian-Senecan Europe.
> ["The Triumph of Love"]

Looking over the wreckage of the later books, especially the Daybooks composed

over the last decade of his life, it's hard to imagine a race of readers that could find much beyond the browbeating and caterwauling. Hill became a voice crying in the wilderness, like an Old Testament grandee—prophet, I mean. Short passages rise beyond the sensibility of the vexed, hermetic mind that composed them—as if the sharpened pales Hill erected against the common reader, the reader he so often held in contempt (let's face it, the common reader is a poor judge of what will last), had become a stronghold the poems could rarely escape.

This might equally be a description of the ravaged landscape of Pound's Cantos—local beauties abound, but apart from the early cantos, and others in a limited way, the willful obscurity and vast stretches of sludge have not grown more attractive since his death, however thoroughly the poems have been excavated. The work for Hill went far enough until it went too far. You can fail to seduce a reader by despising him, but you should not despise him for wanting to be seduced. And yet. And yet.

After the torrent of the last poems, book after unlikely book wallowing forth—growly, leg-pulling, sometimes tortured into rhyme, obscure as Linear A (or were the poems closer to the Kensington stela or the Spirit Pond runestones?)—suddenly the millwheel stopped and the millrace was closed. Perhaps someone, somewhere, is preparing a *Key to All Mythologies* to explain poems almost immune to the reader's eye (as Hill, if we believe him, seems to have desired, though beneath every resistant child lurks a desire for love). What they offer is so partial, so demanding, at best they might come to have the reputation of *Finnegans Wake*—preposterous, brilliant, but who but an Aquinas can find the time? The grim pride did Hill no favors.

The great work, the work likely to last because it can be read with stony-eyed (but not stony-hearted) pleasure, will be the best of the early poems, the shocking swerve of *Mercian Hymns*, the magnificent long poem *The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy*, and, among the books of the Flood, *Canaan*, *The Triumph of Love*, *The Orchards of Syon*, *Without Title*, and *A Treatise of Civil Power*, books more focused if not easy to compass. After publication of his collected poems five years ago, Hill lapsed into the quietude—perhaps, in his case, a fraught quietude—that often befalls poets in their eighties. He became Grand Old Mannish in his last years, with his Brillo of white beard and a straw hat only slightly larger than a hubcap. Then there was a quiet click as he slipped out the door.

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