The New Criterion

January 2020

A monthly review *edited by Roger Kimball*

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Notes & Comments: January 2020

1619 & all that

We are a bit late in getting to that dog's breakfast called "The 1619 Project," *The New York Times*'s effort to "reframe"—read, "wildly distort"—the history and governing impetus of the American Founding. Readers of the satirical classic *1066 and All That* know what fun can be had if you go about your job as a storyteller serving up "all the History you can remember" and pretending that it is the truth. "Histories," we read in *1066 and All That*, "have previously been written with the object of exalting their authors. The object of this History is to console the reader."

It was to console its core readership that *The New York Times* undertook The 1619 Project in a special flood-the-zone issue of its Sunday magazine in August and then in a snazzy, graphics-heavy series of features on its website. For two years, the *Times* had invested heavily in the vaudeville entertainment called "Trump–Russia." The spectacular failure of its leading man, Special Counsel Robert Mueller, to deliver a happy ending to that fiasco underscored the essential futility of the entire enterprise.

This was something that Dean Baquet, Executive Editor of the *Times*, grasped instantly. Last summer, he huddled with his staff in a town-hall-style meeting—the proceedings of which were promptly leaked—and acknowledged a sad truth: "We built our newsroom to cover one story" (the now-debunked story that Donald Trump had "colluded" with Russia to steal the 2016 election). The story didn't pan out. "Now we have to regroup," Baquet told the assembled troops, "and shift resources and emphasis to take on a different story." What story? Henceforth, or at least "for the next two years"—the remainder of Trump's first term—the *Times* was going all in on "race, and other divisions." Robert Mueller couldn't get Trump. Maybe the *Times* could by writing about race in a "thoughtful," i.e., obsessive and one-sided, way—"something," Baquet added "we haven't done in a large way in a long time."

So there you have it. "That, to me," Baquet concluded, "is the vision for coverage. You all are going to have to help us shape that vision. But I think that's what we're going to have to do for the rest of the next two years." *Et voilà*, The 1619 Project, which the paper described in a preface as

> a major initiative from *The New York Times* observing the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery. It aims to reframe the country's history, understanding 1619 as our true founding, and placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are.

What followed was a stupefying race-based fantasy about the origins of the United States. The lead essay, by the black journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, the "architect" of The 1619 Project, set the tone. "[O]ne of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their

independence from Britain," she wrote, "was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery." So, everything you learned about the American Revolution is wrong, or at least wrongheaded. Forget about the Stamp Act, the, Boston Tea Party, the Intolerable Acts, "No taxation without representation," etc. All that, utterly unmentioned by Ms. Hannah-Jones, was mere window dressing. The American colonists might talk about liberty. What they really cared about, according to this malignant fairy tale, was preserving and extending the institution of slavery. "[S]ome might argue," as Hannah-Jones coyly puts it, "that this nation was founded not as a democracy but as a slavocracy." Gosh. Of course, "some might argue" any number of incredible things: that the earth is flat, that the moon is made of green cheese, that *The New York Times* is still a responsible source of news and even-handed commentary. The fact that "some might argue" X does not mean that X is credible.

So it is with the preposterous idea that America was founded as a "slavocracy." Hannah-Jones asserts that "anti-black racism runs in the very DNA of this country." The claim is obviously metaphorical; countries do not possess DNA. But if one were to take the metaphor seriously, as tantamount to asserting that anti-black racism is an essential and therefore unalterable characteristic of America, then the whole 1619 Project would be pointless from the get-go. It would be like complaining about the roundness of a circle or the wetness of water.

Presumably, however, neither Hannah-Jones nor the *Times* intends for us to take the metaphor quite so seriously. For Hannah-Jones, what is wanted is an expression that simultaneously justifies the endless whining of black radicals about how victimized they are because of things that happened a few centuries ago while also stressing the perpetually renewable guilt (like the liver of Prometheus) of whites, all whites, those living today even more than those actually involved in the African slave trade in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth centuries. For the *Times*, it fits in with what Power Line's Paul Mirengoff called its "irresistible urge to delegitimize America." That is the ultimate aim of The 1619 Project: to deliver another blow in the campaign to besmirch and diminish the political and moral achievement that is the United States of America. It is as despicable as it is mendacious.

You might say, Who cares about insane rantings in *The New York Times*? It is increasingly a niche publication for the credentialed, politically correct *nomenklatura*, totally out of touch with the main current of America and held afloat only by its unremitting attacks on anything to do with Donald Trump.

This is true. Nevertheless, the paper is not entirely without influence, even today. Indeed, various public school districts, including some in Chicago, have announced that they will supplement their curricula by distributing copies of The 1619 Project to students, thereby promulgating the racialist worldview expounded by that "major" "reframing" of our history. And though the copies will be paid for by the *Times* and donors, taxpayers will still be indirectly funding a version of history that is politically tendentious and wildly at odds with the facts. The Pulitzer Center (not affiliated with the famed prizes) has announced that it "is proud to be the education partner for The 1619 Project." As we write, the Center's website is full of little valentines to Hannah-Jones and her racialist, ahistorical fantasy about the founding of the United States.

We said that The 1619 Project was stupefying. What we meant was that the claims it makes are so outlandish, at once so ostentatiously at odds with historical reality while also being carefully framed in a corset of politically correct verbiage, that any critical response is at first stunned. Someone tells you that the Apollo 11 moon landing was a carefully staged hoax perpetrated by NASA or the Trilateral Commission or whatever. Your first response is a spluttering incredulity.

It is the same with the contention that 1619, the year that the first African slaves were brought to America, marked "the beginning of the system of slavery on which the country was built." But there were already slaves and various other forms of indentured labor in the Americas as there were all over the world. To say that there were slaves in America is not to say that

"the country was built" on slavery. Moreover, the African slaves were not "kidnapped" by American or British slavers, as Hannah-Jones asserts, but were sold by other black Africans who were happy to profit by selling people they had enslaved to the colonists.

Fortunately, a rational, historically informed response to The 1619 Project has been building. The National Association of Scholars has inaugurated the "1620 Project," not just to commemorate the signing of the Mayflower Compact—a much more significant event in the history of the United States—but also to provide an occasion for thoughtful responses to some of the more outlandish claims made by Hannah-Jones and the other writers involved in the *Times*'s latest campaign of disinformation. (Among our favorites, the contention that double-entry bookkeeping was an innovation "whose roots twist back to slave-labor camps.")

The distinguished historian Allen C. Guelzo, writing in *City Journal*, notes that "The 1619 Project is not history: it is polemic, born in the imaginations of those whose primary target is capitalism itself and who hope to tarnish capitalism by associating it with slavery." The great irony, Guelzo writes, is that "The 1619 Project dispenses this malediction from the chair of ultimate cultural privilege in America," *The New York Times*, "because in no human society has an enslaved people suddenly found itself vaulted into positions of such privilege, and with the consent—even the approbation—of those who were once the enslavers."

We suppose it is a mark of how extreme is *The New York Times*'s latest attack on America that some of the most vigorous rejoinders appear in the World Socialist Web Site, which has run long interviews with two deans of the history of the American Founding, James McPherson and Gordon Wood, neither of whom were consulted by the *Times* for The 1619 Project. McPherson, though eminently circumspect, concludes that The 1619 Project is

> a very unbalanced, one-sided account, which lacked context and perspective on the complexity of slavery, which was clearly, obviously, not an exclusively American institution, but existed throughout history. And slavery in the United States was only a small part of a larger world process that unfolded over many centuries.

Wood concurs and notes further that the idea, propounded by The 1619 Project, that the American Revolution was fomented *in order to protect slavery* is simply ridiculous. On the contrary, "it is the northern states in 1776 that are the world's leaders in the antislavery cause. . . . The Revolution unleashed antislavery sentiments that led to the first abolition movements in the history of the world." The 1619 Project pretends that the British were great crusaders in the campaign against slavery. But Wood points out, first, that the "British don't get around to freeing the slaves in the West Indies until 1833," and, second, that "if the Revolution hadn't occurred," they "might never have done so then, because all of the southern colonies would have been opposed. So supposing the Americans hadn't broken away, there would have been a larger number of slaveholders in the greater British world who might have been able to prolong slavery longer than 1833."

The truth is that in 1776, the American Founders, Southerners as much as Northerners, believed that slavery was on its way out. They were wrong about the timing of that, but the fact remains, as Wood notes, that the Constitution (Article I, Section 9) set an end date on the importation of slaves and that "most Americans were confident that the despicable transatlantic slave trade was definitely going to end in 1808."

The 1619 Project represents a new nadir in the politically correct, anti-American machinations of *The New York Times*. Many sober observers would have dismissed it as beneath comment were it not that the residual prestige of the *Times* lends currency if not credibility to its illiterate and partisan contentions. Perhaps an unintended collateral benefit of this malign folly will be—finally, at last—to dissolve the vestiges of that prestige and expose the paper to the condign contempt of the public whose trust they have so extravagantly betrayed.

Introduction: sovereignty or submission

by Roger Kimball

Among the epigraphs that preface his recent book *The Demon in Democracy: Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies*, the Polish philosopher Ryszard Legutko features a famous bit from Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*:

> I think then that the species of oppression by which democratic nations are menaced is unlike anything which ever before existed in the world. . . . I am trying myself to choose an expression which will accurately convey the whole of the idea I have formed of it, but in vain . . . . I seek to trace the novel features under which despotism may appear in the world. The first thing that strikes the observation is an innumerable multitude of men all equal and alike, incessantly endeavoring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives. . . . Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications, and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent, if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks on the contrary to keep them in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing.

It is interesting to note that the first part of this passage also serves as an epigraph for Jacob Talmon's classic *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, a book that figures below in James Piereson's essay on the evolution of the United States: from a union of states (which is what the Founders had forged) into a nation in the modern sense under Lincoln's guidance, and then, in recent decades, into a nation besieged by the centrifugal forces of multiculturalism and identity politics.

Talmon, writing in the 1950s, makes a critical distinction between liberal and totalitarian democracies. The essential difference between the two, he writes, is in their "different attitudes to politics." The liberal approach "assumes politics to be a matter of trial and error"; it regards political systems as "pragmatic contrivances of human ingenuity and spontaneity." Furthermore, it also recognizes "a variety of levels of personal and collective endeavor, which are altogether outside the sphere of politics."

By contrast, the totalitarian version of democracy is "based upon the assumption of a sole and exclusive truth in politics." Talmon calls this "political Messianism." Readers of Norman Cohn's classic *The Pursuit of the Millennium* will be familiar with the concept (as indeed will readers of Karl Marx). The "messi-

"Sovereignty or submission: Restoring national identity in the spirit of liberty," a symposium organized by *The New Criterion* and the Center for American Greatness, took place on October 16, 2019, in Washington, D.C. Participants were Michael Anton, David Azerrad, Chris Buskirk, Tucker Carlson, Angelo M. Codevilla, John Fonte, Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry, Victor Davis Hanson, Roger Kimball, Daniel McCarthy, Balázs Orbán, John O'Sullivan, James Piereson, and Kiron Skinner. Discussion revolved around earlier versions of the essays presented in this special section.

anic" quality can be seen partly in the totalizing aspect of the vision, partly in the presumption that it is both inevitable and morally superior to what came before. "[I]t postulates," Talmon writes, "a preordained, harmonious and perfect scheme of things, to which men are irresistibly driven, and at which they are bound to arrive."

Communism was one form of political Messianism. The supposedly "post-historical" liberal consensus that Francis Fukuyama championed in *The End of History* is another, kinder, gentler form of utopian presumption. It is worth noting that Fukuyama's book figures as a cautionary marker in several of the essays that follow. Why? Because it is precisely that overweening liberal consensus—the increasingly bureaucratic and notably *illiberal* liberalism espoused by the administrative state—that we set out to challenge in this conference.

Talmon was onto something deep, I believe, when he identified "the paradox of freedom" as the recognition that freedom is unfree so long as it is wed to "an exclusive pattern of social existence, even if this pattern aims at the maximum of social justice and security." The key is this: Do we take "men as they are" and look to politics to work from there? Or do we insist upon treating men "as they were meant to be, and would be, given the proper conditions"?

The former describes the traditional, genuinely liberal view of freedom. The latter describes what Talmon calls "totalitarian democracy." A classic source for the latter view is Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau says that anyone who would "dare to undertake the institution of a government must think himself capable, as it were, of *changing human nature*" (my emphasis).

Contrast that hubristic ambition with James Madison's acknowledgment, in *Federalist* 10, that different men have different and competing interests and that the "first object" of government is to protect those differences and the "diversity in the faculties" whence they arise.

The real battle that has been joined—and it is a battle that is in the process of forging a great political realignment—is not between virtuous progressive knights riding the steeds of liberalism, on the one hand, and the atavistic forces of supposedly untutored darkness represented by "populism," on the other.

No, the real battle is between two views of liberty. One is a parochial view that affirms tradition, local affection, and the subordination of politics to the ordinary business of life. The other is more ambitious but also more abstract. It seeks nothing less than to boost us all up to that plane of enlightenment from which all self-interested actions look petty, if not criminal, and through which mankind as a whole (but not, alas, individual men) may hope for whatever salvation secularism leavened by utilitarianism may provide.

We are still in the opening sallies of the Great Realignment. Many old alliances are being broken, many new ones formed. I expect a lot of heat, and even more smoke. I hope that there will also be at least occasional flashes of light.

It was to encourage such flashes, while also attempting to dissipate some of the attendant heat and smoke, that *The New Criterion* joined with the Center for American Greatness to ponder the question "Sovereignty or Submission?" We took our title from John Fonte's 2011 book, *Sovereignty or Submission: Will Americans Rule Themselves or Be Ruled by Others?* In his essay below, Fonte expands his purview to consider how such progressive entities as Freedom House and the National Endowment for Democracy have, in their efforts to "promote democracy" across the globe, promoted instead exactly the sort of administrative, top-down, essentially illiberal form of governance that writers like Tocqueville and Talmon warned about.

"Transnational progressivism" is Fonte's brilliant coinage to describe this anti-nationalist impulse that seeks to transfer political power and decision-making "from democratic nations to supranational authorities and institutions" such as the European Union, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and kindred organizations ("judges from the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court; career officials in the U.S. State Department, the British Foreign Office, and the German Foreign

Ministry; American CEOs of major global corporations; NGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Greenpeace;" etc., etc.). The true political ends of such elite enterprises are generally swaddled in emollient rhetoric about freedom and democracy. But Fonte uncovered some revelatory gems that speak candidly about what's really at stake. For example, Robert Kagan of the Brookings Institution put it with all possible clarity when he declared in 2008 that the "United States . . . should not oppose, but welcome a world of pooled and diminished national sovereignty." At least we know where we stand.

The question of sovereignty—of who governs—is at the center of all contemporary populist initiatives and has been posed with increasing urgency as the bureaucratic burden of what has been called variously the "deep state" or administrative state has weighed more and more forcefully upon the political and social life of Western democracies.

The phenomenon is often identified with the election of Donald Trump in November 2016. But the political, moral, and social realities for which Trump was a symbol and a conduit both predated his candidacy and achieved independent reality in countries as disparate as the United Kingdom, Hungary, Italy, and Brazil.

The question of sovereignty was perhaps most dramatically posed in the United Kingdom. In June 2016, more Brits voted to leave the European Union and return sovereignty to Parliament than had ever voted for any initiative in the long history of Great Britain. Some seventeen million voted to leave the European Union and regain local responsibility for their own lives. The fact that three years have passed without Brexit having been accomplished is a melancholy reminder of how entrenched alternatives to national sovereignty have become. Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised he would, deal or no deal, get Brexit done by the end of October 2019. He was stymied, as much by the established elites of his own party as by Labour. By the time you read this, we will know whether he survived the hastily called general election in December. I shall go out on a limb and predict that he will. Whether he will then manage to get Brexit passed—and on what terms—is still imponderable.

President Trump has often spoken about the issue of sovereignty. In his first speech to the United Nations's General Assembly in September 2017, he said to a startled roomful of diplomats that "we are renewing this founding principle of sovereignty."

> Our government's first duty is to its people, to our citizens—to serve their needs, to ensure their safety, to preserve their rights, and to defend their values. As President of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries will always, and should always, put your countries first. All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens, and the nation-state remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition.

Trump's slogan "America First" instantly became an object of contempt, ridicule, and hatred to the Left, the NeverTrump Right, and the entrenched bureaucracy of the administrative state. But Angelo M. Codevilla is correct that, before the progressive movement that began with Woodrow Wilson, "labeling any proposal or point of view as 'America First' would have been meaningless" because it would have been redundant. What else would an American administration promulgate? From George Washington through Teddy Roosevelt, an assumption of "America first" was simply taken for granted. Indeed, the phrase, Codevilla notes, "may be the most succinct description of George Washington's statecraft." By telling his fellow citizens that "the name of American, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation," Washington was presaging Trump's slogan *avant la lettre*.

A second key question, and one related to the issue of sovereignty, concerns what Lincoln called "public sentiment": the widespread, almost taken-for-granted yet nonetheless palpable affirmation by a people of their national identity. The erosion of national sovereignty to which populism is a response has been accompanied

by an erosion of the shared national consensus that, traditionally, has nourished the particulars of public sentiment.

Increasingly, the pillars of that consensus—the binding realities of family, religion, civic duty, and patriotic filiation—have faltered before the blandishments of the globalist juggernaut. I think that the English philosopher Roger Scruton was correct when he observed, "Democracies owe their existence to national loyalties—the loyalties that are supposedly shared by government and opposition." One pressing question we face—one raised in several of the essays that follow—is whether we can any longer count on that supervening loyalty to unite us. For most of the contributors, I'd say, the prognosis is, while not despairing, decidedly gloomy.

One reason for the gloominess is what some observers have called the "criminalization of policy differences." Consider the extent to which the term "populism" has been weaponized as a negative epithet by the self-appointed elites. As I have noted elsewhere, if you are able to charge someone with populist sympathies you get, free and for nothing, both the imputation of demagoguery and what was famously derided as a "deplorable" and "irredeemable" cohort. "Populism," that is to say, is wielded less as a descriptive than as a *delegitimizing* term. The element of existential depreciation is almost palpable.

So is the element of condescension. Inseparable from the diagnosis of populism is the implication not just of incompetence but also of a crudity that is partly aesthetic and partly moral. Hence the curiously visceral distaste expressed by elite opinion for signs of populist sympathy. When Hillary Clinton charged that half of Donald Trump's supporters were an "irredeemable" "basket of deplorables," when Barack Obama castigated small-town Republican voters as "bitter" folk who "cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment," what they expressed was not disagreement but condescending revulsion.

The debate over the location of sovereignty—is it with the people affected or with unaccountable elites?—has played a large role in the rise of the phenomenon we describe as "populism" in the United States as well as in Europe. For one thing, the question of sovereignty stands behind the rebellion against the political correctness and moral meddlesomeness that are such conspicuous and disfiguring features of our increasingly bureaucratic society. The smothering, Tocquevillian blanket of regulatory excess has had a wide range of practical and economic effects, stifling entrepreneurship and making any sort of productive innovation difficult.

The issue of sovereignty also stands behind the debate over immigration. Indeed, no issue is more central to the question "Who governs?" than the question of a nation's borders and who gets to decide how a country defines its first-person plural: the "We" that makes us who we are as a people.

Throughout his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump promised to enforce America's immigration laws, to end so-called "sanctuary cities," which advertise themselves as safe havens for illegal aliens (though of course politicians in those cities do not call them "illegal aliens"), and to sharpen vetting procedures for people wishing to immigrate to America from countries known as sponsors of terrorism.

Behind the reaction to Trump's efforts at immigration reform are two very different concepts of the nation-state and world order. One view sees the world as a collection of independent sovereign countries that, although interacting with one another, regard the care, safety, and prosperity of their own citizens as their first obligation. This is the traditional view of the nation-state. It is also Donald Trump's view. It is what licenses his talk of putting "America First," a concept that, *pace* the anti-Trump media, has nothing to do with Charles Lindbergh's isolationist movement of the late 1930s and everything to do with fostering a healthy sense of national identity and purpose.

The alternative view regards the nation-state with suspicion as an atavistic form of political and social organization. The nation-state might still be a practical necessity, but, the argument goes, it is a regrettable necessity inasmuch as it retards mankind's emancipation from the parochial bonds of place and

local allegiance. Ideally, according to this view, we are "citizens of the world," not particular countries, and our fundamental obligation is to all mankind. This of course is the progressive view, and it would be hard to overstate its influence.

It would also be hard to overstate its incoherence. A "citizen" (from *civis*) is by definition a person whose affiliation is with a *particular* place, a "*civitas*." A "world-citizen" is an oxymoron—which does not, alas, mean that it is without effect. As Victor Davis Hanson argues below, the "erosion of the citizen" is accelerating as the mere fact of residence is increasingly taken to be synonymous with "legal citizenship." Consequently, "those who happen to live within the borders of the United States (legally or not) increasingly enjoy almost all the same rights as those Americans who were born here or were naturalized."

Hanson underscores the curious double standard that is at work in the breakdown of citizenship and elevation of "mere residence" to the status of legal immunity. "The rationale of the sanctuary city," he notes "is not politically neutral or apparently applicable to issues other than illegal immigration."

> No sanctuary entity, for example, would support similar nullifications of federal law by conservatives should they declare particular red counties exempt from the federal Endangered Species Act, or their citizens not subject to federal handgun background checks.

Progressives argue that a globalist supranational world—a world without borders—is a necessary condition for free trade. But the spirit of local control tempers the cosmopolitan project of a borderless world with a recognition that the nation-state has been the best guarantor not only of sovereignty but also of broadly shared prosperity. What we might call the ideology of free trade—the globalist aspiration to transcend the impediments of national identity and control—is an abstraction that principally benefits its architects. As President Trump has observed, trade that is not fair is not free.

In the end, what the political philosopher James Burnham anatomized as the "managerial revolution" is part of a larger progressive project. The aim of this project is partly to emancipate mankind from such traditional sources of self-definition as national identity, religious affiliation, and specific cultural rootedness. Burnham castigates this hypertrophied form of liberalism (again, the phrase "illiberal liberalism" seems apt) as "an ideology of suicide" that has insinuated itself into the center of Western culture. In his view, the primary function of such liberalism was to "permit Western civilization to be reconciled to dissolution," to view weakness, failure, even collapse not as a defeat but "as the transition to a new and higher order in which Mankind as a whole joins in a universal civilization that has risen above the parochial distinctions, divisions, and discriminations of the past."

That is part of the story. Burnham also notes the extent to which the progressive, managerial revolution seeks to perpetuate and aggrandize the apparatus that oversees the dissolution he diagnoses. In other words, the operation of the administrative state is not only an effort to extend a certain vision of the world, it is also an effort to consolidate political power. That is one reason its opposition to populist and nationalist initiatives is so ferocious.

The globalist alternative dangled before us is a version of utopia. But like *The Wizard of Oz*, it is all show and no substance. Or rather, the substance is an erosion of traditional sources of strength and identity together with an assault on the middle class and its "deplorable" values as an impediment to the realization of beatitude. Increasingly, as Hanson notes below (and as Joel Kotkin examines at length in his forthcoming book, *The New Feudalism*), Western societies are reverting to a species of bifurcated society in which a tiny group of elites rule over a docile but imperfectly contented mass. What happens when the engines of prosperity falter is anyone's guess. John O'Sullivan speaks below of the advent of "sacrificial utopia." Only someone innocent of the writings of Orwell, and the machinations of Communist despotism, will think that an ironical designation.

Sovereignty & its enemies

by John Fonte

In my book *Sovereignty or Submission* (Encounter, 2011), I argued that we needed to reconfigure the global chess board of world politics. The sovereign democratic nation-state faces two adversaries, one hard and one soft: authoritarian regimes such as China, Russia, and Iran; and also the oligarchical forces of global governance emanating from within the democratic world itself.

Transnational progressives, or globalists, represent a major challenge to democratic nation-states because they seek to transfer political decision-making from democratic nations to supranational authorities and institutions. The decades-long trajectory of the European Union is an example of this phenomenon.

These globalists include the leadership of the United Nations and the European Union; bureaucrats from the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund; judges from the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court; career officials in the U.S. State Department, the British Foreign Office, and the German Foreign Ministry; American CEOs of major global corporations; employees of NGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Greenpeace; and prominent American international relations specialists and international lawyers including the leadership of the American Bar Association.

But another anti-sovereignty force is simultaneously at work: the American democracy promotion network. What role, if any, do the promoters of democracy play in the worldwide ideological conflict between democratic sovereigntists and globalists?

The American democracy promotion network is based in organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and Freedom House and includes an array of prominent writers. Created by the U.S. Congress in 1983 to "strengthen democratic values and institutions around the world through nongovernmental efforts," NED is a tax-exempt, non-profit private corporation. It is funded annually by Congress and achieved prominence during the Cold War. Freedom House was founded in 1941 by Wendell Willkie and Eleanor Roosevelt to be a "clear voice for freedom and democracy around the world." After the Cold War, its private funding dried up. Freedom House is now almost entirely dependent on the federal government. For years, both NED and Freedom House have been considered non-partisan. But the world has changed.

The current front in this conflict is the struggle over Brexit. The NED's daily online journal, the *Democracy Digest*, declared on August 28, 2019, "Nakedly Populist move jolts world's most stable democracy" and linked to an article by the Harvard liberal Yascha Mounk stating that Boris Johnson's decision to suspend Parliament temporarily is "the most blatant assault on democracy in Britain's living memory." Mounk (a major contributor to NED journals) continued, "the big question I've heard asked about Boris Johnson is whether it's right to characterize him as an authoritar-

ian populist in the mold of America's Donald Trump or Italy's Matteo Salvini." A week later, on September 4, 2019, *Democracy Digest* linked to an essay by Ian Buruma asserting that "Boris Johnson poses the same dangers to liberal democracy that populist agitators did to the Roman Republic." In fact, the NED journal continuously links to anti-Brexit articles day in and day out. They rarely, if ever, link to Brexit supporters such as Daniel Hannan or Douglas Murray.

Freedom House also disparages the Brexiteers: its influential annual report in 2018 stated, "The Brexit campaign . . . brought widespread concerns of rising anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment in the country with the Council of Europe expressing concerns about hate speech among politicians and in popular tabloid newspapers." Is Freedom House implying that political speech should be restricted?

It's not just Brexit that has been a focus for these institutions. For the past several years, the democratically elected conservative governments in Poland and Hungary have been under continuous assault from NED, Freedom House, and the global governance movement generally. They are accused of so-called "democratic backsliding."

For instance, the NED's print magazine, the *Journal of Democracy*, in October 2016 published a special section on "The Specter Haunting Europe." Eight pro-EU authors attributed the success of patriotic, culturally and religiously conservative democratic political parties to the dark forces of "authoritarianism," "democratic regression," and "populism" (which always has a negative connotation). Typical was an essay declaring that "the 2015 victory of Poland's Law and Justice Party is an example of the rise of contemporary authoritarian populism."

Another special section in the *Journal of Democracy* of July 2018, "Explaining Eastern Europe," argued that "populist" (as opposed to democratic sovereigntist) electoral success relied on "the willingness of politicians to use fear and anxiety," most often about "mass migration and terrorism." NED authors tell us that "nativist parties that thrive on fears regarding immigration and continuing European integration" must be "contain[ed]."

In other words, NED essayists are saying that democratic nation-states that oppose further EU integration and that wish to determine their own immigration policy are somehow "undemocratic" and thus require lessons on "democratic values" from a political entity (the European Union) in which laws are initiated by an unelected bureaucracy rather than by an elected legislature.

Poland and Hungary are often charged with undermining an independent judiciary—the rule of law. In both countries since the fall of communism, judiciaries were self-perpetuating oligarchies with little input from elected officials. New judges were chosen by sitting judges and committees of lawyers, leading to widespread nepotism and corruption. Imagine if in the United States federal judges were chosen by the American Bar Association, or if judges on the Ninth Circuit chose their own successors. This is not "the rule of law," but the rule of lawyers.

In fact, the conservative governments in Poland and Hungary are essentially reforming their judiciaries, making them more in line with democracies like the United States, in which democratically elected officials are part of the process of choosing judges.

Poland and Hungary are not, however, the only conservative governments that are seen as problematic. Freedom House downgraded Israel's civil liberties rating in 2018 because the conservative Likud government passed the NGO Transparency Law. The law required non-profit organizations that received more than half their funding from foreign sources (mostly from the European Union and individual European states) to disclose this information. Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that "the purpose of the law is to prevent the absurd situation in which foreign countries intervene in Israel's internal affairs without the Israeli public even being aware of it." For Freedom House, the law constitutes "intolerance of dissent." In the same annual report, Freedom House declared that Denmark's right-of-center government deserved "special

scrutiny" because its parliament considered legislation that would "restrict immigrant rights." Specifically, the Danish government reduced cash welfare benefits for refugees and required affluent migrants to pay for their own support rather than use government welfare funds. For Freedom House, this apparently constitutes "setbacks for freedom."

Is there a pattern here? The "illiberals," "populists," and "nativists" always represent conservative democratic sovereigntist political forces (usually friendly, one might add, to traditional Christianity and Judaism), whether in Great Britain, Poland, Hungary, Israel, or Denmark. And, of course, in the United States.

In 2014, before there was a President Trump, Freedom House condemned voter identification laws as Republican attempts to suppress minority voting. Since Trump's election, we have seen the emergence of a grand narrative of a rising illiberalism in the West, which is allegedly now aligned with authoritarianism. The narrative runs along these lines: Putin equals Erdoğan equals Orbán equals Kaczyński equals Netanyahu equals Brexit equals Trump. As one NED essay put it, "Europe" [i.e., the European Union] faces "Islamism to the south, Putin to the east, Brexit and Trump to the west."

But it's not just Europe that's purportedly entering a parlous state. In 2019, Michael Abramowitz, President of Freedom House, declared that "the pillars of freedom have come under attack here in the United States." He cited the Trump administration's "harsh attack on immigrants [n.b. failing to distinguish between illegal and legal immigrants] and asylum seekers [that] have restricted their rights." Apparently, these rights include that of entering a democracy without the consent of the citizens of that democracy.

Larry Diamond of Stanford is the co-editor of the NED's *Journal of Democracy*. He has studied democratic development around the world for decades. And he wrote a book suggesting that the Trump administration poses a worse threat to democracy than Watergate and that "Hillary Clinton would almost certainly have won" the presidency if not for Russian interference.

Robert Kagan of the Brookings Institution is a close associate of the democracy promotion network. His wife Victoria Nuland (who was a key player in the Obama State Department under Hillary Clinton) has served on the board of NED. On the issue of sovereignty, Kagan declared in 2008 that the "United States . . . should not oppose, but welcome a world of pooled and diminished national sovereignty."

The NED, quite clearly, is not adhering to its congressionally mandated mission of strengthening democratic values in a non-partisan manner. Neither is Freedom House faithful to its strategic vision of being a clear voice for freedom and democracy around the world. To be sure, there is a difference between the work of these organizations in places beset by genuine authoritarian regimes such as Venezuela, Cuba, China, Iran, and North Korea—work that is sometimes commendable—and their activities in North America and Europe.

Clearly, in the West, NED, Freedom House, and their stable of writers are highly partisan, anti-conservative, anti-sovereignty, militantly secular, and more supportive of oligarchical elites than democratic majorities. They single out for criticism Denmark's immigration policy, Israel's transparency approach to foreign-funded NGOs, and Poland's restrictions on abortion because they are allied with transnational progressives on crucial democratic and social issues.

When examining Brexit, the European Union, or mass migration in Europe and the United States, the democracy promoters quote and link to *The Guardian*, George Soros's Open Society Foundation, Yascha Mounk, Fareed Zakaria, and Robert Kagan, not to *The Telegraph*, Roger Scruton, Christopher Caldwell, or John O'Sullivan. In sum, they are not balanced.

There little or no criticism of the European Union's long-recognized "democracy deficit" along the lines of the former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's famous Humboldt University speech in May of 2000. Generally, there is there no criticism of the European Union's blatant illiberalism. (By illiberalism I mean gender and ethnic quotas and highly restrictive hate speech measures which distort

the debate in the public square on issues related to mass migration, immigrant criminality, and radical Islamic terrorism.)

There is no criticism of Angela Merkel for pressuring Mark Zuckerberg to censor online denunciation of her immigration policies. Indeed, German illiberalism surpasses anything going on in Poland or Hungary, where the opposition recently carried Warsaw and Budapest in free and fair elections. Why does the United States rate lower than Germany in Freedom House's rankings?

Mark Plattner, the deputy editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, asked whether American conservatives are giving up on liberal democracy. The answer is of course not. Conservatives are embracing democratic sovereignty and rejecting undemocratic transnational governance. They are saying that the forty-fifth president of the United States was right to tell the United Nations that "Sovereign and independent nations are the only vehicle where freedom has ever survived, and democracy ever endured."

Plattner himself, in his book *Democracy Without Borders?*, conceded that the European Union had a "democracy deficit" while at the same time writing (somewhat ambiguously), "I am not arguing that European unification as such is hostile to democracy, or that the only way to preserve democracy in Europe is to reaffirm the sovereignty of the EU's member states. I am not a 'Euroskeptic.'" But, of course, reaffirming the national sovereignty of democratic nation-states is the only way to preserve democracy in Europe or anywhere else in the world.

It is worth focusing our attention on the American democracy promotion network because in a practical, operational sense, this network is a key asset for the global progressives in their campaign against democratic sovereignty.

The democracy promotion network continues to be influential because it retains support among Republicans in Congress and in the foreign policy establishment. Old habits die hard. Many Republican politicians think we are still living in Francis Fukuyama's dream-world in which there is a unified democratic West, instead of today's reality—a world playing host to an global struggle between democratic sovereignty and transnational progressivism.

The democracy promotion network needs to be called out and demystified. At the very least, these actors are not doing what they are being paid to do with taxpayer dollars.

The idea of an American nation

by James Piereson

I begin with a conclusion: the United States of America is nearing a point at which it can no longer be described as a nation-state, in the sense that term is generally used, and is evolving into a different kind of enterprise—one lacking the underpinnings of a common culture, language, religion, or nationality that we commonly associate with modern nation-states.

This is due to several intersecting causes: destructive ideas (identity politics); significant and apparently irresistible developments in the world (globalism and large-scale migration); benign conditions that erode national loyalties (peace and prosperity); and the unique character of the American nation (a nation-state built upon universal principles). These have brought into being new lines of conflict in the United States, with some rallying to preserve an inherited idea of the American nation while others promote the forces that are eroding it. Indeed, America's two political parties seem to be organizing themselves around this fundamental line of disagreement.

Many say that nationalism is a bad thing—that it is a cause of wars, group hatreds, irrational conflicts, and the like—and that we will live better without it. There is some truth to this. But if nationalism is bad, then so are nations and nation-states. Can we have nations without nationalism? Can we have an American nation absent some sense of American nationalism? Obviously not. While nationalism is sometimes taken too far, it is easy to recognize the vices of nationalism without appreciating its virtues. The United States, with its diversity of geography, conditions, and peoples, would have fallen apart long ago without the idea of a nation to hold it together. As a matter of history, nationalism was held up as the antidote to the tendency of the American union to split up and break apart. As the idea of an American nation retreats, the possibilities for break-up will advance at a similar rate.

Henry Adams wrote, somewhat in jest, that "Politics, as a practice, whatever its professions, has always been the systematic organization of hatreds." That is not true, at least as regards a successful politics, which depends upon a degree of comity and agreement—if only an agreement to disagree. A polity can function if people disagree with one another, but not if they hate one another. People do not make mutual sacrifices on behalf of enemies. Pluralism is a good thing, up to a point, though it must rest upon an underlying agreement to abide by certain rules and to refrain from carrying things too far. The idea of a nation binds citizens into a common enterprise.

Yet today the United States seems headed in a different direction: toward pluralism without consensus—a nation-state without a national idea—and towards animus among racial, religious, regional, and national groups. It is comforting to think that a "post-national" state will be a utopia of tolerance and understanding. It could turn into something quite the opposite.

Will this new "post-national" state be able to resolve crises and deliver to Americans the kind of freedom and prosperity to which they have become accustomed as citizens of the world's most successful nation-state? Probably not. Is it still possible to restore the ideal of a single American nation? That remains to be seen.

David C. Hendrickson, in his admirable history of U.S. foreign relations, *Union, Nation, or Empire* (2009), reminds us that the United States was not conceived in 1776 or 1787 as a nation-state but as a constitutional republic in the form of a union among states. The Founders thought in terms of both republicanism and union, though union proved to be the greater challenge because there existed a consensus at that time around the ideals of republicanism but not in regard to the foundation of a union among the states. Anti-Federalists claimed that a continental republic encompassing so many different states was a pipe dream. Advocates of the Constitution feared that without a stronger government the states might fly off on their own paths or form alliances with European powers. They—the Federalists—barely won the debate in 1787 and 1788 by persuading enough of their peers that the states and their inhabitants would find greater security and prosperity within the union than outside of it.

There was a widespread belief in the early years of the Republic that the Union, with its compromises between federal and state authority, represented a greater contribution to the cause of popular government than any other feature of the Constitution. Most federative systems, ancient and modern, had failed, usually because the parts spun off from the center, as Madison pointed out in making the case for union in *Federalist* Nos. 18, 19, and 20. The Constitution, and its formula for union, solved this perennial problem by granting the federal government sufficient powers to sustain itself while allowing state governments wide latitude to adjust to local conditions. Nevertheless, the original controversy between Federalists and Anti-Federalists recurred under different guises from 1789 to 1860–61, when the southern states finally seceded from the Union as others had threatened to do on several occasions in the intervening years. The Union, while an object of reverence, was at the same time continuously under threat of breakup, mainly due to the disparity of interests between the North and South.

At the time of the American founding, the empire (not the nation-state) was the established form of political organization over most of the civilized world. The Holy Roman Empire was still intact (although barely), as were the Ottoman and the Russian Empires, both encompassing dozens of national, religious, and ethnic groups. Great Britain and France were well into the process of building their own empires overseas. Empires, as forms of political organization, controlled large land areas, had fluid and unstable boundaries, and were composed of an array of ethnic, religious, and national groups coexisting within loose imperial federations. They were ruled dynastically by emperors, czars, and monarchs. The idea of a nation-state—a territorially large polity with fixed borders and a state representing a culturally distinct people—was yet to be developed as an alternative to empire.

For this reason, there was a marked tendency among members of the founding generation (Jefferson and Madison, principally) to conceive of the American union according to the imagery of empire. The United States, by virtue of the treaty with Great Britain that ended the revolution, acquired a vast expanse of territory west of the Appalachian Valley extending to the Mississippi River. This brought about a far-reaching change in perspective among American leaders. The United States, up to that point a small coastal republic, now had control of territories that dwarfed European states in size and potential bounty.

Jefferson imagined an "empire of liberty," a boundless territory organized on the principles of republicanism that would stand as a bulwark against European empires looking for opportunities to expand in the Western Hemisphere. He did not necessarily believe that the new republics had to organize themselves as offshoots of the American union but could coexist as independent republics. Later, in 1820, he wrote that the sectional crisis could be resolved by allowing slavery to be "diffused" through the territories where it would no longer represent an overwhelming interest. That formula was rejected by the Missouri Compromise of that year, but resurrected in the 1850s, at which time it further inflamed sectional hostilities.

Jefferson's vision of an expansion-based agrarian republic conflicted with Hamilton's hope for a commercial republic, mostly coastal in nature, dependent upon trade with Great Britain, and run from an administrative center in the capital.

Jefferson looked westward for the American future, Hamilton to the east, toward Europe, and especially toward Great Britain.

Madison, in making his case for the extended republic in *Federalist* 10, advanced a different but compatible theory—that by the application of representation and federalism (local self-government) there would be no territorial limits to the American union. Madison reconciled union, republicanism, and expansion within his theory of the extended republic. This was a rebuke to prominent theorists, Montesquieu and Rousseau specifically, who wrote that republics prospered only in small territorial units where citizens thought alike and held the same opinions. By contrast, Madison claimed that the multiplication of interests over a vast territory would be beneficial because such conflicts would cancel out one another and forestall a concentration of power in the capital—thereby preserving the balance between the central government and the constituent states. It might be necessary occasionally for these interests to unite in common cause, though mainly in response to threats from abroad. Otherwise, the self-canceling conflicts held the system in equipoise, not unlike balance of power arrangements in the international system.

Some historians, Jacob Talmon, for example, in *The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952), have contrasted these theories with the nationalist ideas of the French Revolution. Madison wrote in *The Federalist* that, due to the operation of liberty, it would be impossible "to give to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests." Republican government had to accommodate—indeed, promote—a diversity of opinion and interests. The French revolutionaries thought differently. Jean-Paul Rabaut, one of the moderate leaders in the National Assembly in the early years of the Revolution (subsequently executed in the Terror), declared: "We must make the French a new people. We require an infallible means of transmitting constantly and immediately, to all the French at once, the same uniform ideas." Abbé Emmanuel Sieyès, another revolutionary theorist, similarly wrote that "All parts of France must be made into a single body, and all the peoples who divide it into a single Nation." Article three of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* asserts that "The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation."

Revolutionary leaders sought to purify the French language, eliminate regional governments and loyalties, and construct a national religion as an alternative to Christianity. They thought a "nation" might be built on the model of the Catholic church, with a set of uniform beliefs, a catechism, and secular priests as leaders. The "nation" is "the people," everyone equal, united in a common outlook, and loyal to one another—and to the nation. "The nation," as Talmon wrote, "is not the aggregate of men, women, and children but a confraternity of faith." This is the new language of nations and nation-building—a state linked to a culturally unified public. In contrast to the Americans of that time, the French theorists thought in terms of creating a nation—the first "new" nation built upon popular principles. They failed in this quest, or mostly failed, because a "nation" is a creation of time and events, and cannot be ordered into place all at once.

It was Jefferson's vision of an "empire of liberty" that prevailed from 1800 to the southern secession in 1860–61. The United States expanded its territory at an exponential rate in that period, thanks to Jefferson and his successors in the Democratic Party: Presidents Madison, Monroe, Jackson, and Polk. The United States doubled in size in 1803 by the Louisiana Purchase, then expanded further with the annexation of Florida and later Texas, then added more territory in the southwest from the war with Mexico, and in the northwest (the Oregon territory) via negotiations with Great Britain. The United States was by 1850 an ocean-bound republic with no obvious end in sight to further expansion.

But no one today looking at a map of the United States as of 1850 would conclude that it resembled a modern nation-state. The country's borders continually expanded over a fifty-year period due to land purchases, conquests, annexations, and treaties with European empires. The country was equally divided between free and slave states, with new occasions for sectional conflict arising every

year, and each side looking for ways to break the stalemate. Those living in the North and the South more and more formed loyalties to their respective sections. People from other countries entered the United States freely and with little regulation because the federal government had yet to seize control of immigration policy from the individual states. The vast interior of the country from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean was mostly open land, yet to be settled and organized. Hostile native tribes occupied large swaths of it and were poised to resist further incursions into their territories. Under such circumstances, the "bonds of union" inevitably frayed.

This was an exceptional polity due to its scale, its popular foundations, its rapid growth, its absence of inherited ranks, and so much more. But what was it: union, republic, or empire—or a combination of all three? Whatever it was, it was not yet a nation.

The United States forged itself into a nation—into a nation-state—over a ninety-year period from 1860 to 1950, an era book-ended by the Civil War and World War II, two great wars for liberal democracy, with World War I sandwiched in between. These were communal events: all Americans participated in one way or another. They called for widespread sacrifice: many thousands were killed, and many more thousands wounded, in conflicts of unprecedented scale. These wars, tragic though they were, assimilated millions of immigrants into the national culture, and they provided momentum for the post-war civil rights movement that sought to integrate African Americans into the nation. If you or your son or daughter or your husband or wife fought for America, then no one could say you were not an American. The experience of war bound Americans into a common national enterprise, creating over the decades an ever more coherent image of an American "people" represented by a national state. If in 1860 the United States was a hybrid of different polities, then by 1950 there is little doubt that it had transformed itself into a modern nation.

It was Abraham Lincoln who first conceived the idea of an American nation as a solution to the sectional warfare that eventually broke apart the Union. Lincoln began to use the term "nation" as an alternative to "union" early in his career when he saw sectional divisions escalating at the same time as the revolutionary generation had passed away—Madison, the last of the living Founders, died in 1836. Lincoln envisioned a nation held together by a "political religion" based upon reverence for the Founding Fathers, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence. During the sectional crisis of the 1850s, he held up the Declaration as "the sheet anchor of American republicanism," and invoked the Founding Fathers in the campaign to place limits on the expansion of slavery. In the Gettysburg Address he expressed the idea of the nation in semi-religious terms: "Four score and seven years ago our Fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." This was not technically true, since the idea of a nation was yet to be developed in 1776; nonetheless, it was necessary to buttress the idea of a nation by linking it to the hopes of the Founding Fathers. The war, mixed with Lincoln's leadership and sublime rhetoric, established the idea of an indivisible American nation as anchored in the Declaration and Constitution. This must be counted among his most significant achievements: conceiving and beginning the transition of the United States from union to nation.

This did not happen all at once, since while Lincoln was speaking at Gettysburg half of the nation was still at war with the other half, and a good portion of northern opinion was sympathetic to the South and hostile to Lincoln. He was responsible for the idea of the American nation, though perhaps not for the reality of it. That would be the work of time and events: the development of railroads, highways, and means of communication that cemented the American people and the states with secure and stable borders, along with the wars and conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century that bound Americans together by mutual sacrifices. It is easy to take the nation for granted today, but it was the work of a century, requiring enormous effort and sacrifice that transformed the United States from a hopelessly divided union into the world's most powerful nation-state.

Because of the central role of the Declaration of Independence in validating the Revolution, and Lincoln's success in establishing it as the central symbol of American nationality, it is logical to conclude that the United States is a "proposition" nation founded on a commitment to abstract principles (rather than loyalty to cultural, ethnic, or national groups). It is, in Hans Kohn's terminology, a "civic" nation based upon a civic creed emphasizing liberty and democracy rather than an "ethnic" nation based upon cultural or ethnic loyalties. The United States is held together by loyalty to political institutions and abstract ideals—as in Lincoln's "political religion."

This, while largely so, admits of considerable qualification. Beginning in the founding era, Americans were aware that their country had important cultural underpinnings: it was British, English-speaking, and Protestant. Those categories were enlarged during the nineteenth century to include Catholics and non-English speaking Europeans (mostly Germans). There was a racial element, of which everyone was aware. The first Naturalization Act (1790) limited citizenship to members of the white race, an act that was repealed after the Civil War by the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, prohibiting the immigration of Chinese laborers, a law that was on the books until 1943 and not fully repealed until 1965. The Immigration Act of 1924, enacted on a bipartisan basis, barred all immigration from Asia and set national quotas favoring immigration from Canada and northern Europe. President Coolidge said when he signed the bill that "We cast no aspersions on any race or creed, but we must remember that every object of our institutions of society and Government will fail unless America be kept American." As late as 1942 President Roosevelt could say, "The United States is a Protestant country and the Catholics and the Jews are here at their sufferance." The idea of an American nation, shaped so much by Lincoln's political religion, also had an unmistakable cultural dimension.

Over the course of the post-war era, the foundations of that American nation have gradually washed away. The Immigration Act of 1965, which repealed the national origins quotas in the 1924 act, opened the country to immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The United States is now home to an endless variety of linguistic, religious, and cultural groups. The Protestant, or European, or English-speaking nation is giving way to a multicultural, multilingual, and multinational country in which differences between the new and old groups are celebrated and reinforced. It is no longer possible for the United States to go forward as a "cultural" nation in the form by which it developed between 1860 and 1950. Whether or not this is a good thing is beside the point: it has happened, is happening, and will continue to happen.

As the cultural nation recedes, the United States could go forward as a "civic" nation, on the basis of Lincoln's "political religion" or loyalty to the nation's political institutions. In the history of nations, a purely "civic" nation would be something new. The United States, an exceptional nation, might be the first of that kind. Yet the nation's political ideals, and their associated institutions, have also come under sustained attack by many who celebrate the nation's growing cultural diversity. They loudly assert that the Founding Fathers were slave owners, and therefore hypocrites; the Declaration of Independence is a fraud; the Constitution favors the rich and stands in the way of needed change; the American past is a tale of oppression, conquest, and environmental degradation. Such views are circulated in America's schools, colleges, and board rooms, and they are popular among journalists and political activists. Through these attacks, the "civic" nation is disappearing almost as rapidly as the "cultural" nation.

These developments leave the United States without any strong foundations to keep itself together as a political enterprise—in a circumstance when its increasing diversity requires some kind of unifying thread. What will that be? No one now knows. But unless it is somehow found, the United States will be at risk of blowing itself apart in the twenty-first century, as it did once before in the middle of the nineteenth.

The Left v. the nation
by John O'Sullivan

It sometimes seems to me, and perhaps to you if you have read me frequently, that I have been talking and writing about American nationalism ever since I arrived in America as an immigrant in 1979. In fact, my epiphany came somewhat later. It was not until the special issue of *National Review* devoted to "Demystifying Multiculturalism" in February 1994 that I came out of the closet as a "nationalist for America." That seems a better description of my standpoint than "American nationalist," since I was then and have remained since a loyal subject of Queen Elizabeth II. The impulse to engage with such issues as multiculturalism and immigration came not from a personal transfer of patriotic loyalty from Britain to America—much though I love and admire the latter—but rather from the intellectual conviction that the dominant multiculturalist doctrine of American nationality was a simple error that, if persisted in, would have disastrous results.

Nationalism has many definitions, but the one employed here is the concept that people come to share a national identity, mutual loyalty, and sense of fellowship and common destiny as the result of sharing the same language and culture and of living under the same institutions over a long period of time. A nation may have many different historical origins—dynastic, ethnic, revolutionary, etc. What matters is that over time its people come to feel that they are part of the same collective body and feel a loyalty to it and its symbols, whether the monarchy in the United Kingdom or the flag in the United States. Their attachment to the nation comes less from its theoretical virtue than from the experience of living contentedly in a society that reflects one's own tastes and gives opportunities to realize oneself. A national identity of this kind is taken for granted rather than self-consciously chosen.

All that seemed commonsense to me. The doctrine of nationalism that I thought mistaken was the one based on the "American Creed." This defined Americans as a "creedal nation" unlike any other: a people who were united neither by ethnicity nor by loyalty to a dynastic sovereign but instead by a set of liberal principles, principally liberty and equality. That struck me not as false—in fact it contained important truths about America—so much as inadequate. The liberty that Americans prized, for instance, was a political idea usually associated with the English political philosopher John Locke that was brought to America by the English colonists. Liberty comes in at the beginning of the American story. But as Paul Johnson celebrated in his enthusiastic *History of the American People*, this liberty flowered to its full potential in the geographic and economic space of the New World.

America's bigness was a political and philosophical fact of the first importance, and it made liberty a different thing. It meant that land was cheap, labor expensive, and government distant to the degree that a man might earn a family farm by his labor in a few years. To a people who enjoyed this independence

either in practice or in possibility, Locke's philosophy seemed simple commonsense.

The principles of the Declaration of Independence sustained in the Creed were a philosophical distillation of the lived freedom that the American colonists had created, the American rebels had made a universal possibility, and that millions of immigrants subsequently embraced with gratitude and made their own. All of them would happily recite America's sacred documents such as the Gettysburg Address and sing its popular songs such as "Yankee Doodle Dandy" on the Fourth of July. But it was the common culture of lived freedom that underpinned those ceremonies and that united the American people. Over time and through better communications this common culture encompassed more and more aspects of life and helped shape more and more people.

My favorite illustration of this comes from the Second World War, by which time all but the most recent migrants had become culturally American. When German commandos disguised in U.S. uniforms were conducting sabotage and murder behind American lines during the Battle of the Bulge, the G.I.s testing the identity of potential SS men asked not about anarchism or the First Amendment but questions designed to expose their knowledge (or ignorance) of everyday American life. That produced some unexpected effects. General Marshall corrected his American inquisitor's claim that the capital of Illinois was Chicago; Britain's Field Marshal Montgomery imperiously waved aside the U.S. guards, who promptly shot out his tires; and the actor David Niven (then a British commando), on being asked by the Americans who had won the 1943 World Series, replied: "Haven't the foggiest idea, but I did co-star with Ginger Rogers in *Bachelor Mother*."

If my argument is right here, the American Creed is inadequate as a definition of a People. Its ideas are not as distinctive as the culture in which they're embedded, even when that culture has been transmitted to the world by Hollywood, television, and the internet. Liberal ideas found in the American Creed were and are shared by liberally minded people all over the world—most fervently in other English-speaking countries which had inherited the same ideas even if they sometimes interpreted them differently, but elsewhere too. As the United States rose to international power, these liberals looked to it as a sort of savior. That is the practical meaning of America as mankind's last best hope. But it does not mean that everyone alive wants to be an American or is already a proto-American rather than what he is. Liberal-minded people in other lands usually want their own version of a liberal constitution and a free society.

As daily becomes more apparent, a creedal nationality gradually becomes a vehicle for multiculturalism, which is itself, as the late Samuel Huntington argued in *Who Are We?* (his final and most important book), a recipe for "the deconstruction of America." If America is essentially the embodiment of liberal political ideas, why should the language, culture, and institutions of the original settlers enjoy preference in law and custom over those same attributes and interests of the newer migrants? Provided that the bearers of these new cultures are prepared to eliminate, put in cold storage, or deny their more illiberal features, these immigrants have as much "right" to see their beliefs reflected in the common culture and national political and legal institutions as the founding generations. Properly speaking, there is no "American culture" in this constitutional vision, rather many American cultures. Thus the creedal nation becomes over time a multicultural patchwork quilt.

This is a vision of nationality that is likely to appeal to lawyers, bureaucrats, academics, and, in short, to intellectuals far more than to ordinary citizens. For starters, it will provide them with almost continuous well-paid employment, interpreting old rules in line with new rights and settling disputes between different ethno-cultural groups. It also replaces the comforting solidarity that a national idea should provide ordinarily with a constant ethnic and interest-group conflict. Or, as Al Gore correctly understood but incorrectly translated *E Pluribus Unum*: "Out of One, Many."

Despite these drawbacks, it seemed to me twenty-five years ago that support for the creedal theory was bipartisan. Conservative intellectuals—especially but not only neoconservatives—were as strongly attached to it as were intellectuals of the Left. My antipathy towards the idea of a creedal nation was probably excessive then, but all the same the situation has changed dramatically. Since the 2016 primary season, Americans have been talking about nationalism all the time. That is because, as Huntington predicted and as James Piereson argues in this issue, the American nation is under serious threat of dissolution. One of the two main parties now supports policies of de facto open borders, mass immigration, accelerated multiculturalism, and the elimination of policies that distinguish between citizens and non-citizens. The second reason is that Donald Trump took up the cause of the nation in 2016 when almost all other Republican candidates resolutely refused to do so. Mr. Trump would not be my chosen poster boy for American nationalism, in part because he does not articulate the national question in depth. But he took up the task. Others must now develop the arguments for it—and, alas, they probably have to be intellectuals.

Some conservative intellectuals have already stepped up to the plate. Yoram Hazony, Rich Lowry, and Michael Anton have all produced books defending nationalism against its more hysterical critics. Magazines like the *Claremont Review of Books* and *American Affairs* have arisen to expose the Left's more romantic justifications for multiculturalism and mass migration to skeptical enquiry. And some magazines, this one and *National Review* for instance, never abandoned such criticisms. To be sure, there are still conservative intellectuals committed to the creedal version of American identity, and they don't lack reasons. In a society that has already received millions of recent immigrants, both conservative sides can agree on the need to promote a greater sense of community across different ethno-cultural groups even if we differ on how to do so. These immigrants, when all is said and done, are all Americans or likely to be. And we should want to strengthen the ties of national solidarity uniting us all.

That is not equally true of the Left, which, as we shall see, is ambivalent about national solidarity if it conflicts with human equality and policies of global redistribution. By the Left I mean a variety of political and philosophical groups which define themselves as opposed in principle to the existing order of society and hopeful of constructing a better one.

My definition does not include groups of urban or agricultural workers who protest against manifest social evils or organize in order to improve their living standards. Marx's proletariat was never really a sovereign actor of the Left, nor was it meant to be by socialists. It was a horse whose rider was the vanguard of intellectuals who understood where history was going. As history proceeded, largely disproving the theories of the vanguard, the proletariat emancipated itself from the control of the Left and adopted its own priorities that were rooted in collective democratic self-help, a common culture shaped by Christian values, and—since the world was organized along nation-state lines—a decent, respectable, and largely pacific patriotism. In short, the proletariat proved a great disappointment to the early Marxists because it declared itself to be part of the nation. In 1867 Engels wrote to Marx following Disraeli's victory in that year's election: "Once again the English working class has disgraced itself."

It's hardly surprising therefore that the Left has been either hostile or ambivalent to the idea of the nation. If we look at the fifty-seven varieties of Leftism, we find that each one treats the nation as an obstacle to the realization of its aims.

Marxist socialists see the nation as an undesirable alternative to what should be the worker's true focus of loyalty, namely his class. Both Marx and Lenin conceded that national liberation movements could play a limited part in hastening the demise of feudalism, capitalism, imperialism, etc. But they recognized and distrusted the power of such movements. And once in power themselves, they cautiously embraced an apolitical form of cultural nationalism to appease the subjects of the Soviet empire. As Anthony Daniels has written of the folkloric displays seen by every

foreign delegation to Moscow: "Under communism all minorities dance." It didn't work; nationalism was one of the forces that brought communism down.

Progressives similarly see an effective self-governing nation as an obstacle to their system of elite rule by experts. They don't believe that democratically elected politicians should be able to override decisions reached "scientifically" by trained minds. A Tocquevillian nation engenders especial hostility among progressives as it disperses social decisions down to the lowest possible level, rendering elites even less necessary than in a centralized democracy. This progressive hostility to democracy has been surprisingly candid and strong in the reaction against Brexit in both Europe and America, where elite institutions like the media, though knowing little about it, instantly recognized the referendum as a threat to . . . well, something or other.

Postmodernists in the mold of Michel Foucault or, worse, critical race or legal theorists, see the national idea as a mask of power wielded by the elites they wish to replace, since it mobilizes popular support for the status quo and particular policies. Experience suggests the opposite: it is they who wield the relevant power, and critical race theory is a mask of their power. As Andrew Sullivan pointed out in his important article on the 1619 Project of *The New York Times*, when the American paper of record presents a view of the United States derived almost entirely from critical race theory as a simple compendium of historical facts, it is absurd to claim that a white-supremacist establishment is calling the shots everywhere. This particular Left has made a fetish of its impotence so as to attain absolute power in universities, the media, and publishing. It now wields it all but absolutely. But popular democratic sovereignty in a national political context is genuinely an obstacle to its power, as we see whenever some academic novelty escapes from the Ivy League onto the tabloid front pages and causes a scandal.

The final Left considered here, social-democratic parties, is the most significant one because it exercises actual political power in a number of major European countries, and in the European Union itself, and because it has traditionally been competent in delivering bread-and-butter policies to its urban voters. In recent years, however, social-democratic parties have fallen increasingly under the influence of middle-class public-sector radicals, adopted many of their cultural nostrums, and lost much of their traditional blue-collar electorate. They now find themselves falling into minor-party status. Nationalism and the nation-state are among the main reasons for their collapse. For these concepts directly clash with the Left's new preference for rational self-chosen identities over inherited "natural" ones, obstruct the achievement of its vision of human equality over national equality, and block the national and international redistribution of resources it now seeks.

National identity may be the most intractable of the Left's difficulties. Leftists of all kinds are extremely reluctant to accept that culture, language, and a shared history are vital supports for national community. They are viscerally unwilling to see open borders and the erosion of citizenship as threats to national cohesion. Indeed, they regard such fears as racist or xenophobic. To explain what holds the nation together, they offer two answers: liberal institutions and social-democratic transfer payments. Under liberal institutionalism, citizens are held together by a strong state which protects them and their rights. They therefore owe the state their loyalty. Yet, as Sir Noel Malcolm pointed out in his 1991 pamphlet on sovereignty, how strong is a state going to be if people are taught to think of it merely as a geographical area containing a certain number of human beings endowed with rights? Nations like the United States rooted in the principle of consent have traditionally taken great care to encourage the "Americanization" of newcomers, and for good reason.

According to the transfer payments theory, governments promote national solidarity by transferring resources from favored to disfavored groups and by encouraging all to participate in entitlement programs such as Social Security, which promote an ethic of equal citizenship. In sixties Britain, LSE's Professor

Richard Titmuss delivered the pure socialist theory of national identity: the use of social services is a badge of citizenship. As long as the state has the fiscal ability to keep the checks coming, it can maintain solidarity even without the need for a shared identity rooted in culture and language.

It is not, however, as simple as that. We now know that taxpayers and voters are more willing to fund government transfers if they are linked to the recipients by the ties of sympathy and fellowship that exist in a shared national culture. The more diverse a society is, the less willing it is to spend money on welfare. That's the paradox of the welfare state: it needs national solidarity to finance national solidarity. And what if the treasury runs out? The costs of financial flows are rising because of aging populations and migrant services. Instead of sustaining national cohesion, transfer payments have already become a threat to it in countries such as Denmark, which has adopted a policy of "welfare chauvinism," i.e., generous safety-net programs available only to legal residents.

Social democrats respond to these pressures by such policies as closing tax havens, transforming trade agreements into vehicles for extending regulation, imposing taxes on international financial flows, "harmonizing" regulations in bodies such as the European Union, and so on. Eventually their governments form cartels—that is what the European Union is once its idealistic rhetoric is stripped away—to maintain monopoly prices for their services. But it is in vain: these new transnational bodies suffer from even worse defects than single welfare states: they are remote, undemocratic, and lacking even the semblance of a shared national culture. The overall result is the upsurge of populist nationalism across Europe, which is a protest against, among other things, the erosion of national sovereignty and democratic accountability in the European Union.

Unfortunately for the Left, nationalism may be an insoluble problem for them. Though some leftist intellectuals have argued for the adoption of a more patriotic stance (largely for electoral reasons) since Richard Rorty raised the issue twenty years ago, there is what William Voegeli in his recent *Law & Liberty* commentary on nationalism calls a "fundamental tension in the Left project between equality and community. Each is valued. In a perfect world, both would be fully realized. In the real world, however, there are no clear guidelines for synthesizing the two or for choosing between them when they clash." And clash they do. If your aim is to achieve global economic equality (over however long a time scale), then you will have to reduce the standard of living of Americans, including poorer Americans, below what it would otherwise have reached. If your priority is to raise the standard of living of the American poor, however, you will have fewer resources to devote to foreign aid to the world's poorest. And in either event you won't be able to tell the truth to your activists about the second course or to your voters about the first.

It's an agonizing dilemma, but perhaps a very academic one. For the experience of leftist regimes through history and around the world suggests that the likeliest result of an ideological socialist economic policy in the United States would be a reduction in American prosperity to the point where both foreign aid and domestic poverty programs would fall. And though unintended, that too would be an expression of the Left's idea of a decent patriotism: sacrificial utopianism.

Pre- & post-citizens
by Victor Davis Hanson

Americans cherish their citizenship. Yet they have all but lost it. The erosion of the citizen is insidiously accelerating in two quite different directions. It seems as if we are reverting to tribal pre-citizenship, in the manner of clan allegiances in the centuries before the rise of the Greek polis and the seventh-century-B.C. invention of the concept of the citizen (*polités*). Or perhaps the better comparison is to the fifth-century A.D., when northern nomadic ethnic bands crossed the Rhine and Danube and replaced the multiracially encompassing notion of "*civis Romanus sum*"—"I am a Roman citizen"—with tribal loyalties to fellow Goths, Huns, or Vandals.

In particular, a regression to a state of pre-citizenship can be seen in the conflation of mere residence with legal citizenship. Whether they feel particularly American or not, those who happen to live within the borders of the United States (legally or not) increasingly enjoy almost all the same rights as those Americans who were born here or were naturalized. In addition, multiculturalism is retribalizing America, in the manner of the fragmentation and evaporation of the Roman Empire. Millions seem to owe their first loyalty to those who share similar ethnic, racial, or religious affinities rather than to shared citizenship, common traditions, and collective histories that transcend race, creed, and clan. And the middle class, the classical foundation for citizenship, is also eroding as a medieval society of lords and peasants returns, especially in progressive states like California.

On the more privileged end, we are paradoxically entering an age of post-citizenship. Our alleged elites, mostly on the two coasts, often prefer to envision themselves as "citizens of the world" and, consequently, see their Americanism as passé. They prefer to respect the authority and reputation of transnational organizations rather than American legislative bodies and jurisprudence. Certainly, the protocols of the European Union earn more respect from many members of our professional classes than does the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment.

Moreover, many of the freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights have already been radically curtailed by our current "cancel culture," which is supported by the demons of social media, the administrative state, the courts, and popular culture. An individual citizen's right that is legally protected is often practically impossible to enjoy. More formally, there is a concentrated academic, legal, and legislative effort to alter the Constitution, or at least to jettison abruptly decades of American legal and political traditions in the name of equality and at the expense of freedom and liberty.

Currently there are over five hundred so-called "sanctuary cities" inside the United States, in which federal immigration law has been rendered all but null and void. Those who have violated federal law and resided without legal sanction, who are then arrested and charged with crimes, are protected from federal immigration enforcement and are not

subject to deportation. This current annulment is somewhat similar to the nullification crisis of 1832–33, when South Carolina arbitrarily declared federal tariff laws non-binding within its own state jurisdiction—before backing down under threat of force by President Andrew Jackson.

The rationale of the sanctuary city is not politically neutral or apparently applicable to issues other than illegal immigration. No sanctuary entity, for example, would support similar nullifications of federal law by conservatives should they declare particular red counties exempt from the federal Endangered Species Act, or their citizens not subject to federal handgun background checks.

Some twelve states now issue driver's licenses without much effort to check legal residence—and thereby come into conflict with federal laws governing necessary identification criteria to pass security checks before boarding U.S. airline flights—with the result that many such states must now issue super-"real" driver's licenses that require additional proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residence to obtain. When I taught at California State University, Fresno, one of the strangest experiences was hearing complaints from out-of-state U.S.-citizen students who paid three times the tuition of California-based non-citizen residents, most of them residing in California without legal status. Most states do not distinguish between residents and citizens in allotting social services.

Three centuries of gradually accumulated American jurisprudence, custom, and tradition had previously delineated important legal differences between the concepts of citizenship and residence, both legal and illegal. Only citizens and legal residents could live inside the borders of the United States indefinitely. As a practical matter, since the 1920s only citizens have been allowed to vote in local and national elections. And in 1952, the federal government mandated the possession of a U.S. passport to leave and enter the country without government permission.

Already two of those three pillars of citizenship have eroded. There are currently somewhere between eleven and twenty million illegal aliens residing in the United States without legal sanction. Some have been given amnesty and others de facto exemptions from deportation. The number is increasing. Also becoming more prevalent is the notion and practice that legal citizenship is not particularly necessary to live indefinitely inside the United States, to obtain legal identification, to qualify for state and federal social services, or to cross at will U.S. borders without legal permission.

Aside from the fact that state "motor-voter" laws—which tie voter registration to the possession of a driver's license—often are deliberately blurred or lax enough to allow ballot-registration forms to be sent to illegal aliens, non-citizens have also been given the rights in some jurisdictions to vote in municipal elections, a trend that is likewise accelerating. Illegal aliens legally can vote in local San Francisco school board elections, and a number of other cities have voted to follow suit. And the trend is gaining strength.

In other words, we are returning to nineteenth-century practices, when the westward expansion of the United States, coupled with commensurately small state populations, often meant that there were no enforceable borders. On the relatively empty frontiers, few cared to ascertain the legal status of residents. But whereas in the distant past demography explained legal laxity, today the explanation is politics—or, rather, the doctrine of radical equality of result that seeks to erode any discriminating criteria concerning those residing in the United States.

Salad-bowl multiculturalism has replaced melting-pot multiracialism. The reason why the former Harvard Law School professor Elizabeth Warren and the former University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill both faked Native American identities was to find the easiest and quickest way to enhance their respective career advancements. They correctly assumed that employers would favor, or be forced to favor, those who identified as "hyphenated Americans" in general, and in particular those with minority ancestry.

Over the last thirty years, but especially during the Obama years, the concept of affirmative action gradually gave way to the notion of "diversity." The former doctrine had originated

as a means to "level the playing field" and give African-Americans an edge in college admissions and hiring on the theory that the toxic legacy of slavery and Jim Crow required such reparatory remedies.

But once affirmative action was extended to other minorities without the clear historical grievances of blacks, the floodgates of racial and ethnic preferences were open. Such an amorphous term as "Latino" or "Hispanic" could include rich South Americans or indeed Spanish immigrants, as well as recently arrived Mexican citizens who had never experienced any American discrimination by virtue of never having resided inside the United States at all.

Class as proof of disadvantage was largely forgotten—as if the children of Attorney General Eric Holder or Jay-Z were less privileged than the impoverished offspring of an unemployed white Appalachian coal miner. Given that many Hispanics were superficially indistinguishable from the white majority, some sought to add accents to their names or change to Spanish spellings (Johns rebranded as Juans), and to create hyphenated names, all in an effort to reestablish privileged minority status. How odd that whiteness was claimed to offer intrinsic advantages, even as millions of Americans were finding ways, even if superficially, not to be labeled as white. And yet privilege and advantage were precisely what an apparently too-white Elizabeth Warren sought with her constructed Native American identity.

During the Obama administration, the notion of "diversity" de facto abolished the two former assumptions of affirmative action: proof of prior or ongoing discrimination and economic disparity. More practically, diversity redefined the American body politic. Those who were now "diverse" encompassed almost anyone who claimed to be not white, however that amorphous term was defined. Diverse now included wealthy Asians or Cubans, and a host of other groups heretofore not considered oppressed minorities. And the new diversity comprised nearly 30 percent of the population, with assumed historical complaints against the white majority—a new binary that sometimes required the resurrection of the pernicious "one-drop" rule of the Old South to maintain such a huge constituency. Those with one-quarter, one-eighth, or one-sixteenth non-white ancestry often applied as minorities for jobs and university admissions.

Previous cultural differences in language, food, fashion, art, and music had enriched American life, but as subsidiaries to, rather than replacements of, the core of American citizenship and tradition and history. Now, diversity offers entire parallel and separate anti-Constitutional paradigms. Some students have begun to be housed on campus in race-specific houses. Others can select their potential roommates on the basis of race. "Safe spaces" have been reserved for students on the basis of race or sexuality. Standards of proportional representation are applied to hiring and admissions, and "disparate impact" theories find insidious racism even without the supporting evidence of actual victims. As Heather Mac Donald wrote in this magazine two months ago, Asian-American citizens certainly have fewer constitutional rights of due process and non-discrimination when applying to Ivy League schools than do Latino-Americans or African-Americans.

Since the American founding, citizenship also assumed an active independent voter to elect representatives and ensure that the rights of the Constitution were protected. The Founders saw citizenship as nearly synonymous with a vibrant middle class, which at the origin of America comprised mostly independent and autonomous small farmers—a theme prevalent in Thomas Jefferson's reflections on the Constitution and the works of Crèvecœur and Tocqueville. Yet this additional pillar of citizenship likewise is slowly being diminished, resulting in a pre-citizen landscape of two rather than three classes.

Small farmers are now all but nonexistent, but their middle status after the Industrial Revolution had been absorbed by blue-collar workers and suburban wage-earners. Buying a home, being able to meet a manageable mortgage payment, attending college without crushing debt, and enjoying upward mobility were all considered central to avoiding a

two-dimensional medieval society. Yet by most benchmarks, the framework of the middle class is eroding, as evidenced by rising mortgage costs as a percentage of family budgets, $1.5 trillion in aggregate student debt, and, until 2018, stagnant family income and workers' wages.

The result has been the gradual expansion of a large underclass that looks to government for redistributive justice, and a much wealthier elite who never seem subject to the ramifications of their own progressive bromides. The shrinking middle lacked the romance of the distant poor and the appropriate taste and culture of the rich, and thus was often caricatured as greedy, materialist, and needing of instruction on race, class, and gender.

If the foundations of citizenship are being undermined, so too are its superstructures. Globalism started out with the spread of quasi-capitalism that introduced Western modes of production to the non-West and harmonized the world through technological breakthroughs in transportation and communications. As a result, many of the over seven billion residents of the planet can now call any other instantaneously at reasonable costs, communicate electronically, or within twenty-four hours travel between any two major cities.

But economic homogeneity and global connectedness soon led to the utopian idea of commensurate political uniformity. And here was the problem: while America spearheaded the global wealth creation, its unique constitutional system certainly did not become the model for political emulation. In Europe, the French Revolution and the non-democratic autocracies and state bureaucracies that followed it became more of a blueprint for the European Union than the U.S. Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence did. Poorer nations now look to richer Western systems that emphasize redistribution rather than those that emphasize equality of opportunity. Predictably, transnational institutions like the European Union, the United Nations and its affiliated commissions, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and a host of others devoted to human rights, environmental protection, international commerce and trade, and health and welfare, became politicized. They insist on share-the-wealth policies and redistributive justice contrary to the U.S. Constitution.

In the twenty-first century, America began to relearn that the laws of its republic do not function on autopilot but must instead be carefully nourished and protected in the most practical of ways. The rise of the "cancel culture" of social media, an electronically charged lynch mob that is activated in a nanosecond, means that both individuals and businesses deemed politically incorrect can be threatened with ostracism, boycotts, censure, and ruin.

For example, if rural citizens cannot find ammunition for their legal firearms due to ammunition-selling businesses' fear of censure, the Second Amendment can be rendered de facto irrelevant in places. In theory there is free speech on campuses; in fact, both students and professors accept that unpopular views voiced on issues such as abortion, affirmative action, or global warming can endanger grades and careers, respectively.

Given that federal prosecutors win or plea-bargain about 95 percent of their cases, any high-profile individual can be threatened with indictment and must then weigh the cost of a legal defense versus negotiation and avoidance of trial. Carter Page, a minor and temporary Trump campaign official in 2016, was surveilled by the U.S. government though the politicization and abuse of the FISA court warrant process, repeatedly interviewed and harassed by federal agents to leverage incriminating evidence against his employers, and yet never charged with a crime—a result that became apparent only after Page was forced to spend tens of thousands of dollars in preemptive legal fees. The so-called administrative state—whose investigators, auditors, and regulators are armed with unlimited legal resources and virtual lifetime job security but often lack much knowledge on how the private sector works—can all but ruin individuals and business concerns.

But postmodern citizenship is also more than a matter of adopting global norms in preference to U.S. customs and traditions, or using pressure groups to deny citizens their

full protection of constitutional rights. There is currently a multitude of academic, legal, and political efforts to change either the U.S. Constitution or the custom and practice of the federal government. The common denominator in all these progressive and media agendas, both informal and legal, is the curbing of individual liberty and freedom as the necessary price to ensure an equality of result among all residents.

Furious that the current Supreme Court errs on the side of the individual rather than the collective interest? Then seek to resurrect something akin to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's shameful 1937 effort to pack the court by increasing the membership beyond the current nine justices. Or intimidate sitting justices by threats of mandatory retirement.

Upset that George W. Bush and Donald Trump both won elections without a majority of the national popular vote? Then seek either to disband the Electoral College or to pass state laws requiring a state to pledge its electors to the winner of the popular vote rather than to reflect the will of the majority of voters within a state.

Is it fair to have two conservative senators from Wyoming, who each roughly represent a quarter-million voters, while their liberal counterparts from California each speak for twenty million? Then seek to turn the U.S. Senate into something analogous to the House of Representatives, where congressional offices reflect national demography.

Do too many states vote conservatively? Then use the courts or the state legislatures to reduce the voting age to sixteen, abolish restrictions on voting rights for felons and ex-felons, and end requirements to show identification at the polls.

The list of proposed changes to both the Constitution and long legislative custom and practice that have been ratified and upheld by the courts is nearly endless. The effort is twofold. One aim is fundamentally to transform and recalibrate the American republic to resemble a Jacobin sort of democracy in which whatever a majority of residents on any given day prefers becomes law.

The other aim is to institutionalize politically the vast cultural and economic changes that are turning the United States into a bicoastal culture of rich and poor, with a forgotten and hollowed-out middle in between. That is, to bring into the electorate the sixteen-year-old, the illegal alien, and the felon in order to change the nature of the voter profile to counter the legal, law-abiding, and mature citizen, who is under suspicion of voting incorrectly—a sin often defined as merely being in accord with the Founders' visions of the republic.

The result is that the United States is becoming a country of pre- and post-citizens. If we wonder why illegal alien residents who commit felonies are rarely deported or must be deported repeatedly, or why few college graduates know much about the Constitution and American history, or why loud social-justice-warrior athletes so eagerly mouth Chinese platitudes about curtailing free speech inside the United States, or why the protections offered by the First and Second Amendments depend largely on where you work or live, one of the reasons is because American citizenship as we once knew it is becoming meaningless.

The enemy is an idea
by Michael Anton

The enemy is an idea—at least in part.

But who speaks of "enemies" anymore? Isn't the human race beyond such low, petty, potentially violent concerns?

No. It will never be. It cannot be. As long as there will be man, he will have friends and enemies—individual men no less than groups of men.

Lately a group of dishonest men have taking to dismissing this concern as "Schmittian," after the German political philosopher Carl Schmitt. But this is just their way of calling their own enemies "Nazis." These sophists forget—or deliberately obscure—that Schmitt's core insight follows Plato, who gives three definitions of justice in Book I of the *Republic*, the central being that justice is helping friends and harming enemies. Only this definition survives as Plato proceeds to elaborate his political philosophy.

Schmitt was a Nazi because he joined the Party, not because he understood that politics cannot be separated from—can never fully rise above—the friend–enemy distinction. Or, if believing in the friend–enemy distinction makes you a Nazi then Plato was a Nazi, too. As was virtually every thinker in the Western tradition. We expect this kind of malevolent lunacy from our leftist enemies but not from (former) ostensibly rightist friends. Therefore let this be understood: anyone who today dismisses the concept of "enemy" is himself an enemy, for he aims to deceive and, via that deception, to harm—either by design or out of delusion.

Our enemy—the idea of which I write—denies the existence of enemies. Like the devil, it is seductive and promises great goods. It preaches universal brotherhood, global unity, a "borderless world." Also like the devil, it has many names: liberal international order, rules-based international order, new world order, neoliberalism, among others. But its truest name is "universal and homogenous state" (UHS). To speak more precisely, the UHS is the underlying philosophic idea; the others are epiphenomena, attempts to make concrete in deed what the UHS prophesies in speech.

Under the rubric "liberal international order" (LIO), this idea has been much in the news lately. It is held to be an unalloyed good, the totemic structure of our time, the only thing standing between humanity and ruin. It is also said to be under constant attack from President Trump and his allies and friends. This latter claim is even true, depending on which understanding of "liberal international order" is meant, for there is more than one.

The concrete meaning of "liberal international order" is the collectivity of institutions created in the immediate post–World War II era. But what really matters are not just the institutions themselves but also—perhaps more so—the underlying philosophy or ideology that gave rise to them, plus their methods of operation.

The initial—and ostensible—purpose of the LIO in this understanding was to do for Europe (and Asia) what the Peace of West-

phalia, the treaties that ended the War of the Spanish Succession, and the Congress of Vienna had done previously: end a conflict, reconcile enemies, and create decades of peace. In this respect, the LIO may be understood as one of many similar efforts in a long line: a temporary solution to a temporary problem, adapted to the particular circumstances of its particular time.

Occasionally statesmen are tempted to think more grandly of their present, and pressing, task and to dream of "making the world anew." And sometimes the settlement to a particular problem does, in fact, fundamentally change the world. The Treaty of Westphalia not only ended the Thirty Years War, it created an international system based on the principles of state sovereignty and foreign non-interference in domestic affairs that lasted centuries and that, in attenuated form, still stands.

The architects of the LIO held their own work in still higher regard. They, or many of them, thought they were building not merely for decades or even centuries but for all time. To this hubris was added another, and wholly new, element: ideology, the desiccated, doctrinaire codification of philosophy.

It's an unsettled—and perhaps unsettlable—question how many architects of the "liberal international order" thought of their project in these terms: permanent, unassailable, aligned with a new and superior understanding of nature. Did Jean Monnet intend his modest European Coal and Steel Community to become the European Union behemoth? Likely he did. But if so, it is a non-trivial detail that he declined to *say* so to the broader European public. Indeed, never having stood for elected office at all, he relieved himself of the bothersome necessity of having to explain his program to any but a handful of international elites, nearly all of whom supported it.

One architect of the LIO, however, never found circumspection either necessary or to his taste. Alexandre Kojève emigrated to France from Russia at an early age, a White fleeing the Reds. Which is ironic, given Kojève's later self-identification as a "Stalinist" and credible, if unproved, allegations that for thirty years he spied for the USSR.

Kojève is today known principally for three things. First is the influence of his famous lecture course on Hegel, taught in Paris in the 1930s and attended by a rogues' gallery of students who would go on to become some the most destructive intellectuals of the twentieth century, including Sartre, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Weil, and Beauvoir. Foucault and Derrida—too young to have attended the course in person—later claimed Kojève as a major influence. Though in fairness, it should be noted that Kojève's influence was not entirely malign. No less than Leo Strauss regarded Kojève as one of his few worthy philosophic opponents, and other attendees of those lectures included Queneau and the eminently sober Raymond Aron.

Second is the content of those lectures. In them, and in his subsequent writings, Kojève claims to have "fixed" Marx by bypassing him in favor of Hegel, whose own errors Kojève also claims to have fixed. Not a modest man, to be sure.

Third is Kojève's longtime work in the French bureaucracy, in a rather nondescript office under a vague title that belied his importance. One of Strauss's students, Stanley Rosen, described Kojève as "the Mycroft Holmes of France." That is, he was to the post-war French government what Sherlock's older, smarter brother was to the Victorian Whitehall: the decider. Except Kojève was real. Rosen quotes one of his favorite sayings: "De Gaulle decides on relations with Russia and the *force de frappe*; I, Kojève, decide everything else."

A central contradiction in Kojève's thought is his claim on the one hand to have "fixed" or moderated Marx, and his unapologetic Stalinism on the other. Certainly, Kojève tolerated and even excused Stalinist excesses in his own rhetoric. He seems to have taken Hobbes's dismissive comment that tyranny is merely monarchy disliked to mean that there is no fundamental distinction between just and unjust rule; there is only sovereign power or its lack.

And yet Kojève often seems to have gone out of his way to praise more "moderate"

examples of his preferred polity in contrast to Stalin's USSR; for example, in his famous debate with Strauss, he held up Portugal's Salazar to show that Hegelian utopia need not rest on a foundation of (too much) terror. Something in him intuited that terror doesn't sell.

Many of us comfort ourselves with the thought that Marxism cannot be done "soft." If so, that would indicate that the means necessary to support it, because so brutal, will always be unpopular, making any Marxist regime unstable and short-lived. Tocqueville's famous warning about "soft despotism" seems not to apply, and not merely because it was penned decades before Marx wrote, but also because it describes a regime so much less harsh, less anti-natural than Marx's.

Yet Kojève's greatest "achievement" appears to have been to bridge the gap: to take what Tocqueville meant as a warning and to transform it into a recommendation. For the ancient philosophers, tyranny is a danger coeval with political life. Man can avoid it for a time—perhaps even for a long time—but we can never eliminate the possibility. When and where tyranny arises, the classics recommend mitigation, making the best of a bad situation. Essentially, they urge the tyrant—for his own good and for the good of the ruled—to govern like a legitimate king, to treat the polity as if it were his estate. At most they concede that some tyrannies are in a sense necessary in a "post-constitutional" situation after the breakdown of an established order, but are just only in the sense that deserved punishment is just.

Kojève turns all this—and more—on its head. Necessary mitigation becomes a positive good; deserved punishment is elevated into the "end of history"; and Marx's dystopia is reimagined as the "universal and homogenous state." Which is, in concept, exactly what it sounds like: universal (aspiring to cover the entire globe), homogenous (treating, and working to make, everyone the same), and a state (the world's sole wielder of sovereign power).

The philosophy underlying all this is deep and complex and—with one exception, explained below—needn't detain us here. It's the popularized version—the ideology—that matters, many of whose basic tenets will be instantly recognizable as the conventional wisdom of our globalist elites, the Davoisie:

> Political and economic integration among states reduces causes of conflict.
>
> Integration also reduces "friction" and therefore costs of doing business.
>
> Integration leads to greater efficiencies in the allocation of monetary and human capital, and of other resources.
>
> Integration is therefore always good, and the solution to almost any problem is more integration.
>
> Diversity, inclusivity, and equity ("DIE") are necessary for integration to succeed and also are positive ends in themselves.
>
> Only in an integrated environment—and therefore the more extensive the better—can these positive ends be achieved and maintained at their fullest.

These last assertions derive from Hegel's concept of "recognition," viz., that "history" is driven by the struggle of each and every person to achieve "recognition" of his/her/"their" (if ever there were a time to assault the English language with idiotic pronoun misuse, this would be it) personal claim to dignity by all other persons. In the ideologized version under which we currently live, that requires the mass redistribution of honors in the name of tolerance, fairness, and redress.

One can easily see the Marxist elements of this system: e.g., its universalism, insistence on leveling, the way it sees all history through the sole lens of past injustice or group struggle. Its most notable non-Marxist feature—its contempt of the proletariat and exaltation of an oligarchic ruling class—is explainable not merely by the desires of the ruling class (for every ruling class prefers to be rich rather than poor) but also by the clever way that neolib-

eralism has (mostly) substituted Marxism's redistribution of wealth with the redistribution of honors.

The qualifier is necessary, because some wealth redistribution still goes on—though not at the scale, or with the intent, anticipated by classical Marxism. Rather, the point under neoliberalism is to tie the "wealth" (however meager) of some to their allegedly retrograde refusal to grant "recognition" to others—specifically to the "diverse," the downtrodden, the "unincluded." This is why neoliberalism finds it permissible to celebrate the destruction of certain (let us call them Red State or "flyover" or "deplorable") communities. Like the peasant in Marxist theory, the modern "deplorable"—however penniless or powerless he may seem or believe himself to be—remains a stubbornly retrograde force who cannot be persuaded to abandon his "privilege" and so must be crushed.

We must not underestimate the appeal of this vision. It may sound dystopian and terrifying to us, but it is a source of inspiration and hope to millions. Some of those millions simply look past the necessary heavy-handed intrusiveness—the demonizations, the propaganda, the censorship, the anarcho-tyranny, the double-standards, and various unfairnesses—on which the system must rely. Others relish these as features, not bugs.

But supporters of this new regime all agree that it offers at least one great good: the final, long-awaited, and much-longed-for coalescence of humanity (or at least the good parts) into one universal siblinghood. It's no accident that the official anthem of the European Union is Schiller's "Ode to Joy" as set to music by Beethoven (*alle Menschen werden Brüder*)—nor is it an accident that the European Union recently began an effort to criminalize the "denigration of the European Union and its symbols." Though one wonders how long the "gender-specific" language of Schiller's poem will be allowed to stand unexpurgated.

I wrote earlier of a contradiction in Kojève's thought. We find another nestled within the contours of neoliberalism. It is, as noted, universalist and seeks universal siblinghood for all humankind. It holds this to be the highest and most obvious good. It therefore does not know what to make of the hold-outs, those who like their particularity and don't want to give it up. Are such people simple flat-earthers?

In any case, how can one form a brotherhood with those who don't want to be brothers? But remaining with them or getting rid of them each poses a mortal threat to the project. Keep the deplorables around and they're likely to drag the polity in the "wrong" direction, toward nationalism and populism, away from neoliberalism. Kick them out, or separate from them, and you've admitted that your brotherhood has failed, its universalist pretentions are phony. The mere existence of hold-outs—whether inside your polity or outside in another one created for the purpose of holding out—is a standing rebuke that cannot be tolerated.

This (in part) explains the weeping over Brexit, Trump, the Yellow Vests, and the resurgence of nationalist politics throughout Europe. These acts of defiance are unwelcome signs that the vaunted "end of history" has not yet arrived, and worse, may *never* arrive. The only way to square the circle is to assume that they are manifestations of sabotage by "wreckers" who, once dispatched, will no longer stand athwart progress. Which is the operating assumption, for now.

Trump's signature sin is not merely to side with but to give voice to—to *lead*—the defiers. This is why his every word is condemned as a dangerous solvent on the supposedly unifying and stabilizing forces of globalization.

But if one begins from different premises—from a belief in eternal human nature—one understands the defiance differently, and is buoyed by it. Even on Hegelian terms, it's possible to understand the defiance precisely as arising from resentment of neoliberalism's refusal to "recognize" deplorables or their concerns. Yet a truer understanding would be that, while the deplorables do crave recognition, they do so not on Hegelian terms but on human terms. They wish to have their equal natural humanity recognized, of course,

but also their status as husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, co-workers and friends, and—last but not least—fellow citizens.

If we are to define a "deplorable" as a holdout from neoliberalism, the LIO, and the UHS, then we may say that he holds out in part owing to his stubborn insistence on the ineradicability of the distinction between countryman and foreigner, citizen and alien, and—in the final analysis—between friend and enemy. There will always be nations, which means there will always be friends and enemies. Mankind is not, cannot be, and therefore will never be a universal brotherhood. To the neoliberal, this thought is retrograde. To the deplorable, it is not a thought; it is nature—no more to be despised or attacked than wished away.

This—I believe—inexpungible opinion among the larger portion of mankind is a great good, a reason for hope. It is a reason (one among many) why the project of universalist homogenization must fail—a failure to which anyone concerned with the fate of human freedom should look forward.

But this should not be taken as license for complacency. The fact of that failure's inevitability must not be allowed to obscure the vital point that *when* the failure occurs matters a great deal. The longer this goes on, the greater the toll it will take, and the harder our recovery will be.

This suggests the necessity of action, of resistance. That action can take many forms: spiritual, memetic, intellectual, organizational, political. But at the end of the day, to defeat an idea requires not just a better idea—which we have—but one marshaled in the service of a superior reality, a true and appealing vision of a real nation with real communities, real commonalties, real bonds of civic friendship, and a real sense of who we are, and who we are not.

We have that, too. Or, we used to. Our supreme and most pressing task is to remember it and get it back.

Liberty: collective & individual

by Angelo M. Codevilla

From society's commanding heights, a ruling class of intellectuals, politicians, publicists, industrialists, and bureaucrats, as well as churchmen, has devalued the attachments to God, family, locality, and nation by which Westerners, and especially Americans, have lived, and has purveyed the sense that we are parts of a global political economy run by experts. Contemporary "internationalism" is part of the larger progressive effort to substitute government by officials, who are supposed to be intellectually and morally superior, for government by, of, and for the people. This essay examines the philosophical and practical bases for the American people's rejection of the past century's peculiar internationalism, and suggests that the best way of transcending it—to resume control of ourselves as well as of our relationship with other peoples—is to return to the principles practiced by presidents from Washington to Theodore Roosevelt.

The assumption that human beings are rightly governed only by their betters entered the progressive tradition as an inheritance from France's *ancien régime* which Napoleon institutionalized throughout Western Europe under the banner of the Revolution. Hegel celebrated state-engineered process as the march of the human spirit. Only in the 1880s did it come to America in the writings of Josiah Strong, Woodrow Wilson, and Herbert Croly. Ordinary people can hardly imagine the domestic objectives at which progressivism aims. Progressivism's international objectives—perpetual worldwide peace and the equality of peoples—are even further from ordinary people's grasp or cares. The administrative state internally, and "globalism" internationally, are two sides of the same progressive coin.

The statesmen of America's first century managed foreign affairs in tandem with the people's concerns, using language common to the people and within the Constitution's provisions for popular accountability, because they believed that the people are and should be in control. By contrast, our progressive ruling class has focused foreign policy on matters beyond ordinary people's ken and expressed in jargon, in no small part to remove what they do from these peoples' hands. They believe that Americans' instincts mix isolationism and militant nationalism, and lead to war. In fact, when the people's priorities ruled, America enjoyed a century of international peace. The century of progressivist internationalism has been a time of war.

Europe's secular worship of nation-states, which began in the fifteenth century and culminated in the Great War's paroxysm, never came to America. It is difficult to over-emphasize Americans' devotion to peace and rejection of international quarrels. When presidents from George Washington to Theodore Roosevelt steered clear of others' wars, they were acting as the American people's fiduciary agents.

Who rules, and by what right? Mankind's default answer is that the strong rule by virtue of strength. Plato's *Republic* disputes this at length on the basis of natural reason. Our Declaration

of Independence does so succinctly. It states: "The laws of Nature and Nature's God" entitle "one people"—any and all peoples—to a "separate and equal station" "among the powers of the earth." How can we know that? We know it because of a "self-evident" truth: "all men are created equal . . . endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." To whom is that truth about the Creator's creation self-evident? It is self-evident to those who believe in the Creator's words: "and God created man in His own image, male and female created He them." It is self-evident because God creates all human beings, and because that divine image is single, ineffable. And because each and every human being is naturally sovereign over his own "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," no one may rightly rule him without his consent.

Biblical revelation of equal creation supports the Declaration's statements of natural liberty—collective and individual. Hence, all men are naturally free to distinguish themselves collectively among "the powers of the earth." Therefore each people, sovereign over itself, exercises its natural liberty to rule itself, and only itself. The *collective* right of peoples to have lives of their own and to pursue happiness as they see fit is simply the writ-large version of the equal rights of *individuals* that proceeds from their equal creation.

Though individual liberty implies collective liberty, the exercise of collective liberty does not necessarily imply the enjoyment of natural human rights, never mind the exercise of civil liberties. In America these liberties happened to coincide, albeit imperfectly, because of a heretofore happy coincidence of a certain sense of nationhood with a certain understanding and dedication to righteous living.

As far as America's founders were concerned, the whole point of government is to preserve the happy coincidence that made America unique. John Quincy Adams explained the Founders' America:

> the people . . . were associated bodies of civilized men and christians, in a state of nature, but not of anarchy. They were bound by the laws of God, which they all, and by the laws of the gospel, which they nearly all, acknowledged as the rules of their conduct. They were bound by the principles which they themselves had proclaimed in the declaration . . . by all the beneficent laws and institutions, which their forefathers had brought with them from their mother country, by habits of hardy industry, by frugal and hospitable manners, by the general sentiments of social equality, by pure and virtuous morals.

The people, he said, were to cultivate and show forth a character, commitment, and cohesion peculiar and separate from that of other nations:

> It is a common government that constitutes our country. But in THAT association, all the sympathies of domestic life and kindred blood, all the moral ligatures of friendship and of neighborhood, are combined with that instinctive and mysterious connection between man and physical nature, which binds the first perceptions of childhood in a chain of sympathy with the last gasp of expiring age, to the spot of our nativity, and the natural objects by which it is surrounded. These sympathies belong and are indispensable to the relations ordained by nature between the individual and his country. . . . These are the feelings under which the children of Israel "sat down by the rivers of Babylon, and wept when they remembered Zion."

The precondition for preserving the American people's character was and would remain preserving its independence—its collective liberty to govern itself. Because the habits that come from exercising responsibility, collective as well as individual, are key to that character, making that exercise the foremost priority for all policy is essential. This does not mean navel-gazing. It does mean looking at everything through the prism of what serves America.

In the century prior to progressivism, labeling any proposal or point of view as "America First" would have been meaningless. Statesmen debated policy within their fiduciary responsibilities' natural focus. Concern for whatever happens beyond our borders depended on its impact on Americans. But the progressives' paramount premise is precisely the opposite: that U.S. policy's proper primary

concern must be with mankind as a whole, and with America and Americans only incidentally and derivatively. Therefore, progressives have used the label "America First" as an imputation of narrow-mindedness, selfishness—in short, of illegitimacy.

America First, however, may be the most succinct description of George Washington's statecraft. By telling his fellow citizens "the name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation," he was adjuring Americans to look at the rest of the world through America's prism. Washington had no doubt that America would soon be powerful. But maintaining peace and independence would depend chiefly on regarding everything from an American perspective. From that perspective, all nations are equal, in that their interests and quarrels are their own, not ours. Our interest is to have "Harmony and liberal intercourse" with all that would have it with us. To do that, we should "observe good faith and justice towards all Nations." That, in turn, requires avoiding political connections that would drag us into their quarrels. Taking sides in those quarrels naturally tends to pit Americans against one another: "Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground?"

The 1790s taught Washington that commitments to foreign nations embitter existing domestic partisan divisions. Because each side cites foreign concerns to strengthen its case against other Americans, alliances tend to be sources of weakness, not strength.

When Washington wrote to the nation's governors that it was now up to the American people to "establish or ruin their national Character forever," he was urging Americans above all to guard their identity as a virtuous people. In the tradition that Montesquieu and Gibbon had transmitted from Livy, Washington repeatedly reminded Americans that, to remain free, they must take care to be virtuous. Never in history had that been easy. Nor would it be now. No power would make up for lack of virtue. Maintaining the integrity of America's soul was also the reason why John Quincy Adams emphasized abstinence from others' quarrels, from the temptation to make America "the dictatress of the world."

Adams was intimately acquainted with Washington's teachings and with Hamilton's, Madison' and Jay's reasoning on what it takes to maintain peace, as well as with his father's application of naval power to maintain it. This, in addition to his having watched as Presidents Jefferson's and Madison's neglect of military power forced America into the War of 1812, led him to devote his diplomatic career to defining and establishing the Founders' foreign policy as a paradigm for future generations.

Expansion of U.S. territory in North America, mutual non-interference and reciprocity, and deadly force against pirates and importers of slaves were among his policy's pillars. Adams regarded the 1819 Transcontinental Treaty that secured an internationally recognized U.S. border on the Pacific Ocean, in addition to the accession of Spanish Florida, as his proudest achievement. Earlier, he had successfully argued for military action to destroy bands of British-led terrorists operating out of there. John Quincy Adams's formulation of the Monroe Doctrine is a perpetual reminder of America's geopolitical priorities. Since the peoples on our borders and the nearby islands are the agents by which both good and ill may come to us, U.S. foreign policy must begin with a defensive focus on them. What is nearest is of dearest concern.

Adams's central concern, however, was securing the American people's exercise of their collective liberty among nations—in a word, self-government. Taking unilateral responsibility for actions vis-à-vis the rest of the world was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for that. Since any and all commitments to foreign powers comport restrictions on one's collective liberty, concern for that liberty requires minimizing commitments.

He also advised minimizing formal commitments a because diplomatic experience had taught him that governments do what they believe to be in their interest regardless of the existence of agreements that command or forbid. Understanding that diplomacy is the verbal expression of realities, he relied on making sure all sides understand how each others' interests

interact. He explained Washington's insistence on reserving alliances for specific circumstances by pointing out that although sovereign nations' interests may coincide from time to time, they are never identical. America's own interest, overriding geopolitics and commerce, is to strengthen its own peculiar, fragile, republican character. Adams hoped that acting honorably and respectfully among nations would also help foster honor and integrity—republicanism's bases—among Americans.

Safeguarding self-government and promoting responsible behavior was also Abraham Lincoln's theme in his 1838 Young Men's Lyceum address. He too did not fear foreign aggression. Irresponsibility, however, would open the way for men of "the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle"—men like Napoleon, who would impose the order that Americans could not or would not exercise on themselves.

Nothing more clearly epitomizes the contrast between the century-plus of foreign policy focused on America and that which has followed under progressives than the difference in how Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson viewed American power and the Great War. Roosevelt would have warned Germany that America would not allow Britain to be defeated and the Atlantic Ocean to become a hostile German lake. Thus warned, Germany might not have forced Britain's hand by invading Belgium. The war might not have started. Wilson, by contrast, stated that "the interests of all nations are our own also," and committed America to establishing "permanent peace" as well as "a world safe for democracy." By thus departing from the American people's priorities, Wilson helped turn a mere war into a civilizational tragedy.

In 1917, the American people did not sign up to try improving the world. They bitterly rejected that notion in 1919 and have since. But neither then nor since have the American people's preferences outweighed our bipartisan elites' desire to wield America's enormous power on the international stage. As they minimized the people's collective liberty regarding international affairs, they made a mess of things.

Theodore Roosevelt had synthesized the previous century's foreign policy in the formula "speak softly and carry a big stick." His emphasis on balancing ends and means matched the American people's appreciation for solvency in personal and business affairs. For him, to "combine the unbridled tongue with the unready hand" was the most dangerous of habits. Progressive policy, however, has been insolvent, bankrupt, because its words have been such that no amount of earthly power could match them. Foreigners' belief in American power far in excess of its application has given progressive policy such efficacy as it has had. But endless discrepancies between words and deeds have made American power increasingly incredible. Since words can neither change reality nor cause foreigners whose interests differ from America's to share in our officials' departure from it, we should keep in mind that the American people are the only ones whom our officials' unbridled tongues can deceive.

Even though the description of progressive U.S. foreign policy as "liberal hegemony" dates only to the 1990s, the sense that American power and wisdom entitles, nay, obliges, U.S. officials to lead, order, and sheriff the globe has been their lodestar regardless of the public's very different concerns.

Because progressives' transnational or multilateral objectives are foreign to the American people, they have largely removed decisions about the people from the people by making commitments through executive agreements or by acting informally. Following Woodrow Wilson, they have pressed their priorities on the American people by pretending that these reflect their allies' demands. Prioritizing alliances over objectives, they have made it difficult to evaluate those objectives.

Progressives have treated international institutions' norms as if they were international law binding on Americans. Those institutions—notably the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and the complex of committees thereof—have become ends in themselves. "Internationalism," too, has become something of an end in itself, as may be seen in a proposal by Germany and France to establish an "Alliance for Multilateralism," ostensibly directed at no one but aiming to foster a "rules-based order." The proposal's language hints not at curbing

anything that China, Russia, or Iran might be doing, but rather at curbing some Americans' desire to focus on America's own interest and identity. Thus do latter-day "multilateralists" around the world ally with progressive Americans against the American people.

By the same token, members of America's progressive establishment have made profitable careers out of advising like-minded foreigners in their public and private affairs, and enjoying foreigners' assistance in their own private and public affairs in America. The latter includes all manner of help or hindrance in business and political campaigns. This confusion of foreign and domestic affairs, as well as of the public and personal, has corrupted its practitioners in every imaginable sense of the word.

While abjuring war as a tool for securing national interests, progressives have used the tools of war in the name of ideals. Dealing with matters of the utmost seriousness, they have acted un-seriously.

The U.S. armed forces are the world's largest and, by many measures, the world's best. And yet the United States has lost its wars since 1945. The "war on terror," having cost some eight thousand of our military dead and five times that number crippled, plus perhaps six trillion dollars, leaves us with multiples of the number of terrorists arrayed against us than when it started. That is because our progressive establishment is mismatching forces and objectives, ends and means, as it has been doing in every military confrontation since 1950. Its refusal to defend U.S. territory against missiles, especially from Russia and China, leaves no doubt that U.S. nuclear policy is bluff advertised as bluff, and that our nuclear forces deter only ourselves.

Most important, the U.S. government squandered the American people's trust. America is left over-armed and insecure, over-allied and increasingly opposed. Americans now are subject not to men of "the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle," but to self-indulgent bureaucrats, as presumptuous as they are incompetent.

Today's progressive establishment, having pursued its dreams with plenary power, yet seeing those dreams turn into troubles it had not imagined, now focuses its energies on maintaining its prerogatives against an increasingly assertive public. Specific issues of policy having become of secondary importance; power itself—who rules—is the issue.

In our time, the progressive establishment's substantive causes are a pale reflection of themselves in their heyday. Nobody today would refer to the United Nations as "the last, best hope" of mankind. Not in a half century has anyone in authority suggested that it might be possible to eliminate war. Yet these were the mid-twentieth century's tropes. Bureaucratic inertia sustains feeble attempts at "arms control," as well as occasional references to "nuclear non-proliferation." Today, nobody would bet his money that any nuclear power might be persuaded to "de-nuclearize." And yet, the idea that nuclear weapons were in the process of being dis-invented animated the Clinton, Obama, and both Bush administrations. Who, today, would recite George W. Bush's 2005 inaugural with a straight face? Who would argue that alliances must determine missions rather than the other way around? The "Arab Spring" was all the rage in Washington. And then it raged. The European Union is a done deal—that is in the process of undoing itself. Not so long ago, the notion that this progressive project would be the other end of a "dumbbell" of transatlantic power was catnip among the great and the wise. Now it just looks dumb.

How does one earn the label "populist"? It seems by not being quick enough to disassociate himself from descriptions of Americans and America such as those of George Washington, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. And what do populists want? The exercise of collective liberty is populism's quintessential, defining demand: "we the people" get to rule ourselves. "Institutions" have no right to rule. Neither does social position or group identity confer any such right. If there is such a thing as a crime against popular government, government by the people, it is the presumption that some are more equal than others.

If there had been doubts that, at least in America, the exercise of collective liberty is the precondition for exercising individual liberty, our progressive establishment's vindictive presumptions should settle those doubts.

New poems
by Christian Wiman

Summer river Rosie dam

The old bitch Rosie ambles up the drive.
The taut knobs of her teats nearly touch the dust.
Somewhere something needs her.
Chunk-necked, long-bodied, lug-legged, smudge-colored.
She abhors brooms but otherwise endures
insults, indifference, novice efforts to leash or clean.
A kind of commanding obedience about her:
as long as it takes you to see, she waits.
Then, with a sort of conspiratorial shiver and eons in her eyes,
lugs her nubs up the porch steps and sighs loudly down
as if she's been deflated.
A ghost of must and an orbit of fleas,
one toothed ear and two bonus toes.
Nothing culminates in her, except maybe muttness.
She is the opposite of frolic.
Her sleep is an extinction.
However, should an afternoon prove overlong, heat
smite, one's pleasures pall,
should one let slip the one word she knows
(*Rosie* is a rune to her, one more blurt from the blurters)
she's up! all frisk and ripple, sniffing existence anew,
and with her tail pronged as a warthog saunters
down the steps, across the yard, parting the tall grass ahead of you
toward the roar.

And someone wrote it down

I read about a bomber whose favorite fruit was dates.
Somewhere, in the annihilating light and the no-time-to-cries,
amid the sudden silica of the market stalls,
the whirlwinded bones and the misted viscera: dates.
A brother said he'd loved them. Said it, I imagine,
with the same lonely catatonia of the saint
when God withdraws, and then withdraws His withdrawal,
until there's nothing but a word for what had been a world.
Someone picked up the pieces. Someone scrubbed the blood.
Someone clung to something human, and someone wrote it down.

A light store in the Bowery

Some love is like a light store
you slip inside only to escape
the rain. Something to see, it turns out:
the plasma lamps, mosque and lava,
the elegant icicles of the chandeliers,
shapes and shades so insistently singular
that rooms can't help but happen around them,
lives can't help but acquire choices and chances
inside. Some love is like an old owner
who when a child walks in with her parents
can only imagine shatterings.
And some love is like that child
asking with an earnest and exemplary awe,
"Where do they keep the dark?"

Letter from Southsea

All washed up

by Anthony Daniels

Arriving late from France on the Caen-to-Portsmouth ferry, we decided to stay overnight in Southsea, a once-fashionable Victorian seaside resort contiguous with Portsmouth. Many of the grand seafront houses are still extant, having survived the bombing during the war, but of course, as everywhere else in the country, the whole townscape has been ruined by a few modernist buildings constructed in what Jean Cocteau called *architectural Esperanto*, strategically placed so that the horrified eye cannot avoid or escape them.

Southsea, of course, is where Arthur Conan Doyle set up his medical practice and wrote the first Sherlock Holmes stories. At the time, it was a place of retirement for generals and admirals, and Conan Doyle took enthusiastic part in the town's sporting, cultural, and intellectual life, recounted in detail by Geoffrey Stavert in his book *A Study in Southsea: From Bush Villas to Baker Street*. The pictures in this book amply illustrate just what an aesthetic disaster the advent of the motor car has been for a small country such as Britain, how this infernal machine has come completely to dominate urban life so that, for example, front gardens have been asphalted over completely to accommodate it, thereby destroying all pride in the buildings behind, which have been allowed to decay because they are no longer worth preserving. Roads that were once pleasant, leafy, airy, and spacious are now cramped and crowded and littered with multicolored machinery.

Southsea was the birthplace of Peter Sellers, but also of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the author of one of the most malign books ever written, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. Chamberlain, the son of an admiral, hated his country, moved to Germany and wrote in German, and has commonly been called Hitler's St. John the Baptist. By strange coincidence, a few days after I left Southsea, I found a book by Norman Baillie-Stewart, *The Officer in the Tower*, which recounts how he was twice imprisoned for treachery, being a former British officer who broadcast propaganda from Nazi Germany and may have been the original Lord Haw-Haw. Baillie-Stewart was the son of a colonel in the Indian Army who retired to Southsea, so perhaps sea air is not always as healthy as advertised.

Conan Doyle's house was bombed and completely destroyed in the war, and replaced in the 1950s by an utterly dispiriting utilitarian block of flats, the very embodiment of what British bureaucrats of the time considered necessary and sufficient for the good life, with only a forlorn blue plaque to record that the home of a great writer once existed on the site. And yet, not far away, in an unbombed part of the town, to the rear of the seafront, is an interesting if not wholly attractive world which Conan Doyle would surely have found of interest.

Through streets of small houses, constructed for the Victorian lower-middle class, now turned mainly into cheap lodgings (insofar as any lodgings in England can now be called

cheap, thanks to the unacknowledged inflation of high asset prices brought about by low interest rates and so-called quantitative easing, that is to say the conjuration of money out of nothing), runs a long thoroughfare that somehow captures much about the state of the country.

It is full, I am glad to say, of independent little businesses, there not being a chain store or multinational in sight. A visitor from another planet might conclude that the predominant economic activity of the district was the provision of takeout food to a local population incapable of cooking, which consists largely of young people, presumably students, who rarely appear before noon and are not late to emerge principally because of the care they have taken over their appearance. Suffice it to say that it is easier to find Korean barbeque takeout in the street than a raw tomato. The students are too busy sleeping and smoking dope to cook for themselves.

The name of a single shop sticks out in my mind: *Bored of Southsea*. It is a clothes shop, and its name supports a favorite theory of mine, that people buy clothes mainly because they are bored and hope that the search for exactly the right T-shirt will lend purpose to their lives. There are other interesting establishments too, for example one devoted entirely to the sale of hemp products, with a large bright green cannabis leaf painted on the shop window, and an old-fashioned junk shop so unimaginably cluttered that a careless movement might bring a moth-eaten stuffed otter in a glass bell crashing down on you. I looked, as I always do in such shops, for an unrecognized Vermeer—even a Van Meegeren would be better than nothing—but none was to be had.

The wonderfully gloomy shop was presided over by a casually dressed young man contentedly reading in a dusty corner without the assistance of pop music to aid his concentration. I experienced the shop as balm to my soul. To think that such an establishment can still exist in these days of universal e-commerce, undisturbed by music or customers, where probably nothing is bought for days on end, and in the hands of a young man who seemed totally unaware of the need for money! I left the shop reassured that all is not yet lost, that our civilization will survive.

Perhaps not surprisingly in this golden age of self-mutilation, though, there were at least five tattoo parlors on the road, one with the words *Ink You Can Be Proud Of* emblazoned on its windows. They appeared not to be doing a roaring trade, perhaps because the market round here had already been saturated: there must come a time when even David Beckham can have no more tattoos.

And then there were the health-food and oriental medicine shops. I wished I had had a camera, to record for posterity (if, *pace* Greta Thunberg, there is one) a man in his late thirties, so fat that I could easily have fitted into one of his thighs, shuffling past one of these shops with the help of his tripod walking stick, out taking his Staffordshire terrier for a very slow and no doubt rather short morning crawl. What a juxtaposition! Hypochondriacal superstition meets lifelong self-neglect! Ours is truly an age of extremes.

Having visited Southsea several times before, I knew that there were three second-hand bookshops on that road although, because of irregular opening hours, I had been able to visit only one of them once. On my previous visits I felt like a thirsty man in the desert, desperately making his way to a watery mirage. So near and yet so far!

On this occasion, I gained admission to two of them, the owner of the third (in the disparaging words of the proprietor of one of the others) being irregular in his habits and never to be relied on to be open even during opening hours. "A law unto himself," said my informant.

Not that either of the others seemed exactly obsessed by order. The first, a lady as friendly as she was nearly edentulate, told me that her bookshop had ninety thousand books, mostly lying in the kind of flat cardboard boxes in which fruit is packed because her shelves had toppled under the weight of the books. But they were nevertheless in some kind of order: she said, "Here is your section on nature, zoology, animals, and David Attenborough, there are your academics" (academe evidently

being conceived as one vast undifferentiated institution productive of books that not many would read, much less buy).

I was already familiar with, and fond of, the third. I arrived just as the owner opened up for the day. Before he had even unlocked the door, he launched into a lament about the forthcoming rise in rent (by 20 percent) that would drive him out of business after many years. I know that the economic system depends upon everyone in business trying to maximize his profits, and that overall we are much the better off for it, but all the same I could not but feel sorrow that there is no place in this universe for an otherworldly man to run his eccentric, disorganized business in which he takes pride in charging for his wares what he thinks they are worth, not what someone might be willing to pay for them.

Soon after I began to browse, a man of about my age entered, obviously bookish. He was a familiar of the shop, and there is an instant camaraderie among those peculiar beings who find excitement in searching shelves on which, as George Orwell once described it in his account of working in such a bookshop, every bluebottle prefers to die. We began to discuss the perennial problem of all compulsive book-buyers, that of space and the consequent complaint of wives. There is only one solution, albeit a temporary one: a bigger house.

Having settled the problem of space, we progressed to more purely literary matters. "Did you know that Houston Stewart Chamberlain wrote his major work in Southsea?" he asked, with a kind glee. I didn't know because it isn't true, but residents of towns everywhere like to lend world-significance to their place of residence, even if it is for something bad. Much Wenlock in Shropshire, for example, likes to think that it was the true originator of the Olympic Games.

I chose six books from the shelves. The store was particularly strong in detective fiction 1920–60, with about two yards of Edgar Wallace alone, from which I selected *The Flying Squad*. In total the books came to £32.

"I'll give you 30 percent off," said the bookseller. "That's £22.40. Call it £22."

I asked for a receipt—my books are a tax-deductible expense. He tore a page out of an old exercise book and started to write on it with an old pen. He had difficulty because he was so short-sighted: he had to hold it about three inches from his face to see what he was doing. His old pen ran out of ink after two words.

"Do you mind a receipt in pencil?" Even his pencil was near the end of its useful life.

My spirits were lifted again by such blithe unawareness of change, such indifference to money and commercial advantage. The survival of his enterprise (if such it could be called), and others like it, was to me evidence of the survival of freedom, albeit tenuous and threatened. Here were people who lived as they wished, doing no harm and giving pleasure to at least a few others.

I hastened to read one of the books I had bought in the shop: *The End of the Armistice* by G. K. Chesterton, published in 1940, four years after his death. It was a collection of Chesterton's articles about Germany, from which Chesterton emerges as part brilliant seer, part appalling bigot. He saw the danger of Hitler early and clear, and the need for re-armament:

> A man does not give up his umbrella at the exact moment when a thundercloud is threatening to crash over his head; a man does not give up his sword at the exact moment when his next-door neighbour, who has obviously gone mad, is waving sabres and battle-axes over the wall.

But then we read:

> We might applaud a hundred things done by the Nazis if we could bring ourselves to applaud the motive and the mood. Unfortunately it is a hysteria of self-praise, which is fed by its own virtues as much as its own vices. For that is the vital or rather mortal weakness of Pride. It says, "I did a fine thing kicking out a Jew usurer"; but it also says: "Bashing a Catholic boy scout was a fine thing, because I did it."

How terrible in its implication is the single word *but* in that last sentence!

Reconsiderations

Chasing Nabokov

by John Simon

Editors' note: John Simon, who died on November 24, 2019, was working on this review at the time of his death.

There appeared in 1973 *Strong Opinions*, Vladimir Nabokov's selection of 335 pages from the much larger trove of his so-called public prose—interviews, letters to editors, and articles. This left unpublished a considerable archive, much more extensive, not necessarily less interesting. Now comes the 527-page *Think, Write, Speak: Uncollected Essays, Reviews, Interviews, and Letters to the Editor*, edited by Brian Boyd and Anastasia Tolstoy.[1] This is a generous selection that barely touches on the former selection of, as it were, obiter—or arbiter—dicta, and is paired with various contributions by the editors, preponderantly Boyd.

Now, these are not to be compared to fingernail parings of saints or laundry lists of celebrated authors. The new collection is nothing like that, given that it is selected by a Nabokov authority as the cream of a much larger crop that will, I hope, obviate the need for a third installment. This one should certainly delight both Nabokov scholars and fans, and even anyone the least bit interested in Nabokoviana of both public and private pronouncements.

Brian Boyd is the author of two opulent Nabokov critical biographies, *The Russian Years* and *The American Years*, some 1,400 pages taken together, and quite possibly definitive. A professor in the English Department at the University of Auckland and a prolific editor and translator of Nabokov, he clearly knows Russian. Even so, he sought the collaboration of Anastasia Tolstoy, a descendant of one of Vladimir's favorite writers, herself the author of an Oxford doctoral dissertation entitled "Vladimir Nabokov and the Aesthetics of Disgust," and some other Nabokovian forays.

Their new book features not only the constituents that its subtitle proposes, and, at the beginning of each selection, biographical and bibliographical notes (with further endnotes), but also a copious introduction by Boyd and some illustrations of various texts that in total may or may not exceed a thousand words. Taken together, this may constitute a somewhat bumpy autobiography and biography.

Think, Write, Speak derives its starting point from the well-known opening sentence of *Strong Opinions*: "I think like a genius, I write like a distinguished author, and I speak like a child," of which Boyd makes quite a meal. But is it true? No matter, a writer is allowed a clever formula, even if it is a mite oversimplified, a trifle far-fetched.

The greatest part of the book comes from interviews, which derive from the widest imaginable sources, at least two-thirds of them featuring questions about *Lolita*, suggesting that those were the real cause of the interview. Which in turn suggests that Nabokov might not have made it into the big

1 *Think, Write, Speak: Uncollected Essays, Reviews, Interviews, and Letters to the Editor*, by Vladimir Nabokov, edited by Brian Boyd and Anastasia Tolstoy; Knopf, 527 pages, $30.

leagues, no matter all his other fine books, were it not for *Lolita*, forever his most read and talked about one.

Especially interesting are his views on the nature and effect of the writer.

> The human mind is so built that the acquisition of precise knowledge seems to be facilitated by the fact of the limitless past being limited (always in the present) by its documentary remains; but the nearest approach to the truth at the likeliest point within these limits may really prove to be a distance of many dim miles if we apply to the past the complex aspect of our sensorial and spatial present.

I doubt not that Nabokov could have explained what he means here more fully, but these lines exhibit the playing with words so characteristic of him. Let us cite a few examples.

"Two and two no longer make four, because it is no longer necessary for them to make four." Again: "The twinkle in the author's eye as he notes the imbecile drooping of a murderer's underlip, or watches the stumpy forefinger of a professional tyrant exploring a profitable nostril in the solitude of his sumptuous bedroom, this twinkle is what punishes your man more surely than the rope on the local chestnut tree or the pistol of a tiptoeing conspirator." Here the play is duly with details of an image.

Or this: "The real writer, the fellow who sends planes spinning and models a man asleep and eagerly tampers with his rib, that kind of writer has no given values at his disposal; he must create them himself. The art of writing is a very futile business if it does not imply first of all the art of seeing the world as the potentiality of fiction." Again the emphasis is on creating one's images full of inventiveness, thus the writerly detail based on the sleeping man characterized by his tamperable rib. So too: "the plight of a child, a very ordinary little girl caught up by a disgusting and cruel man." Again the details, here "disgusting and cruel," even if Humbert was perhaps more, or less, than that. But the words make for powerful epithets.

What are these writers' values to which Nabokov refers so frequently? The wedding of the real to the visionary, the very real world married to the imaginative, the fictional. What makes Thomas Mann so "bad"? That he is "a small writer who did big stories badly," when the idea is to tell details well. This is what for Nabokov was done by the writers he most admires: Flaubert, the Pushkin of *Eugene Onegin* (an eternal Nabokov concern, giving rise to his awful, commentary-heavy two-volume version of the novel, and threats of additional volumes, I would say happily unrealized), even such unlikely figures as Chateaubriand and Chénier (whom Pushkin knew by heart), but not Balzac and Stendhal and Faulkner, who are, in his chief condemnatory term, journalists. Above all of them, he remarks, towers Shakespeare.

Interestingly, without referring to Whitman, Nabokov does not shy away from contradiction and *Think, Write, Speak* is most valuable during these moments. Take, for example, the girl Lolita (her name a diminutive of Dolores, "a very beautiful name . . . . with a long veil, a name with liquid eyes"). First, in *Strong Opinions*, she is "a little Spanish gypsy" who loses her virginity at twelve, like Nabokov's other leading lady Ada. In *Think, Write, Speak*, she "isn't a perverse young girl" but "a poor child" exposed to "the imagination of the sad satyr that makes a magic creature of this little American schoolgirl, as banal and normal in her own way as the poet *manqué* Humbert is in his." Now: "I pity her: an orphan, alone in life with a demanding forty-year-old"; that poor child "debauched" by a monster, but whose own senses "never stir under the caresses of the foul Humbert Humbert." There is no nymphet. Lolita the nymphet exists only through the maniacal gaze of Humbert. (On another occasion Nabokov remarked that, contra Freud—"the Viennese charlatan" who peddled "elixirs"—"sexual charm is just a tiny detail in the beauty of the world.") As for the novel *Lolita*, it is "a unique book that has been betrayed by a factitious popularity." Very well, if you like, but can you really blame readers or even critics for adding to its factitious popularity?

Much of *Think, Write, Speak* deals with writers like Nabokov himself, and what his writing

achieves in his own estimation. Most startling is the recurrent assertion that he thinks not in any language, but in images only. In his luxurious childhood, from appropriate governesses, he learned French and English, his two other languages. Much as he loves Russian and uses it *en famille*, English is the richer language. Despite years in Berlin, he never really learned German—too bad, I say, for someone who wrote and loved lyric poetry. He composes generally in bed or in his morning bath, or even on what seems to be the toilet, looking down at the floor. He is never happy with a bare head, and wears a nightcap even to bed. As a lepidopterist, Nabokov rates capturing a rare butterfly a greater thrill perhaps than any literary achievement. Always he writes on index cards whose order can be reshuffled, and always in pencil, which can be erased; he says he uses up the rubber end more than the graphite one. He only wishes that the point could stay continually sharp. The pencil, as over the pen, is like a whisper.

The writer must create his own values. Writers are either for perceptive readers, or for boys, like Hemingway and many others, not poets but journalists. He stresses the need for a certain detachment for the artist, who must never be socially, let alone politically, embroiled. The main thrust, other than the autobiographical, is concern for what the true writer is and does differently from his loathed journalist.

He is bored by Sade, dazzled by Diderot, and loves most of Proust as well as Pasternak's poetry, yet despises his novel *Doctor Zhivago*. He similarly despises Marivaux ("only a journalist") and Malraux ("execrable"), but likes Mauriac's *Nœud de vipères*. He has contempt for *Portnoy's Complaint* but huge praise for Salinger, as good a writer as his beloved Robbe-Grillet and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Updike and Capote for parts of *In Cold Blood* (but not the sentimental ending). And speaking of endings, he cried at the last of *Lolita*, as his adored Flaubert did about the death of his famous heroine. Among his most revered authors are Homer, Horace, those of the New Testament, Dante, Shakespeare, the aforementioned Chateaubriand (a curious choice), Pushkin, Flaubert, Joyce, "and a few others." These, I presume, would include Tolstoy, Gogol, the poet Khodasevich, and the Griboedov of *Woe from Wit*. He admires, but does not seem to love, Nikolay Gumilev and Mandelstam, victims of the hated Communists.

Another favorite is *Ulysses*, with which he tacitly competed with *Ada*, in my opinion a dismal failure (see the review in my book *The Sheep from the Goats*). The best prose has "the woof" of poetry, he proclaims. Thanks to Joyce, he knows the streets of Dublin as well as those of Moscow, in neither of which he has ever set foot. America is the only country where he has ever been perfectly happy (good butterflies, it would seem). He is a slow writer, about two hundred pages a year. He finds similarities between the writer and the spy: both evince the all-important love of detail. His method is letting the words play with one another. His characters have fun catching a phrase *in flagrante*. But to him, Conrad's words, for instance, mean nothing, and he compares him and bad writers to Pierre Loti (whom as a boy I read and admired). The art of the novelist should include humor, but it is infinitely more complex than that of the famous professional comics like Chaplin, Keaton, and Laurel and Hardy.

"Art is exile," he claims. So is being the goalkeeper in his beloved football, a position he played professionally for a while on a Russian émigré team in Berlin. He liked boxing, in which he even gave lessons, and he always fancied tennis, which he thought of taking up again at age sixty. His scientific practice of lepidoptery, abundantly represented in *Think, Write, Speak*, may leave some readers cold. Perversely, the nuance of a wave interests him as much as the girl drowning in it. A curious fellow altogether.

In fiction, he states, "I like not only to see the main theme radiate through the whole novel," but also those characters lurking in the corners, as it were. "One must draw everything one can from words . . . the one real treasure a true writer has. I like to take a word and turn it over to see its underside, shiny or dull, or adorned with motley hues absent on the upperside. . . . One finds all sorts of curious shadows of other

words, harmonies between them, hidden beauties that suddenly reveal something beyond the word." It is "serious wordplay . . . a new verbal species that the marveling author offers to the poor reader who doesn't want to look; to the good reader, who suddenly sees a completely new facet of an iridescent sentence."

He also offers that it took him ten years to realize that his true calling was prose not poetry, a special, poetic prose that depends on comparisons and metaphors to say what it wanted to say.

Speaking of harmonies, Nabokov admits that he has "no ear for music," and what he says, for example, of Stravinsky, is shameful, albeit later amended. He is quite willing to speak about plans for the future, which include—despite the comforts of Switzerland and the Montreux Palace, about which he has a good deal of amusing stuff to say—a return to America "with tenderness" at the first opportunity, although he is "indolent" and "sluggish," and the acquisition of three new suits from England. Meanwhile he is "rereading Rimbaud, his marvelous verse and his pathetic correspondence . . . . I am also dipping into a collection of unbelievably stupid Soviet jokes." Which brings us to a closer look at *Think, Write, Speak*.

The book, after Boyd's introduction, begins with two charming 1921 essays, the first about Cambridge, at whose university Nabokov spent three years, the second about Rupert Brooke, written in an easefully fluid style rather than an unconvincing one. There are also countless reviews, chiefly from *The New Republic*, where his friend Edmund Wilson, then its editor, favored him. About now forgotten writers, these reviews can, though much smarter than the Soviet jokes, be lightly dipped into.

But things pick up considerably with letters to the editor, and even more so with this book's primary concern, the numerous interviews, as well as some longer essays on Pushkin and an essay on "The Creative Writer." We read mostly interviews submitted on demand in writing, and answered by and by in the same manner, but there were also some conducted by personal contacts. Some of the best are by writers in their own right, such as Penelope Gilliatt, Andrew Field (a Nabokov biographer), Harvey Breit, John Coleman, Jacob Bronowski, Jeanine Delpech, and the greatest of television interviewers, the admirable Bernard Pivot, on his program *Apostrophes*. They end in 1977 with an interview for the BBC by Robert Robinson.

Among the most interesting are the ones with Dieter E. Zimmer for North German Radio and Helga Chudacoff for *Die Welt*. Among the most disappointing are those with John Wain, James Salter, and the one co-conducted by Lionel Trilling. Probably the most arresting response is to Miss Chudacoff's comment about being an enthusiastic American: "I don't even know who Mr. Watergate is." Was he serious, or, more likely, joking?

Good as *Think, Write, Speak* is, it is not for everyone. But lesser or non-Nabokovians may prize some of the book's strong opinions on life and literature. The book is likely to find favor with lepidopterists and some chess enthusiasts (Nabokov composed chess puzzles). Those fascinated by a grown man with a net chasing butterflies on three continents (he never made it to the mountains of Iran) may also find it amusing. And some of Vladimir's comments on his ever so helpful wife may even be genuinely endearing. All those willing to spend thirty U.S. dollars or forty Canadian ones may well find it a worthy investment.

Reflections

Courting dishonor

by Simon Heffer

Is the British honors system the magnificent culmination of a thousand years of history, or is it utterly preposterous? It is, in fact, both. It takes an old country and the demands of circumstance over hundreds of years to engender the evolution of a structure that begins with a hereditary monarchy, descends through a peerage (which was once a nobility, but is no more), and ends with recipients of the humble British Empire Medal. This means of patronage, designed in medieval times to bind in the sycophants and cronies of the ruler, has been expanded to propitiate a vast political clientele. Some people angle desperately for letters to put after their name or, even better, a title before it; others who readily qualify despise the system and turn down gongs, some even having the bad taste to announce very loudly that they have rejected them.

Twice a year, at least, a thousand or so people have their dreams fulfilled. Probably as many others gnash their teeth, or simply feel the next list must, surely, be when their name comes up. One list appears on New Year's Eve, the other on a Saturday in June designated the Queen's official birthday: the sovereign is the fountain of honor. Occasionally, honors are granted at other times. To reflect the intensely political nature of the system, there is a Dissolution Honours List after a general election and change of government and a Resignation List if a prime minister exits in the middle of a parliament. Peerages used to figure in these lists, notably with former ministers ennobled on retirement. Now, since the partial reform of the House of Lords in 1999, with most of the hereditary element removed, separate lists of "working peers" are created regularly to replace those who have died.

It was promiscuous abuse of patronage to the Lords by two recent prime ministers—Tony Blair from 1997 to 2007, and David Cameron between 2010 and 2016—that did more to bring the honors system into disrepute than anything had in a century, during which time the Liberal party routinely sold honors to raise money. Blair, assuming power after eighteen years of Conservative rule, created 357 peers in ten years; Cameron proceeded at an even higher annual rate, creating 243 in just six. Blair sought to even things up in a House dominated by Tories since time immemorial; Cameron helped his Liberal Democrat coalition partners, putting streams of obscure local councilors into the legislature. The result was the expansion of the House of Lords to 793 members, almost a hundred fifty more than the Commons. To say the caliber has sunk is something of an understatement; people of no distinction whatsoever—and of course with no electoral mandate—thus act as legislators.

Prime ministers have been increasingly careless with appointments to the Lords in recent decades, because since 1999 giving a man (or woman) a peerage no longer confers a right for their eldest son to inherit their seat in parliament. Life Peerages, which die out with their holders, were introduced solely for Law Lords in the 1870s and became available for all in 1958. Since 1965, when a Labour government that

repudiated the hereditary principle won office, only three hereditary peerages have been created, all on the advice of the traditionally minded Margaret Thatcher. Two were viscountcies for distinguished politicians who retired at the 1983 election: William Whitelaw, Mrs. Thatcher's second-in-command, and George Thomas, a former Labour minister who became Speaker of the House of Commons. Neither had a son who could inherit, and so the peerages died with them. The third was an earldom in 1984 for a former prime minister, Harold Macmillan, who had turned one down twenty years earlier. He did have a son (who predeceased him), but also a grandson, who on Macmillan's death in 1986 succeeded as the 2nd Earl of Stockton. Now some are beginning to realize that if the old system of hereditary peerages still pertained, perhaps prime ministers would be far more careful about whom they put into the Lords—and the sovereign might be less reluctant to take issue with some names put forward for her approval.

We know that Edward VII and his son George V, whose reigns were from 1901 to 1936, often exploded with rage at names put forward by prime ministers for all degrees of honors. George V was appalled at having to knight F. E. Smith, the vulgar, womanizing, hard-drinking, and rabble-rousing Conservative MP, when he became Solicitor General in 1915; he was even more galled to be forced to give him a barony (the lowest of the five ranks of hereditary peerage) in 1919 when Lloyd George made him Lord Chancellor. Lloyd George and his allies exploited the system better than anyone in history. Not only did cronies such as Smith become barons in return for compliant behavior, Smith was soon advanced to a viscountcy and an earldom, ending up as the 1st Earl of Birkenhead. Another lawyer a few years ahead of him, Rufus Isaacs, went one better, becoming Marquess of Reading after a few more years of public service. The fifth and final rank of the peerage, the dukedom, has for the last hundred and fifty years been reserved for sons of the sovereign; the last non-royal to benefit was the Marquess of Westminster who, in 1874, became a duke after Queen Victoria had been tactfully informed that, because of his landholdings in west London, he was now richer than she was. The present Queen, on Winston Churchill's retirement as prime minister in 1955, felt that as he was a national hero on the scale of his ancestor the 1st Duke of Marlborough, or the 1st Duke of Wellington, she should revert to the earlier precedent and ask whether he would like to be Duke of Dover. The offer was made, however, only when an intermediary had established he would turn it down, as he wished to die a commoner. Of course, it would hardly have mattered a jot if he had changed his mind.

Churchill was "Sir Winston" after having accepted England's foremost order of chivalry, becoming a Knight of the Garter. As Wellington, who might have been speaking of the present system, famously said, there was "no damn'd merit" in the Garter. Edward III founded the Order in 1348 after allegedly having picked up the garter of the Countess of Salisbury when it had dropped off, uttering the immortal words "honi soit qui mal y pense"—"shame be to him who thinks evil of it." There was no damn'd merit in it—for centuries its members were from the elite establishment, great landowners, friends of the sovereign, and it has only been diluted slightly in the last century by admitting a few non-aristocratic prime ministers and other senior politicians. The Garter remains entirely in the gift of the Queen, and therefore does not tend to go to chancers; the same is true of the Scottish equivalent, the Thistle. The Queen also personally appoints to the Royal Victorian Order, created by her great-great grandmother in 1896, and awarded for service to the sovereign and her family.

Another of the "respectable" orders is that of the Bath, founded by George I in 1725 and taking its name from the act of purification medieval knights went through. Its numbers are limited and it is awarded to civil servants and military figures. It is widely seen as a reward for people of quality who have forsaken the infinitely higher remuneration of the private sector. Similarly, the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, a product of

the Regency in 1818, goes exclusively to those in the diplomatic service, or serving the country in its international relationships. After that, however, things become murky.

The basic knighthood, the knight bachelor, is not part of any order of chivalry. It dates back to long before the Garter and was bestowed on gentlemen who had served the sovereign with distinction. Now it is handed out to writers, actors, sportsmen, pop stars (Sir Mick Jagger, Sir Elton John, Sir Paul McCartney, etc.), and all manner of television celebrities as a means of allowing governments to ingratiate themselves with the public by honoring their heroes. The KB also gets handed out to businessmen whose companies either have written, or will write, large checks to the political party who favors them.

The real degradation of honors has occurred when they are sold to raise money either for the government or for a political party. Before the Garter was established, a form of knighthood called the baronetcy was introduced; it was hereditary, like a peerage, but carried no right to sit in the legislature. James I and VI of England and Scotland sold them for around £1,000 each—quite a sum in 1611—to raise money for the depleted Stuart treasury. Lloyd George did the same when prime minister between 1916 and 1922, though there is evidence that the sale of honors began under his precedessor H. H. Asquith. Knighthoods started at £10,000; a baronetcy might be £25,000, perhaps equivalent to £2.5 million today. Those with real money could buy a viscountcy for between £80,000 and £120,000.

But the lasting monument to Lloyd George's obsession with honors as a means of getting people on his side is the Order of the British Empire, created in 1917 and still going strong, long after the Empire itself has vanished. It did one good thing: although some rare women had been given peerages, the OBE allowed women routinely to receive high honors at last, with the damehood created as an equivalent of the knighthood. But the Order of the British Empire, which is now the main means by which people are honored, is also often merit-free—going to time-servers and used as a means to propitiate minorities in a society still perceived as run by white men. Tony Blair was accused of running a "cash for honors" racket, and although proof was not forthcoming, the smell never went away. It was rumored a life barony could be had for a mere £200,000. The cronyism of Harold Wilson's 1976 Resignation Honors List was thought to be uniquely disgusting, until David Cameron's came out in 2016, which included a gong for his wife's hairdresser. On top of the bloating of the House of Lords, such things have brought the system entirely into disrepute.

Yet no one will reform the system, because the patronage is so useful, and because too many significant people like to be considered more important than they are, and many others think that people with honors are indeed important. It is a cheap way of keeping people happy—either intentionally or unintentionally—and assists the Disneyfication of Britain that helps so much with tourism. Perhaps it is a sleeping, if rather useless, old dog that should be let lie.

Theater

The bijou from Peru

by Kyle Smith

An underrated pleasure is reading about the money woes of famous people. If world-conquering figures awash in funds nevertheless fret about dollars and cents, one's own load of pecuniary anxiety becomes lighter. Cole Porter (1891–1964) began to grace the Broadway stage with his tunes in 1915, when he was only twenty-four, and was the grateful recipient of major injections of dosh from both his wealthy family (his grandfather James Omar Cole was sometimes labeled "the wealthiest man in Indiana") and his rich wife, the Kentucky divorcée Linda Lee Thomas. Yet even after having written "Let's Do It, Let's Fall in Love," "What Is This Thing Called Love?," "I Happen to Like New York," "Night and Day," and "Don't Fence Me In," he openly groused about money, for many years to come. In 1928 he wrote to his cousin and financial manager Harvey Cole to borrow $10,000, a huge amount, but he said he expected to soon be earning $25,000 a year. In 1930 he spent $18,000 on a trip around the world—$300,000 in today's money. He telegraphed Harvey the following year to warn him against paying off a previous loan because "I HAVEN'T A RED CENT." Following his hits *Anything Goes* and *Gay Divorce*, he borrowed $6,000 in 1934. He never really parted ways with financial worry until his sixties, when his mother, Kate, died and left him $550,000 in 1952 (more than five million in today's dollars).

Porter's writing ability was phenomenal, but his spending ability was too. His *joie de vivre* proves infectious in *The Letters of Cole Porter*, edited by Cliff Eisen of King's College, London, and Dominic McHugh of the University of Sheffield.[1] Long, luxurious trips to Europe and the Holy Land and the Caribbean and the Pacific served nicely to recharge the composer-lyricist's batteries. It was during one such luxury excursion, in the company of his wife and a friend since Yale days, the actor Monty Woolley, that Porter, gazing over the side of the ship at some majestic sight or other (the location varied in different versions of the story), exclaimed, "It's delightful!" His wife chimed in, "It's delicious!," and Woolley followed through with "It's de-lovely!" I do hope Porter wrote off the cost of the trip as a business expense.

Approaching a life via a volume of letters such as these is, however, a bit like trying to read through a mystery novel from which half the consonants have been removed. The reader eager to know what it might have been like to be a gay man married to a woman for forty years (or to glean some sense of what it might have felt like to be Linda Porter, who battled lung ailments and pre-deceased her husband by a decade) will be vexed. Though Porter wrote flirty letters to other gay men, some of them lovers, there is no reflection on his marriage of convenience, and the comments to those lovers don't reveal much deep emotional involvement. Nor do Porter's letters (with very rare exceptions) provide insights

1 *The Letters of Cole Porter*, edited by Cliff Eisen and Dominic McHugh; Yale University Press, 672 pages, $35.

into his creative process, although Eisen and McHugh generously provide occasional snippets of interviews in which Porter was asked about such matters (and provided thoroughly massaged answers). They also reprint diary entries from Porter's Hollywood foray, which help to fill out the book.

Porter saved up his wit for his paid writing. Almost never in this volume does the reader encounter amusingly bitchy asides and aperçus about the well-shod and the Broadway scene. From early days in France—Porter moved to Paris in 1917 to join the relief effort and met his wife there the following year—Porter loved to mingle with the nobs and the aristos, and if he mentioned them to correspondents it was admiringly.

A "delicate rather than a robust boy"—according to his principal at Worcester Academy in Massachusetts, Porter's secondary school—the scion of Peru, Indiana, was already writing songs at prep school, none of which survive. At Yale, where he studied French, German, and Latin and was a member of the Glee Club, the Whiffenpoofs (founded in 1909, the year before he arrived), and the Yale Dramatic Association, Porter wrote some three hundred songs, though all but eighteen are lost. His fight song "Bull Dog" continues to be sung at Yale football games. A stint at Harvard Law School from 1913–14 ended, he later recalled in a magazine interview recounted in the book, when he played one of his compositions at a party and the dean told him, "Porter—don't waste your time. Get busy and study music." Porter duly transferred to the Harvard School of Music. By 1915, a Broadway agent named Elizabeth Marbury was urging him to write for the New York stage. Plans for his first Broadway musical, *See America First*, immediately fell into place. "It may seem that I am making a large order for the young man," Marbury told the *New Haven Register*, "but I am convinced that Mr. Porter is the one man of the many who can measure up to the standard set by the late Sir Arthur Sullivan." Porter was twenty-three. *See America First* didn't last, and Porter thought he was finished. "As they dismantled the scenery and trucked it out of the stage alley, I honestly believed I was disgraced for the rest of my life," he said years later in an interview.

Porter's letters from Europe in the late 1910s and '20s are his chattiest and most creative, burbling with contrived youth. "Jack Clark's back, having persuaded his fiancée in the Midi somewhere that it would be much simpler if she married someone else," he wrote Woolley in 1918. In the same letter, he wrote charmingly of Linda: "She happens to be the most perfect woman in the world and I'm falling so in love with her that I'm attractively triste. It may merely be the Spring, but it looks dangerously like the real thing and I'm quite terrified, for there's nothing like it to kill concentration." The pair married in Paris in 1919 and traveled widely in Europe and North Africa, with frequent trips back to New York where Porter launched various revue-style shows, before the book musical became the rule. Porter also dabbled in ballet, both professionally (the score for *Within the Quota*) and personally (Boris Kochno, the lover of the founder of the Ballets Russes, Sergei Diaghilev).

From Venice, where he and his wife established a home (the Ca' Rezzonico, where once the Robert Brownings resided), Porter wrote frequently to Kochno in an uncharacteristic register of histrionic devotion, and in mediocre French. Among the recipients of the Porters' lavish Venetian hospitality (Porter even rented a barge, hired a band to entertain, and held dance parties on it) was Richard Rodgers, who had earlier run into Noël Coward. Coward brokered an introduction between Rodgers and Porter, a man who appeared "thoroughly indolent" but "kept peppering me with questions about the Broadway musical theatre, revealing a remarkably keen knowledge of both popular and classical music," Rodgers later recalled. "Unquestionably, he was more than a social butterfly." When Porter played some of his compositions after dinner, a gobsmacked Rodgers asked the playboy why he wasn't writing for Broadway. Porter explained that three of his scores had already been produced there, adding that he had discovered the secret formula of hit songwriting: "I'll write Jewish tunes."

In 1935, he reflected on being dismissed in his early years: "They used to regard me as a dilettante," he told *Theatre World*, "and refused to believe that best-sellers could possibly emanate from a young man well-endowed with the world's goods."

Porter's diary entries from his excursions to Hollywood, which began in 1935, are among the book's funniest passages. Story development proceeded lackadaisically compared to Broadway's frenetic pace. In 1936, when he suggested a revue built around sections of a newspaper, attendees at a conference with the producer Sam Katz "all leaped at this, as if I had suddenly discovered radium, and Sam suggested that after such a great idea I should go to the desert and take three weeks rest." Anyone familiar with the enduring Hollywood habit of expressing first maniacal enthusiasm and then total disdain for a given idea within the span of days or even minutes will nod with recognition. After the newspaper idea and many others foundered, Porter wrote, "On the way home in the motor, I figured out, by computing the salaries of the writers engaged on this picture so far, that it had cost MGM $29,000 to decide not to do a Revue." In 1936, Katz was so nervous about Porter's work for the Eleanor Powell–James Stewart movie *Born to Dance* he was producing that he asked Porter to come in and sing the entire score for the studio chieftains Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg, among others. After the performance, Mayer immediately signed Porter to a new contract. Thalberg even smiled.

The horrendous riding accident of 1937, during which Porter toppled off a horse in Locust Valley, New York, which then fell on top of him, crushing his right leg and fracturing the left in several places, inspired surprisingly little commentary in Porter's letters. In one of the few in which Porter discussed his agony, he told Woolley on December 2, 1937, that his right leg was covered with blebs, small ulcers that form above damaged tissue. He was treated with Amartan—"the stuff they used for the burnt passengers of the Hindenburg." Nevertheless, "quite a few of [the boils] had to be cut off, which didn't add to my comfort."

Surgeries and howling pain, counteracted by drugs, were part of the routine for the last third of Porter's life, even as he bubbled with frothy tunes. He finished the show *You Never Know* (1938), a flop that nevertheless gave us "At Long Last Love," in the weeks after the riding mishap. Most of Porter's enduring successes came in middle age—shows such as *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948), *Can-Can* (1953), *Silk Stockings* (1955), and the movie *High Society* (1956). Porter makes occasional, usually dismissive references to physical therapy or the wheelchair he sometimes needed, most often in a blasé or sniffy tone. Yet when his right leg was finally amputated, in 1958, the event marked his creative demise, six years before his actual death. As he was in the hospital that winter, his final musical, *Aladdin*, a collaboration with S. J. Perelman, aired on television, in February, to negative reaction.

Until that horrible moment of amputation, though, Porter's writing expresses more querulousness about critics than his legs. He considered the reviewers as a lot to be brutally unfair as well as demonstrably inept at picking out which songs from a given show might endure. (Porter confessed that no one else could guess which songs would last, either.) At one point Porter spitefully sent a harried MGM researcher on a mission to gather up poor notices such as one particularly unkind review, supposedly from *The New Yorker*. "Robert Benchley in the *New Yorker*, speaking of 'Begin the Beguine,' wondered why such a big production had been built around such a commonplace song," Porter wrote, demanding that the clipping be dug up and quoted in newspaper advertisements as a way of encouraging audiences to dismiss critical doubts attached to his current show, *The Seven Lively Arts* (1944). The editors of the present volume, baffled, write in a footnote, "Possibly Porter's memory failed him here." Benchley said nothing like this and his review of *Jubilee* (1935), the show that introduced "Begin the Beguine," was a rave. "I hope that it runs forever," Benchley wrote. Porter took his place in a long line of artists who proved more able to remember nonexistent slights than actual compliments.

Many of the most personal letters are to Porter's lover Nelson Barclift, a dancer-choreographer; Sam Stark, a Los Angeles jeweler Porter met on one of his Hollywood sojourns; and the actress Jean Howard. But Porter put little effort into them, and though they're hearty and friendly, there isn't much in them that merits attention. A rare funny note is a January 8, 1947, letter to Stark: "The doctor came today to look at my 'Common' cold + decided I wouldn't die. Thank God I won't die below my station!" A 1955 letter to George Eells contains this priceless note from Zürich: "Last night we were practically quoting Goethe in a little German restaurant here which nothing but the old aristocracy knows when in walked a sad-looking little man with bad teeth and so lonely. We had had several drinks and so we decided to take pity on him and asked him to join us. He turned out to be . . . [over] Darryl Zanuck." Zanuck, the emperor of Twentieth Century Fox, might have been the most prominent Swiss-American in Hollywood.

Though Porter often left Linda when going off for jaunts with his lovers, he frequently struck a heartsick note when writing about her delicate health in the last five years of her life. Hot, humid weather exacerbated her lung ailments. But in November of 1949 he wrote to Stark, "A month ago I felt that she couldn't live for more than half a year more." Things changed, however, "due to my having had her apartment air-conditioned. What I resent is that I thought of this and not her Doctor." Linda's health recovered for long stretches, but after many scares she perished of emphysema in 1954.

Porter's secretary Madeline Smith became friendly with Stark and continued to provide updates on his health after the grueling 1958 leg removal. The final chapter of the book consists mainly of Porter's polite thank-you notes and refusals of offers of work. "You will have to arrange some way by which any added numbers in CAN CAN, as a picture, will be either other songs of mine or songs written by somebody else," he wrote his agent Irving Lazar on April 7, 1959. "The reason for this is because I am living in torture and it doesn't seem to decrease." Friendly competitors such as Alan Jay Lerner and Irving Berlin tried to nudge him back to work, but Porter had difficulty maneuvering his artificial leg and endured several months-long stays at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in Manhattan while Mrs. Smith noted with alarm his evident depression and lack of appetite. The absence of even performative effervescence in his terse final six years of letters is chilling. His secretary, who called him "the Little Boss," noted with dismay that Porter had no belief system to comfort him. "I regret so much that he has not the strength, that comes in time of need, of a bolstering religion," she wrote Stark on November 3, 1958. "Even a Buddhist, a Seven [sic] Day Adventist, a Jehova's [sic] Witness, any thing to take the place of 'just nothing.' Without faith—one is like a stained glass window in the dark."

Porter's art has proven as enduring as Berlin's, calling to mind Art Deco, black tie, martinis, then MGM technicolor. On screen, his songs conjure up the likes of Fred Astaire (*The Gay Divorcee*, the movie cognate of *Gay Divorce*) and Cary Grant (the biographical film *Night and Day*) and Bing Crosby (*High Society*). Porter's work was a buffet of wordplay and melody, a swell party that went on for forty years. It's pleasing that the man himself was a hard-working bon vivant, a playboy with a redoubtable work ethic. Grand tours, floating dance clubs, an apartment in the Waldorf-Astoria: few famous men lived up to their images so completely. In a 1957 note to Howard, Porter sweetly acknowledged his free-spending rise from country lad to city sybarite: "Perhaps the dinner wasn't big enough for you—there were only nineteen—but, of course, I am a simple boy from Indiana who likes quiet evenings." Life for Cole Porter was wunderbar.

Art

Kirchner at the Neue Galerie

by Karen Wilkin

Among the first works that come to mind when I hear the phrase "German Expressionism" are Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's tough-minded street scenes. Painted at the age of thirty-one, a few years after he moved from Dresden to Berlin in the autumn of 1911, they are testimony to his fascination with the louche metropolis. In this powerful series, the young artist (1880–1938) concentrated on the city's urban core at night, filling his canvases with tightly pressed crowds of pedestrians—prostitutes in narrow, fur-trimmed wraps and feathered hats, men pursuing them in long overcoats—revealed by the lurid glow of shop windows and newfangled electric street lighting. There's something sinister about Berlin after dark as Kirchner presents it. The paintings' tipped space, angular drawing, and slashing brushstrokes bear witness to an awareness of Cubist ideas about constructing a picture, while their blazing blues, purples, yellows, and pinks suggest knowledge of what the Fauvists were doing as well. Yet Kirchner's warping of viewpoints and exaggeration of shape, touch, and color never read simply as formal innovations, as they do in the work of his French colleagues. Rather, they seem to be irrepressible expressions of anger and urgency. Just about all of Kirchner's works, whether portraits, landscapes, cityscapes, or studio interiors with models, are notable for this kind of intensity, although most are less fierce than the Berlin street scenes.

Still, it is only mildly surprising to learn that their author was a volatile personality, with problematic, contradictory, sometimes unsavory political views. Kirchner struggled with depression and addiction, despite his international success as a painter. He had a work included in the 1913 Armory Show and was featured in major exhibitions in Switzerland and the United States during the 1920s and early 1930s. His paintings were also widely admired and exhibited in his native country, until National Socialism declared war on the avant-garde. More than six hundred of Kirchner's works in German museums were seized, he was expelled from the Prussian Academy of Arts, and he was represented by more than thirty examples in the 1937 "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich, a devastating condemnation for someone who is said to have prided himself on the "German-ness" of his art and who, at least initially, supported Hitler. In 1938, Kirchner committed suicide, aged fifty-eight, after destroying some of his work.

We can form our own opinion of the artist from the survey exhibition "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner" at the Neue Galerie, New York.[1] Co-curated by Jill Lloyd, an independent scholar of Expressionism and a Kirchner expert, and Janis Staggs, of the Neue Galerie, the economical but extremely informative show assembles an impressive group of paintings, works on paper, prints, sketchbooks, a sculpture, and textile hangings executed

1 "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner" opened at the Neue Galerie, New York, on October 3, 2019, and remains on view through January 13, 2020.

after the artist's design, brought together from important international sources. Two stellar Berlin street paintings, *Street, Berlin* (1913) and *Berlin Street Scene* (1913–14), are included, along with such key works as the devastating *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* (1915), painted after Kirchner was discharged from the German army after a breakdown. He presents himself in his artillery uniform, a cigarette dangling from his lips, a naked figure—a painting?—looming behind him. His mask-like, Picasso-inflected face draws our attention first, until we notice the bloody stump where we expect to see the painter's right hand—a metaphorical disfiguration that fortunately never happened.

The exhibition's lean, thoughtful selection spans Kirchner's entire career, beginning with his first years as a painter, when he lived in Dresden. Advance warning: perhaps in homage to the contrarian artist, the chronological installation does not start in the smallish gallery to the right of the stair and elevator, as we have been taught to expect by the Neue Galerie over the years. Instead, the earliest works are to be found in the large gallery at the west end of the building, so head straight back along the corridor lined with posters and works on paper. Further warning: the gallery walls are broken into ample, eye-testing zones of brilliant pink and purple; remarkably, the canvases hold up to the audacious setting, perhaps because of their uniformly super-heated, often acidic color. A generous selection of Kirchner's vivid, energetic prints, many even more ferocious than his canvases, is installed on the museum's second floor.

Kirchner initially moved to Dresden in 1901 to study architecture and engineering. Two years later, as a student in Munich, he began to paint, attending both a technical college and something described as "Teaching and Experimental Ateliers for Fine and Applied Art." He returned to Dresden to complete his engineering studies while continuing to paint and make woodcuts. In 1905, he received his engineering degree and, with his fellow students Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, founded the artists' group Die Brücke—The Bridge. They were subsequently joined by Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, Otto Mueller, and Kees van Dongen. Later that year, the group held its first exhibition. While still in Munich, Kirchner had seen work by French modernists, including Paul Signac, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Félix Vallotton. This preliminary education in non-traditional approaches to touch and color was furthered by his seeing exhibitions of the work of Vincent van Gogh, the Fauves, Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne, and Henri Matisse, among other adventurous French innovators, after his return to Dresden and on visits to Berlin. It's possible to find echoes of these encounters in the saturated color and often dense, patchy surfaces of his exuberant early works. *Portrait of Hans Frisch* (*ca*. 1907) presents us with an introspective man in a dark-blue suit, reclining on a patterned sofa, conjured up with rhythmic, bold, looping strokes that turn the entire image into a lively, tapestry-like expanse. Something similar obtains in *Two Nudes* (1907); the figures, one seated, one standing uncomfortably close to her companion, are compressed into a tall, narrow canvas, with everything—bodies and fragments of setting alike—broken into small, repetitive swipes of color. The complicated, Fauve-inspired shifts among the high-key pinks, blues, and yellows do little to evoke form, as they are evidently intended to do. Instead, they dissolve into an agitated, all-over expanse, yet they convey the young painter's energy, optimism, and disdain for the conventional.

Things solidify within a few years. The balance of the Dresden pictures, which include spiky groups of dancers, curvaceous nudes, and a solidly constructed portrait of a woman, depend, for the most part, on large areas of unbroken, full-bore, uniformly bright hues. Possibly because the influence of Henri Matisse makes itself felt, there is more air and more tonal and chromatic variation in the portrait of the woman, made in 1911, just before Kirchner moved to Berlin. The canvas is a wonderful orchestration of dark and light blues, acid greens and yellows, sparked by red, pink, and warm brown. The dark skin

of the protagonist, seated behind a tipped table, in front of a painting of nudes, is made radiant by her gleaming white blouse and pink fingernails.

There's no evidence in the works on view of Kirchner's having absorbed any traditional art training, despite his ventures into art school. From the start, his paintings are raw; the subject matter, especially the images of syncopated dancers, is rough. We're made forcibly aware of his interest in African and Pacific sculpture, which he studied in the Dresden Ethnological Museum. The cumulative effect is not only a rejection of established standards of accurate drawing and careful finish, but also, by extension, a rejection of correct bourgeois German society —to which Kirchner's family belonged and which his engineering degree was intended to prepare him to inhabit.

Instead, we are offered an unequivocal embrace of the outré, bohemian, and unexpected, an enthusiasm that seems even more evident after the artist's move from Dresden to Berlin. The optimistic mood of the earlier paintings intensifies and darkens. Matisse's influence is palpable, formally, but Kirchner's response to the French master's example is tense, disquieting, even anxiety-provoking. In Berlin, his drawing becomes more schematic, his treatment of space more claustrophobic than in his Dresden pictures. We are forced to confront the image thrust before us, not allowed merely to contemplate it. We interpret the Matissian half-length *Woman in a Green Jacket* (1913), with her angled arms, as a figure reclining against an aggressively patterned pink coverlet, but we seem to hover uneasily above her. In the even more Matissian *Girl in a White Chemise* (1914), the figure, stretched prone, diagonally filling the canvas, is almost engulfed by the oversize patterns around her, while in *The Toilette (Woman Before the Mirror)* (1913–20), the half-clad woman seated at her dressing table, facing her inexplicable reflection, seems to have been folded and wedged into the tightly packed canvas. In this context, the exhibition's two Berlin street scenes read as heightened manifestations of an unchanging impulse.

The section devoted to Kirchner's problematic years during the First World War includes that brutal self-portrait, along with a series of colored woodcuts, made in 1915, illustrating *Peter Schlemihl's Wondrous Story*, the tale of a man who sells his shadow to the devil for endless riches, with predictably dire results. The prints' jagged drawing and sharp contrasts of broken positive and negative shapes carry the memory of the brute effort of cutting the block, echoing the mood of the sour tale and, perhaps, providing a visual metaphor for Kirchner's difficult war experience. After volunteering for military service in 1915 in an excess of German patriotism, he was assigned as a driver in the reserve unit of a mounted field artillery unit. The discipline and regimentation of the army triggered a mental breakdown. Kirchner was discharged on the condition that he seek medical treatment. Having acquired an addiction to alcohol, morphine, and other sedatives, he spent the next few years in rural German sanatoriums and a Berlin clinic, with several stays for treatment in Davos, Switzerland, a tranquil, pastoral region supposed to encourage calm and health. Kirchner eventually settled in Davos, after his release from a yet another German sanatorium in the summer of 1918. The work he produced in response to this new environment forms the conclusion of the Neue Galerie's show. Installed in the gallery where exhibitions have usually begun, the selection spans Kirchner's last two decades, 1918 to 1938.

Not surprisingly, the Davos paintings seem relatively relaxed, almost playful, after the tension of what precedes them. He even collaborated on folkloric embroidered textiles. Kirchner apparently photographed his picturesque alpine surroundings and clearly paid close attention to the life of the farmers and herdsmen of the region, making dramatic mountain views, bucolic valleys, and lush evergreen forests his subject matter, along with their architecture and inhabitants. The color is still saturated, but more harmonious and less mouth-puckering than in the Dresden or Berlin works, while the drawing is more relaxed and less jagged. Still, Kirchner re-

mains Kirchner. The blue-clad farmers carrying scythes and the cheerful yellow cows in the triptych *Life in the Alps* (1917–19) are as simplified as the dancers we have encountered earlier, although they look calm rather than agitated. The sharp mountain peaks of the central panel seem tamed by the pink roofs of the chalets and affectionately rendered animals below them. But the large, striding female figure in the long blue dress, carrying a rake, in the right-hand panel, alters the pastoral mood. Her narrow, elongated head and schematic, squeezed face are strange and ominous; her head seems almost animal-like, so that we sense a faint flavor of such malevolent folk-tale females as the witch Baba Yaga. There is less ambiguity in *Mountain Studio* (1937), a generous, light-filled, largely empty space, with large paintings visible on the walls, a tall mirror, a summery view out an open door, tribal rugs, and a cat and kitten front and center. Kirchner's admiration for Matisse is still visible. At first we concentrate on the complex play of interlocking rectangles from which the painting is constructed. We enjoy the subtly orchestrated browns and purple-browns of the wooden interior, nod at the evocation of pale sunlight, smile at the nicely observed relationship between the felines in the foreground, and then begin to realize how incomprehensibly Kirchner has described the room's architecture. Ceiling beams splay. Short corridors angle away from each other into dead ends. As I said, Kirchner remains Kirchner.

The exhibition is accompanied by a handsome catalogue with essays by a group of Kirchner scholars, including the show's curators. They include discussions of such thorny issues as "The Importance of Friedrich Nietzsche for Ernst Ludwig Kirchner" and "Politics and German Identity as Factors in Kirchner's Suicide," the latter an informative and rather disturbing analysis of the artist's shifting opinions about race and the political situation during his most productive years. The Neue Galerie exhibition is a splendid overview of Kirchner's achievement as an artist. The catalogue helps us to see him whole.

Exhibition note

"Félix Vallotton: Painter of Disquiet"
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York.
October 29, 2019–January 26, 2020

If only for the inclusion of *The White and the Black* (1913), the retrospective of the Swiss painter and printmaker Félix Vallotton (1865–1925) merits its subtitle. The Met has given special emphasis to the painting, and can you blame it for doing so? It's an arresting picture. Toward the right of the canvas, a black woman, clad in blue and smoking a cigarette, sits pensively on a bed. The object of her attention is a reclining white woman who is nude and—what exactly? Sleeping, maybe; posing, perhaps. (Her posture suggests a degree of self-awareness.) The title conjures a Whistlerian focus on color harmonies, and the image bears a knowing resemblance to Manet's *Olympia* (1863). The relationship between the two women is provocative in its ambiguity. Was Vallotton, a committed leftist and anarchist sympathizer, commenting on class divide—exploring unstated tensions between mistress and servant? He didn't leave a paper trail regarding intent; the exhibition catalogue is mum on the subject. We are on surer footing in guessing that the curators are keying into contemporary woke culture by bestowing a prominent berth to *The White and the Black*.

As a feat of painting, *The White and the Black* owes nothing to Whistler, only nods to Manet, and strays far afield from Édouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, both of whom Vallotton counted as friends. Paul Gauguin is the nearest correlative, partly for the confluence of eroticism and race, mostly for the elasticity and import given to color—the expanse of sea green serving as the backdrop, especially. That, and the painting isn't . . . *good*. Or, rather, not as good as it portends. The longer one stays with *The White and the Black* the more its shortcomings are revealed. The nude feels as if she has been airlifted from another galaxy. (As a variation on Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus*, it likely was.) The concomitant disconnect sug-

gests that we're looking at a painter who hasn't altogether mastered the intricacies of pictorial space. The disquieting thing about "Painter of Disquiet" is, in fact, how consistently Vallotton misses the mark set by his not inconsiderable ambitions. The critic and artist Patrick Heron memorably dubbed Gauguin a "great bad painter." Vallotton doesn't rank that high. Still, the exhibition should pique the interest of those with a taste for idiosyncratic talent and *fin de siècle* culture.

Born in Lausanne to a middle-class Protestant family, the sixteen-year-old Vallotton forsook his studies in Greek and Latin, heading, instead, to Paris in order to pursue art. He enrolled at the Académie Julian and haunted the galleries of the Louvre, becoming enamored with the paintings of da Vinci, Dürer, and Ingres. With a boost from the painter Jules Lefebvre, his teacher at the Académie, Vallotton's work was exhibited at the Salon des Champs-Élysées in 1885. It wasn't long before the young artist began exploring less traditional byways. Working as an art critic for the *Gazette de Lausanne*, Vallotton singled out Henri Rousseau for special praise, and he began doing woodcut illustrations for a variety of periodicals. These caught the collective eye of the Nabis, and Vallotton was invited to join a group that counted among its members Vuillard, Bonnard, and Maurice Denis. Subsequently ensconced within the Parisian avant-garde, Vallotton exhibited in the Salon des Indépendants and socialized with the likes of Félix Fénéon, Gertrude Stein, Paul Verlaine, and Thadée Natanson, the publisher of the influential literary magazine *La Revue blanche*. Radical politics were a continuing fascination for Vallotton, albeit one tempered by his marriage to Gabrielle Rodrigues-Henriques, a widow of considerable wealth and influence.

Vallotton's work for the popular press generated notoriety and won admiration. A critic of the time dubbed him the "Baudelaire of wood-engraving." As a presumed nod to this honorific, the Met exhibition opens with Vallotton's starkly configured black-and-white prints, largely of events taking place in the streets of Paris. Truth to tell, their cumulative effect is underwhelming. The high-contrast pictures devoted to the World's Fair have a punchy appeal, as does Vallotton's use of caricature. But the images are muddled—puzzle pieces that don't snap into place—and one is reminded that the best cartoonists stylize form with flair and rhythm. The good bourgeois citizens of France, as pictured by Vallotton, are ill-configured stereotypes in compositions with little interior logic. Vallotton was better when sticking to nineteenth-century academic standards of figuration. *Self-Portrait at the Age of Twenty* (1885) and *The Sick Girl* (1892), though stiff and stagey respectively, are more convincing. Not convincing at all is *The Five Painters* (1902–03), Vallotton's portrait of himself, Vuillard, Bonnard, Ker-Xavier Roussel, and Charles Cottet. A cut-rate Madame Tussaud wouldn't settle for the dour and dusty mannequins Vallotton has shuffled into place.

A suite of prints titled *Intimités*, along with a group of related paintings, explore the quiddities of (mostly illicit) romantic intrigue: men and women, ensconced within well-appointed interiors, rendezvous and embrace. The hothouse atmosphere of *The Lie* (1897) generates erotic tension, and the stately tones sweeping through *The Visit* (1899) underscore the unseemly machinations of seduction. Composition, more than *mise en scène*, was a strong suit. Vallotton employed asymmetry to striking effect, and his cropped vistas and subtle shifts in vantage point add a welcome frisson of modernity. *The Bon Marché* (1898), a tripartite homage to the venerable department store, is remarkably gutsy in how a slurry of figures is clearly situated within a centralized area of darkness. *Box Seats at the Theater, the Gentleman and the Lady* (1909) is a study in structural concision and skewed geometry that would have made Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec smile—Guy Pène du Bois, too. And that's the problem: the work can't help but recall better painters. The Met's decision to hang Vallotton's portrait of Gertrude Stein side by side with Picasso's depiction of the poet and writer points to how relatively stolid and unadventurous Vallotton was as an artist. The oeuvre, though not without its diversions, makes for a bumpy ride. "Painter of Disquiet" is best considered a curiosity that's never quite as curious as it wants to be.

—*Mario Naves*

Music

New York chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

An evening of liturgical music was enjoyed at Alice Tully Hall. Enjoyed? In a way, yes, although this must depend on the listener. The concert was an event in Lincoln Center's White Light Festival. There were two pieces on the program and one composer: James MacMillan.

He is a Scotsman, born in 1959. A note in our program said that MacMillan had an abrupt change of life in the late 1980s.

> He left a teaching post at Manchester University to return to his native Scotland and settled in Glasgow. There he devoted much of his energy to working with students and amateurs.
>
> MacMillan did this out of a sense of commitment motivated by his strong sense of identity as a Scotsman, a socialist, and a devout Catholic.

The first piece in the White Light concert was *Miserere*, composed in 2009. It lasts about ten minutes. The second was *Stabat Mater*, composed in 2015, which lasts almost an hour. Both pieces were receiving their U.S. premieres.

Miserere is for mixed chorus, unaccompanied. To generalize about it, it is calm and beautiful. It seemed to me written in an attitude of prayer. "We should really be in church, not a concert hall," I thought. I also thought of something I had written in 2015, when asked to address the basic question, "How is music doing, and where is it going?"

> Most days, I don't sweat the future of classical music, which has been sweated forever: Charles Rosen, the pianist-scholar, said, "The death of classical music is perhaps its oldest tradition." Music is one way in which people express themselves. It is also a way in which people praise God (and such praise has resulted in some of the greatest music). The creative instinct is unkillable. Beauty, though it may be suppressed, is unkillable. And genius will out.

In Alice Tully Hall, *Miserere* was performed by The Sixteen, a British choir founded by Harry Christophers in the late 1970s. Mr. Christophers conducted the evening in New York. When he was through with *Miserere*, he took the score from his stand and carried it off. I smiled and thought, "Not American. The unions would clobber him for doing that. Will someone reprimand him?"

Stabat Mater requires an orchestra, in addition to a mixed chorus, and the singers were joined by Britten Sinfonia, a chamber orchestra based in Cambridge (England, of course, not Massachusetts). *Stabat Mater* definitely belongs in a concert hall, as well as church. It is vivid, unsparing, and occasionally cinematic. It is not meant to be pretty. Instead, it reflects an ordeal, as a Stabat Mater really must. MacMillan ends his piece with strange, rather staccato Amens.

I cannot say that I enjoyed the piece, and I cannot say that I was supposed to enjoy it. Frankly, it struck me as a private piece, one with deep, deep meaning for the composer (as well as a universal application, to be sure). James MacMillan "puts himself out there," as they say today. That is important for an artist to do, in any age.

Five days after this concert, the New York Philharmonic was guest-conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, the fabulous Finn. The program included a work of his own—a new work, in two parts. Its title is *Gemini*, and the two parts are "Pollux" and "Castor." Salonen has written an interesting composer's note about *Gemini*, and he talked about the work at some length from the stage (less interestingly). I will relate some of what I heard, as the Philharmonic played and Salonen conducted.

"Pollux" is star-like, sci-fi. I *would* say that, right? Because I have been influenced by the title—by those words: "Gemini," "Pollux," "Castor." Honestly, I think I would say it regardless. At any rate, the music has a minimalist lull and sheen. Then it is Impressionist—Debussyan—and still lulling. There is a pleasant din, conveying an atmosphere. "Music-of-the-spheres stuff," I scribbled in my notes. We hear tinkly soft percussion. That din grows louder, with a feeling of rhapsody.

Gemini is imaginatively orchestrated, by the way. Esa-Pekka Salonen has spent his life around orchestras—conducting them—and he knows what they can do.

"Castor" is a showpiece, I would say, and a kind of tone poem. It is exciting, also loud. There is a perpetual-motion feeling about it. There is also a dose of primitivism, with savage timpani. "*Rite of Spring* territory," I scribbled.

When *Gemini* was over, the sharp woman sitting next to me said, "I think it's fun to play. I think the players enjoyed doing that." I believe this is right. I also think that *Gemini* has a chance to outlive its composer—that orchestras will want to play it, as an example of Salonen.

Two nights later, the Philharmonic played a piece called *Wires*, written in 2016 by Bryce Dessner. He is an American, born in 1976. When he was in his mid-twenties, he founded an indie rock band, The National, with his twin brother, Aaron. He also writes film music. Thinking about his career, I thought of Jonny Greenwood, of Radiohead fame—and film-score fame and classical-music fame.

Wires is for electric guitar, although "for" is not quite the right word. *Wires* is not a concerto, but it certainly features the electric guitar, which, with the Philharmonic, was played by the composer himself. He was sitting in the concerto soloist's position, next to the conductor. So if you supposed it was a concerto, you could be excused.

The guitar in this work is twangy and droney. The music at large has a wooziness, common in today's works: that stunned, disoriented feeling. There is lots of percussion in *Wires*, as, again, is common in today's works. Rhythms are tricky and interesting. I would like to hear *Wires* again, which is higher praise than it might sound.

Once more, the New York Philharmonic had a guest conductor, and once more he was a Finn. A fabulous Finn? Probably, yes. They grow conductors on trees over there. This one has the curious, lovely name of Santtu-Matias Rouvali, and he was born in 1985. Rouvali is from Lahti, where his parents played in the orchestra. He is set to succeed Esa-Pekka Salonen as the principal conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra (London) in the 2021–22 season. Meanwhile, he is in Gothenburg and elsewhere.

Rouvali has great big bushy hair—and interesting hair is an asset to a conductor (although men such as Solti have done all right with none). Rouvali has a thin, lithe body, and he is enjoyable to watch on the podium: balletic.

This concert began with Tchaikovsky and ended with Sibelius. The Tchaikovsky was the *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy-Overture, about which I will generalize, and over-generalize: slow parts were fussy and somewhat stagnant; faster parts were fine. And the Sibelius? It was the Symphony No. 1, and I have to ask, Do Finnish conductors conduct Sibelius because they have to or because they want to? Some combination, I imagine.

Again, some generalizing, and over-generalizing: The First was beautiful and serene—more serene than I prefer it, but musically convincing. The playing was unusually transparent. You could have written down the score from it. Rhythms were easily, smartly negotiated. When conducting a brass choir or woodwind choir, Rouvali tended to use his left hand alone, batonless. The performance made me love the Sibelius First all over again. The final pizzicato was a mess, but that's par for the course, I'm afraid.

Talk about great hair. The next night, Riccardo Muti came into Carnegie Hall with his Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In an interview, I once had the temerity to raise his hair (to raise the *subject* of his hair, I should specify). He said that, lifelong, it has been "croce e delizia," borrowing a phrase from *La traviata*: a burden—a cross to bear, the subject of much comment—and a delight, a pleasure, an asset.

Muti and the CSO performed two concerts, the first of which began with a rarity—a symphony by Bizet. The Symphony in C? That is no rarity, but a staple! It is also one of the greatest juvenile pieces ever written, produced by the composer when he was seventeen. No, the symphony in question was *Roma*, which Bizet labored over for about ten years and apparently was never satisfied with. He composed it under the inspiration of a long sojourn in Italy, which resulted from his winning—what else?—the Prix de Rome.

Personally, I don't remember ever having heard the *Roma* symphony. What do we know of Bizet, typically? The Symphony in C, of course—by the way, *Roma* is another symphony in C—and *Carmen*, needless to say, and *The Pearl Fishers*, or at least the great, gala-friendly duet from it, and the suite from *L'Arlésienne*, and maybe a song or two: probably "Chanson d'avril" and "Adieux de l'hôtesse arabe." But nothing else.

Is *Roma* a neglected masterpiece? It is certainly neglected. And, listening to the first two movements, I felt I had met a new, wonderful friend. The second two movements require patience, I would say. In any case, Riccardo Muti conducted the piece with clear affection and understanding. The piece could not ask for a better advocate. He likes to champion orphaned works, Muti does: I think of the "Dante" Symphony (Liszt) and *Lélio* (Berlioz).

During the intermission of the Chicago concert, a man made an amusing remark (and I believe he is French, this fellow): "Say what you will about *Roma*, the French need all the symphonies they can get." We then made a quick catalogue: the Symphony in C; the *Symphonie fantastique* (Berlioz); the "Organ" Symphony (Saint-Saëns); Roussel's Symphony No. 3, maybe; are you allowed to count the Franck, even though the composer was basically Belgian? I'm sure I have overlooked a few.

Later in their program, Muti and the CSO performed some Berlioz: *The Death of Cleopatra*, which Joyce DiDonato, the great American mezzo-soprano, came on to sing. I wondered about the voice. Most of us think of DiDonato as a Baroque and bel canto singer. And we think of the Berlioz as calling for a big, rich, fat, plush mezzo voice. As it happened, DiDonato sang the piece superbly—with her own, authentic voice, which was plenty big and rich enough. Mainly, she sang with keen, keen musical intelligence—musical and dramatic intelligence. The voice was almost beside the point. Muti and the Chicagoans were unerring, with the final pages grippingly executed. Those pages are quiet, yes—but they were gripping all the same.

Shortly after the Chicagoans left town, Conrad Tao played a recital in Weill Recital Hall. He is a young (twenty-five) pianist and composer. When he entered, many in the audience whooped, as young people do. He is a huge talent, Tao—as has been evident since his teen years.

His program was an unaccustomed mixture. It had living American composers: David Lang, Julia Wolfe, and Jason Eckardt. A late American composer, Elliott Carter. And Bach, Schumann, and Rachmaninoff. Tao himself was not among the living American composers, which was a pity, I thought: I hope the young man will not be too shy about showcasing his own stuff.

He has a huge technique. He knows how to pedal. He plays like a composer, meaning that he seems to understand the logic of the piece under his hands. (I especially noticed this in Bach.) He is a good slipper into composers' skins. He plays with great intensity and concentration, like Igor Levit and a few others. He can do just about whatever he wants with a piano, playing *with* it, as much as playing it. It is his plaything, if you will, and a big intelligence governs everything he does.

I noticed just a little singing—not with his fingers but with his voice, in Glenn Gould fashion. This is a bad habit to get into, in my view, and I hope the young man stamps it out early.

What should he do, by the way? What should his career be? What would you decide, if you could decide for him? He has so many options.

Should he be a piano virtuoso and concertizer? A champion of new music (others')? A full-time composer, in various genres? In my opinion—not that I have a vote—he should try to have it all, or as much as he can.

The next night, I went to *Akhnaten*, by Philip Glass, at the Metropolitan Opera. Glass wrote this opera in 1983; he wrote *Satyagraha* in 1979. In 2008, *Satyagraha*—which is loosely based on the life of Gandhi—had its premiere at the Met. Now *Akhnaten*—about that pharaoh—has had its own Met premiere. Heading the production team in both cases was Phelim McDermott, the British stage director.

Akhnaten is Glassian, in a word. Whatever you think of this composer, he is recognizable, right off the bat. The key question about minimalism, as I have suggested many times, is, Does the drug take? Does the hypnosis set in? Does the listener submit? Does he zone out, oblivious to time and space? I'm sure I have offended minimalists, but offense is my middle name. For me, sitting at the Met, the drug of *Akhnaten* mainly took.

The visual helps, I must say. McDermott's production is consistently interesting, replete with symbols and other appealing touches. Would you want to put on a recording of *Akhnaten* at home, without a production to look at? I'm not sure I would—but *Akhnaten* is a theater piece, after all, meant to be experienced in the theater.

Anthony Roth Costanzo, the American countertenor, portrayed the title character, and did so ably. At the beginning of the opera—for several minutes straight—he was stark naked. I had not seen full-frontal nudity at the Met since Karita Mattila's Salome. Also, I thought of Martin Bernheimer, the late, great critic. One day, we covered a concert performance of *Tristan und Isolde*. There were video screens on the stage, showing young actors as the title characters, starkers. When Martin saw me at intermission, the first thing he said was, "I didn't know Tristan was Jewish."

The conductor of *Akhnaten* was Karen Kamensek, an American who has worked a lot in Germany. To conduct *Akhnaten* is, among other things, to perform a feat of counting. During some stretches, I think, a conductor must feel like a metronome. In any event, Kamensek seemed a worthy manager of affairs.

I will quote something from the program notes about Glass's score. I had to read this a couple of times, blinking all the while: "The vocal lines also tend toward the melodic, even if they are original and remarkable." Um . . . is melody fuddy-duddy or otherwise unremarkable?

The following night, there was another event in Lincoln Center's White Light Festival. This was *The Abyssinian Mass*, by Wynton Marsalis. Performing was the Chorale Le Chateau along with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Damien Sneed is the leader of the chorale; Marsalis is the leader of the orchestra. Sneed conducted the mass overall (with true artistry).

Marsalis composed this work in the late 2000s, on commission from the Abyssinian Baptist Church, that old Harlem institution. Fats Waller played the organ there, while his father preached. *The Abyssinian Mass* has some twenty sections, to which Marsalis has given various styles: jazz, gospel, and other styles. For example, I thought I heard a touch of New Orleans funeral music. If you don't like something in the mass, wait a minute: another section will be along soon.

I especially like the Gloria Patri section: peppy, clever, joyous. Listening to it, I thought of the Sanctus in the Verdi Requiem, which I have always considered something of a scherzo moment.

A question occurred to me, as I sat and listened: How much of *The Abyssinian Mass* is written out—note for note—and how much is riffing? How much is left to the discretion and inspiration of individual singers and players? I can't answer with confidence. I'm sure there is room for riffing.

Marsalis sat in the back of his orchestra, a humble member of the trumpet section. He let other trumpeters do the work, by which I mean, he gave them the spotlight. But every now and then he'd pick up his own horn and blow. He's still got it, and that sound is extraordinary.

I may not have loved every minute of the mass, and you may not have either—but I loved the spirit that pervaded the hall. The singers sang as if they believed what they were singing. To continue a theme from the top of this chronicle, people will always express themselves through music, and praise God through it too.

The media

Uncivil service

by James Bowman

In one way at least, it seems a pity that the House Intelligence Committee's impeachment inquiry turned out to be such a box-office dud. In times less fevered than ours, the parade of self-important State Department functionaries who appeared as witnesses against the President would have been seen by dispassionate observers as confirming every disobliging thing he has ever said about "the swamp" or the so-called "deep state" in Washington that he ran against in 2016. That Representative Adam Schiff may have worried about this possibility is suggested by his refusal to call the original "whistle-blower" as a witness—or even to disclose his identity. A man seemingly so lacking in self-awareness as Mr. Schiff must have a smidgen of it tucked away somewhere in the dark corners of his soul—enough at least to know that putting a rank-and-file member of the ever less respected "intelligence community" at the head of these self-righteous jacks-in-office would have made it too obvious that something other than public spirit had led them to come forward to assist him and other House Democrats in attempting to depose an elected president.

It was pretty obvious as it was. As Angelo Codevilla, that most knowledgeable and incisive of commentators on the dysfunctional intelligence services, put it in a recent essay:

> Dogs biting humans being naturally unremarkable, any attempt to convince us to regard accounts of their biting as noteworthy events leads one to ask whether the person advancing that position is ignorant of nature, or is toying with us. By nature, instances of bureaucrats speaking ill of their elected superiors are equally unremarkable and lead us to ask the same questions. . . . Usually, there is no more reason to pay attention to establishment bureaucrats opposing a president elected to oppose them than there is to dwell on dogs biting whomever frightens them. But now the Democratic Party is using what little remains of the intelligence agencies' credibility as the sword with which to strike Trump and the claims to secrecy of those agencies as the shield from behind which to do it. In other words, it is doing just what it did during the Russian-collusion scam. That is why the scam itself is the story.

That is also why the long-running media campaign against the President took a new turn while Mr. Schiff's impeachment inquiry was still underway: in order to head off public attention to the story of the scam and redirect it towards the courage, the nobility, the high-principled patriotism of the scammers. Michelle Cottle of *The New York Times* showed the way back in October: "They Are Not the Resistance. They Are Not a Cabal. They Are Public Servants," she (or her headline writer) wrote. As so often in the Rutenberg-era *New York Times*, you have to reverse the negatives and positives to get any idea of the truth. To believe Ms. Cottle's disclaimers you would have firmly to close your eyes to the abundant evidence, which none of them even attempted to hide, that these State Department

careerists thought not just that they ought to be running American foreign policy instead of the President but that they were *entitled* to run it, if not by the Constitution (which gives that responsibility to the elected chief executive) then by their own superior intelligence and the moral standing they think it has conferred upon them. Lieutenant Colonel (as he demanded the ranking member of the committee address him) Alexander Vindman gave the game away when he kept referring to "the Interagency"—something which has no constitutional or even administrative existence and seems to mean nothing more than the bureaucratic consensus of the day—as the ultimate authority to which even the President was expected, by implication, to submit himself.

Michelle Cottle herself had to acknowledge at the outset of her column that her take on these "public servants" meant that "President Trump is right: The deep state is alive and well." But the point is, you see, that this is a *good* thing—because, like her *New York Times* colleague James B. Stewart, she regards the deep-staters as heroes. Both would echo the former acting CIA chief John McLaughlin's cry: "Thank God for the deep state." This is not something the President's critics were saying up until a month or two ago, which may be why Ms. Cottle thought she should stick her neck out a little to declare that the whistle-blower and his confederates were "not the sinister, antidemocratic cabal of [Mr. Trump's] fever dreams," but "a collection of patriotic public servants—career diplomats, scientists, intelligence officers, and others—who, from within the bowels of this corrupt and corrupting administration, have somehow remembered that their duty is to protect the interests not of a particular leader but of the American people."

Readers of *The New York Times* may believe that, but I don't think many others will. If this is indeed what such disaffected underlings have "remembered," it is only by virtue of forgetting that their oath of loyalty was sworn neither to "a particular leader" nor to "the American people" but to the Constitution and therefore to the constitutionally elected president—whose "interests" nobody up until the day before yesterday ever supposed it to be any of the business of these "public servants" to judge. But these are revolutionary times, as I have mentioned before, and nobody on either side of our polarized politics ever seems to think of the Constitution as anything other than a ritual piety—unless there is something to be found in it that can be construed as supportive of whatever he or she wants to do. We are all now like those liberal judges—or the tame "constitutional scholars" whom Representative Jerrold Nadler called before the House Judiciary Committee to reassure him of the perfect constitutionality of the impeachment jihad—who can only find in the founding document permissions for, never constraints upon, the exercise of their own unbridled will.

A month later, Ms. Cottle had abandoned any claim that her heroes were not the Resistance. Not only were they glorious resisters in themselves, but they shed some of their heroic effulgence on their fellow bureaucrats, hitherto toiling in obscurity:

> Once upon a time, government officials were largely thought of as dreary drones—that is, when anyone bothered to think of them at all. But along came President Trump, and suddenly, these largely unknown operators have assumed an aura of mystery, danger even. For those who don't see them as treasonous denizens of the swamp Mr. Trump was elected to drain, they are heroes of the resistance, calling out the excesses of an out-of-control president. Once again, Mr. Trump seems to have accomplished something that no one imagined possible: He has made civil servants sexy.

Such admiration, amounting almost to adulation, of a shadowy anti-Trump movement within the permanent government (of which it had previously been Democratic and media orthodoxy to deny the existence) cannot have been entirely unconnected to the imminent release of the Department of Justice's Inspector General's report into FBI abuses of power during and after the 2016 election campaign. As I write before that report's release, I must rely on preliminary indications and leaks for

the prediction that it is going to make no serious criminal referrals of anyone above a pretty junior level of the FBI. There are also leaks to the effect that Attorney General Barr does not agree with the conclusion of Michael Horowitz, the IG, that the FBI's application for surveillance warrants against members of the Trump campaign were well-founded despite their reliance on the famously unreliable Steele dossier. If, as the indispensable Andrew McCarthy writes,

> the Horowitz report is going to take the tack that, because Russia did in fact meddle in the 2016 campaign, any investigative overreach amounts merely to regrettable but understandable overzealousness, that would be a very big deal—and not in a good way. The question is not whether Russia meddled. On four separate occasions, the FBI and the Justice Department solemnly told the [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court] there were grounds to believe that Carter Page and others in the Trump campaign, potentially including Donald Trump himself, were complicit in a criminal conspiracy with the Kremlin. The question is: What was their compelling basis for making that explosive representation, which breached the American norm against government intrusion in our political process?

If ordinary Americans start asking that question, even the expected circling of the bureaucratic wagons might not be enough to save these earlier but less celebrated heroes of the Resistance from the ignominy that Mr. Horowitz is said to want to spare them.

There are also the promised indictments from special counsel John Durham, perhaps of some of these same deep-state heroes who were behind the discredited Russian-collusion narrative. Such consequences are now conveniently forgotten by those trying to re-make that movie with a different cast of characters—apart, that is, from the supervillain both sets of heroes have been attempting to take down. The media buildup for the Lieutenant Colonel Vindmans and the Fiona Hills of Ukraine-gate could be expected not only to protect them from too close a scrutiny of their motives but also to prepare the ground for the media's defense of the McCabes and Strzoks and Comeys—who may be found to have committed the odd act of perjury or to have illegally leaked classified information, but presumably for motivations as noble as those of their newly sexy successors.

What used to be thought of as the "news" pages of *The New York Times* made their own contribution to the lionizing of disaffected bureaucrats when, with typical lack of irony, they announced that "Trump's War on the 'Deep State' Turns Against Him"—as if the whole point about the deep state (whose existence the headline writer's quotation marks suggest the *Times* is officially if absurdly still denying) wasn't that it was "against him" from the beginning. The idea being pushed by Peter Baker, Lara Jakes, Julian E. Barnes, Sharon LaFraniere, and Edward Wong, all of whom are credited as co-writers, seems to be that these highly principled bureaucrats were innocent non-partisans quietly going about their constitutional business until Mr. Trump "distrusted and disparaged" them, whereupon they were driven, maugre their head, to oppose him.

> "With all the denigration and disparagement and diminishment, I think you are seeing some payback here, not by design but by opportunity," said Representative Gerald E. Connolly, a Democrat from Washington's Virginia suburbs who represents many federal employees. "It's almost karmic justice. All of a sudden, there's an opportunity for people who know things to speak out, speak up, testify about and against—and they're doing so." Current and former officials like Marie L. Yovanovitch, Fiona Hill, and George P. Kent told House investigators how the government was circumvented by a rogue foreign policy operation on Mr. Trump's behalf. Michael McKinley, a four-time ambassador and senior adviser to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, described resigning after four decades at the State Department over the treatment of the career foreign service. Even the original Anonymous is back, the unidentified author of a much-discussed essay in *The New York Times* last year claiming that officials within Mr. Trump's administration were working "to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations." The writer, still unnamed, plans to

> publish a book next month called *A Warning*. The witnesses heading to Capitol Hill do not consider themselves part of any nefarious deep state, but simply public servants who have loyally worked for administrations of both parties only to be denigrated, sidelined, or forced out of jobs by a president who marinates in suspicion and conspiracy theories. But it is also true that some career officials, alarmed at what they saw inside the corridors of government agencies, have sought ways to thwart Mr. Trump's aims by slow-walking his orders, keeping information from him, leaking to reporters, or enlisting allies in Congress to intervene. And so what is "karmic justice" for the career establishment feels like validation to Mr. Trump and his circle that they were right all along.

In short, by imagining a non-existent conspiracy against him, they say, the President actually conjured a real conspiracy against him into existence. Apart from the obviously disingenuous and self-serving nature of such a claim, it implies that civil servants, but not their boss, were or ought to have been immune from criticism, and that such criticism from an elected superior amounted to a justification for the latter's removal from office. How far adrift such speculation is from factual reporting is something that, like the substance of the Constitution, is of no interest to the narrative-pushers of *The New York Times*. Nor can their narrative explain away the plain fact that "Mr Trump and his circle" *were* right all along about the deep state, even if proleptically.

For those not disposed to accept *The New York Times*'s account without questioning it—and after the two-and-a-half-year debacle of Collusiongate, this must include a fair number of even their most Trump-hating subscribers—there are thus two competing narratives between which to decide. In the *Times*'s account, members of the implicitly trustworthy "intelligence community," in cooperation with the public-spirited media, suspected wrongdoing, even of a quasi-treasonous nature, on the part of Mr. Trump or his associates and sought to uncover it. They may have exceeded their authority in trivial ways out of sheer patriotic indignation, but they inadvertently sparked so furious a reaction on the part of the President that a set of equally non-political State Department colleagues were moved to come forward with a completely different set of complaints of disloyalty, based on their superior's plainly criminal desire to know more about potentially corrupt behavior by members of the previous administration.

In the second narrative, an unelected bureaucratic elite and a politically engaged media, united in their contempt for an inexperienced and vulgar media figure unaccountably placed in authority over them by ignorant and even more vulgar voters, worked together constantly and untiringly, beginning even before he was elected and proceeding by any means necessary, legal or illegal, to rid themselves and the country of such an uncouth boor before the country could be allowed to make the same mistake a second time. If this latest effort at impeachment should fail, however, we can look forward to the election next year as a referendum on which of these two narratives is believed by "the American people," to whom both sides appeal: that of *The New York Times* or that of Mr. Trump. I can't imagine that that is a position savvy Democrats will wish to find themselves in, but revolutionary self-confidence coupled with sheer hatred of the President may yet carry the day for them.

Books

Cosmopolitan cocktail

by Brooke Allen

The advent of railroads in the 1840s marked the beginnings of a seismic cultural shift for the European continent. The first continuous international train left its station in 1843; just three years later, with the inauguration of the Paris–Brussels line, it became apparent just how much the new technology would affect the individual's interaction with the larger world. The 205-mile journey between the two capitals took twelve hours—none too speedy by modern standards—but its first riders, a group that included Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, already understood the social implications. "Space is killed by the railways, and we are left with time alone," marveled Heinrich Heine: "I feel as if the mountains and forests of all countries are advancing on Paris. Even now, I can smell the German linden trees; the North Sea breakers are rolling against my door."

Natural and national boundaries appeared to dissolve; Europe entered its first period of cultural transnationalism since the Roman Empire. Writers and artists, books and paintings traveled easily, now, across the continent. Operas, orchestras, and theatrical productions could tour everywhere under steam power. Commentators at the time, very much like those who hailed the possibilities of the internet in the 1990s, saw the new technology as ushering in a period of peace and brotherhood, democratization and universal harmony. And like the boosters of the internet, they were soon to be disappointed. Nevertheless, something important did grow out of this new internationalism: what we now think of as "European culture" (as opposed to the "Christendom" of earlier centuries) was created, with a distinctive canon of classic works created by improved communications and emerging market forces.

Orlando Figes, who has spent most of his career writing on Russian history (*A People's Tragedy*, *Natasha's Dance*, *The Crimean War*), has in his newest book provided an exhaustive chronicle—sometimes over-detailed, but often moving and enlightening—of these decades of fruitful cultural sharing and, yes, "appropriation," a word now uttered with contempt, but a process that is of course essential in any civilization's development. The ideal of European brotherhood and harmony, tested by the Crimean and Franco-Prussian Wars, would blow up completely in 1914, less than a century after the Congress of Vienna. Still, European culture as a focus for identity has to a large extent survived, as the existence of the European Union—however troubled—demonstrates. In *The Europeans: Three Lives and the Making of a Cosmopolitan Culture*, Figes has focused largely on the arts as a "unifying force between nations."[1] His aim, he writes, is to "approach Europe as a space of cultural transfers, translocations and exchanges crossing national boundaries, out of which a 'European culture'—an international synthesis of

1 *The Europeans: Three Lives and the Making of a Cosmopolitan Culture*, by Orlando Figes; Metropolitan Books, 592 pages, $35.

artistic forms, ideas and styles—would come into existence and distinguish Europe from the broader world."

As a way of shaping and sweetening for the general reader the prodigious array of facts and figures he brings to the project, Figes has wisely chosen to construct his tale around three central personalities of the age: the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev (1818–83); Louis Viardot (1800–83), a French "republican activist, editor, opera director, Spanish scholar, critic, writer and literary translator, art expert and collector"; and his remarkable wife, the famous singer Pauline Viardot (1821–1910), with whom Turgenev was romantically involved for decades (a fact her husband tactfully ignored). Between the three of them, they seem to have known everyone of cultural importance in nineteenth-century Europe and to have made significant personal contributions to the transmission of literature, music, art, and theater across national boundaries. Indeed, they personified an ideal of cosmopolitan open-mindedness.

Turgenev, a landed aristocrat who always managed to be broke, studied at the University of Berlin for three years. From that time on he considered himself as much German as Russian, and on his return to Russia passionately advocated the Westernization of the country, opposing the nascent Slavophile movement that took Russia to be separate from Europe, spiritually purer. After an unsuccessful few years in the Russian civil service, Turgenev returned to Western Europe where he would spend the rest of his life, usually living near or with the Viardots and writing the series of novels, beginning with *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1852), that would make him one of the most famous and beloved of European authors. He used his growing prestige to promote East–West literary exchange. "Turgenev played a vital role in getting Russia's writers better known in Europe in the 1840s and 1850s—a role he would broaden as a cultural intermediary between Russia and the West over the next thirty years," Figes explains. He befriended Tolstoy, a decade younger than he, and urged *War and Peace* on publishers and opinion-makers in the West. In Paris he became an intimate of the Magny circle: Mérimée, Sainte-Beuve, the Goncourts, and particularly Flaubert, who became increasingly dependent on the Russian's wisdom and literary finesse. "He staggered me," wrote Flaubert, "with the depth and crispness of his judgments. If only all those who mess about with books could have heard him, what a lesson! He misses nothing. At the end of a session of a hundred lines, he can remember a weak adjective; he made two or three exquisite suggestions on points of detail for *Saint Anthony*." Turgenev effectively acted as agent, publisher, and translator for Flaubert. He promoted Maupassant, Jules de Goncourt, and Zola—who consequently gained fame in Russia well before he did in France—in Moscow and St. Petersburg. "We nicknamed him the ambassador of the Russian intelligentsia," remembered Maksim Kovalevsky: "There was not a Russian man or woman in any way connected to writing, art or music, on whose behalf Turgenev did not intervene."

The Viardots were similarly influential, similarly generous in the help they gave other artists and intellectuals. In France, Pauline, who was Spanish by birth, and Louis, who had lived in Spain and loved its art and culture, did much to inspire a new interest in that exotic country; Louis' collection of Spanish art, and his writings on that subject, were formative. As players in the opera scene—Louis as what would now be called a producer, Pauline as a singing star and teacher—they were at the center of musical culture at the critical moment when music became a favored activity in the life of the new bourgeoisie. Pianos were newly affordable and they proliferated in middle-class homes, while the 1840s saw the development of a serious concert culture enabled by the easier movement allowed by railway travel; recent establishments like the Philharmonic Society of London and the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire in Paris thrived. "In some ways," Figes writes, "attendance at such concerts was part of the assertion of a middle-class identity, a way for subscribers to align themselves with the aristocracy as gatekeepers of high culture."

Musical soirées at the Viardots' throughout their lives—and Pauline lived a very long

one, dying well into the twentieth century at the age of eighty-nine—seem to have been attended by everyone who was anyone at that time. Rossini, Liszt, Chopin, George Sand, Berlioz, Bizet, Gounod, Delacroix, Corot, Doré, Saint-Saëns, Ary Scheffer, Renan, Daniele Manin, Herzen, Bakunin, Dickens, the young Henry James—all these and many more came for "music-making, amateur theatricals, spoofs, charades, and the portrait game." The love duet from *Tristan und Isolde* was first performed at the Viardots' Paris salon, with Pauline and Wagner himself singing the title roles. In Baden, where our three protagonists lived for several years in the 1860s, the Viardots hosted, at their Thursday evenings, the likes of Clara Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Anton Rubinstein, and Johann Strauss II (and this is not even to mention the various crowned heads who attended such occasions). Ah, life before television! Pauline herself was no mean composer—Figes speculates that had her world been ready for female opera composers, she might have distinguished herself in that field as she did in others. One would especially like to have been present in Baden when the *opéras bouffes* written by Pauline and Turgenev in the style of Jacques Offenbach were performed. How charming to discover that Turgenev was an Offenbach fan! So, too, was Pauline, though Offenbach had famously parodied her recent triumphant performance in the role of Gluck's Orphée with his burlesque *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

Offenbach's operettas offered a new sort of mass entertainment (as brilliantly described in Zola's *Nana*). Other forms of art, too, were gaining a mass audience with new techniques of mechanical reproduction. The introduction of faster lithographic presses brought down the price of sheet music for home performance. A literary canon was developing through the new cheap "libraries" sold in train stations and accessible to all. Paintings old and new were popularized through photographic reproductions; the age of the art print and the art postcard was dawning. The invention of the wet-collodion process in 1851 enabled multiple prints to be made from a single negative—a great improvement on the daguerreotype. A new craze for portrait photography set in. Baudelaire complained bitterly: "From that moment on, our loathsome society rushed, like Narcissus, to contemplate its trivial image on a metallic plate. A form of lunacy, an extraordinary fanaticism took hold of these new sun-worshippers." Selfie-culture, it seems, had dawned.

No less egregious was the rise of mass tourism under the aegis of train and steamship power, Murray's guidebooks, and the Thomas Cook tour. Then, as now, the sight of bands of clueless tourists provoked snobbish reactions from the well-traveled intelligentsia; "No changing of place at a hundred miles an hour," commented John Ruskin, "will make us one whit stronger, happier, or wiser. There was always more in the world than men could see, walked they ever so slowly; they will see it no better going fast." Louis Viardot, it would seem, disagreed. In any case he personally did much to set the new tourist agenda, writing five bestselling museum guides that greatly influenced not only the formation of a standard canon of works to be visited, but modern curatorial practices in general; following his suggestions, museum directors began arranging works of art in chronological order rather than squeezing them onto walls at random.

The fact that the French Viardots supported Prussia at the outset of the Franco-Prussian War says everything about their essential cosmopolitanism. They despised Napoleon III, who had destroyed the Second Republic and was now drumming up French jingoism and stupidly attacking a militarized Prussia. As the Prussians crushed France and swept all before them, however, the Viardots changed their minds, while Turgenev bemoaned "the aggressive greed for conquest that has overtaken Germany." Forced to flee their beloved Baden and unwelcome in France, where they were reviled as friends of the Prussian royal family, the trio took temporary refuge in England—*das Land ohne Musik*—where they brought a whiff of Continental culture and musical fashion to a new circle of friends that included Anthony Trollope, George Eliot and George Henry Lewes, Robert Browning,

Frederick Leighton, Arthur Sullivan, and William Gladstone.

The unification of Germany spelled disaster for the kind of cosmopolitan communities that Turgenev and the Viardots had excelled in creating around them wherever they went. Artists like Offenbach—who was German, French, and Jewish—were suddenly stigmatized, their careers destroyed. National boundaries were strengthened, psychologically if not physically. The gigantic funerals of Victor Hugo in Paris and Giuseppe Verdi in Milan, with millions of mourners following the cortèges, were as much nationalist occasions as tributes to art.

Louis Viardot and Ivan Turgenev died just months apart, in 1883. Pauline went on for another twenty-seven years. Figes chooses to end his tale at the moment when Sergei Diaghilev arrived in Paris with his Ballets Russes in 1907: "This was the point when Russia took its place right at the heart of Europe's cosmopolitan culture. . . . The Stravinsky ballets were in fact a synthesis of European elements, the music drawn as much from Debussy, Ravel and Fauré as from Russian folk song and its champions in the nationalist school." The young impresario expressed a passing wish to pay a visit to the aged singer who had lived through legendary times and had worked with Rossini, Chopin, and Meyerbeer. The meeting never took place. But, as Figes points out, the Ballets Russes represented the "fulfillment of the cultural ideals she had embodied all her life."

Figes does not provide a postscript, but he might well have done so. To what degree does Russia culturally belong to Europe, a century after Diaghilev? Who won, the Westernizers or the Slavophiles? Can the European Union be seen as representing the same sort of values that internationalists like the Viardots and Turgenev espoused? A recent novel about the European Union, Robert Menasse's *The Capital*, has fun with the fact that the "Culture" ministry is regularly the least regarded and worst funded section of the Brussels bureaucracy. *The Europeans* raises many, many questions about contemporary Europe, but it leaves readers to draw their own conclusions.

Romans & countrymen

Anthony Kaldellis
Romanland:
Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium.
The Belknap Press, 392 pages, $45

reviewed by Thomas F. Madden

Ten years ago, in a piece for *The Wall Street Journal*, I noted that during the age of Caesar and Livy the Roman Empire still had more than a millennium of life ahead of it. This observation generated an irate letter to the editor, berating me for the suggestion that the Byzantine Empire, which fell in 1453, had anything to do with the ancient Roman Empire, which collapsed in 476. Well, now with the publication of Anthony Kaldellis's fascinating new book, which forcefully argues that the two empires are one and the same, I am at last vindicated. So there, Mr. Letter Writer.

Of course, it is not new to claim that the Roman Empire's successor was the Byzantine Empire—the Eastern remnant left after the West was swept away. Historians are also aware that the easterners continued to refer to themselves and their state as Roman. The term "Byzantine" is modern, developed by scholars to differentiate the medieval Greek-speaking state with its capital at Constantinople from the ancient empire of Augustus based in Rome. Although this medieval state had its origins in the Roman Empire, the dramatic changes in language, culture, religion, and ethnic makeup led historians to rename it the "Byzantine Empire"—something that no one, least of all its citizens, ever called it. Looking back on it, the retitling was an odd decision. History, after all, is the story of change, so renaming something simply because it changes invites confusion. Nevertheless, European writers found it hard to conceive of a Roman state with no connection to Rome. Modern historians who disliked the relabeling (and I include myself here) were stuck with the nomenclature, since its use is now universal.

Kaldellis's book goes a long way toward undoing that bit of historical sleight of hand. It is, however, no narrative. It is a serious piece of scholarship very precisely directed at fellow

Byzantine historians, and thus assuming an extensive knowledge of the period. That said, it is also no dry academic tome. Throughout, Kaldellis adopts an easy conversational tone almost unheard of in Byzantine scholarship. At one point, for example, he accuses Byzantinists of "bullshitting." Later, he describes Emperor Justinian's plan to "make Rome great again." Another chapter that denies an Armenian identification for many Byzantines is followed by a "personal postscript" insisting that the author is in no way anti-Armenian.

Although the book is addressed to Byzantinists, one imagines that many of them will be less than happy to receive it. According to Kaldellis, they are wrong about the central character of the empire that they study. A few, such as Florin Curta of the University of Florida, come out alright, but most Byzantinists are subjected to sustained criticism. Among those under the lash are distinguished scholars such as Averil Cameron, Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Angold, Jonathan Harris, Cyril Mango, and many others. This is not a book that posits a theory for consideration, refinement, or debate. Rather, it is a bold correction of more than a century of "cognitive dissonance" for which the "evidence is extensive and incontrovertible." Although refinements will be forthcoming, Kaldellis makes clear that with this book he hopes to transform his field.

This work builds on the conclusions drawn by Kaldellis's earlier study, *The Byzantine Republic* (2015), which argued for the continuity between the Byzantine and Roman governments. This time, he employs historical "snapshots" to demonstrate that the majority of people in what we call the Byzantine Empire actually comprised a distinct ethnic group—the Romans—defined by common customs, language, religion, history, clothing, and a shared homeland. Based on modern ethnography, Kaldellis rejects the idea that a Roman people need share a common "blood" ancestry. Ancient Romans, after all, had no such requirement, welcoming a wide variety of outside groups into citizenship in their empire. Byzantium, Kaldellis argues, continued this inclusive practice. Byzantines understood themselves to be Romans and could easily differentiate between themselves and foreigners. This is in sharp contrast to the common view of Byzantium in which the bulk of the population is an amorphous blend of Greek speakers following the Orthodox Christian faith while simply giving lip service to Roman identity.

The how and why behind the separation of a historical people from their ethnicity is particularly fascinating. As early as Pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century, westerners were beginning to question the *romanitas*, or Romanness, of the people in the eastern Roman Empire. In 871, the German Emperor Louis II wrote to the Byzantine (which is to say Roman) emperor in Constantinople stating that he and his people no longer deserved to be called Roman since they neither lived in Rome, followed the Roman pope, nor spoke the Roman tongue. Yet, as Kaldellis points out, during the ancient Roman Empire these had not been the criteria for Romanness. Ancient Roman citizens had lived across the Mediterranean—indeed, many never visited Rome. They worshipped many gods, dressed in many fashions, and spoke many tongues—although Greek and Latin were the two most important. The new medieval criteria for Romanness were posited, Kaldellis contends, so that the German emperors, who styled themselves "Holy Roman Emperors," and the popes in Rome could have exclusive identification with the ancient empire. They, therefore, began referring to the eastern Romans as "Greeks" and their state as the "empire of the Greeks" or the "empire of Constantinople."

The terms "Byzantium" and "Byzantine" did not come into widespread use until the mid-nineteenth century. Kaldellis suggests that this was a reaction to the creation of the modern Greek state in 1830. The newly independent Greeks were eager to reclaim their ancient capital of Constantinople and looked to Orthodox Russia as a partner against the Ottoman Turks. With the Crimean War, Kaldellis believes, the Great Powers began to fear that Greek/Russian aspirations would disrupt the balance of power, and so in their histories they referred to the medieval empire

with the ethnically neutral "Byzantine." This, to me at least, seems too conspiratorial. Perhaps the shift in terminology was simply a response to the early nineteenth-century Greek nationalists' frequent portrayal of themselves as the oppressed descendants of the ancient Greeks—the authors of democracy imprisoned by Eastern despotism. As Hellenophilism spread throughout Europe's elite classes, the term "Greek" began to evoke images of ancient democracy and modern liberty. It just no longer fit a medieval empire.

Kaldellis carefully demolishes the centuries-old argument that the Byzantines (that word again!) lost their right to be called Roman when they abandoned Latin. Greek, after all, had been an important language for the ancient Romans since the early days of the Republic. In fact, the Byzantines moved quite deliberately from Latin to Greek, recognizing the former as their ancestral yet no longer commonly used tongue. In that regard, Kaldellis points out, they were not unlike post-Biblical Jews who abandoned Hebrew, or Irish who no longer spoke Gaelic. By the twelfth century, the medieval Greek that they did speak had become so firmly associated with their Roman identity that it was commonly called *romaïka*, or the "Romaic" language. It continued to be called Romaic until the nineteenth century, when Greek nationalism swept it into its smothering embrace.

The medieval Roman nation also continued to accept new groups just as it had done in antiquity. Kaldellis examines how groups such as the Khurramites, Muslims, and Slavs were assimilated by conversion to Christianity, instruction in Greek (i.e., Romaic), and intermarriage. In most cases, by the second or third generation the assimilation was complete. Kaldellis rejects currently fashionable scholarship that holds ethnic identity to be a "fluid" construct. As he puts it:

> One can allegedly wake up in a Serbian household, play the Greek in the marketplace in the morning, then switch to an Albanian persona at a wedding in the evening, pray at a Muslim shrine, and correspond with Jewish relatives at night. I suspect that such models reflect the ideals and hopes of late modern liberalism and are inherently political.

I could not agree more.

Kaldellis's scholarship is always learned, but also fiercely iconoclastic, tearing down orthodoxies that have stood for centuries. I just wish the tone of the book were not so angry. There seems to be a tacit presumption that scholars who deprive the Byzantines of their national identity have done so with malice aforethought, rather than simply because they've never considered the issue very seriously. Kaldellis even coins the term "Roman denialism" and labels those who do not accept his conclusions as "denialists," although, thankfully, not "deniers."

At the start of this study Kaldellis laments that "the field has not yet had a scholarly discussion of the problem of the Romanness of Byzantium. . . . There is no body of critical scholarship to act as a center of gravity for a sustained systematic discussion." This innovative and eye-opening book by one of the most important Byzantinists working today is the first word in that larger discussion. It will surely not be the last.

Britain's Valhalla

David Cannadine, editor
Westminster Abbey: A Church in History.
Yale University Press, 456 pages, $45

reviewed by Harry Adams

Even in the profane twenty-first century, it is difficult to overstate the importance of Westminster Abbey. As the coronation church for every English, and subsequently British, monarch since 1066 (bar the ill-fated Edward V and the conflicted Edward VIII), no other building has enjoyed such an integral and enduring relationship with a nation-state and its successive ruling dynasties. Britain's de facto national church and mausoleum houses the remains of seventeen monarchs, eight prime ministers, and a wealth of national figures

of military, cultural, and scientific repute, from Robert Adam to Isaac Newton. It has played host to countless events of historical importance, including the first performance of Handel's *Zadok the Priest* for George II's coronation in 1727; the interment of the Unknown Warrior in 1920; and perhaps most important of all (for the younger generation, at least) that television wedding to end all television weddings, the marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton in 2011.

During these ceremonial set pieces, the abbey becomes a magnificent stage, on which English, British, and Commonwealth identity is performed, reflected upon, and subtly transmuted according to the demands of the day. But how many of the 1.3 million people who visited the abbey in 2018 paused to consider how all this came to be? How did a structure built by Benedictine monks and rebuilt by English kings manage to withstand both the Reformation and the Interregnum to become a kind of modern-day British Valhalla? Why has this ostensibly Anglican church found space within its walls for the mortal remains of both a medieval saint, Edward the Confessor, and an ex-Christian anti-hero, Charles Darwin? Beset by the throng of day-trippers elbowing around the irksome one-way route, the average visitor to the abbey often engages in a whistle-stop game of coronation-counting and tomb-spotting. While there is, of course, nothing wrong with this sort of sightseeing (which dates back to at least the sixteenth century in Westminster's case and provides a vital source of income), the abbey's popularity has made it increasingly difficult for the curious-minded punter to gain a deeper understanding of this building's remarkable and paradoxical history from visiting alone.

Happily, however, the superb new *Westminster Abbey: A Church in History*, commissioned by the Dean and Chapter to commemorate the seven-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the consecration of the third and present church on the site on October 13, 1269, offers solace for the beleaguered tourist, worshipper, scholar, and interested bystander alike. The principal strength of this lavishly illustrated book is its ability to do equal justice to each element of the abbey's complex history, from the consecration of the first church in the Late Anglo-Saxon period on the remote and marshy Thorney Island two miles southwest of the City of London, through to its shifting relationship with an increasingly secular Britain in the present century. The book achieves this remarkable feat because it is more a collection of scholarly essays, authored by distinguished specialists on the periods and issues in question, than a guidebook or souvenir memento.

That said, for a collection of academic essays, this volume is perfectly coherent and readable, thanks to the skill of its contributors (Henry Newman, James G. Clark and Paul Binski, J. Mordaunt Crook, Diarmaid MacCulloch, Julia F. Merritt, Henry Summerson, and William Whyte) and editor, David Cannadine, who supplies an introduction and a chapter concerning the abbey in the twentieth century. The outgoing Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend John Hall, also contributes a thoughtful prologue concerning the abbey's continuing relevance to modern Britain. While the standard of the research (and commendable endnotes) is professional and scholarly, the book remains accessible to the non-specialist. The chapters are arranged chronologically, and the contributors eschew arcane jargon and theory in favor of a more traditional methodology focused, as the book's title suggests, on situating the abbey's history within a wider ecclesiastical, political, and cultural context. This holistic approach is laudable as it means that no prior knowledge of English and British history is required of the reader. And in line with other volumes in the Yale University Press stable, a glossary is provided at the rear for the ecclesiastical and architectural terminology, along with helpful lists of the kings and queens and abbots and deans from 959 to 2019.

The book is no dry institutional history. Its broad scope allows the contributors to probe the more intricate aspects of the abbey's story. Binski and Clark's two co-written chapters concerning the medieval period, for example, are particularly interesting on the abbey's role in the development of parliamentary democ-

racy. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Parliament met in the abbey's Chapter House, before relocating to the Refectory in 1387 following complaints from the monks that the parliamentarians were damaging the tiled floor. Perhaps, as MacCulloch muses, the smell of monastic cooking was simply too much for MPs, as during Henry VIII's reign Parliament moved to the Palace of Westminster and the House of Commons to the former St Stephen's College. Although this building was destroyed during the fire of 1834, its layout, which derived from the chapel's original sets of opposing choir stalls, informed the design of the current lower chamber. Winston Churchill later argued that the move to St Stephen's was crucial to the development of a two-party system of parliamentary representation—of Government and Opposition—and, indeed, as Binski and Clark suggest, it is intriguing to speculate how Britain's parliamentary system might have differed had the House of Commons continued to meet in the circular Chapter House.

MacCulloch's entertaining chapter on the fateful sixteenth century explores how, following the Reformation under Henry VIII and Mary I's short-lived Catholic recovery, the abbey finally gained its present intuitional identity as a Royal Peculiar (or church exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and subject only to the monarch). This immunity from Anglican hierarchy and dogma is the key to understanding the abbey's idiosyncrasies and, in particular, its pronounced ecumenicism and curious stomach for atheism and secularism. The fact that the abbey is exempt from the Church of England's formal ban on public acts of worship by people of different religions has made it the obvious venue for many multi-faith national commemorations, such as the recent services marking the anniversaries of Kristallnacht and the Srebrenica massacre as well as the annual Commonwealth Day Observance. That the abbey was willing to find space in 2018 for the ashes of the unshakable atheist Stephen Hawking further demonstrates its unique fitness for its role as a national mausoleum.

The abbey remains dependent, however, on royal (and now Parliamentary) patronage. Coronations have often set the tone for a monarch's reign and thereby the fortunes of the abbey. As Merritt shows in her chapter, William and Mary's crowning in 1689, following the upheaval of the Glorious Revolution, was a solemn affair designed to emphasize dynastic continuity and legitimacy with "the reassuring balm of abbey ceremonial." Much like the decidedly Low Church Queen Victoria, who took to the same Coronation Chair 148 years later, the Dutch prince disdained lavish ceremony and generally shunned the abbey for the remainder of his reign. In stark contrast, as Whyte notes, George IV's coronation in 1821—a debauched affair featuring mock-Tudor costumes for all participants and a twenty-seven-foot-long train for the king's robe—prefaced a much jollier approach to monarchy and enhanced prominence for the abbey.

This book also gives suitable attention to the role of the abbots and (following the Reformation) deans in adapting the abbey's procedures and fabric so as to survive the vagaries of royal and political favor. The Victorian era, for example, saw the abbey lose its temporal estates (and chief source of income) to the Ecclesiastical Commission in return for a measly £20,000 annual stipend. Threatened by High and Low churchmen alike, and in dire need of major structural repair, it was, as Mordaunt Crook confirms, thanks in large part to the sturdy Broad Church leadership of Dean Stanley that the abbey survived at all during this difficult period. While the restoration work undertaken by George Gilbert Scott and J. L. Pearson during this era is not perhaps for medieval purists, it is entirely in keeping with the bold (unashamedly classical) spirit of Nicholas Hawksmoor's earlier west towers (1745), not to mention the abbey's latest architectural addition in the form of the outstanding Weston Tower (2018) by the abbey's present Surveyor of the Fabric, Ptolemy Dean.

Above all, then, this book reveals Westminster Abbey's uncanny knack for survival and regeneration. While debates over the role of both the monarchy and Church of England may loom in the abbey's future, its status as Britain's Valhalla is surely not in doubt. In-

deed, this magnificent and comprehensive history of the abbey leaves one with fresh hope that this most extraordinary building will, in some form or another, remain at the heart of British politics and culture for at least another seven hundred and fifty years.

Book of the year

Mark Ferraguto
Beethoven 1806.
Oxford University Press, 276 pages, $55

reviewed by John Check

"When we examine things finely enough," writes Gary Saul Morson, "they baffle us with ever finer distinctions." So it is with the music of Beethoven and the circumstances surrounding its composition. As devotees of classical music prepare to celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the composer's birth, they can be grateful for all that has been uncovered about his life and times and music. But they realize there is always more to see, always finer distinctions to be made.

Mark Ferraguto, a professor at Pennsylvania State University, looks through a musicological microscope at a group of works from a single year of Beethoven's second period. Extending from 1802 to about 1815, the second period includes some of Beethoven's most popular compositions: the "Emperor" Concerto; the Third through Eighth Symphonies; and the "Kreutzer," "Waldstein," and "Appassionata" Sonatas. Tied to the second period is the idea of the heroic style, which is most widely associated with the Fifth Symphony. The heroic can be traced in that work almost like a storyline from the dark, tumultuous beginning through the bright, triumphant end. By contrast, writes Ferraguto, the works of 1806 "seem to represent a departure from the heroic idiom that characterizes Beethoven's music of previous (and later) years."

Beethoven perhaps had reason in 1806 to modulate his tone. In the spring, he suffered a commercial setback with the second run of the opera *Leonore*. (*Leonore* would be revised in 1814 and retitled *Fidelio*.) The reception of the 1806 version may have been better than that of the previous year's premiere, but this was small consolation. Work on the opera was frustrating from the start, as the composer, already dealing with significant hearing loss, found himself enmeshed in a collaborative undertaking that was foreign to his temperament. "For Beethoven," writes Ferraguto, "mounting an opera had meant navigating an unfamiliar world of impresarios, stage managers, librettists, divas, and censors." Aware he was competing in a game he would not win, Beethoven shifted his attention to what he knew best: instrumental music.

Ferraguto's chapter on the Fourth Piano Concerto and the D-major Violin Concerto begins with a discussion of the origin, meanings, and implications of the word "virtuoso." The virtuosic has long been associated with notions of strength and superhuman facility, and the two concertos of 1806 furnish performers with opportunities to display their prowess. But, as Ferraguto suggests, the higher virtuosity of these works lies in their expressiveness. Passages of brilliant showmanship serve "as a foil to the expressive, both preparing it and heightening its significance." Virtuosity thus becomes a means of projecting an incipient Romantic ideal: the interiority of the individual performer, the essence of the artist.

The chapter on the "Razumovsky" Quartets, the longest of the book, centers on Beethoven's borrowing and manipulation of themes from Russian folk songs. For more than a hundred and fifty years, commentators and critics have debated the composer's intent in so doing. Was Beethoven, with his elaborate treatment of melodies from these songs, trying to "drown" them in "floods of German erudition"? (Such was the position of one Russian critic quoted by Ferraguto.) Was he instead parodying or satirizing his source material? (Such is the position of the scholar Richard Taruskin.) Ferraguto entertains these and other possibilities before sensibly pointing to the dedicatee of the quartets: the erstwhile Russian ambassador to Austria, Count Andrey Razumovsky. A cosmopolitan and a thoroughly trained musician, Razumovsky sometimes played second violin in the Schuppanzigh Quartet, whose members he

housed and salaries he paid so that Beethoven might have a compositional laboratory in which to experiment. Far from intending to mock or belittle his patron, Beethoven used Russian folk songs in the Op. 59 Quartets to honor Razumovsky's heritage. In bringing to bear upon them his contrapuntal ingenuity and all the learned techniques that are the hallmarks of occidental music, Beethoven honored as well Razumovsky's Westernized self-cultivation, a trait of aristocratic Russians since the time of Peter the Great.

Haydn's role in Beethoven's life and work is a favorite subject of critics and scholars, and it is in this light that Ferraguto examines the Fourth Symphony. Beethoven had high hopes for the work and sought to have it published by Breitkopf & Härtel, the firm that also published the leading music journal of the day, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. As Ferraguto relates, Breitkopf & Härtel announced plans in 1806 to publish an inexpensive series of scores by German masters, beginning with the symphonies of Haydn. Beethoven studied with Haydn in 1793, and it was to him that Beethoven dedicated his first three published piano sonatas in 1796. Ferraguto looks closely at Haydn's influence on his former pupil, and in doing so he suggests something important about Beethoven's motivations regarding the Fourth Symphony:

> [S]cholars have placed so much emphasis on the personal rapport between Haydn and Beethoven that they have missed the larger picture. Haydn's legacy was, in the first decade of the 1800s, a far more important influence in Beethoven's life than Haydn himself. By 1806, Haydn the man had already been eclipsed by Haydn the phenomenon, and Beethoven—whatever his personal feelings—was too shrewd to overlook the fact that emulating Haydn's approach could be a successful commercial strategy.

Haydn in 1806 was an old man—he would die in 1809 at the age of seventy-seven—but he was famous and revered, his music in demand and available throughout Europe. The distinction he enjoyed was the kind Beethoven craved.

For readers who aren't conversant with musical notation, the forty or so notated examples in *Beethoven 1806* may prove daunting. Even readers who understand notation may find the specialized language of musical analysis beyond their ken. Ferraguto's book belongs to a series sponsored by the American Musicological Society, and, true to form, it delves into the sometimes esoteric, sometimes trendy concerns that permeate any academic association. (The first chapter introduces theories of mediation and microhistory.) To his credit, Ferraguto is a generous scholar, one who endeavors to make the best case for the authorities he cites. This very generosity may try the patience of readers who are nonspecialists, but such readers are not his intended audience. Mark Ferraguto brings to his work much learning and thought—along with devotion and persuasiveness. Look through the microscope with him to see more finely into Beethoven's immortal works.

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion*:

Harry Flashman: no flash in the pan *by John Steele Gordon*
Paris's cathedrals of sound *by James F. Penrose*
Alexander in the thick of battle *by Nigel Spivey*
George Seferis's Greece *by Robert D. Kaplan*

Notebook

John Simon, 1925–2019

by James Panero

Early in my magazine apprenticeship, I received a memorable telephone call from one of my writers. *Hello?* "Whom do I have to f— to get a callback around here?" replied the raspy, Mitteleuropean voice on the other end of the line. It was John Simon, our legendary critic who died in November at the age of ninety-four.

Only John, I imagine, would have used "whom" rather than "who" in his salacious salutation. He was not about to make an error of grammar at his own demotic expense, even for a joke. After all, "there are those to whom 'whom' is sacred, and those who have forgotten that they ever heard it, if indeed they did," he wrote in *Paradigms Lost: Reflections on Literacy and Its Decline*, his 1980 book on the falling standards of English. For John, which interrogative pronoun to use was never a question.

It wasn't mere provocation that made John so memorable, although he could memorably provoke. It was his way with words, and especially American words, that played out over so many decades on the written stage. Born in the former Yugoslavia in 1925, John was a late arrival to our linguistic shores. English was the fifth language he learned, after Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, German, and French. So he handled our American words and phrases like hard-earned gold in his pocket. He appreciated their luster with the turn of his fingers. He understood their richness in a way that native speakers never would or could. And he stacked them on the page again and again in a tireless doubling-down of opinion.

John made a career out of criticizing the vicissitudes of stage and screen—of books, music, movies, theater, and just about every cultural space in between. His extensive writings have been collected in some dozen books, most recently a three-volume set from Applause Books extending over two thousand pages. That his latest review appears in the very same issue as his obituary speaks to how dedicated he was to his craft. He was a critic to the end and the last of a generation.

Whenever John came by our office, he was the first to lie on the floor and crawl through our slush pile of review copies destined for the Strand Bookstore. He then had us hold onto whatever he found while he made judicious disposals from his bookshelves at home—a concession to his wife, Patricia. There on our floor was the man we knew had received one of the most famous wounds among criticism's legionnaires. At a party for the New York Film Festival in 1973—it now bears little repeating—the actress Sylvia Miles dumped a plate of steak tartare on John's head after he had called her a "party girl and gate crasher" in a review. The exchange soiled a jacket he had purchased on Rodeo Drive. When John sent her his dry-cleaning bill, she refused to pay. A veteran of the culture wars with a laureled suite at the Hôtel des Invalides of criticism, John died with the acid still fresh in his pen and the paper-cut scars of battles won and mostly lost.

Like many, I grew up reading John on the theater in *New York* magazine. It was a post he commanded for nearly thirty-seven years with unparalleled intensity. He panned much more than he praised, upsetting many. Still, the theater world never hesitated to proclaim his favorable judgments, which were not always expected. He called *Cats*, for example, a "delightful albeit trivial *Gesamt*almost*kunstwerk*." He also dared to see theater as a visual experience rather than some disembodied political statement. At times he even discussed the bodies on view. He once picked at Barbra Streisand's prominent proboscis. When the actress Calista Flockhart took the stage, he commented that here was "Ally McBeal in the flesh," but "be forewarned: There is very little flesh on dem bones." Of *Wicked* he wrote that "Kristin Chenoweth is cute as a button, but rather makes you wish for a zipper." He called Liza Minnelli a "performer whose chief diet is audience adulation" and whose "comeback" was "from alcoholism, [being] overweight, and an overlong absence from regular performing."

These offenses and then some were too much for Adam Moss, *New York*'s new editor, who pushed John out as one of his first acts in 2005. John was too controversial. He was bigoted. He was sexist. He was old-fashioned. He made fun of Liza Minnelli's looks. Throughout his career, the complainants lodged their grievances against such supposed nastiness. Over time, they won. Not only was John defenestrated from his high-rise column at *New York*, which was never again as important in theater criticism, he also lost his lofty aeries at venues ranging from Channel Thirteen and *National Review* to *Bloomberg News* and *The New Leader*. Some of these falls were more his doing than others, to be sure, but a critic gains honor through each venue lost, no matter the reason.

At *The New Criterion*, we were proud to be one of the last remaining venues to feature John regularly and at length. At the end of his life, he otherwise made do with a blog called *Uncensored John Simon*—underwritten by his surprise friend Yoko Ono—and appearances on local Westchester television. John wrote seventy-six pieces for *The New Criterion* from 1989 through, now, 2020. The essay in this issue that carries him over the decade line, a review of a new collection of writings by Vladimir Nabokov, was in edits when he died on November 24. Even at the end of his life, John wrote in a distinctive style of erudite prestidigitation and playful idiom: "obiter—or arbiter—dicta" . . . "cream of a much larger crop." The piece bears his precise and unmistakable accent.

The subject matter of Nabokov also seems right for a final act. The two shared linguistic affinities. Each delighted in their adopted, "richer" English language. Wordplay abounds for both writers, although John was quick to point out that Nabokov did not know German—unlike the reviewer of the present volume. A "special, poetic prose that depends on comparisons and metaphors" came to define Nabokov, John writes in this review. In *Paradigms Lost*, he made a similar observation about himself:

> I suppose I must credit my coming to English relatively late with my especially analytical, exploratory, adventurous approach to it. I am always surprised when people marvel at the way some foreigners—Joseph Conrad, Karen Blixen, alias Isak Dinesen, Vladimir Nabokov—wrote English. If you have a sufficient feeling for and facility with language, coming to a specific tongue later rather than earlier can prove a distinct advantage. . . . There is a sense in which one is both an insider and an outsider in that language, and the interplay between the two becomes creative play.

As an outsider, John reveled in the new language at his fingertips. "English became eroticized for me," he said. Beginning in Belgrade and moving on to study in Cambridge, England, he finished his high school years at New York's Horace Mann. When he enrolled at Harvard, where he went on to earn a doctorate in comparative literature, he tested the potential of his adopted language by writing "ardent verses to a number of Radcliffe girls." He says his "poetry ran dry before there was enough of it for a volume; by then, however, my prose had begun." One must also wonder at his poetry's amatory successes. He described

one story as involving a "rutilant princess and a dainty redhead with a steamily rubescent epidermis." His first love was words.

John defended the significance of words while bristling at their devaluation. He did not genuflect to identity politics. Nor did he come to our shores to carry America's cultural baggage. The shocks of the Sixties only clarified this critical vision. He saw our cultural debasement as stemming from "some sort of populism, Marxism, bad social conscience, demagoguery, inverted snobbery, or even moral cowardice."

Even in the 1970s, he questioned the rising Orwellian impositions of the new Left. "Should we Genderspeak?," he asked in one essay for *Esquire*. "I understand and even sympathize with a woman's desire not to be called a poetess or an authoress, because there was once a kind of female-ghetto poetry and prose that gave *poetess* and *authoress* a bad odor. But *actress* was never pejorative, nor, certainly, were *empress*, *priestess*, *duchess*, and the rest." Contrary to the prescriptive dictates of our political ophthalmology, John was not about to start wearing rose-colored glasses.

The decline of criticism was just as much his concern as the decline of culture. "Insensitivity is the coloring of the age," he told Mike Wallace in 1978. "The only way that you can pierce all that protective, or maybe not protective, coloring is by calling people's attention to the fact that another opinion exists. You can't do that by whispering. You can't do that by a polite little rap on the knuckles. You have to make yourself felt." Some years ago, my wife and I took John out for dinner in the theater district to be followed by a show (which he left at intermission). When she asked John's opinion about another critic, his voluble response nearly sent the proverbial record scratching and plates crashing to the floor. I will reserve his remarks to the grave.

We "read a critic for the writing," John says in "Critics & criticism," his essay in these pages in November 2018. "If the critic goes beyond information and adjudication, if he or she can add wit to the review or critique, the resultant effect is at least doubled. . . . This is scarcely less important than the critic's yea or nay." As the explosion of the summer blockbuster paralleled the rise of pop criticism and hot takes, the thumbs-up, thumbs-down school of criticism was never for him: "Except from the palsied or mentally defective, it takes no dexterity whatsoever, let alone art."

Nor did John have a style well suited for the proliferation of mass media. Up against the imperial forces of Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, in 1983 he waged a one-man rebellion on *Nightline* against the dark side of *Star Wars*:

> The raves for the early *Star Wars* have been so violent and so extravagant, that I feel one cannot afford to mince one's words if one dislikes these things. I feel they're so bad because they're completely dehumanizing. Obviously, let's face it, they are for children, or for childish adults. They are not for adult mentalities, which unfortunately means they are for a lot of my fellow critics, who also lack adult mentalities.

Rather than watch *Return of the Jedi*, John suggested that children—and Roger Ebert—read *Huckleberry Finn* or see *Tender Mercies*.

Good opinions may never be popular, but they need to be stated. Serious criticism often stands against majority rule and what one wants to hear. A year ago John joined me in my office to record a discussion about his life in review. *Do you have any advice for aspiring critics?*, I wondered at the end.

> I mainly give them a piece of advice, which may not be helpful, or maybe it will, but is to trust themselves: to review in the way that they really feel or really think. Not in the way the audience, the readers, the editors, the public might think. But they themselves, what their true feelings, true opinions are. That is what you heed, and what you put on paper or on the internet.

John was not anything but himself. His departure leaves us without a friend to call and a culture desperately in need of his criticism.