The New Criterion

40th anniversary

October 2021

A monthly review *edited by Roger Kimball*

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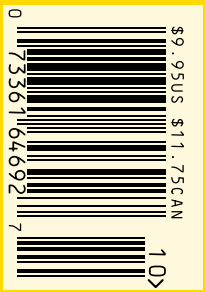

The New Criterion *October 2021*

Contributors to this issue

Harry Adams is a doctoral student at the Courtauld Institute of Art, writing his dissertation on the City of London.

Brooke Allen writes frequently for *The New Criterion* and other publications. A former Professor of Literature at Bennington College, she now teaches in its Prison Education Initiative.

Marc M. Arkin is a professor emerita at Fordham University School of Law.

Jeremy Black's recent books include histories of the Caribbean and of France.

James Bowman is a Resident Scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the author of *Honor: A History* (Encounter).

Dan Brown's *Subjects in Poetry* is forthcoming this November from LSU Press.

Anthony Daniels is a contributing editor of *City Journal*.

Paul Dean is a freelance critic living in Oxford, U.K.

Peter Filkins published his fifth collection of poems, *Water / Music* (Johns Hopkins), in April. He teaches at Bard College.

Michael Fontaine teaches Latin at Cornell University.

James Franklin's book *Corrupting the Youth* (Macleay Press) is a history of Australian philosophy.

Katie Hartsock is the author of a poetry collection, *Bed of Impatiens* (Able Muse).

Simon Heffer's *The Age of Decadence* was published in America by Pegasus in April.

Joseph Loconte is the director of the B. Kenneth Simon Center for American Studies at the Heritage Foundation. He is the author of *God, Locke, and Liberty: The Struggle for Religious Freedom in the West* (Lexington Books).

William Logan's new collection of criticism, *Broken Ground: Poetry and the Demon of History*, was published last spring by Columbia University Press.

Wilfred M. McClay is a professor of history at Hillsdale College and the author, most recently, of *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story* (Encounter).

Jay Nordlinger is a senior editor at *National Review*.

Paul A. Rahe is the Robert S. Mertz Visiting Scholar at the Hoover Institution.

Kyle Smith is the critic-at-large for *National Review*.

Karen Wilkin is an independent curator and critic.

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Notes & Comments: October 2021

Duchamp in Kabul

It is amusing to speculate about what Marcel Duchamp, the doyen of Dada, would have made of his appearance in twenty-first-century Afghanistan. That happened as part of a cultural outreach program sponsored by the United States. In an article on *The Spectator*'s website called "Did 'gender studies' lose Afghanistan?," the writer known pseudonymously as "Cockburn" unearthed a video from 2015 that depicts a fresh-faced, posh-sounding academic instructing a small group of Afghan men and women about the wonders of "conceptual art." The locals sit around a table in a dimly lit room exuding an air of puzzlement as their tutor shows slides and emits the usual art-speak patter. Exhibit A was *Fountain*, the unadorned urinal that Duchamp impishly offered to the art world in 1917. Anyone know what this is? the docent asked, noting that she didn't necessarily expect "the ladies" to recognize it. One of the gents ventured "toilet" under his breath; the camera captured the look on the faces of some of "the ladies" and it is priceless. "What garbage," they must have been thinking; "Why are we here?" This was just after their instructor told them that Marcel Duchamp was Very Important in Western capital-A Art and then assured them that the exhibition of *Fountain* in an art gallery was "a huge revolution."

Well, those poor Afghans are even now learning about huge revolutions. Marcel Duchamp will not, we are confident, be on the menu. And besides, it's not at all clear that Duchamp would have agreed with the assessment of this cultural ambassadrix. "I threw the bottle rack and the urinal into their faces as a challenge," Duchamp said some years later, "and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty." The "they" in question being the commissars of the art world, the ruminant herd of independent minds faithfully parroting the going clichés, lips firmly affixed to the teat dispensing the heady nectar of cash-saturated snobbery.

The cash is important, and it turns out that the pursing lips of the State Department are just as eager for their nutrient nipple as are those of the art world. Even our jaded eyes opened wider at the news, also reported by Cockburn, that the United States had over the years spent $787 million (that's $787,000,000) on "gender programs" in Afghanistan. And that figure, Cockburn notes, "substantially understates the actual total, since gender goals [!] were folded into practically every undertaking America made in the country."

Talk about Dadaist performance art! "Do-gooders established a 'National Masculinity Alliance,' so a few hundred Afghan men could talk about their 'gender roles' and 'examine male attitudes that are harmful to women.'" (We wonder if stoning women to death was discussed.) We're confident that Duchamp would have enjoyed joining us as spectators at those powwows. Consciousness-raising is never an easy task, however, and the gender crusaders (can

we say "crusaders"?) had their work cut out for them. For one thing, as Cockburn notes, in neither the Dari nor Pashto languages are there any words for "gender" per se. "That makes sense," he observes, "since the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' was only invented by a sexually abusive child psychiatrist in the 1960s." Oh dear.

> Things didn't improve from there. Under the U.S.'s guidance, Afghanistan's 2004 constitution set a 27 percent quota for women in the lower house—higher than the actual figure in America! . . . Remarkably, this experiment in 'democracy' created a government few were willing to fight for, let alone die for. . . . Police facilities included childcare facilities for working mothers, as though Afghanistan's medieval culture had the same needs as 1980s Minneapolis. The army set a goal of 10 percent female participation, which might make sense in a Marvel movie, but didn't to devout Muslims.

Now that America's excellent, twenty-year, multi-trillion-dollar adventure in Afghanistan is at an end (except, of course, for the Americans left behind), it's worth sparing a thought for those, er, manning the many gender programs paid for by your tax dollars. The commentator Tucker Carlson shared a plaintive tweet by Dr. Bahar Jalali, "Historian, Founder of the First Gender Studies Program in Afghanistan," who on August 30 noted sadly that, after eight-and-a-half years teaching at the American University in Afghanistan and founding that first "Gender Studies Program," it was all being "snatched away so needlessly." As Oscar Wilde said about Dickens's portrayal of the death of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, one would have to have a heart of stone not to laugh, just a bit, at Dr. Jalali's predicament.

There is also a serious side to this whole episode, however, which Carlson put his finger on when he raised the issue of "cultural imperialism." It used to be that leftists derided Western countries, especially Britain and the United States, for that retrograde practice. But it turns out that the Left is just fine with cultural imperialism so long as it is not traditional bourgeois values but rather their subversion that is being exported. Thriftiness, piety, hard work, and traditional social and moral norms are bad things to teach. But feminism, "gender studies," racial obsession, moral relativism, and attacks on of the fabric of inherited morality? Bring it on.

Put it down as reason 6,875 that our adventure in Afghanistan ended in failure.

Crippling classics

We wonder if Dr. Jalali or her colleagues bringing enlightenment to the natives of Afghanistan subscribe to the Society for Classical Studies blog? As we've noted several times in the pages of *The New Criterion* (most recently with Victor Davis Hanson's essay "Classical patricide" last month), the discipline of classics, at least in its academic instantiation, has become among the wokest of woke redoubts. The Society for Classical Studies, which began life in the mid-nineteenth century as the American Philological Association, is a poster child for the new anti-classical approach to classics. Its blog is edited by T. H. M. Gellar-Goad, who teaches at Wake Forest—make that "Woke Forest"—University and specializes in Latin poetry, "especially the funny stuff."

That's as it should be, because the blog of the Society for Classical Studies is an inadvertently comic repository of politically correct attitudinizing, dilating everywhere on such crimes as "whiteness" (a Gellar-Goad speciality), patriarchy, and anything beginning with "hetero-." One page is devoted to a hysterical (and we definitely do not mean "funny") mischaracterization of the protest at the Capitol last January, though what possible connection that protest may have with the study of classics is never revealed. Another page provides exhaustive (not to say exhausting) advice about avoiding "disability terminology" when discussing the ancient world. The jollity here starts with a "content warning" that what follows includes "disability slurs & ableist language," so *caveat lector*. It also includes some strange linguistic abnormalities, if we may so put it, but faulty diction is a small price to pay for woke rectitude. We learn, for example, that scholars aspiring to write for the

blog should eschew the word "normal" and use "nondisabled" instead. Don't say that someone is "insane," "crazy," or a "lunatic," but rather that he exhibits "neurodiversity." Don't say that someone is "mute" or "dumb" but that he is a "person with mutism." Someone is going to have hours of fun updating the Gospels, purging them of all those cripples, lunatics, and deaf, dumb, and blind people whom Jesus cures. (Is it OK to say he "cures" them? Isn't that invidious, suggesting, as it does, that it might be preferable *not* to be crippled, blind, mute, etc.?)

As a concrete example, the SCS contrasts two ways of describing the fact that Hephaestus was (in most accounts) born with a withered foot. "Hephaestus suffered from a congenital deformity that limited his movement" versus "Hephaestus had a congenital mobility impairment." The first, they say, is bad because "disability is given a negative valence from the start with words like 'suffered,' 'deformity,' and 'limited.'" It's too bad that they didn't get this memo to Homer and other Greeks who wrote about the great blacksmith. They could have altered their description of Hephaestus as "*ὁ Ἀμφιγυήεις*," "the one that [as the Liddell & Scott Greek lexicon tells us] halts in both feet, the lame one." The relevant part of the Greek compound is *γυιός*, which means, well, "lame," but we're sure that can be changed in a future edition of the dictionary.

The friend who sent us the link to the SCS blog did so not to call our attention to the filigree of politically correct virtue signaling. Rather, he alerted us to two announcements. First, that, henceforth, anonymous or pseudonymous postings would be allowed on the blog. Naturally, this will make it much easier for disgruntled classicists to attack with impunity people they don't like. Second, that the "SCS position on political content" had been "modified." You see what cards these people are. Previously, the editors wrote, they did not "normally" consider contributions that took a position on current political issues. Maybe someone called their attention to that contentious post about the protest at the Capitol. The editors had changed their minds. The "tumult of the last several years," they wrote, had made their previous position "untenable." Henceforth, posts that take overt positions (though, we suspect, only certain positions will be welcome) will be permitted.

What really caught our attention, however, was their concluding comment. The site's original position, the editors said, the position that frowned on introducing contemporary political concerns into a blog ostensibly devoted to the classics, "denies the fact that our discipline is inherently political and has been since its foundation. An 'apolitical' stance is itself political."

They offer this as a novel idea, though of course it is an idea that has been with us at least since the 1960s when slogans like "the personal is the political" and, indeed, that everything is "always already" political (to paraphrase Jacques Derrida) were repeated *ad nauseam*. (The idea has a long genealogy, as anyone who has encountered encomia to "German physics" in the Germany of the 1930s or "socialist science," as distinct from the bourgeois variety, in the Soviet Union from the same period will know.)

That said, we want to end by agreeing that, *in a sense*, "an 'apolitical' stance is itself political." It is so in this sense: we found schools, universities, and other educational institutions in order to perpetuate knowledge and hand down certain civilizational values. One of those values is the affirmation that some things are worth pursuing for their own sake: the study of the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome, for example, and the languages that unlock their mysteries. We decide to teach classics rather than political attitudinizing because we think classics is important. It is a foundational political commitment to say that such things are inherently valuable and that they transcend the vagaries of contemporary politics. This is the basic *raison d'être* of liberal education. Here was something the great classicist and board member of *The New Criterion*, Donald Kagan, eulogized later in this issue, understood. The Society for Classical Studies has hopped on to the rickety bandwagon transporting that commitment to oblivion. Like other fatuous armchair revolutionaries, their members seem blissfully unaware that in repudiating the culture that formed them they are also repudiating themselves.

Western civilization at the crossroads: II

A popular form of monomania

by Anthony Daniels

"We hope by this time next year to have from a hundred and fifty to two hundred healthy families cultivating coffee and educating the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger."
—Mrs. Jellyby, *Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens (1852)

Conceptions of morality change, never more so than in the lifetime of *The New Criterion*. If a person who died at the time of the first issue were to return to life, he would find himself in an angrier and more charged moral atmosphere than the one he had left—and one in which the principles that undergird Western civilization scarcely seem to be in evidence. Indeed, he would think that the world was a moral hornets' nest that had been poked with a stick, so furious is the buzzing.

Some years ago, I shared a public platform with a person considerably more eminent than I. The subject of discussion was what it took to be good, which can be argued over for an eternity without compelling a universally accepted answer. This does not make the question meaningless, however, as the Logical Positivists might once have claimed; indeed, there are few questions more important.

The person more eminent than I (whom I shall not name, the avoidance of pointless personal denigration being a part, albeit a small one, of what it takes to be good) said that it took intelligence to be good. Since the eminent person almost certainly considered only the upper 1 or 2 percent of the population to be intelligent, and since he claimed that intelligence was a necessary but not sufficient condition of goodness, it was clear that he did not think much of the moral qualities of the great majority of his fellow creatures. His answer was perfectly compatible with the claim that only one in a thousand people is good.

I said that I thought that what he said was appalling, true neither philosophically nor empirically. But just because a viewpoint is bad philosophically, is empirically without foundation, horrible in its implications, does not mean that it cannot be held. History would no doubt have been rather different if this had been impossible.

It is always a good idea to try to elucidate what can be said in favor of an opinion with which you disagree: there is probably no better way of getting one's own thoughts clear. What, then, can be said in favor of the idea that one must be clever to be good?

There must surely be some cognitive element to goodness; one does not speak of a morally good bird or lizard, for example. And if to be good means a disposition to be good and not merely to perform an occasional good act, as if almost by chance, then cognition clearly has a part to play in being good. Cognitive ability—intelligence—should therefore be at least an advantage in, if not actually a precondition of, being good.

This is all the more so since moral decisions are often complex rather than simple and straightforward. The world is not so constituted that it only provides us with easy moral questions to answer, which is why laying down invariable moral rules is so difficult. Circum-

stances really do alter cases; if they did not, Kant's view that we should tell the truth even to a murderer on his way to cut someone's throat, simply because we should always tell the truth, would not strike us as so absurd, believable only for a man with little ordinary intercourse with the world.

When to speak the truth, when to hold one's tongue, when to indulge in euphemistic evasion, when to tell little white lies for the good of others—these are subtle questions often requiring a swift appreciation of the many possible reasons or circumstances that must go toward sound judgment. Surely high intelligence, in the meaning of my co-panelist, helps here?

But whether or not it does so cannot be answered in *a priori* fashion. Even if *some* intelligence were required to be good, the relationship, if any, between its level and goodness would still have to be established. It might well be, for example, that there is an adequate level of intelligence above which any surplus contributes nothing as far as moral character is concerned. I think this is ordinarily the case: we do not expect better behavior of someone with an IQ of 140 than of someone with an IQ of 110. And if the man with the higher intelligence quotient is bad, he is probably better at being bad.

Understanding the moral argument for a certain course of action is not the same as performing that action: indeed, most of humanity has found the former rather easier than the latter. I once worked in a prison as a doctor, and though the prisoners were, on the whole, poorly educated, and though it is generally held that prisoners are of a lower average or median intelligence than that of the general population, I found that very few of them were moral imbeciles in the sense that they could not understand or grasp a moral argument. Clearly, many of them had difficulty in applying the conclusion of that argument in practice, but their problem was not with intelligence.

It is in any case a matter of common experience that the best people one knows are not necessarily the most intelligent—though I do not want to imply, either, that high intelligence is incompatible with goodness. In fact, in my experience there is little or no relation between goodness and intelligence.

Why, then, did my co-panelist, himself highly intelligent, assert something so patently false? I think it was because there has been a progressive distancing of the locus of moral concern, at least among the educated, from personal conduct to wider, impersonal questions.

This is not an entirely new phenomenon. Lenin, for example, wrote that "our [Bolshevik] morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat." All other morality, according to Lenin, was deception and dupery, designed to throw dust in the proletariat's eyes. He, at any rate, found his theory of morality extremely liberating: since it was he who decided what was in the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat, it meant that he could do what he liked. And what he liked, often enough, was to have priests, poets, and sundry other enemies murdered.

In similar fashion, Islamists think that whatever supposedly defends or advances their brand of Islam is both morally justified and obligatory, making irrelevant all other considerations that are normally thought to be moral. This, too, liberates them from restraint, though not necessarily to the direct personal advantage of those who act in accord with the doctrine—unless, that is, they really *are* rewarded in heaven.

Leninism and violent Islamism are, of course, extreme examples of what happens when a narrow ideology is made the philosophical basis of moral action. Such ideologies are not founded and propagated by men lacking in intelligence, though their rank-and-file followers may well be of lesser intelligence than they. Lenin, surely one of the most unattractive figures in world history though for decades treated in the Soviet Union as a moral exemplar, the Muhammad of Communism as it were, was certainly not of deficient intelligence. These totalizing ideologies elevate highly doubtful intellectual constructions and abstractions into realities in the mind of the believer, who then views the whole world in their light. The abstractions become more real to believers than the everyday reality in which

most of us live most of the time. By this means, viciousness is transmuted into duty and cruelty into an act of cleansing. Sadism is part of the makeup of many people, if not quite of all, and totalizing ideologies appeal to the most sadistic among us, with their justification for, indeed requirement of, conduct that would otherwise be deemed beyond the pale.

Thus intellectualization of a certain kind can promote the dulling of normal moral sensibilities. Even more than political language (as analyzed in Orwell's essay), ideology is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, indeed to make lies the proclaimed truth from which all dissent is impermissible, and murder a duty.

It would be an exaggeration to claim that the populations of Western liberal democracies have succumbed entirely to the siren song of totalizing ideologies, but nevertheless the signs are not altogether encouraging. Two factors promote the advance of ideology in our societies: first, the death of God, and second, the spread of tertiary education. The two may well, of course, be related.

Whatever else the death of God may have done for us, it has not lessened our desire for an overall or transcendent meaning or purpose in our lives, especially in conditions in which our basic material needs—those which, when not met, lead to a struggle for existence in the most literal sense—are almost guaranteed to be supplied. This is especially true of those who have been most stimulated to experience the desire for transcendent meaning or purpose, that is to say the educated, by whom I mean those who have passed the first quarter of their lives (at least) in supposedly educational institutions.

In the absence of religious belief—and I take it as axiomatic that religious belief in any other than an etiolated, semi-pagan claim to spirituality, is unlikely now to revive with sufficient vigor or unity fundamentally to alter the moral atmosphere, especially in that part of the population that experiences most acutely a need for transcendence—there are relatively few possible sources of meaning greater than that of the flux of everyday life. Chief among these is political ideology, the most obvious being fascism and Marxism. Both have lost their salience for most people, however, fascism because of the appalling catastrophe of Nazism, and Marxism because of its prolonged and brutal failure in Russia. (However much Marxists proclaimed their distance from the Soviet Union, the ignominious collapse of the Soviet Union profoundly damaged the intellectual prestige of Marxism.)

But just as the death of God did not destroy the human need for transcendence, so the disasters of Nazism and Communism did not halt the search for transcendence by means of ideology. Instead of disappearing, therefore, as one might have expected or at least hoped, ideology in the sense of an overarching system of thought that simultaneously explains the woes of the world and suggests a means to eliminate them, thereby endowing a profound meaning to a person's existence, giving him a cause that appears larger than himself, did not disappear, but on the contrary has flourished *pari passu* with the expansion in tertiary education. This time, ideology appears in a balkanized form, with a rich variety of monomanias, ranging from the "liberation" of sexual proclivities to the salvation of the biosphere. But, as if to prove the theory of intersectionality, various monomanias have formed tactical alliances with one another, such that if you know a person's monomania, you also know what his attitude to many seemingly unrelated questions will be. There has developed a popular front, so to speak, of monomaniacs.

It is not surprising, then, that one's opinion on matters social and political has become for a considerable part of the population the measure of virtue. If you have the right opinions you are good; if you have the wrong ones you are bad. Nuance itself becomes suspect, as it is in a tabloid newspaper, for doubt is treachery and nuance is the means by which bad opinions make their comeback. In this atmosphere, people of differing opinions find it difficult to tolerate each other's presence in a room: the only way to avoid open conflict is either to avoid certain persons or certain subjects. Where opinion is virtue, disagreement amounts to accusation of vice.

Since there is no new thing under the sun, at least where human error and foolishness are concerned, this is far from the first time in history that people have taken opinion as a metonym for virtue. And where there is political divergence, there is the possibility, or likelihood, of polarization, for Man is a dichotomizing animal. Neutrality in a polarized situation is deemed cowardice or betrayal; it is impermissible to have no opinion on an issue, no matter how ill-informed on, or indifferent to, it one might be. The right of non-participation on one side of a debate is abrogated: as some members of the Black Lives Matter movement put it, "silence is violence."

But while polarization of opinion is nothing new, the number of people who concern themselves with political and social affairs in both a theoretical and practical way has increased enormously, and with it the sensation of living amid conflict even in times of peace. Family and generational estrangements on the grounds of opinion, while not unknown previously, have become more common, almost expected. I know of several parents who have to hold their tongues if they wish to maintain relations with their children. No lyricist would now write, as did W. S. Gilbert in 1882,

> I often think it's comical
> How Nature always does contrive
> That every boy and every gal
> That's born into the world alive
> Is either a little Liberal
> Or else a little Conservative!

Such lightheartedness is not possible where opinion is the main, or sole, test of decency, the litmus of vice and virtue. Every difference of opinion is a difference not on the single point at issue alone, but of an entire *Weltanschauung*, and a few words are often sufficient to demonstrate which camp a person is in, that of vice or that of virtue.

The extreme importance now given to opinion (by contrast with conduct) in the estimation of a person's character has certain consequences. This is not to say that in the past a person's opinions played no part in such an assessment, and no doubt there are some opinions so extreme or vicious, for example that some whole population should be mercilessly wiped out, that in any day and age one would hesitate to associate with someone who held them. But before, even when someone held an opinion that we considered very bad, we still also assessed the degree of seriousness with which he held it, the degree to which it was purely theoretical, the importance it played in his overall mental life. The holding of such an opinion would not redound to his credit, but if lightly held and with no likely effect on his actual behavior, it would detract only slightly from our view of him. He might still be a good man, albeit one with a quirk, a mental blind spot.

If we take as an example the question of capital punishment, it should be possible for people to disagree without concluding that those who take a different view from their own are morally deficient or defective. I am against the penalty on the grounds that even in the most scrupulous jurisdictions mistakes are made, and that for the state wrongly to execute one of its citizens is a heinous thing, moreover one which will bring the whole criminal justice system into disrepute. If it is argued that the state's unwillingness occasionally to execute wrongfully will lead to more wrongful deaths by murder than would otherwise have occurred, I would reply that this is a price that must be paid (though I concede that there might in theory be a price *too* high to be paid, though I think this is unlikely in practice ever to eventuate). A person who declared himself in favor of summary execution without trial of all those with whom he disagreed or otherwise reprehended would probably be regarded as mad rather than bad, at least outside the purlieus of the Taliban.

If someone were either for or against the penalty on more deontological grounds, that it was either just or barbaric in itself, I would recognize these as sensible arguments without necessarily subscribing to either, and without giving to them the weight that those who subscribe to them give them. Thus, it should be possible for us to have a discussion on the question, disagreeing but without casting as-

persions on each other's character. It seems to me, however (though I have no strict scientific evidence to prove it) that such reasonable discussions have become less and less frequent, precisely because opinion and not conduct has become the touchstone of virtue.

This naturally raises the temperature of any discussion and inclines participants to bad temper. But there are other consequences too.

For one thing, the elevation of the moral importance of opinion changes the locus of a person's moral concern from that over which he has most control, namely how he behaves himself, to that over which he has almost no personal control. He becomes a Mrs. Jellyby who, it will be remembered, was extremely concerned about the fate of children thousands of miles away in Africa but completely neglected her own children right under her own eyes, in her house in London.

This is not to say that huge abstract questions, such as the best economic or foreign policy to follow, have no moral content. Of course they do, but generally in a rather vague, diluted, and distant way, for example that one should choose the policy that does the most good or, more realistically, the least harm. This policy is likely to remain extremely difficult to determine, being subject to so many variables. Again, reasonable people are likely to disagree, all the more so as the desiderata of human existence are plural: there is, in most situations other than total war, no one goal that morally trumps all others. If it could be shown that the creation of wealth is favored by, or even requires, a degree of unemployment, but it also accepted that wealth is a good and unemployment is a harm, then decent people might well disagree how much wealth creation should be foregone in order to reduce unemployment, in part because goods and harms are often not commensurable.

The question of what conduces to economic prosperity is large and important, but people may disagree as to the worth—the human worth, that is—of prosperity itself, at least within quite wide limits. But even if they agree as to its worth, and assuming that there is a single indubitable measure of such prosperity, they may still disagree as to how it is to be produced or encouraged. If someone says that personal freedom is a precondition of prosperity, someone else might point to the case of China, whose rise to prosperity has probably been the most remarkable, at least in terms of timescale, in the whole history of the world. China, of course, is a highly authoritarian country. But the first might reply that China in certain respects allows more freedom than Western countries, for the weight of the state in China, so much heavier in some respects than elsewhere, is so much lighter in others. There is no social security there to speak of, so that people must fend for themselves when necessary, and this in turn means that the state is spared the need to raise taxes to pay for social security. Since taxes are generally coerced even in democracies (where one group coerces them from another, and few people pay them if avoidance is possible), there is less coercion in this respect in China than in almost any Western country. Thus is the argument saved that personal freedom is a precondition of prosperity.

It is evident that discussions of this nature can be, and often are, endless: even that of free trade versus protection is not decided once and for all. People engaged upon such debates will rely on what I hesitate to call alternative facts. If there is a correct answer to be had, it cannot be decided by moral virtues of the disputants. The better person may have the worse arguments, and the worse person the better. The difference between *laissez-faire* and *dirigisme* cannot be settled by reference to the moral qualities of those who advocate for either, at least not in a world in which rational argument counts for something.

The overemphasis on opinion as the main or only determinant of a person's moral character thus has the effect of promoting irrationalism, and all argument becomes in effect ad hominem. If a person holds one opinion, he is good; if another, he is bad. Everything is decided in advance by means of moral dichotomy. Nuance disappears. If a person approves of abortion, even in restricted circumstances, he is, for opponents, virtually a child-murderer, and therefore beyond the moral pale. If he does

not, he is, for opponents, a misogynist who would condemn girls of twelve to bear the children of their rapists, and therefore beyond the moral pale. One does not willingly talk to or otherwise consort with people beyond the moral pale.

There is a positive-feedback mechanism built into opinion as the measure of virtue, for if it is virtuous to espouse a particular opinion, it is even more virtuous to espouse a more extreme or generalized version of it. It then becomes morally impermissible for a person to hold the relatively moderate opinion; he is denounced with the peculiar venom that the orthodox reserve for heretics. When J. K. Rowling, a feminist once in good odor with the morally self-anointed, delivered herself of an opinion couched in moderate terms stating something so obvious that it will one day (I hope) astonish future social or cultural historians that it needed saying at all, namely that a transsexual woman is not a woman *simpliciter*, she was turned upon viciously, including by those who owed their great fortunes to her—or at least to her work. She had committed the cardinal sin in a world of opinion as the criterion of virtue of not having realized that the moral caravan had moved on. How easily sheep become goats!

Taking opinion as the hallmark of virtue has other effects besides provoking dichotomization, bad temper, and the exertion of a ratchet effect in the direction of ever more extreme and absurd ideas. It tends to limit the imagination, moral and otherwise. For example, once something tangible is declared to be a human right, which no decent person can thenceforth question or deny on pain of excommunication by the virtuous, the good procured by the exercise of that right ceases to be a good for any other reason than that it is a right. The recipient has no reason to feel grateful for what he receives, because it was his right to receive it, though he may, of course, feel rightfully aggrieved if he does *not* receive it. A United Nations *rapporteur* recently condemned New Zealand for its breach of human rights because it did not provide decent housing for all its citizens (and other inhabitants); rents were expensive and there was overcrowding as well as some homelessness. The New Zealand government, which had committed itself to the view that there was a human right to decent housing, meekly promised to try to do better. It had not promised to treat housing *as if* it were a human right, but to treat it as a right itself; it was therefore skewered by its own supposed virtue.

If anyone were to deny that decent housing was a right, it is almost certain that he would soon be attacked as a landlords' apologist, as someone indifferent to the plight of the homeless—as if there could be no other reason why people should be decently housed and not homeless *other* than that they had a human right to decent housing.

The potential consequences of a right to decent housing, if taken seriously, are pretty obvious: the commandeering of private property, for example, which proved such a triumphant success in the Soviet Union that people were living in communal apartments two-thirds of a century later. And since "decency" in housing is not a natural quality but varies according to circumstance (what is verging on the indecent in Auckland, Christchurch, or Wellington would be palatial in Lagos or Dhaka), compliance with such a right is an invitation to, or would require and justify, ceaseless and constant bureaucratic interference. Furthermore, declaring decent housing to be a right, irrespective of the conduct of the person exercising it, would not exactly be a spur to personal effort, especially in the lower reaches of society. And if decent housing is a right, why bother to seek the true economic or social reasons for high rents and homelessness? A right is a right, independent of economics; all that is required is that it be complied with.

These rather obvious objections to the concept of decent housing as a human right are seldom aired, at least in public discussions, because those who make them are so easily portrayed as Gradgrinds or Scrooges, heartless and cruel, lacking in the imagination necessary to understand or sympathize with poverty. The supposed moral quality of the objector trumps the possible validity of his objections, which therefore do not have to be considered. Far

from the objector lacking imagination, however, it is the proponent of the human right who lacks it: he fails even to try to imagine what the consequences of what he advocates might be. Words are the money of fools, no doubt, but also of people who desire unlimited powers of interference in the lives of others.

The importance accorded to opinion—correct opinion, of course—as the criterion of virtue has another strange effect, besides increasing intolerance and limiting imagination, for it conduces both to a new dictatorial puritanism and a new libertinism whose equilibrium is forever unstable.

The puritanism manifests itself in language. In the modern moral climate, for example, it is essential to be a feminist. A person who declared himself indifferent, let alone openly hostile, to feminism would be considered by many to be, *ex officio*, a morally depraved person, perhaps even a potential Bluebeard. Purity is imposed on language itself: in Britain, a person who subscribes to "correct" opinion would now not dream of using the word "actress," as it is allegedly demeaning to females who act, suggesting inferiority to (rather than mere sexual difference from) males who act. In France the same type of person would not now dream of using the word "*écrivain*" for a female who writes, instead employing the feminine neologism "*écrivaine*," because not to do so would imply that writers, at least ones worthy of notice, are solely or predominantly male.

It is obvious from these examples, which demand the defeminization of language on the one hand and its feminization on the other, that the purpose of this language reform is the exercise of power to impose virtue, rather than the solution to any real problem, since neither "actress" nor "*écrivain*" as applied to a woman has intrinsic derogatory connotations.

In similar fashion, American academic books now routinely use the impersonal "she" rather than "he," and sub-editors impose this usage on their authors, even on those women to whom it would not come naturally because of their age. Sometimes such absurdities as alternating the impersonal "he" and "she" are employed, to ensure (or rather imply a deep commitment to) sexual equality; the phrase "she and he" is also employed rather than "he and she," considerations of euphony being disregarded in favor of an ideological commitment to righting past wrongs and protecting women from domestic violence by means of sub-editorial vigilance. No doubt the guardians of "correct" usage imagine that they are doing what would once have been called "God's work," and therefore brook no demurral from their edicts. The mills of the new morality grind very fine indeed.

This new morality contrives to be both liberal and illiberal at the same time. It takes as its basic or founding text the famous words of John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty* (1859):

> [T]he sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. . . . [T]he only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. . . . The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others.

Whether or not people have actually read *On Liberty*, Mill has probably had a more profound effect on common modes of political thought than any philosopher other than Marx. Mill's "one very simple principle," as he calls it, is as omnipresent in our way of thinking about morality as the Sermon on the Mount once was.

But the one very simple principle turns out not to be so very simple after all. What seems initially to be permissive, and indeed is used to justify permissiveness, can also be highly restrictive, even totalitarian, in its implications. In the first place, it must meet what might be called the "no-man-is-an-island" objection: human beings are social and political by nature, so that it is difficult to think of any conduct which does not concern others. Even an anchorite who lives in a cave must have cut himself off from people who once knew him, who might be severely affected emotionally by his

withdrawal from society. Most of us are very far from being anchorites.

What is less frequently remarked in objection to the very simple principle is that the notion of harm to others is indefinitely expansible. When Mill wrote, life for most people was extremely tough; there was no treatment for most illnesses, and existence therefore hung by a thread, even for the privileged (the life expectancy of members of the British royal family in the middle of the nineteenth century was about forty-five). The slightest injury could, through septicemia, lead quickly to death. In these circumstances, people were likely to take less seriously claims of harm done to themselves by minor inconveniences or verbal infelicities. Real victims were too numerous for claims to victimhood by the objectively fortunate to be entertained with the reverence they now frequently receive. Even in my childhood, we used frequently to recite the old proverb in response to an intended insult, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." No more: in a world in which opinion is the measure of Man, words are poison, dagger, Kalashnikov, hand grenade, and atomic bomb, and no one now gains a reputation for moral uprightness who does not sift the words of others for the wickedness they may contain.

No one could possibly deny the great importance of words and opinions in human life, of course, or their power to give offense and even to provoke violence. Words and opinions may inspire people either to the best or the worst acts, but we do not usually absolve people of their responsibility, or fail to praise or blame them, on the grounds that they were inspired or influenced by the words of others. If I translate your words into deeds (excepting situations of duress or some other extenuating or excusing condition), the responsibility is mine. In advocating the most complete freedom of speech—at least for members of a civilized community who are capable of exercising it, another somewhat fluid and contestable limiting condition—Mill assumed that there was a great gulf fixed between words and opinions on the one hand and deeds on the other.

But now, for the first time, we have found a way to reconcile the most illiberal impulses (and we ought to remember that it does not come naturally to people to grant liberty to others) with Mill's one simple principle, which has achieved almost sacred status and cannot be directly opposed or contradicted head-on. Mill tells us that we must not forbid ourselves anything except that which harms others, but (unlike him) today we have expanded the possible harms to include almost everything that we can say, since offense is harm done to the person who takes offense and there is almost no opinion about anything that might not offend someone. Moreover, taking offense can become a habit, a duty, and a pleasure. Where opinion is virtue, the strength of offense taken is a sign of commitment to virtue, which then sets up a type of arms race of moral exhibitionism, in which my offense taken at something must be greater than yours because only thus can I prove my moral superiority over you. Shrillness then becomes a token of depth of feeling, and no one can feel anything who does not parade his outrage in public.

As with most principles, however, the one which makes everything permissible that does not harm others but which also expands harms to the giving of offense is not applied consistently, to say the least. Only offense against those who hold morally approved ideas counts as harm; offending those who hold disapproved ideas is almost a positive duty. No one, as far as I know, has ever proposed a "safe space" to protect believers from the distress occasioned by reading, say, Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779). As for the protection from taking offense accorded to Muslims, it is (if I may so put it) liberally admixed with fear—but that is another question.

It is the inconsistency with which the principle is applied that permits or encourages the coexistence of puritanism with libertinism. If we take some sexual proclivity, for example, that previously, and maybe for centuries, was regarded as disgusting or immoral, the liberal discovery that it is perfectly in accordance with morality because it does no harm to anyone who does not refuse consent to it is soon

trumpeted as a triumph of liberation; as if to make up for lost time, it soon becomes *de rigueur* not merely to permit what was previously forbidden, but to "celebrate" it. The hidden becomes ubiquitous and the unnameable present on everyone's lips. As readers of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis will appreciate, the scope for reform in the direction of public tolerance, to be brought about by righteous agitation, is almost endless. No person for whom opinion is the beginning and end of virtue, and for whom agitation for reform is the *summum* of the good life, need experience the despair expressed by Mill in his moving *Autobiography* (1873) when he asked himself:

> "Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?" And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, "No!" At this, my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for.

These are thoughts that the modern followers of Mill spare themselves, or perhaps that never occur to them (Mill was, after all, a brilliant man, which many of his modern followers are not). And provided that these thoughts can be kept at bay, the pursuit of various reforms of "institutions and opinions" can give a sense of purpose to a life, deeper currents of human existence being disregarded.

This is not, of course, a plea for immobilism: the need for reform is pretty constant (even if the failure to recognize its potential ill-effects is also pretty constant), and sometimes it is as well that there are persons who make such reform the focus of their lives. William Wilberforce, for example, made the abolition of slavery the aim of his life, and he is rightly honored for it. Furthermore, it is as well that our societies should contain untold numbers of people with like consuming aims: from the search for a cure of a rare metabolic disease to the origins of the Amharic alphabet. The danger comes when the most dubious, even fatuous, social theories and reforms in the name of virtue become the cynosure of the moral life of a large and influential sector of society, namely the intelligentsia that is ultimately the determinant of a modern society's history. This is so even, or perhaps especially, when the intelligentsia in question is ignorant, foolish, grasping, power-hungry, and unrealistic.

The effect, if not the purpose, of the overemphasis on opinion as the whole of virtue is both to liberate and to control. The liberation—from restraint on personal conduct—is for the persons with the right opinions; the control is for, and over, the rest of society. The intelligentsia is thus like an aristocracy, but without the *noblesse oblige* or the good taste that to some extent justified the aristocracy.

Perhaps the most striking illustration of this is the fate of the "revolution" of May 1968: those who wanted to forbid forbidding soon found themselves in control of a state that forbade more than ever, and which insinuated itself by regulation and the passage of myriad laws ever more termite-like into the lives of its citizens, while at the same time allowing for a limited libertinism. As Aldous Huxley said in 1948 in his preface to the second edition of *Brave New World* (to which, incidentally, his own attitude was far more ambivalent than we might suppose), a future government intent on establishing tyrannical control over its population would be advised to grant it freedom in the matter of sex and drugs. *Voilà*! But in the end, the impulse to control is paramount.

Two stray notes on "Moby-Dick"

by William Logan

A curious advertisement

The Whale, as the novel was first called, was published as a classic three-decker in London on October 18, 1851, the American edition a month later on the fourteenth. As there was no international copyright agreement, Herman Melville indulged in a complicated jig of shifts and dodges to prevent piracy—British and American copyrights had to be obtained separately. One of the dodges was to bring the British edition out first but follow so rapidly with the American that the latter was published before it could be hijacked by pirate-printers. The book was therefore first typeset in America (and possibly "plated," that is, made into stereotype plates)—indeed, Melville paid for the setting, as he hadn't yet negotiated a contract with Harper & Brothers, his American publisher.

In early September Melville dispatched the proof sheets to London, where they were rapidly edited and the type reset. American spellings were altered to British, and the publisher Richard Bentley or a quite prudish publisher's "reader" (acting as copy editor) cut or rewrote passages offensive to British sensibility. Out went droll disparagement of British royalty and the British in general; out went mild blasphemy or simple irreverence, such as the sport Melville made of the torments of the afterlife ("hell is an idea first born on an undigested apple-dumpling"). One whole chapter had to go. For reasons that remain unclear, the long list of "extracts," really a wearying run of epigraphs that stands at the head of the American edition, appeared at the tail of *The Whale*.

The Harper brothers (there were four) published the book in one fat volume, by which time Melville had changed the title to *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*. Though Melville's brother Allan claimed it would be a "better *selling* title," the editors of the Northwestern-Newberry edition (the fifteen-volume set of Melville's works published by Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library) suggest that Harpers might not have wanted to publish *The Whale* two years after the Reverend Henry T. Cheever's *The Whale and His Captors*. Perhaps, instead, Melville feared the novel might be mistaken for a work of natural history.

The London reviews were rapid in coming, some of them devastating:

> *The Athenæum* (October 25, 1851)
>
> This is an ill-compounded mixture of romance and matter-of-fact. . . . The style of [Melville's] tale is in places disfigured by mad (rather than bad) English; and its catastrophe is hastily, weakly, and obscurely managed. . . . We have little more to say in reprobation or in recommendation of this absurd book.

> *The Spectator* (October 25, 1851)
>
> This sea novel is a singular medley of naval observation, magazine article writing, satiric reflection upon the conventionalisms of civilized life, and rhapsody run mad.

Other critics were slightly less negative:

Atlas (November 1, 1851)—first review

In all Mr. Melville's previous works, full of original genius as they are, there was to be found lurking a certain besetting sin of extravagance. . . . He allows his fancy not only to run riot, but absolutely to run amuck, in which poor defenceless Common Sense is hustled and belaboured in a manner melancholy to contemplate. Mr. Melville is endowed with a fatal facility for the writing of rhapsodies. Once embarked on a flourishing topic, he knows not when or how to stop.

The Morning Chronicle (December 20, 1851)

Here, however—in "The Whale"—comes Herman Melville, in all his pristine powers—in all his abounding vigour—in the full swing of his mental energy, with his imagination invoking as strange and wild and original themes as ever, with his fancy arraying them in the old bright and vivid hues, with that store of quaint and out-of-the-way information—we would rather call it reading than learning—which he ever and anon scatters around, in, frequently, unreasonable profusion, with the old mingled opulence and happiness of phrase, and alas! too, with the old extravagance, running a perfect muck throughout the three volumes, raving and rhapsodising in chapter after chapter—unchecked.

The great majority of the London reviews, however, were lavishly positive, though Melville never saw them, as Bentley never sent him a packet of clippings:

Morning Advertiser (October 24, 1851)

High philosophy, liberal feeling, abstruse metaphysics popularly phrased, soaring speculation, a style as many-coloured as the theme, yet always good, and often admirable; fertile fancy, ingenious construction, playful learning, and an unusual power of enchaining the interest, and rising to the verge of the sublime, without overpassing that narrow boundary which plunges the ambitious penman into the ridiculous: all these are possessed by Herman Melville, and exemplified in these volumes.

John Bull (October 25, 1851)

Of all the extraordinary books from the pen of Herman Melville this is out and out the most extraordinary. Who would have looked for philosophy in whales, or for poetry in blubber? Yet few books which professedly deal in metaphysics, or claim the parentage of the muses, contain as much true philosophy and as much genuine poetry as the tale of the *Pequod*'s whaling expedition.

Critics reviewing *Moby-Dick* struggled to compare to known models a book *sui generis*—that is, to expectations. How do you describe an elephant, or a whale, to those who have never seen one?

One distinction between the *The Whale* and *Moby-Dick* had a material effect on reviews like that in *The Spectator*: the absence in the British edition of the Epilogue, which contained the critical information that Ishmael, the narrator, had survived the sinking of the *Pequod*. Absent that, the narrator seemed to have died before the tale ended, violating the hoary rules of fiction. It's unclear whether the section was idiotically dropped by the publisher or disappeared through some mishap in the London setting. Far less probably, Melville might have considered an epilogue necessary only after the revised proof sheets had been dispatched to England.

The Whale's reception there, it has long been recognized, was broadly and at times wildly favorable. The current (2020) census on the blog *Melvilliana* lists 116 reviews, both English and American, of which seventy-nine are favorable, twenty unfavorable, and seventeen mixed. Unfortunately, only the dreadful ones in *The Athenæum* and *The Spectator*, extracted above, were reprinted in America.

Richard Bentley used snippets from the early London notices to publicize the book. From mid-October through mid-December, advertisements were placed in at least six newspapers, sometimes more than once. The discovery of such ads is important but perhaps never to be complete, because runs of Victorian newspapers have not always survived intact, and some reviews otherwise lost may have left evidence in the snippets chosen. At least six ads cite a review in the *Morning Herald* very different from the one formerly known; and this additional review was found

only recently by Scott Norsworthy, reporting in *Melvilliana* that it was published on November 17, 1851. Two other ads quote a review from a source identified merely as "Evening paper": "The raciest thing of the kind that was ever produced. The author's ink must be the black liquor of the cuttle-fish, and his pen drawn from the wing of the albatross." (One ad quotes only the first sentence.)

The latter review was long untraced, in part because of the deliberate vagueness of the citation. It was finally identified in *Melvilliana* as having been drawn from a review in the London *Globe* (October 20, 1851). Why did Bentley think it necessary to disguise the paper's name? So far as I can tell, no one has remarked on the reputation of this source, a reputation that may explain the publisher's sleight of hand.

This and the other reviews of October 20 in the *Morning Herald* and *The Morning Post* were thought until recently to be the first notices; but the indefatigable Mr. Norsworthy has since discovered that the *Globe* review had appeared three days earlier, also in the *Morning Herald*—on October 17, the day before the book's London publication. Bentley nonetheless credited the snippets as from "Evening paper," as the *Globe* was, so either he missed the insertion in the *Herald* or the critic was double dealing, getting paid for the same copy twice. The latter seems unlikely, as any duplicity would have spoiled the prospect of further commissions. Perhaps Bentley arranged for both insertions and for his own reasons credited the "Evening paper"—the reprinting of reviews was not unknown and relative circulation may have played its part, if the *Globe* was the more popular. Still, reviews in the *Morning Herald* might now be treated to more scrutiny, on the chance that it was also part of a seamy underside to London publishing.

Less than a decade before *The Whale* was published, a piece appeared in the literature column of *The Illustrated London News* (July 22, 1843) under the heading "The Puff System." It began, "It may not be deemed incompatible with the character of a Family Newspaper to have occasional recourse to disquisition upon literary topics of the day as seem to be susceptible of strong interest in the public mind." The subject at hand was called by the reporter

> The Puffing System—a system as insidious, unwholesome, and extended in ramification as any other of the undermining sources of corruption by which a combination of imposture, ingenuity, and mental depravity have wrought deception upon society and polluted the springs of public taste. This puffing system has been of a peculiar and poisonous growth.

The article goes on to mention a recent trial at the Magistrates Court, in which an aggrieved book publisher, one Mr. Colburn (probably Henry Colburn), sued the *Atlas*. The weekly journal had exposed this "puffing system," in which newspapers indulged in the "system of paragraphing—that is, of passing off paid paragraphs . . . , about books, as the *bona fide* opinions of their editors, and so gulling the public," when in fact the reviews were written and paid for by the book publishers. (This use of *puff* goes back, according to the *OED*, at least as far as lines written at the end of the sixteenth century by John Marston, "Blown up with the flattering puffs/ Of spongy Sycophants." It can be found more than a hundred years earlier as a verb.) Though the publisher had sought a thousand pounds in damages, he received forty shillings (two pounds) and an order to pay his own costs.

The author of the piece in *The Illustrated London News* pressed his assault on "that ugly literary monster, the London booksellers' puff":

> Every person accustomed to peruse the evening papers will have been struck from time to time with literary notices scattered among the miscellaneous topics of chit chat, and couched in a tone of delicate inuendo [*sic*] about books that are forthcoming, or of extravagant approval about those which are forthcome. The work must be a jewel! The reader has leaped from his sofa to his bell-rope, and in five minutes his servant has been inquiring of Sams, Mitchell, or Hookham [London booksellers], either when

> it will be published, or why it has not arrived. Now the paragraph which has betrayed him into this excitement is all *fudge*—fudge in the most provoking, Vicar-of-Wakefieldish sense.

The attack claimed that

> the publisher of the book has paid perhaps a guinea [a pound and a shilling] for its insertion. It may deceive hundreds, but it is only a bookseller's puff, originally manufactured by some such hack as was examined for Mr. Colburn on the *Atlas* trial—but doomed to go the round of the morning newspapers upon the now established authority of "Evening paper."

The *Globe*, the *Sun*, and the *Standard* were specifically condemned. The correspondent pointed out that the *Times*, when reprinting such guff, prefixed the word "advertisement" before the suspect quotes (or perhaps the listing itself), while the *Chronicle* "'stigmatises' them with diminutive type." According to the British Newspaper Archive, the *Globe* was a "booksellers' trade journal," though the *Sun* and the *Standard* were not.

Richard Bentley was perhaps not above quoting from reviews that he had bought and paid for. To conceal the source under the name "Evening paper" is exactly the accusation in *The London Illustrated News*. The actual name of the paper might have made the knowing reader discount the opinion—why else conceal it? The deception can't have been simply because one of the ads was placed *in* the *Globe*, as the disguise remains in the ads placed elsewhere, earlier. The *Globe*'s notice, just five sentences long, is certainly full of outlandish flattery, even among reviews that praised Melville highly. There is no firm evidence, alas, that Bentley stooped to such a contrivance, even if common among publishers.

Knowing that the *Globe* review might have been planted, however, may also make suspect the similarly brief raves in *The Morning Post* and the *Morning Herald* on the same Monday. There's a small overlap of vocabulary among these October 20 reviews, but not enough to suggest they were written by the same man—indeed, a canny publisher would have employed three different men. If Bentley did place that earlier review in the *Herald*, which appeared two days after the official publication of the novel, perhaps he quoted only from the later review because that was the one he had *not* ordered written and needed no disguise. The reviews are, however, short enough that half an hour's skimming might have made any critic familiar enough with the novel to hazard a review of it.

Some evidence of the culture of reviewing during the period may also be found, if we trust to fiction, in *The Way We Live Now* (1875). Though the novel follows *Moby-Dick* by more than two decades, Trollope's career began before Melville's novel was published. Bentley's possible hand in placing reviews is reminiscent of Lady Carbury's solicitation of favorable notices of her first book. ("To puff and to get one's self puffed," she writes to a friendly editor, "have become different branches of a new profession.") When she complains to her publisher about a particularly dire review, Trollope explains the Linnaean structure of the literary world:

> There is the review intended to sell a book—which comes out immediately after the appearance of the book, or sometimes before it; the review which gives reputation, but does not affect the sale, and which comes a little later; the review which snuffs a book out quietly; the review which is to raise or lower the author a single peg, or two pegs, as the case may be; the review which is suddenly to make an author, and the review which is to crush him. . . . Of all reviews, the crushing review is the most popular, as being the most readable. When the rumour goes abroad that some notable man has been actually crushed—been positively driven over by an entire Juggernaut's car of criticism till his literary body be a mere amorphous mass—then a real success has been achieved.

With allowance for a small amount of caricature, this seems a fair description of reviewing then and now—apart from the near extinction of the crushing review.

The harsh criticism of Melville's period may be almost as disconcerting to a modern reader as

the shiftiness of publishers. Those who think critics should never criticize may find the treatment of his masterpiece, however acceptable by nineteenth-century standards, not edifying but shocking. The early critical reactions did not prevent *Moby-Dick* from being recognized as the Great American Novel, though that took most of a century—and neither did the positive reviews, nor the bits of possibly paid-for puffery, create a best-seller. The British edition never sold out. Though *Moby-Dick* did go through three more American printings over the next twenty years, the later ones were small and overall sales poor. Melville's nine novels were published in an astonishing eleven years, the first seven in seven. After the last, *The Confidence-Man* (1857), an act of genius exceeded only by the tale of the whale, Melville abandoned fiction and fled to poetry, for which he possessed almost no gift. For two decades he was forced to make his living as a New York City customs-house inspector.

The "Acushnet" crew memorandum

Melville signed as a "green hand" on the whaler *Acushnet*, which set sail at the beginning of 1841 from Fairhaven, a whaling port across the Acushnet River from New Bedford. He lasted only eighteen months, deserting in the Marquesas in July 1842. Years later, while living in Massachusetts, he was visited by one of his old shipmates, Henry Hubbard. Melville afterward composed a memorandum headed "What became of the ship's company of the whale-ship 'Acushnet,' according to Hubbard who came home in her (more than a four years' voyage) and who visited me at Pittsfield," the Berkshire town where Melville made his home. At some time, possibly long after, he dated it 1850, though the probable date of Hubbard's presumed visit was in the spring of 1853. The arguments about the date and a transcription of the document may be found in the Northwestern-Newberry edition.

The various seamen often succumbed, when they did not simply desert, to mishaps or maladies not uncommon among sailors: "run away or killed," "went ashore . . . , afterwards committed suicide," "went ashore . . . half dead with disreputable disease," "died at the hospital," "went ashore half dead, spitting blood." Fewer than half the sailors who shipped out on the *Acushnet* sailed home in her.

Melville's crabbed and infuriating hand requires a good deal of deciphering, but the transcription stumbles over only one word. His shipmate Robert Murry or Mury (Murray in the memorandum) "went ashore, ?shunning fight, at Rio Janeiro." This may have been only seventy days into the journey at the *Acushnet*'s first known port of call, but then Melville might have remembered the fate of Murry already, unless he was put ashore on the return voyage. Captain Valentine Pease, after the return to Fairhaven four years later, swore in an affidavit that Murray had "deserted on the voyage."

No better than a scribble, the enigmatic word is called "indeterminate" in the Northwestern-Newberry edition and the alternatives flatly rejected: "'shoving,' 'sharing,' 'shamming,' and even 'showing' do not fit the context more convincingly." I agree that *shoving*, *sharing*, and *shamming fight* make little sense in context. It's not clear, however, why a sailor not on a warship—or a pirate ship—would be dismissed for "shunning fight," unless it refers to a fight with a whale (presumably irrelevant unless Murray was a harpooner). You might think that having placable members of crew would be an advantage in the confining and uncomfortable quarters below deck on a whaler. As "shunning fight" seems to have been adopted wholesale by writers on Melville, I want to put in a strong word for the remaining alternative, "showing fight."

Of the readings, "shunning fight" is almost impossible to discover in or before the middle of the nineteenth century. It's hard to find even now, except in references to this transcript of the *Acushnet* memorandum. There are only four examples before 1860 in Google Books of "shunning fight," all from Charles Churchill's poem "The Duellist" (1763). It's possible but unlikely that "shunning fight" was a rare idiom that doesn't appear in print searches. Similarly, there are no instances of contemporary use before 1860 for "sharing

fight" (though two false positives, misinterpretations of the scan) and none for "shoving fight." The abundance of examples for "sham fight" or "shamming fight" cannot overcome the objection that "shamming fight" would be unlikely grounds to send Murry (or Mury) ashore.

"Showing fight," however, is far more likely and far more appealing. According to the *OED*, to "show fight" is a phrase used as early as 1803, meaning, as should be obvious, "to display pugnacity or readiness to fight." Before 1860 there are, in Google Books, over 2,000 entries for "show fight" and over 1,500 for "showing fight." Though a portion prove to be duplicates (as is common in such searches), the phrase appears broadly, in some cases specifically in naval use or by former sailors:

> [Frederick Marryat], *Peter Simple* (London, 1834). [Marryat was a Royal Navy captain who became a novelist before resigning his commission.]
>
> "Vell," cried the woman who had made me a prisoner, "I do declare I likes to see a puddle in a storm—only look at the little biscuit-nibbler showing fight."

> Matthew Henry Barker (The Old Sailor, pseud.), *Topsail-Sheet Blocks; or, The Naval Foundling* (London, 1838). [Barker sailed on an East Indiaman and in the Royal Navy.]
>
> "Hold your tongue, youngster, and don't shove your oar in where 'tis not wanted," ordered the master's-mate: "though perhaps it would have been as well to have backed up so much blustering by at least *showing* fight."

> [George Cupples], *The Green Hand: A "Short" Yarn* (New York, 1850). [Cupples spent eighteen months at sea before turning to fiction, and in his sixties, after an accident disabled the captain, sailed a merchant ship from India to England.]
>
> Rare fun we had of it for three or four hours on end; the cadets and writers showing fight in a body, the Yankee being regularly keelhauled, tarred, and feathered, though I believe he had crossed the Line twice by land.

> George Frederick M'Dougall, *The Eventful Voyage of H. M. Discovery Ship "Resolute" to the Arctic Regions in Search of Sir John Franklin* (London, 1857). [M'Dougall was a master on the *Discovery*.]
>
> We have found the little animals [lemmings], rolled up in a ball-like form, snugly ensconced within the folds of our blanket bags; nor would they be expelled from such a warm and desirable position without showing fight.

The examples suggest that, even when not used about sailors, the phrase was part of the vocabulary of writers who sailed and sailors who wrote. The flogging scene from Melville's *White-Jacket* (1855) may be relevant, where four sailors are whipped with a "cat," a cat-o'-nine-tails, after being found fighting on the gun-deck. The captain says, "I allow no man to fight on board here but myself. I do the fighting."

No one needs a member of crew too eager to use his fists.

The appropriation of Locke
by Joseph Loconte

More than fifty years ago, the Cambridge political scientist John Dunn shook the academic world by the collar when he argued—contrary to the secular account of the origins of liberal democracy—that the intellectual father of the liberal project was an essentially Christian thinker. A chief complaint in his *Political Thought of John Locke* (1969) was the absence of any serious treatment of the relationship of Locke's political philosophy to his religious beliefs. "It is an astonishing lacuna," he wrote.

Dunn's work, an exploration of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) in its historical context, did much to fill it. "Locke saw the rationality of human existence, a rationality which he spent so much of his life in attempting to vindicate, as dependent upon the truths of religion," Dunn declared. Indeed, Locke's entire intellectual enterprise depended upon "the axiomatic centrality of the purposes of God." Dunn's bracing conclusion: Locke's conceptual approach to political society "is saturated with Christian assumptions."

If Dunn is correct, then the liberal order owes a profound debt to the biblical tradition with respect to its ideas about freedom, equality, and our capacity for self-government. Indeed, the argument now being waged over the legitimacy of the American political order—coming from both the ideological Left and the religious Right—is really an argument over Locke's moral vision of a just society.

No seventeenth-century thinker, after all, exerted more influence over the American Revolution and the Founding generation. Outside of the Bible, no writings were more widely read or cited in the revolutionary period than Locke's. It is not too much to conclude that the American experiment in self-government was originally and substantially Lockean in its political and religious outlook, which is to say, following Dunn, that it was "saturated" with Christian beliefs about human freedom and human responsibility. If so, then any debate over the character and future of the American project must take into account the relationship between Locke's political ideals and his religious convictions.

Two of the chief targets in *The Political Thought of John Locke* were C. B. Macpherson, a Canadian political scientist, and Leo Strauss, the German immigrant to the United States who helped to revive the study of classical political theory. Taking a Marxist approach, Macpherson regarded material property as the central concept in Locke's political thought. He accused Locke of using natural law as a "façade" to justify the "unlimited accumulation" of property in a capitalist society. Strauss, famous for distinguishing between the explicit and supposedly hidden meaning of historical texts, persuaded a generation of political theorists that Locke was a closet Hobbesian who used biblical language to cloak a radically individualist, anti-religious agenda.

Despite their differences, Macpherson and Strauss both regarded Locke as an Enlightenment skeptic who rejected Christianity's supernatural claims, moral precepts, and belief in the immortality of the soul. Locke's attachment to the individual's right of appropriation is so

uncompromising, wrote Macpherson, that it "overrides any moral claims of the society." Likewise, Strauss claimed that Locke elevated the lone individual "as the center and origin of the moral world." His damning conclusion: "Locke is a hedonist."

This criticism of Locke's liberalism as the great solvent of tradition, virtue, and religious belief continues to influence political scientists, educators, and public intellectuals. For the ideological Left, it has nurtured the progressive assumption that liberal values emerged only as societies became more secular and dispensed with religious belief. More recently, Macpherson and Strauss have been enlisted by those among the religious Right who accuse Locke of transforming the classical and Christian conceptions of freedom into a license for personal liberation.

Yet the image of Locke as a postmodern hedonist has not held up well under scholarly scrutiny. Since the publication of Dunn's *Political Thought of John Locke*, we have had decades of Locke scholarship exploring not only his political philosophy, but also his lifelong religious beliefs and concerns. Though differences of opinion remain over the contours of Locke's religious faith, there exists broad agreement about Dunn's essential thesis: in Locke's writings we encounter not only a severe critic of authoritarian religion, but also a fierce defender of Christianity's moral precepts who considered himself an orthodox believer.

There are many places in the corpus of Locke's writings where he articulates his beliefs about God, human nature, and the moral obligations owed to God and neighbor. In the opening lines of *Two Treatises of Government*, for example, Locke presumes the natural freedom of mankind in rebuking political absolutism: "Slavery is so vile and miserable an estate of man, and so directly opposite to the generous temper and courage of our nation, that it is hardly to be conceived that an Englishman, much less a gentleman, should plead for it." The remainder of the *First Treatise* is a careful, biblical refutation of patriarchal absolutism. Locke builds upon this theme in the *Second Treatise*, in which he declares God's proprietorship over all mankind:

> For men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; all the servants of one Sovereign Maker, sent into the world by his order and about his business, they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure.

Neither Strauss nor Macpherson paid much attention to Locke's proclamation that a trustworthy political theory must be rooted in religious anthropology. Many in Locke's audience, no doubt, would have recognized his allusion to a passage from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: "For we are God's *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

The theology expressed in the *Two Treatises* forms the conceptual core of Dunn's analysis of Locke's political philosophy. "Men were owned by God. They were vessels sent on a voyage by him," Dunn writes, and they were thus obligated "not to rob their owner of their services." For Locke, legitimate political authority must respect the divine prerogative.

A succession of scholars have reached similar conclusions about Locke's beliefs. At a 1982 Carlyle Lecture in Oxford, the political theorist Jeremy Waldron experienced the stirrings of a Lockean epiphany. The speaker, Alasdair MacIntyre, observed that Locke's arguments for equality and individual rights in the *Two Treatises of Government* were so imbued with religious content that they could not be taught in America's secular public schools. Waldron balked, assuming that "the theology could be bracketed out of Locke's theory." Nevertheless, after re-examining Locke's political and religious works, he concluded that Locke's claims about human equality were inseparable from his belief in man as a creature subject to the commandments of his Creator. "The theological content cannot simply be bracketed off as a curiosity," Waldron writes in *God, Locke, and Equality* (2002). "It shapes and informs the account through and through."

The Cambridge historian Mark Goldie rejects attempts to turn Locke's view of lib-

erty into libertinism. Locke, he explains, did not believe in freedom of action in a moral vacuum. "We are put on earth to fulfill our best nature; we are here to do God's business," Goldie writes in his edition of Locke's *Two Treatises* (1993). "Accordingly, political freedom consists in a lack of impediments to conducting a godly life." Elizabeth Pritchard, a professor of religion at Bowdoin College, insists upon "the centrality of theism" to Locke's liberalism. "Locke's workmanship argument is emphatic that each human is the property of God," she writes in *Religion in Public: Locke's Political Theology* (2014). "Locke's political theology is predicated on a consensus on the sacrality of humans *qua* property of God. It is this consensus that grounds human rights, more specifically, the liberty and equality of all human beings."

Another pillar of Locke's political theology is what some scholars have called "the democratic intellect." They emphasize Locke's belief in the universal capacity of human reason: the ability of every person to understand that God exists and what he requires. As Locke declares in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), whatever differences exist among people of different economic or social backgrounds,

> they have Light enough to lead them to the Knowledge of their Maker, and the sight of their own Duties. . . . It will be no Excuse to an idle and untoward Servant, who would not attend his Business by Candle-light, to plead that he had not broad Sun-shine. The Candle that is set up in us, shines bright enough for all our Purposes.

Writing in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke* (1994), Hans Aarsleff, a professor of English at Princeton, explains that, although Locke was a "pious believer in scriptural revelation, . . . his public philosophy was directed toward God's manifest revelation in creation because it, by being open to the reason and senses of all, allows for equality of knowledge for all." Locke's anthropology legitimized, without moral distinction, the rational capacities of every human being. Here is an unashamedly religious rationale for political equality: the proposition that God has constituted human nature so that every individual, by virtue of his or her humanity, possesses both the capacity and the obligation to seek after God and to discern his moral law.

Since Dunn's work, a large and growing community of scholars has explored how Locke's political philosophy was embedded in the religious beliefs and assumptions of post-Reformation Europe. In *The Mind of John Locke: A Study of Political Theory in Its Intellectual Setting* (1994), the Cambridge historian Ian Harris explains that, for Locke, the task facing man was not an amoral quest for self-preservation or a Hobbesian struggle for survival. Rather, Locke conceives of God "not merely as creator and preserver of mankind, but as setting purposes fundamental to human life."

In *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (1986), the political theorist Richard Ashcraft observes that Locke first developed his thinking about man's moral duties to God in his *Essays on the Law of Nature* (1666), published early in his career. These duties, Locke writes, are bound up with the law of nature and derived "from the right which the Creator has over His Creation." Though self-preservation is an essential attribute of humankind, it cannot be the basis for the moral laws that govern men and nations. Instead, building upon the divine prerogative declared in Genesis, Locke argues that political absolutism is incompatible with God's "grand design" for humankind. "The political message of Locke's commitment to creationism is starkly clear," writes Ashcraft. "Neither monarchs nor fathers have a right to destroy God's workmanship, since such a right belongs to the maker of the property." Ashcraft calls this the "primary axis" upon which Locke rejects political absolutism.

If the absolute sovereignty of God precludes absolutism among men, another basis for political society—accessible to all—must be proposed. But what? This was Locke's great objective in his *Second Treatise*, where he cited the Bible sparingly, relying on natural law and natural rights to make the case for human freedom and equality:

> The state of Nature has a law of Nature to govern it, which obliges everyone, and reason, which is

> that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions.

Scholars widely agree that Locke rooted this "law of Nature" in the divine will and that it was upon this theistic foundation that he based his argument for consensual government. In *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus* (2005), the political theorist Greg Forster writes that, for Locke, the only kind of natural or moral law worthy of the name was divine in origin. "To be a moral law properly so called, a law need not be revelatory—it can be discerned in nature instead—but it must bear God's authority." In *John Locke: Essays on the Law of Nature* (1988), the philosopher Wolfgang von Lyden writes that Locke rejected the doctrine of Thomas Hobbes, which makes self-preservation and self-interest the basis of natural law. Instead, God was for Locke the "binding force" of natural law. "He derives natural law from man's rational nature and this, in turn, from God's wisdom and eternal order that prevails in the universe." Kim Ian Parker, the author of *The Biblical Politics of John Locke* (2004), observes that Locke himself drew out the political implications of a divinely ordained natural law: those who violated the law of nature faced punishment from political authorities "for seeking to destroy others who are, in effect, God's property."

Many see a strong connection between Locke's theological basis for consensual government and his argument for the rights of conscience in matters of faith. Locke's interest in the debates over liberty of conscience began during the Restoration (1660–88), a period of intense religious persecution. A broad defense of religious liberty—grounded in both natural rights and revealed religion—became one of his lifelong pursuits. "In one form or another," writes the political scientist Gordon Schochet, "religious toleration constitutes the single strand that unites his entire intellectual and political career."

Here again a consensus has emerged. Like his political radicalism, Locke's advocacy for religious liberty was framed and motivated by a set of firmly held religious beliefs. Scholars debate Locke's orthodoxy, but there is little doubt that he maintained a lifelong belief in the divine authority of the Bible, in Jesus as the Messiah, in the hope of eternal life, and in a final judgment.

Dunn was one of the first scholars to take seriously Locke's convictions on these matters. Contrary to materialist interpretations, Dunn insisted that Locke's belief in eternal life shaped his politics and drove his appeal for the rights of conscience. For Locke, only genuine faith, based on the "inward persuasion of the mind," could be acceptable to God. As Dunn explained:

> The right of freedom of conscience in Locke's eyes is fundamentally a right to worship God in the way one judges that God requires: a right which follows from, and is barely intelligible without the duty to do just that. . . . It is a grotesque impertinence for any human political authority to intrude its inept and irrelevant pretensions into this overwhelmingly important individual preoccupation.

Most scholars have come around to this view. In their edition *John Locke: An Essay Concerning Toleration* (2006), J. R. Milton, a philosopher at King's College London, and his brother Philip Milton, a lecturer in law at the University of Leicester, examine nearly all of Locke's writings on religious freedom from 1667 to 1683. As they see it, Locke's individualism was severely constrained in that every person was accountable for his own soul—for the integrity of his life and faith—before a holy God. "[Locke's] starting point, the foundation on which everything rests, was that everyone has two destinies, one in this world and the other in the next," they write. "Of these the latter is by far the most important . . . and religious considerations must take priority over secular ones."

Locke's views on the subject of religious reform can be situated roughly within the Protestant tradition of Martin Luther. "As nobody else can go to heaven or hell for me," Luther wrote, "so nobody else can believe or disbelieve for me." As Locke put the matter himself: "The one only narrow way which leads to heaven is not better known to the

magistrate than to private persons," he wrote in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, "and therefore I cannot safely take him for my guide."

There are plausible reasons to view Locke not only as a religious believer, but also as a Christian reformer. In *John Locke: Writings on Religion* (2002), the philosopher Victor Nuovo argues that Locke took the Christian doctrine of redemption deadly seriously because the prospect of eternal happiness "was for Locke not an idle hope but an assurance beyond doubt." His rejection of militant Christianity "does not put him outside the Reformation, but, together with his fidelity to the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, arguably places him within it as one of its advocates."

In recent years, no scholar has explored with more care the sources of Locke's thinking about religious liberty than John Marshall, an historian at Johns Hopkins University. In his magisterial *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (2006), Marshall places Locke in the company of reformers who championed the "primitive Christianity" of the early church over the use of force in winning converts. Locke collected virtually everything written about toleration he could get his hands on: the works of Desiderius Erasmus, Sebastian Castellio, Jeremy Taylor, William Chillingworth, Philipp van Limborch, and others in the Christian-humanist tradition. All were Trinitarian, orthodox Christians; all sought a more tolerant form of Christianity. Like them, according to Marshall, Locke believed that "God himself required a voluntary or consensual worship which could not proceed from force" and that "the duties of equity and charity in imitation of Christ and the apostles required the toleration of others."

In the opening pages of *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), his most sophisticated defense of religious freedom, Locke repeatedly appeals to the teachings and example of Jesus and his disciples as the moral lodestar for a more liberal political order. "The toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion, is so agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the genuine reason of mankind," he wrote, "that it seems monstrous for men to be so blind, as not to perceive the necessity and advantage of it, in so clear a light." It is beyond question, Marshall writes, that for Locke "the duty of charity was a crucial argument for toleration, as charity was the most important duty of Christianity."

The Yale philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff warns that it is a mistake to isolate Locke's religious beliefs from his political philosophy: "For a striking feature of Locke's thought is that religious considerations enter into all parts of his thought; Locke's philosophy as a whole bids fair to be called a Christian philosophy." Against Macpherson and Strauss, J. R. Milton argues that Locke's Christian vocabulary "cannot be interpreted either as a pious façade or . . . as a mere residue in a mind already fundamentally secular but either reluctant or unable to acknowledge itself as such." Mark Goldie concurs: "Locke's philosophy was profoundly imbued with Christian convictions: he was no secular thinker."

Thus, over the last half century, scholars from all disciplines have repudiated the profile of Locke created by Macpherson and Strauss: Locke as a Hobbesian, hedonist, materialist, deist, and an opponent of traditional religion. Indeed, we have learned that Locke sought to anchor his entire approach to politics in one of the central doctrines of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures: the concept that God has marked out a noble calling for every human being, a purpose that was not intended to be realized in a political order based on slavery.

What, then, explains the secular interpretations of Locke that continue to be propagated? In his own day, Locke was attacked as an atheist; one contemporary critic compared him to "one of those Locusts that arose out of the smoke of the bottomless Pit." Today Locke is hailed by much of the Left as a champion of the radical Enlightenment and pilloried by much of the Right as a tool of the devil to dissolve mankind's obligations to God and neighbor.

George Kateb, a professor of politics at Princeton, argues—somewhat bizarrely—that only in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is Locke truly sincere in his arguments for God's existence. "When he invokes God elsewhere he is not sincere," Kateb wrote in 2009, without offering any criteria to evaluate Locke's sincerity. "What is more,

nothing moral or political follows from his sincere theological arguments." As we have seen, quite a bit follows from Locke's religious convictions. Nevertheless, Kateb claims that Locke "made an unequaled contribution to the emergence of secularism in general and political secularism in particular." In *Why Liberalism Failed* (2018), the Notre Dame political scientist Patrick Deneen parrots the Marxist critique and condemns Locke's liberalism as "a catastrophe for the ideals of the West," based upon a "false anthropology" that exalts "the unleashed ambition of individuals." Still others have imbibed the materialist narrative and applied it to the American Founding. The result is a view of liberal democracy as having been steeped in an anti-religious, radically individualistic ethos from its birth.

We are thus faced with a profound conceptual mistake involving one of the most consequential minds in the Western political tradition. Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* became a catalyst for the American Revolution and for other revolutions dedicated to human equality, freedom, and government by consent of the governed. His *Letter Concerning Toleration* transformed the debates over the rights of conscience and ranks as the most important defense of religious liberty ever written. These works stand at the heart of the liberal-democratic canon.

Locke's achievements are best appreciated in their historical setting, the time that Paul Hazard called "the crisis of the European mind." Born in 1632, Locke lived during one of the most turbulent periods of English history: the English Civil War, the Restoration, and the Glorious Revolution. He witnessed firsthand the devastating results of religious persecution. Political absolutism and religious authoritarianism were ravaging European civil society; deeply intertwined, both relied upon eccentric interpretations of the Bible.

Locke met them head on. Whatever the precise content of Locke's religious beliefs, no serious account of the body of his work can fail to detect a set of religious convictions that functioned as the motive force behind his political philosophy. Locke returned often to the life of Jesus as the model for private and civic behavior. "It is not enough to believe him to be the Messiah," he warned in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, "unless we also obey his laws and take him to be our king to reign over us." Locke's aim was to instigate a revolution in the *theological* outlook of European society: a return to historic biblical teachings that would give rise to a more just, tolerant, and pluralistic society.

This conclusion comes as no surprise to scholars who have studied not only Locke's published works, but also his unpublished manuscripts, notebooks, and letters. Locke's extant correspondence consists of about 3,650 letters. Spanning more than five decades, they reveal, among other things, a man of heartfelt faith grappling with the gulf between the moral demands of Christianity and a society lacerated by sectarian strife.

While in political exile in the Netherlands, for example, Locke wrote to his friend, Philipp van Limborch, the leader of a dissenting church in Amsterdam. Limborch had sent Locke a manuscript of his *Theologica Christiana*, a defense of Christian orthodoxy and a plea for religious toleration. "If you wish me to speak openly and sincerely," Locke wrote, "nowhere have I found opinions more clearly set forth, better supported by reasoned arguments, further removed from party feeling, *and in all points more conformable to the truth*" (italics added).

For anyone who cares to examine it, the scholarship offers a stunning rebuke not only to Macpherson and Strauss, but also to the entire secularization thesis. Funeral services for this great myth are long overdue. The roots of the most cherished values of liberalism—its emphasis on human dignity, equality, freedom, and pluralism—grew in the soil of religious belief. Put another way, liberal democracy emerged not because of secularization, but because of a fresh and dynamic application of the principles of biblical religion.

Many actors played a role in the triumph of these concepts in the West, but none was more influential than John Locke. Consequently, any scheme for democratic renewal that remains either ignorant or contemptuous of this history is surely a fool's errand. Indeed, the recovery of Locke's singular moral vision is one of the most urgent cultural tasks of our day.

When there were giants: three great classicists

by Victor Davis Hanson

Classics is not just an abstraction of values, legacies, literature, and history. Whether it comes alive or stays moribund in the modern age hinges on the success or failure of classicists in the classroom, in public fora, and in print. In that context, classics has suffered a great loss this year, with the death of three quite different but equally gifted and dedicated classicists. The Yale historian of Greece Donald Kagan died in early August, and he leaves an enormous void that will be impossible to fill. A number of obituaries by scholars and former students have surveyed his magnificent life. A few journalists have added occasional epithets such as "neoconservative"—an odd sobriquet when it is hard to detect any contemporary ideological bias in his signature four-volume history of the Peloponnesian War and other works.

In truth, what was spectacular about Kagan's career were the contributions that derived from his natural intelligence, his superb mastery of the chief sources from fifth-century B.C. Athens, his devotion to the wider dissemination of scholarship to the public, his love of and advocacy for undergraduate teaching, his traditionalist commitment to family and country, and his moral courage in weighing in on contemporary controversies, without worry over reactions from an often ideologically monolithic faculty and administration.

Most graduate students of Greek history in the mid-1970s and 1980s were assigned by their advisors the orthodox works of leading historians such as M. I. Finley, G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, and Peter Garnsey. This brilliant post-war generation of interdisciplinary Oxford and Cambridge historians focused on the prejudices and inadequacies of our ancient sources and incorporated into their histories the contributions of the social sciences, demography, economics, statistics, studies of rural life, ideology, and anthropology.

Like Kagan, they often sought to make their scholarly views accessible to the general public. But unlike Kagan, they did not write in the narrative traditions of the grand European historians of Greece, such as Karl Beloch, Georg Busolt, George Grote, and Eduard Meyer. The nineteenth-century idea of a multivolume story of ancient history perhaps had given way to the model of the invaluable *Cambridge Ancient History*, where teams of experts were assigned only areas in their published expertise, with instructions to condense their scholarship into accessible narratives.

In sum, as a graduate student I was discouraged by advisors from reading Kagan's supposedly passé style of historiography. Yet when I later did, I eventually appreciated that it opened up a world that I had missed, revealing my own abject ignorance.

Kagan devoted over twenty years of his life to a four-volume history of the Peloponnesian War, in an unapologetic commitment to narrative history, with emphases largely on politics and war. He wove the ancient testimonies of Thucydides, Diodorus, Plutarch, and less-well-known fragmentary historians with epigraphic sources to provide an engaging account of some ninety years—prior to,

during, and after the twenty-seven-year-long Spartan–Athenian catastrophe.

Kagan, again in then-unfashionable ways, focused on the various parties and interests within the major city-states, who brokered their respective foreign policies of their poleis and were guided by less tangible motivations that transcended class interests to include honor, fear, and perceived self-interest.

He implicitly rather than overtly reminded the reader that current realist ideas like the role of a balance of power, of deterrence, of alliances, and of preemption were hardly modern, and in fact were ancient notions, innate to human nature itself. And he focused on paradoxes: good men (such as his beloved Pericles) can make terrible decisions. Bad men (e.g., Cleon) can come up occasionally with insightful strategies. Ill-conceived wars can still be won (perhaps the only thing worse than the commitment of the full resources of the Athenian Empire to an optional war with democratic Syracuse was the loss of that conflict). Sound strategy and victories can be forfeited by illogical but entirely human decisions (e.g., the last three years of herky-jerky Athenian strategy during the Ionian War at sea). Sometimes supposed tactical genius can be too cute and lead to misinformation, miscommunication, and misadventure (as in the case of the general Demosthenes at Syracuse).

The idea of free will predominates in Kagan's histories. Unlike Marxist determinists, Kagan resisted the notion that anything is "inevitable," or that leaders are themselves captives of larger social, economic, and ideological forces. Instead, wiser decisions could have prevented the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War (perhaps contra the judgment of Thucydides himself, given that peace is somewhat unnatural and requires the hard work of statecraft when adversaries have so little in common).

Second, Kagan brought his classical reverence for tradition, Western institutions, and erudition to contemporary controversies. He politely but firmly criticized George Will's influential enthusiasm for the idea that a more scientific approach to contemporary baseball had improved a constantly changing game and indeed enhanced fan enjoyment in the evolving national pastime.

When the Bass family of Texas gave a multimillion-dollar contribution to Yale to support a greater emphasis on and instruction in Western civilization—only to see it contorted for interests other than those of the donors' intent—Kagan was outspoken about the lost opportunity of such rare munificence. And yet he privately understood, in the Thucydidean sense, that people in the wrong can appeal to a principle that people in the right must sometimes unfortunately concede: the Bass family's generosity was still subject to the whims of the ungracious Yale recipients. The faculty were correct that donors cannot, at least absolutely, set the exact parameters and details circumscribing faculty governance, even when it is self-destructive. And so the generosity was returned to the donors.

As a young professor at Cornell, Kagan's opposition to the radical takeover of the university's campus was not just brave, but prescient. Many of the excesses of the current woke movement follow precisely the logical trajectories of what Kagan, the advocate of free expression and racially blind meritocracy, warned about a half-century ago. He was inspired by Thucydides' warnings about the epidemic of deadly relativism during the stasis at Corcyra, where factions destroyed institutions that they themselves would eventually sorely miss.

Third, Kagan might not have identified as a populist, at least politically, but he certainly was one in the conduct of his own life. While he was an unapologetic champion of erudition, of higher learning, and of the advantages of elite culture and civilization, he retained his Brooklyn roots, the pragmatic common sense of his youth, and interests outside academia. I spent a year with him at a research center on the Stanford campus between 1992 and 1993 and watched him chat with groundskeepers and cooks about their jobs. He pressed me about farming, tractors, and the ins and outs of viticulture. How, he inquired, did one harvest raisins and olives—to the point that I once joked, "I am also an occasional classicist, Don."

Meanwhile we talked about the two books we were working on: each afternoon, a half hour on his work in progress about the causes of wars and a half hour on my study of the agrarian roots of the Greek city-state. What I also learned from these discussions was his insistence on speaking politely but boldly, on questioning orthodoxy—if orthodoxy seemed groupthink rather than induction—and on valuing common sense and practicality over theory and abstraction. He used the term "wrong" often when praising the erudition of a great classical scholar who unfortunately came to improbable conclusions—as if displays of vast knowledge sometimes blinded the historian to the obvious. Good sense, Kagan often reminded me, was the important attribute of a historian.

He always ended our afternoon meetings with advice, new to me at the time, that if our short lives were to have any meaning, then we must first always honor family, country, our parents, and ancestry—and where we come from. And if academic colleagues thought these loyalties quaint, he warned, then the problems were, of course, theirs and not ours—at least not entirely.

His family and Yale students and colleagues knew him better than I did, and have commented on his life and scholarship in greater depth and with more authority (such as Paul Rahe, writing later in this issue). For me, Kagan was the consummate friend, a moral person who always sought to persuade without either offending or backing down.

Donald Kagan was a rare man of integrity, a great scholar, and unsurpassed as a teacher. Academia was lucky, in the past, to have faculty of his caliber in prominent roles on campus. I wonder what we will do when there are no more Donald Kagans, given that many young classicists have never come across anyone like him.

John Patrick Lynch, the University of California, Santa Cruz, classicist and former Cowell College provost, also died this summer, after spending over a half-century in teaching, administration, and devotion to the Santa Cruz campus. Lynch might be termed as liberal as Donald Kagan was conservative. But such identifications are meaningless in their particular careers, because they felt strongly that ideology had no place at all in the mentoring and assessment of students. I never heard either offer a positive or negative judgment of current or former students in terms of their political persuasions.

Lynch was hired at age twenty-six by the recently birthed University of California, Santa Cruz. He finished his thesis at Yale and began teaching that same fall out in then-raucous coastal California, which proved a new experience for the Great Barrington native.

Lynch's assigned mission was to inaugurate a classics program at the new UC Santa Cruz campus. These were the heady days of the late 1960s and 1970s, when the new scenic campus, for a short time, was one of the most difficult in the state to gain admission to (I spent all summer on the waiting list on appeal after being initially rejected). There were no grades—only pass-fail assessments with evaluations. But the result was not laxity, at least originally, but oddly more rigor: a meticulous professor like Lynch, released from a grading scale, could be far more accurate in his appraisals, whether in exuberance for brilliance, or in unabashed condemnation for failure, or in pointed suggestions for mediocrity.

I met Lynch the year after he began teaching at Cowell College, one of the residential colleges at UCSC, when I had enrolled as a freshman and had just turned eighteen that first month of school. He was both our dormitory preceptor and Western Civilization core instructor. So I saw him almost daily during my first year in residence. John had already generated a student and faculty following from his initial year—to be frank, a cultlike cadre who worshipped him, as I soon discovered. Certainly, I had never before heard of, much less seen, any teacher with long hair, a beard, sandals, and such casual dress. I expected the worst.

Yet immediately his conduct belied every such stereotype of a "hippie" on the Santa Cruz campus. John was devoted to strict academic standards, followed to the letter the rules of his institution, and insisted on class attendance: all

work was to be turned in on time, and student investments were to be commensurate with the endless hours that he spent grading our essays with lengthy and detailed commentaries. At a student get-together, I once heard a hip classics major say to John, "Pass me more pizza." He answered curtly with a slight frown, "OK, but I need a paper from you—now!"

John's thesis was then being published as *Aristotle's School*, part of a lifelong scholarly interest in ancient Greek philosophical schools—their organization, philosophical focuses, contributions to Western philosophy, and physical spaces—in classical and Hellenistic Athens. When he critiqued the unique organization of the new Santa Cruz experiment it was often in reference to past philosophical undertakings. And he sometimes noted dryly that the educational and institutional legacies of Plato and Aristotle had not always ended in success, at least as originally envisioned.

I think he was the finest undergraduate teacher I ever had—combining mastery of his field, calm in class, and a worry more for students than for himself. Just as importantly, he helped recruit to Santa Cruz those with similarly extraordinary teaching skills and devotions—the vivacious and infectiously enthusiastic scholar of ancient drama Mary-Kay Gamel and the historian of Roman literature Gary Miles—to help start a classical languages and literature program, one that became a campus treasure and was widely known in the field as one of the most challenging and imaginative programs in the nation.

Personally, Lynch was modest, sometimes quiet and shy, but always principled and unafraid in times of debate. His agenda, as I increasingly appreciated later, was to introduce the highest standards possible of classical scholarship, language, and literature instruction to nontraditional students in the broadest sense of the word (UC Santa Cruz of the early 1970s was, well, a very funny place)—as a way of drawing out talents from the underappreciated.

Like Donald Kagan in his lifelong devotion to his beloved wife Myrna, Lynch was a true partner to his wife Sheilah, who, as an alumna, shared his devotion to UC Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz community. Their Catholic faith and devotion were unmatched. And, like Kagan who worshipped his loyal and accomplished sons Robert and Fred, Lynch too talked nonstop of his son Brendan and daughter Bernadette, not to brag, but in his own admiration of the conduct of their lives.

In 1984–85, when I sought to start a classics program at CSU Fresno, I simply retraced the steps that I remembered from John Lynch. And I confess that for the first time I finally fully appreciated the time, sacrifice, and generosity that he had extended to us all, who had been mostly ignorant of what large teaching loads at relatively low pay entailed.

John had one great peeve: any notion of watering down philology or classical standards to accommodate student fads and trends. Instead, he was convinced that talent had nothing to do with class, much less race (he grew up in an impoverished Irish-Polish family), but everything to do with hard work, natural ability, and the willingness of mentors to offer sound advice and politely tone down students' unwarranted estimations of themselves, while buoying them out of illogical depressions. When John and Sheilah visited our farm, I remember my usually formal mother walking up to him and saying, "I seem like I know you after all these years, since we owe you so much, Mr. John Lynch. You were our son's friend. You offered him a lesson of what learning and life were about." And so it was, and I have owed him ever since.

When I learned of John's death a friend said of my shocked state, "Victor, after all, he was your hero." I don't think I had ever thought of him that way until then. I realized, yes, of course, he always was. Most of what I tried to convey to students I learned from him. I was his emulator, although with far less success.

Still another great classicist, Leslie Threatte, unfortunately died this year as well. Undergraduate classics students of John Lynch would have first met the UC Berkeley professor and classicist Threatte (a Harvard Ph.D.) in spring 1972, when he used to visit the Santa Cruz campus and watch the "Athanatoi" ("The Immortals"), our intramural softball team. John Lynch pitched. Leslie gave up

after playing an inning or two (athletics were not his forte). Instead, he talked to us classics majors about his envisioned monumental project on Greek grammar and philology (at a softball game in Santa Cruz, no less, and to teenagers). I remember a graduate student who remarked in an aside on Threatte's enthusiasm for such a huge grammar, "No one does that stuff anymore."

In those years, Threatte also looked the part of the hippie, with long hair, Levis, and T-shirt. But at evening classics get-togethers in Santa Cruz he modestly answered all questions about Greek and classics—and usually stunned students into silence with his exactitude and detail. He talked casually of ancient Greek grammar, Greek epigraphy, and the modern Greek countryside as if he were commenting on English idioms and the Florida landscape. His modern Greek was native-like—and yet he never volunteered to display such fluency, instead needing to be prodded.

When Threatte referenced his own teachers Sterling Dow or Eugene Vanderpool, or Berkeley colleagues such as the greats Kendrick Pritchett and Ron Stroud, it was always in deference and honor for having known such scholars. That esteem seems obvious, but during the youth rebellion of the 1960s and 1970s, it was singular that a young professor, to private groups, would express such admiration of those of an older and supposedly staid generation. For Threatte, there was some unspoken class of superior philologists, whose mutual respect transcended the *Sturm und Drang* of the chaotic 1960s and 1970s.

Threatte was a permanent summer and sabbatical resident of Athens, and a go-to resource for students at both the College Year in Athens and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens on topics such as the Epigraphic Museum or a vexing passage in a Greek inscription and many others beyond. He once guided three of us on a January hike to the Cave of Dyskolos, the backdrop to Menander's *Dyskolos*, on the slopes of Mt. Parnes near the ancient deme of Phyle. As we hiked, he gave continuous commentaries on the various Greek cult caves of Pan and the underwhelming nature of Menander's comedy, along with mini-lectures on botany, piano playing, birdwatching, and the particular Greek dialect of a passing shepherd or herdsman. When one student smashed a flower with her boot, he sighed "We have killed another rare Attic winter crocus."

He was a regular hiker on the famous Eugene Vanderpool walks of the Attic countryside. When we entered the occasional provincial museum, he would give an impromptu sight reading of a Greek inscription on stone, as if it were nothing more than easy English.

Leslie in 1978–79 hired my wife and me to clean his apartment each week while he was in the States and we were in Athens, and then again enlisted us to proofread the galleys of his monumental *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions, Volume I: Phonology*. (*Volume II: Morphology* followed in 1996.) It is no exaggeration to say that Threatte's grammar proved one of the most prodigious works of classical Greek philology of the late twentieth century. As an experiment once, I took just one copied page of the manuscript to the American School library and tried to replicate his research work on examples of Greek phonetic spellings; it took four hours. I told my wife, and she remarked of the stack of galleys on the table, "All this would consume an entire life, then?" And it did.

Leslie had a reputation for being sarcastic, curt, and occasionally cynical, but these traits only came out as a defense mechanism when he sensed ostentatiousness and snobbery, especially when directed at students.

In 1984–85, after farming full-time for four years after graduate school, I had begun to teach Latin as a part-time instructor (for $435 a month) and was trying to start a classics program at CSU Fresno, while still farming 180 acres of orchard and vine crops and helping to raise a family of five, all amid an agricultural depression. We had not heard from Leslie in a few years, but apparently he heard that I was finally returning to classics.

Out of the blue, he called our home in spring 1985 and asked if he could visit and help promote the idea of starting a classics program at Fresno. He was then the chairman of the Berkeley classics department and came down on the train. For the next two days he charmed

administrators at CSUF on the importance of classics, did two local radio programs, and met with our mostly Mexican-American students (peppering them with questions about Spanish grammar, etymology, and vocabulary). When he left, the provost sighed, "Well, if a scholar of that caliber believes classics is possible in Fresno, then let's see if he's right," and she soon granted two full-time positions in a new program that had previously only had one quarter-time slot.

In 2004, I once asked a renowned Berkeley classicist in his nineties about Threatte the teacher, scholar, and person. He said something to the effect that only fools had misjudged him; beneath his slightly southern accent (Leslie grew up in Florida), his sometimes modest dress, and his sharp repartee was one of the great classical philologists of our age, a master pianist, a dedicated teacher for those possessing his requisite seriousness, and a kind person who gave freely to all of his expertise.

As I wrote in my essay "Clasical patricide" for *The New Criterion* of September 2021, classics is now again in one of its periodic "crises" of declining enrollments, financial cutbacks, ideological rancor, and institutional fratricide—albeit this time perhaps suicidal rather than homicidal. The discipline is often tagged as being elitist or exclusionary. That charge is not valid in my experience from a half-century of Greek and Latin study. We should remember that classics cannot be separated from the classicists who teach, publish their scholarship, and seek through their advocacy to keep the study of classical antiquity alive. For all the talk about the death of classics, one reason that there remains even a debate about its present and future is that there still are a few great classicists, whose professional and ethical examples resonate among students, colleagues, and the public, and so draw more people to the field than can others less gifted or more self-interested, who often have the opposite effect on prospective students and scholars.

Donald Kagan, John Lynch, and Leslie Threatte were all products of the middle or lower-middle classes. They were classically liberal in their outreach to all students, but with understandable interests in those who, like themselves, had once faced financial or family hardships. For all their political differences, they believed in the idea that America gave rare opportunity and that its citizens were most gratified when those least expected to succeed proved successful. The three were great believers in the leveling power of education, and the notion that political, ethnic, and class differences fade when people share like interests and excel through their own hard work. Of course they were not Pollyannaish. At various times in their careers, they fought university establishments and perceived unfairness or indifference.

I hope that it is not true that these Ivy League scholars and graduates were one-time artifacts of the peculiar era of post-war optimism, national confidence, and the good will of twentieth-century America. All contemporary classicists have known their own Kagans, Lynches, and Threattes, and just as we lament the last World War II veterans who are now fading away, and along with them all their firsthand memories of those ghastly but important years, so too I fear that a generation of teachers and scholars who transcended politics and were united by scholarship and near-missionary zeal for undergraduate teaching will not or cannot be replaced.

In their own everyday kindness, unassuming ways, and extraordinary devotion to classical antiquity, these three men were giants.

New poems

by Dan Brown, Peter Filkins & Katie Hartsock

"Anatomy is destiny"
—Sigmund Freud

The fallacy behind this try at writ—
What matters is which way you're genitalled—
Cohabits with the larger truth of it.
Consider, as a case of this, my eyes.
In the time it took my mother's milky gaze
To register what more than once she called
Their beauty (milliseconds, one would guess)
My infant self was lastingly endowed
With an instance of the ultimate largesse:
A love that proved conducive, as the parent's
Love it was, to a life that I, on balance,
Would have to call a blessing to have had.

—Dan Brown

Making hay

for R. W., in memoriam

Dotting a fresh-mown pasture
they are abstracted—
lozenges of green whose yield
will feed a winter's hunger
with a summer's field.

For now they sit there,
circumspect and salient
as totems to another time
whose sickles and scythes
ceded the baler's tines

this sun-baked stubbled plain
of timothy and fescue
configured with each pass,
summer materialized
in cylinders of grass.

Yet, absent the sharp inflections
of blade on polished hone,
is there really any loss?
Or is it dim nostalgia
denying *is* for *was*?

For it's haying that remains,
patient mindful husbandry
never quite out of style,
so long as the scent of clover
still carries a country mile

to circulate among us
lost to screens and pixels
the freshet of this summer day,
sweet with its own idiom:
the musk-green smell of hay.

—Peter Filkins

To Dervla Murphy's mother, in a time of quarantine

An invalid for thirty years,
bookended by piles of pages
you couldn't turn, concerned with tasks
beyond your reach, like islands

of dust on curtain lace—*castaway*,
castaway—you got mean.
Who wouldn't, when the dream where you
can't move won't end, when no door

leads outside. What house is built
for that. My mother's feet
surprise me when I cut her toenails.
She still walks but not that far,

hasn't traveled much and yet she'll say,
"Let's go, I know what walls
look like." On bumpy roads I push
a stroller built with shocks,

suspension, real wheels we keep inflated.
No All-Terrain Pro
or Revolution Flex 2.0
for you, who pushed your pram

up into the Knockmealdown Mountains
on walks alone with the baby,
the year that would be your last to walk.
It was talked about.

It wasn't done: a mother taking off
to wildflowers, vistas,
ridges, freshest unbound air.
But you did. And when you died

Dervla rode her bike to India.
She stayed inside with you
so long, until you could wander
again, so far, with her.

—Katie Hartsock

Reflections

Uncut gems

by James Panero

On the evening of October 29, 1964, a trio of beach boys sidled their white Cadillac up to the American Museum of Natural History. By the next morning, they had pulled off the biggest jewelry heist in U.S. history. Allan Kuhn, Roger Clark, and Jack Roland Murphy—a champion wave-rider known as "Murph the Surf"—had that rare combination of talents. By the time they targeted the museum, they were accomplished swimmers, aerialists, and burglars. Living in Miami, Murphy had helped popularize California surf culture on the East Coast. He had also used his aquatic skills to swim away from the many mansions he looted along the Intracoastal Waterway. Flush from these capers, the gang lived large in New York. They took up an expensive penthouse suite at an Upper West Side hotel as they patronized jazz clubs and passed around a copy of *The Story of the Gems* by Herbert P. Whitlock (who had been the curator of minerology at the museum from 1918 to 1941), all the while searching for targets. The museum's J. P. Morgan Hall of Gems and Minerals, at the time an antiquated fourth-floor room of open windows and unalarmed cases, was an easy mark.

Scaling a fence at West Eighty-first Street, then an exterior staircase, then sidestepping along a hundred-foot-high ledge, at around 9 p.m. Kuhn and Murphy entered the fifth-floor office window of Colin Turnbull, a curator of African ethnology, who kept a harpsichord by his desk to play at lunchtime. As Clark stayed behind in the getaway car and communicated by walkie-talkie, Kuhn and Murphy timed the rounds of the museum guards. They then descended by rope through an open window into the Hall of Gems a floor below.

Through the gifts of J. P. Morgan and other Gilded Age benefactors, the collection of the American Museum of Natural History included some of the rarest gems in the world. Using a glass cutter, duct tape, and a hammer, the thieves took two dozen of the most valuable of them. Their haul included the 100-carat star ruby donated by Edith Haggin DeLong and the 116-carat Midnight Sapphire. They also carted away two engraved emeralds, two aquamarines, a number of uncut diamonds, and several bracelets, brooches, and rings. Their biggest prize was the Star of India, a 563-carat sapphire, the largest gem-quality star sapphire ever discovered, which had been donated by Morgan himself. After the two made their late-night escape, they brought their loot along in a bag to the Metropole Cafe in Midtown as they went to listen to Gene Krupa's band.

Thanks to their high-flying lifestyle, the three were soon tracked down and apprehended, but not before fencing the jewels in Miami. A New York prosecutor named Maurice Nadjari made a deal with the thieves and escorted Kuhn from his New York jail cell as they tracked down the jewels in Florida. While the uncut Eagle Diamond was never found, the prosecutor remarkably recovered over half the goods. A friend of the museum paid a hefty ransom for the DeLong ruby.

The Star of India eventually returned as the jewel in the crown of the museum's collection. A 1975 film called *Murph the Surf* was made about the caper.

"These gems have life in them: their colors speak, say what words fail of," George Eliot famously wrote of the power of jewels and the minerals that compose them. A decade after the robbery, in 1976, the museum sought to embed this jeweled allure in the new Harry Frank Guggenheim Hall of Minerals and Morgan Memorial Hall of Gems. Designed by Fred B. Bookhardt, Jr., of William F. Pedersen & Associates, this new combined exhibition hall filled a windowless cul-de-sac on the first floor of the museum. Replete with ramps, enclosed passages, and amphitheater seats, all covered in dark wall-to-wall carpeting, the design was praised at the time as "one of the largest and most ambitious exhibition halls the museum has yet attempted." "I've been on many a mineralogical exploration," said Vincent Manson, the curator of the hall, "and the atmosphere one feels in here is very much like that of going down into the earth to explore for minerals."

"God sleeps in the minerals, awakens in plants, walks in animals, and thinks in man," observed the nineteenth-century agriculturalist Arthur Young. Like some space-age mine dappled in prismatic light, the 1976 hall inspired more than a generation of museumgoers with its mysterious appeal. Its sensory approach epitomized a style of museum design that saw specimens elevated out of their cases into theatrical, immersive displays—a method pioneered by Carl Akeley fifty years before through his animal dioramas.

For this critic, first as a child and then adult, the 1976 hall was a favorite piece of museum culture. It was also a dated specimen that revealed more about the crystalline obsessions of the 1970s than the crystals themselves. For the latest generation of earth scientists who just want to tell the story of rocks, however, the hall had become a ridiculed romper room for the museum's underage visitors. George E. Harlow, the museum's curator for the physical sciences, says his staff called it "Nanny Hall."

Shuttered in October 2017, the Guggenheim and Morgan halls have been gutted and replaced, after some delays this past June, with the Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals. Museum practices often swing like a pendulum. Curated by Harlow and designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates along with Lauri Halderman of the museum's exhibition department, the new hall blasts out any remnants of that indoor-outdoor carpeting. In its place it presents an open, 11,000-square-foot room of labels and display cases that more resembles the gem hall of 1964 than 1976. What the presentation loses in immersive appeal it makes up for in the miraculous forms it displays and the often interesting stories they tell.

The completion of the Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals is but the first stage of a larger project to turn the unfinished western side of the museum facing Columbus Avenue into the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation, a new wing designed by Jeanne Gang with exhibition spaces again by Ralph Appelbaum Associates. No longer a cul-de-sac, the Mignone Halls will eventually connect into this new space.

Rocks "are books," claimed John McPhee, who wrote more than a few clunkers about them himself. "They have a different vocabulary, a different alphabet, but you learn how to read them." While it is true that every rock tells a story, you don't necessarily need to hear the story of every rock. The new halls of gems and minerals now tell many stories, certainly too many for a single viewing. A theory of evolution concerning not just animals and vegetables but also minerals has lately gained currency among geologists and now takes up much of the storytelling. "The diversity of minerals on our dynamic planet is directly connected to the evolution of life," says Harlow—turning the "diversity" key even in the cylinder of this hard science. Fortunately, the presentation of these minerals and gems, aided by artful lighting and unobtrusive stands, nevertheless keeps the natural world mostly front and center. The information provided, about both their evolution and their discovery, also largely adds to their interest and appeal.

The new halls open with two amethyst geodes that, at nine- and twelve-feet tall, are among the largest on public display. New to the museum, these "giant geodes" from the Bolsa Mine in Artigas, Uruguay, began forming 135 million years ago. Gas escaping between the separating South American and African continental plates opened up cavities in the hardening magma like rising bread. Groundwater then flowed through the spaces, depositing silica that crystallized into quartz. Over millions of years, high energy radiation from the surrounding rocks turned the colorless quartz a deep purple. Out of the ground and no longer exposed to this radiant energy, the amethyst will slowly lose its purple hue.

It seems quite a fanciful story—Middle Earth stuff—but the crystals are there to prove otherwise. Interspersed among display cases are similarly captivating crystals in what the museum calls its new "crystal garden": stibnite from China; a double-ended dravite from Australia; fluorite from Spain; beryls from the American Northeast; elbaite and fluorapophyllite from Brazil; rhodonite from New Jersey; labradorite from Madagascar; petrified redwood from Oregon; grape agate from Indonesia; and calcite, aragonite, and a massive block of blue azurite and green malachite known as the "Singing Stone" from Arizona. From rounded to prismatic, textured to smooth, red to green and creamy to black, the variety of colors and textures here reveal the great sculptural powers of the natural world.

While the display cases are now abundant, their dark appearance and the metallic armatures within (crafted in the same way as the supports for dinosaur bones three floors up) largely allow the stones to stay in the foreground. The smaller specimens are then grouped in ways that illustrate the stories of their creation and discovery. Some examples: the difference between simple and complex pegmatites; "the many colors of fluorite"; the hydrothermal environments of mineral development; "the fabulous tourmaline family"; how light affects the perception of minerals; "the Tin Islands and the Bronze Age in Europe"; the zinc deposits of New Jersey; the minerals employed in the modern world; "How Do We Use Different Salts?"; and the extensively excavated mineralogy of New York City. A wide-ranging selection of minerals from the "Copper Hills of Arizona," all from mines around the town of Bisbee, reveals the remarkable forms of copper, gold, and silver buried below the Mule Mountains.

As a display for both minerals and gems (which are simply polished minerals), the new Mignone halls divide up the two in much the same way as the old Guggenheim–Morgan footprint. Alcoves along the right wall serve as specialty galleries. One small space reveals the fluorescence and phosphorescence of a stone slab from the Sterling Hill Mining Museum in Ogdensburg, New Jersey, that glows in ultraviolet light. Another serves as a temporary gallery, now used for an exhibition on "Beautiful Creatures: Jewelry Inspired by the Animal Kingdom." The most sought-after space in the hall, this new gallery is just a half-step away from a Cartier showroom. Marion Fasel, the guest curator, is otherwise a commercial consultant with a "passion of telling jewelry and watch adventure stories," according to her biography. This opening show's connection to the specimens of flora and fauna elsewhere in the museum barely saves it from commercial oblivion as naturalistic pieces are divided in cases dedicated to mammal, insect, and aquatic forms. The stand-out examples are the pieces that bring out the concurrences of nature: in particular, Paula Crevoshay's 2014 brooch of a Portuguese man o' war, inspired by the resemblance of the 33-carat Mexican water opal at its center to the pneumatophore, or "float," of that dreaded hydrozoan.

Between these two alcoves is the central, permanent showcase of gems, one that is surprisingly reserved in its display. One suspects that the designers of this gallery, unlike the special exhibition with its illuminated Fifth Avenue-like stands, wanted to undercut the sparkle of the spectacular. In deadpan fashion, wall-mounted displays present the museum's rich collection of opal, topaz, garnet, quartz, ruby, emerald, sapphire, diamond, tourmaline, and other precious gems. Located in a standalone case in front of this alcove are those collection highlights that spent some unwanted time away from the museum back in 1964. For all of the stories told in this new hall, the tale of Murph the Surf is notably, but understandably, absent.

Theater

A shaky new season

by Kyle Smith

"Stop killing us! Stop killing us!" Should you happen to miss either the agit or the prop in Antoinette Chinonye Nwandu's insipid play *Pass Over* (at the August Wilson Theatre through October 10), Nwandu arranges to have her characters assert, re-assert, and on occasion even shout out her themes, which amount to brazen misinformation in the form of theater. Directed by Danya Taymor, *Pass Over* is the first play either to open or re-open on Broadway since the pandemic began, and to the extent it indicates theater has become a sort of beach ball being batted around by a mindless mob like the ones that rampaged across the country in the summer of 2020, it seems to herald a tiresome season. Of course the play is being hailed as a masterpiece. How could circumstances be otherwise? The principal goal of the critical profession is to protect its own employability by begging for favor from the mob. If a play by a black artist should be deemed to sharply rebuke racism, no matter how blunt, strident, didactic, dull, and conceptually erroneous it may be, few critics who would like to continue drawing their pay envelope will dare note its flaws. I'm not speaking theoretically, by the way; when the Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago put on *Pass Over* in 2017, Hedy Weiss, a veteran critic of thirty-four years for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, dismissed it and its underlying premises in a review and was attacked as a racist on social media by a rage mob claiming injury from her pen. She was fired. Prostrate yourself to the new orthodoxy, or clean out your desk.

Pass Over's lead characters are a sort of Vladimir and Estragon of the 'hood, two chatty black vagrants living on a junk-strewn lot in an unnamed city who vow to "get up off this block." Moses (Jon Michael Hill) and Kitch (Namir Smallwood), who affectionately address each other as "nigga," discuss the pleasures of which they would avail themselves if only they could cross a river into a promised land of milk and honey. Why don't they just start by getting some entry-level jobs? Fool, these are *black* men, and the racist constabulary will never allow this. Black people are forbidden success in this country, according to the playwright, a Harvard graduate with a play on Broadway.

The program features what may be the most pretentious description of setting I've ever seen:

> TIME: the (future) present
> but also 2021 C.E.
> but also 1855 C.E.
> but also 1440 B.C.E.
>
> PLACE: The river's edge
> but also a ghetto street
> but also a plantation
> but also a desert city built by slaves
> (And also the new world to come ((worlds without ends))

Oh dear, thinks the weary theatergoer. Are we really about to be told that black Americans in 2021 are no better off than the slaves of ancient Egypt or those of the Antebellum South? We

need an adjective harsher than "fatuous" to describe this level of reality denial. In a single ninety-five-minute act, Moses and Kitch repeatedly interrupt themselves to freeze and throw their hands in the air as though about to be shot by police, aver that the "po-po" (police) are dedicated to "killing niggas, mostly," and encounter a mysterious white man (Gabriel Ebert) in a cream-colored suit who tempts them with all of the splendors of the Promised Land. A joke: when the white man reaches into his pocket, the two black men blanch as though they're afraid of being shot. Never mind that interracial crimes are nine times more likely to be carried out by blacks against whites than the reverse, or that the data show there is no discernible pattern of racism in police shootings of suspects, or that black people are extremely unlikely to be murdered by police, or that the vast majority of black people who get murdered are put in their graves by other black people, not cops of any color. Surveys show 44 percent of liberals believe the number of unarmed black people killed by police each year surpasses 1,000 (the actual figure is more like one-fiftieth of that), and the theatergoing audience, being achingly far left, can reasonably be assured to be tickled by having its mythology reaffirmed. Whether it's worth the cost of a theater ticket to be told a familiar lie in the most grindingly obvious way is a different question.

The white interloper's temptations begin to seem suspicious when he lets slip that his name is "Master," which causes Moses and Kitch to blanch again, as though the chief source of discomfort for two guys who live under a street lamp and eat garbage is a chance allusion to plantation life. Naturally the white actor, Ebert, also plays a racist cop (is there any other kind?) who turns up later in the play to torment and taunt Moses and Kitch because they "don't know their place." We are also treated to a recitation of the names of dozens of black folks known to Moses and Kitch who were murdered, presumably by the police, and there is an interlude in which the two friends consider whether a murder-suicide pact is the only way for black people to escape the horrors of white supremacy.

If you're thinking the play sounds a bit trite and heavy-handed, I'm not doing my job. It's unbelievably trite and heavy-handed. It amounts to a lesson in how not to write: don't build your play around demonstrably false premises, don't blast your themes out into the audience like cannonballs, don't overlook the importance of nuance, don't be blatant with the metaphors and symbols, don't be a bore. At the performance I attended, the black fellow next to me (one of the few present; the audience was perhaps 90 percent white) was plainly underwhelmed by the play, much of which he spent scanning his phone for something more interesting. Many theatergoers who take the reviews at face value are in for a similar experience. *Pass Over* is an embarrassingly bad play that should never have risen farther than the woke one-upmanship of the undergraduate seminar room, where the universe's most privileged children seek attention via the simplest route available: identifying white-supremacist evils in every nook of twenty-first-century American life like the brainless teen girls in *The Crucible* claiming they saw Goody Osburn with the devil.

An opportunity to experience a play that pushes back against conventional left-wing narratives is ordinarily not to be missed, but the execution of an intriguing idea is poor, bordering on amateurish, in *Trial on the Potomac: The Impeachment of Richard Nixon*. The evening begins by launching into an alternate history: in what is expected to be his resignation speech, Nixon instead vows to stay and fight. Geoff Shepard, who in the real world was a young White House lawyer at the time, believes he could have successfully defended the president in an impeachment trial, whose charges he envisioned diverting against White House Counsel John W. Dean as the true author of the Watergate cover-up. The play is based on Shepard's 2015 book *The Real Watergate Scandal*, and even those well-versed in Nixoniana may learn a thing or two.

It's a shame that a more artful play didn't result from Shepard's memories and his research. The piece (which ran in a small theater within St. Clement's Church on West Forty-sixth Street in

August and early September) came billed, oddly, as the New York stage debut of Rich Little, the celebrity impressionist who was one of the most popular stand-up comics in the late 1970s and early '80s. Nixon was Little's most celebrated character, but the act was a caricature for comic effect, not an interior-directed dramatic performance. At eighty-two, Little has virtually no record as a dramatic actor, but was evidently in the mood to stretch himself. Strangely, though, Nixon is offstage for most of the show after his opening monologue, appearing at length only in a climactic speech in his own defense. Little did not exactly impress with his delivery. He was clearly reading the monologue off an electronic prompter placed over the audience's heads.

Other amateurish touches are woefully present throughout: the set looks like it came from a Goodwill store, the costumes and styling are off, and, as directed with all the flair of a high-school production by Josh Iacovelli, the large, third-rate cast frequently stumbled over its lines on the evening I attended. The play itself, a debut effort by a veteran Las Vegas musician named George J. Bugatti, is at best an interesting rough draft.

Shepard's contention, filtered through Bugatti, is that Nixon was railroaded by a combination of Judge John Sirica, the "Deep State" (a sinister reference to which pops up in the play), and a public ignorance of the details of the case, fed by the media. As the play points out, Americans were broadly convinced that Nixon was guilty of . . . something, and still are today, but generally could not say exactly what that something was. The charge that the president obstructed justice is, upon reflection, not especially strong, and it remains unproven that Nixon personally directed the "hush-money" payment of $75,000 to Howard Hunt, the CIA man who bugged the Democratic National Committee's headquarters in the Watergate building. Shepard's contention is that Dean, not Nixon, was the ultimate mastermind of the break-in, and that he did so not to dig up dirt on Democrats ahead of the 1972 election (wouldn't it have made more sense to spy on individual campaigns rather than the DNC?) but to cover up the sexual past of his then-fiancée, later wife, Maureen. (John W. Dean sued the publisher of a 1992 book along these lines, *Silent Coup*, which alleged that a prostitution ring was being run out of the Watergate, and won an undisclosed sum in a settlement. Both Deans are still living.)

As Ted Kennedy (Richard Wingert) and his associates gloat about and mock Nixon's predicament, Shepard (the eager if forgettable Nick Mauldin) pushes his boss, Nixon's lead personal attorney, James St. Clair (Troy Sill), to mount a muscular defense that effectively puts Dean on trial and deals with the obstruction charge by noting that the June 23, 1972 "Smoking Gun tape" in which Nixon broached the possibility of using the CIA to stave off the FBI investigation has been misinterpreted. Shepard—the first person to dub the recording a "smoking gun"—has some backing from Dean himself, as stated in Dean's overlooked 2014 book *The Nixon Defense, What He Knew and When He Knew It*, in contending that Nixon wasn't discussing Watergate at all in this conversation, but was referring to using the CIA to dissuade the FBI from revealing that prominent Democrats who wished to remain anonymous, including the former finance chairman of Hubert Humphrey's 1968 campaign, had donated to Nixon anonymously just before enactment of new legislation that mandated donor disclosure. Two years later, when he resigned, Nixon himself had apparently forgotten the context of the conversation and bought into the spin that the tape proved he was covering up Watergate.

All of this might have yielded a contrarian legal drama that successfully leads the audience to believe that an impeachment trial of Richard Nixon might not have gone as smoothly for the prosecution as the media and historians would have us believe. Yet the play, in setting out to advance a sort of anti–Aaron Sorkin vision of scheming, malevolent Democrats, winds up being equally anti-Sorkinite in its witless dialogue and narrative unruliness. "They've stacked the deck against you—want to level the playing field?" is a typically clumsy line. There are aspects to Nixon's climactic speech that seem consonant with Nixon's brooding combativeness and awkward tone—"Welcome to Dick Nixon's lynching party; is

this mic bugged?" he asks at the outset, and I could picture the man himself saying something similarly unfunny, but despite decades of preparation for the role, Little fails to make the speech the barn burner it is meant to be. In short, *Trial on the Potomac* could be a worthwhile play, but only if it were rewritten, recast, and restaged.

The one-man show *The Book of Moron* (at the Soho Playhouse through October 3), which stars and was written by Robert Dubac, carries a startling credit: "Directed by Garry Shandling." Shandling, an actor and stand-up comic, died five years ago. It's not unusual for productions to be re-mounted for several years after their debuts, but Shandling's brand of comedy (he was born in 1949) peaked in the 1980s, when he guest-hosted for Johnny Carson. You might as well announce that your play is a museum piece. The theater audience is famously older than average, but even graying audiences know a stale act when they hear one, and Dubac's style of humor suggests he hasn't kept up with comedy trends of the last two generations.

Dubac is an obscure television actor and stand-up comic who has crafted the show around a character who has woken up from a coma with impaired memory and conducts an interior dialogue with a number of selves. Dubac offers heaps of sophomoric existential humor and a clatter of would-be clever one-liners augmented by magic tricks, props (at one point he sticks tubes in his ears and wiggles them to indicate activity in his "bullshit detector"). There is also a chalkboard upon which he has written a list of supposedly taboo comedy topics (sex, religion, media) that haven't actually been taboo since Joe Biden was in grade school. As Dubac plays off himself, arguing with his own taped voice, he does a kind of stream-of-consciousness patter reminiscent of Robin Williams's act in the 1970s, but with neither Williams's hilarious surrealism nor anything resembling a fresh take on anything. Among his jokes is that all marriage is same-sex marriage because . . . it's the same sex, year after year. I think Nixon was still in office the last time jokes about the alleged sexlessness of marriage seemed novel. "If you get mugged by a woman, does she only steal 70 cents on the dollar?" is Dubac's idea of a pointed joke about the fictitious gender wage gap.

Dubac fancies himself a bit edgy and politically incorrect ("I'm a white male over fifty, so everything's my fault"), but he never ventures more than half a step off approved conversational pathways. He may not be aware of this, but despite the Taliban-like enforcement of PC norms in the mainstream media, and on social-media sites such as Twitter, there are lots of vigorously anti-PC comedy acts in the clubs these days, led by arena-filling comics such as Ricky Gervais, Dave Chappelle, and Louis C. K. All are scathing in different ways to *bien-pensant* sensibilities and all regularly inspire finger-wagging columns from the sorts of left-wing commentators who would find absolutely nothing objectionable in Dubac's mild, tame act.

Dubac tries to evenly parcel out jokes aimed at both Left and Right, but comes across as an ordinary moderate Democrat—slightly annoyed by cancel culture, but even more annoyed by the existence of a single right-leaning cable news channel. Indulging one vapid cliché after another, he makes several tepid jokes whose premise is that Fox News Channel peddles false and inflammatory information, though Fox is no more guilty of this tendency than the supposedly objective CNN. There's a critical race theory joke here too—Dubac's premise is that the hostility toward this profoundly anti-American intellectual fad is driven by a fabrication on the part of Fox. He thinks it's ironic that Alabama has four syllables because, according to him, no one in Alabama knows any other four-syllable words.

Duboc stresses that *The Book of Moron* is a one-man piece of theater, not a club routine, by which I suppose he means that the lighting changes a bit when he switches from one voice to another, and he moves around the stage and employs more props than most stand-ups do. His use of these items is questionable. At one point, holding a black cloth in front of him, he pretends to poke the cloth with an erection. Maybe a two-drink minimum would make this act seem funny, but I doubt it.

Art

Medieval Spain at The Cloisters

by Karen Wilkin

For those of us addicted to the Romanesque, the wealth of eleventh- and twelfth-century frescoes in the National Museum of Catalan Art is among the highlights of Barcelona, even more exciting, it could be argued, than the city's much-vaunted examples of Antoni Gaudí's architecture. (Let's not discuss the ethics of detaching the paintings from the walls of the small, remote churches for which they were conceived and moving them into a neutral, non-ecclesiastical setting.) For New Yorkers, failing a trip to Barcelona, the next best thing is a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's treasure house of medieval art and architecture, The Cloisters. To console us for the lack of the riches of Barcelona, there is, for instance, a fresco of a fabulous, enormous dromedary (possibly 1129–34), from the monastery of San Baudelio de Berlanga, Castile-Léon. The animated, stylized beast is noteworthy for his sinuous neck and improbable feet, like paired catcher's mitts, possibly inspired by the artist's having seen the actual animal with its desert-worthy pads. Should the camel not prove sufficient to assuage one's Romanesque deprivation, there are additional frescoes nearby from the same monastery, made at the same time, with scenes from the life of Christ. The figures in these paintings, with their oversized, perfectly round halos and stylized drapery, are as solemn and hieratic as the dromedary is playful, as they enact the Healing of the Blind Man, the Raising of Lazarus, and the Temptation of Christ by the Devil. (The Devil, shown three times, is particularly memorable, a scrawny vulpine creature with clawed feet.) For a further dose of Romanesque painting, there is the somewhat earlier *Virgin and Child in Majesty and the Adoration of the Magi* (*ca*. 1100) from Santa Maria de Cap d'Aran, near Tredós, installed in the adjacent apse from the ruined church of San Martín at Funtidueña (*ca*. 1175–1200)—a confrontational Byzantine-inflected image of a towering seated Madonna who presents us with a Christ Child, also seated, like a miniature adult, the mother and child both surrounded by a golden oval, with small, slender Magi at their feet. And as a bonus, the apse also includes capitals and other architectural sculptures, as well as an impressive near-life-size crucifix from Northern Spain, with a crowned, transcendently serene Christ in a long loincloth (*ca*. 1150–1200).

Now, these splendid paintings and the apse itself, along with the related sculptures, are illuminated and contextualized by The Cloisters' exhibition "Spain, 1000–1200: Art at the Frontiers of Faith."[1] A sharply focused but sumptuous gathering of religious and secular objects, including illuminated manuscript leaves, ivory carvings, sculptures, paintings, architectural elements, devotional objects, textiles, pages from the Koran and the Hebrew Bible, a few archival documents, chess pieces, an incense burner, gravestones, and more, the show brings to vivid life an extraordinarily complex and fertile part of the

1 "Spain, 1000–1200: Art at the Frontiers of Faith" opened at The Met Cloisters, New York, on August 30, 2021, and remains on view through January 30, 2022.

history of the Iberian peninsula—a period when, depending on the place or the precise time, Muslims, Christians, and Jews either coexisted peacefully or battled one another ferociously. Whatever the political situation, it seems to have stimulated notable literature, music, philosophy, architecture, and art, as the diversity and high quality of the objects on display attest. Despite the upheavals and shifts in power during the centuries under review, rulers and religious institutions commissioned significant works of a remarkable variety of types in an equally remarkable variety of mediums, reflecting both the specific requirements of different faiths and subtle aesthetic interchanges among them.

The boundaries, it seems, were permeable. In "Spain, 1000–1200" we marvel, for example, at tantalizing scraps of Islamic silk, with gorgeous symmetrical abstract patterns and stylized animals and birds, and learn that the original fabrics were co-opted for Christian ecclesiastical purposes. The flattened, often symmetrical decorations on some carved ivory objects identified by the exhibition labels as Spanish—that is, Christian—seem remarkably similar to the patterns on the textiles. But one richly carved ivory box, thought to have been used for Christian rites, is decorated with Old Testament—that is, Jewish—stories. A manuscript illumination envisions the heavenly Jerusalem, seen in a bird's-eye view, as looking a lot like Islamic Cordoba. Elsewhere, architecture is occasionally accounted for with photographs, but it is represented mainly by the detached pieces of buildings with which The Cloisters is punctuated—chunks of often ruined national patrimony: doors and doorways, column capitals, altar fronts, whole chapter houses, and the like—that impoverished Europeans were eager to sell to rich Americans, before that sort of thing was frowned upon. (The apse from San Martín is an exchange loan from the Government of Spain and, while we're at it, when the Metropolitan was able to acquire nine frescoes from San Baudelio de Berlanga, the museum returned six of them to Spain as long-term loans.) The great majority of the works in "Spain, 1000–1200" are drawn from the Met's own collections—a few come from other institutions—making the show a tribute to The Cloisters' impressively rich and comprehensive holdings.

The exhibition's subtitle, "Art at the Frontiers of Faith," refers to the complicated struggle for power between Muslim Spain and Christian Spain during the period under review. The Southern part of the Iberian peninsula, Muslim al-Andalus, was a conspicuously cosmopolitan society in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews all lived and worked. We are told by the exhibition wall text that al-Andalus was "a major political, economic, and cultural presence in the Mediterranean region . . . a haven for the visual arts, bringing together skilled craftspeople of all faiths who created glorious sacred and secular artworks." Northern Spain was not only Christian but also determined to differentiate itself as such, distinct from polyglot al-Andalus. In the early eleventh century, the Cordoba-based caliphate that ruled the Muslim South collapsed and was replaced by smaller kingdoms, such as Seville, Granada, and Valencia, known as *taifas*, distinguished by, among other things, their enthusiastic patronage of the arts. In the late eleventh century, the *taifas* were conquered by a Muslim Berber dynasty from North Africa, which ruled until the mid-twelfth century, when it was deposed by yet another North African Berber force. Christian Spain took full advantage of the instability of al-Andalus to recapture such holdings as Toledo and Zaragoza. Just as Muslim leaders had built splendid mosques in al-Andalus, leaders from the North built churches to reassert the Christian presence in newly conquered territories, seeding uninhabited areas with monasteries and developing a distinctive Iberian version of the Romanesque architecture developing concurrently in France. Sometimes, as we learn from a photograph of the church of San Baudelio de Berlanga (the original source of The Cloisters' frescoes of the camel and the scenes from the life of Christ), the Spanish Christians adopted the architectural techniques, such as the ribbed vault, of the mosque-builders. Narrative paintings and devotional sculptures in the churches, such

as The Cloisters' frescoes, the crucifix, and the reliefs and capitals in the apse, both enriched the buildings and emphasized their difference from the iconoclastic mosques with their non-figurative decorations. But to complicate things, Christian and Muslim rulers alike were fighting among themselves, so that alliances between Christians and Muslims to oppose mutual enemies of either stripe were not uncommon. And traveling artists diminished the importance of geographic divisions.

Not surprisingly, the strikingly diverse objects in "Spain, 1000–1200" reflect the multivalent, mixed traditions of the intermingling and opposing populations of al-Andalus and the resurgent Christian North. They also reverberate with the various influences to which they responded, including the far-flung innovations and conventions disseminated by traveling artists. While the objects on view are unmistakably of their time, we recognize these foreign overtones as deriving from the various aesthetics of other parts of Europe and the Islamic world, sometimes from the distant past. A crisply carved tenth-century capital, probably from Muslim Cordoba, turns the acanthus leaves of the classical Corinthian order into geometric tracery, reminding us of the persistent influence of the Roman remains found throughout the Mediterranean world—sometimes incorporated wholesale into medieval buildings, sometimes transformed, as in The Cloisters' capital, into new patterns and motifs. On another capital, either from Northern Spain or Southern France (*ca*. 1200), the memory of acanthus leaves survives as slender volutes in the corners, but the main motif is a parade of lions, ridden, surprisingly, by youths whose nude forms wrench us out of the Romanesque and back to antiquity. Other carved stone figures, fragments of a relief of the Adoration of the Magi (*ca*. 1175–1200) that was once an integral part of the church of Nuestra Señora de la Llana, Cerezo de Rio Tirón, make us recall the figures on French church portals of the period, with their repetitive, rhythmically grooved drapery. A small relief of a kneeling knight or king, from Northern Spain (*ca*. 1175–1225), with a vigorously textured coat of mail, a sword, an oversized head, and economically simplified features, seems to spring from alien impulses, more highly conceptualized and further divorced from perception. The Byzantine flavor of the fresco of the Virgin and Child in the San Martín apse makes us consider what was happening in Italy, a conduit of influences from farther east. And so on.

Everything in "Spain, 1000–1200" rewards our attention. The large sweep of the exhibition makes us look hard at, say, the various fragments incorporated into the apse of San Martín, objects that, in days past, we may have scanned rapidly before concentrating on the frescoes and the crucifix or gazed at idly during the concerts held in the apse. We rediscover wonderful things such as a Catalan altar frontal (*ca*. 1225), with its border like an Islamic textile, or a column, once on the exterior of the apse, with a stack of intertwined acrobats (*ca*. 1175–1200). (Casts of the sculptures on the exterior of the apse have been substituted for the originals, which can now be exhibited safely, indoors.) Stretching the parameters of the exhibition a bit, there's a twelfth-century South Italian oliphant—a hunting horn made from an elephant's tusk—that I was fascinated by as a child, mostly because I loved the word. I'm still fascinated when I realize that the oliphant's all-over, low-relief motifs are reminiscent of the animals and birds on Islamic silks. For sheer intensity it's hard to beat the illuminated manuscript leaves of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (*ca*. 1180) by Beatus of Liébana, from the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, each sheet a marvel of intense blue, gold, red, pink, and green, with vigorous drawing that at once seems to be wholly original and to echo the illumination styles of other monastic centers in France and the British Isles, testimony to the exchanges and interconnections among these institutions. For gorgeousness, my vote goes to a cylindrical tenth-century ivory pyxis, from the palace of a caliph of al-Andalus, covered with a tracery of foliage, inhabited by parrots, gazelles, and lions, and with a band of impossibly delicate geometric

patterning around the top. It's missing its lid, but it's still irresistible.

"Spain, 1000–1200" is also a miniature crash course in the complexities of Iberian history at a particularly provocative moment in the struggle between Muslim and Christian Spain. We know how it ended, of course—badly for non-Christians, with the entire population of Muslims and Jews officially expelled from Catholic Spain after 1492, or forced to convert, and the infamous Inquisition. (Columbus's 1492 voyage to the New World was financed largely by money and property extorted from Jews trying to raise funds for their departure.) The wide-ranging, marvelous objects in The Cloisters' exhibition, with their evidence of fruitful exchange and cross-fertilization, make us imagine a return to some of the values of the time when they were created. We wish that the fertile coexistence of al-Andalus and Christian Spain had lasted far longer and that the tolerant, outward-looking culture of the Iberian Muslim world could be reborn among fundamentalist Islamic societies today. Inshallah.

A brief coda: there is no catalogue for "Spain, 1000–1200: Art at the Frontiers of Faith," but we are promised that it will be the subject of a forthcoming Metropolitan Museum *Bulletin*. In the meantime, there's an informative documentary, made in 2013, on how the apse of San Martín, which opened to the public here in 1961, was moved to its present location at The Cloisters, including fascinating footage of the ruined church in Castile from which it came, and of the laborious, delicate work of deconstruction and reconstruction, along with information about the church's history and details on what Spain got in return for the loan. Just go to the Met's website and click on "Exhibitions," then look under the "Cloisters" heading. There's ample material about the show, in English and Spanish, and the film.

Music

Salzburg chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

Grant that there is no good year for a pandemic. Every year is the wrong year. But if the leaders of the Salzburg Festival could have chosen a year, I wager, they would not have chosen 2020: the centennial of the festival. But the show went on last year, with determination and heart. There were fewer performances than usual, and fewer patrons. But the show went on.

It certainly went on this year, in 2021, though it may have looked a little funny: patrons were required to wear masks—and not just any masks, but the FFP2 mask (which has a beak). Before getting into a concert hall, patrons were required to show either a COVID-19 vaccination card or proof of a recent (and negative) test. Still, these seemed minor inconveniences, if inconveniences at all. My impression was, people were glad—extra-glad—to be at their Salzburg Festival.

Mozart was onstage, as usual, in various forms—including the form of *Don Giovanni*, that extraordinary opera of 1787. The production was a piece of work. But before I get to the production, let me say something about the music-making. Marilyn Horne, the great mezzo, once observed that critics tend to go on about a production, mentioning the singers at the end of their review, almost as an afterthought.

Setting the singers aside for a moment, I'd like to begin with the conductor: the straw that stirs the drink. He was Teodor Currentzis, the Greek-Russian sensation. There is a lot of hype around him; it is basically true. He is a very musical being, though you may disagree with some of his choices. On this night—as on all of his nights, I gather—there was "energy in the executive." He is incapable of conducting a dull phrase. But neither is he obnoxiously energetic. The orchestra in the pit was his own, musicAeterna. That's how the name of the band is rendered. Don't shoot the messenger, or reporter.

The cast was youthful and capable. I will single out the soprano portraying Donna Anna, Nadezhda Pavlova. Yes, there is a new Pavlova in town. Her bio tells us, in its first sentence, that she is "one of the most exciting singers of her generation." Please be aware: virtually every singer's bio begins with something like this. But here, it is probably true. Pavlova has voice, technique, wit, allure—all of it. And if she can sing Mozart, that taskmaster, she can sing almost anything.

At the beginning of this production, a church is stripped bare. This takes a long time. Usually, the stage crew breaks down a set at the end of the night. This time, the crew breaks down the set at the beginning. A goat scampers across the stage. (This must stand for Don Giovanni's horny ways.) A car crashes down from on high. Eventually, Leporello sprinkles what seems to be fairy dust. He has a Xerox machine. There is an old man in a bikini. People are juggling basketballs. Don Ottavio is dressed in some white costume, and he has ski poles. He also has a poodle. There is often a touch of Liberace-in-Vegas.

I could go on, or mock on, but I will stop. The director is Romeo Castellucci, a celebrated

Italian. A smart guy, he knows what he's doing. But do *you* know? When you're sitting in the audience, do you get all the symbols, all the points: religious, political, and social? I will admit to a bias. Opera is "lyric theater," and I gravitate to the lyric, rather than to the theater. Yet opera is both. It is not a concert. Even when you or I might wish it were.

Also onstage was Handel—in the form of his oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo and del Disinganno*. This is hard to translate. The first part of it is easy: "The Triumph of Time and of . . ." "Disillusion," you could say. But not in the sense of disappointment or dissatisfaction or the crushing of hope; in the sense, rather, of the loss of illusions, a freeing from deception. Did I say "oratorio," a minute ago? Yes, but this work is an oratorio that can be opera-ized—staged—as it was in Salzburg.

Handel wrote it in 1707, when he was but twenty-two. He reworked the piece twice, in later years, and borrowed from it throughout his long career. The hit aria in it is "Lascia la spina, cogli la rosa"—better known as "Lascia ch'io pianga," from the opera *Rinaldo*. When you write a tune like this one, you employ it at every opportunity.

Il trionfo is an allegory, presenting four characters, or figures: Beauty, Pleasure, Time, and Disinganno (let's call him). Beauty is the target, tussled over by Pleasure, on one side, and the team of Time and Disinganno on the other. Guess who wins? As the title tells you, it is not Pleasure. The message of the allegory is *tempus fugit*, don't get ensnared in the sensual, and all that.

At the risk of offending Marilyn Horne, I will say a few words about the production, before getting to the music-making. The director in Salzburg was Robert Carsen, the famed Canadian. The idea is this: The City of Salzburg holds a beauty contest, and the winner is launched on a career of modeling—and the "high life." Our winner, of course, is Bellezza, or Beauty. Carsen uses video, shot with his cast around town. I could relate interesting detail, but suffice it to say that the production works. It is offbeat and modern, yes, but it is in harmony with the oratorio, or opera. The production did not distract from the music, taking over the evening.

Our orchestra was not musicAeterna but Les Musiciens du Prince-Monaco, of which Cecilia Bartoli is the artistic director. She was also Piacere—Pleasure—in the show. Conducting the orchestra was Gianluca Capuano, a regular collaborator with Bartoli. He is a dependable and knowledgeable musician.

In the role of Beauty was a rising Swiss soprano, Regula Mühlemann, who is rising for a reason: like Nadezhda Pavlova, she has all the tools. Furthermore, she is fresh, appealing, winsome. "To eat," as my grandmother would say. Tempo and Disinganno were portrayed by two veteran Americans: the tenor Charles Workman, from Arkansas, and the countertenor Lawrence Zazzo, from Philadelphia. Each sang with beauty (as well as Beauty), maturity, and conviction. They may not have been the "names" in the cast, but they more than held their own.

Cecilia? In her mid-fifties, she has a lot of singing left in her. The technique is still there, the voice is ample—and she seems to be growing in musical and theatrical wisdom. What's more, she is a leader. I would like to say she is "infectious," but that is probably the wrong word, in this day and age. Her enthusiasm, discipline, and commitment are catching, lifting up those around her.

There are regular pianists at this festival, and four of them are Grigory Sokolov, Evgeny Kissin, Arcadi Volodos, and Igor Levit. (I have followed age order.) All of these are Russian-born, though none has lived in Russia in a very long time. This year, Kissin played a recital that began with Berg's Op. 1—the sonata he published in 1910. It continued with several works by Khrennikov. The first half ended with the Gershwin Preludes.

These last two composers were surprising, to me. Tikhon Khrennikov was a Communist apparatchik, the longtime chief of the composers' union. He participated in the persecution of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and worthy others. Kissin is a staunch anti-Communist. He may also be an understanding sort—someone who understands the pressures that Soviet composers, like all Soviet citizens, were under. In any

case, Khrennikov was a good composer. Kissin and Gershwin? I was merely surprised—and pleased—to see the two together.

The second half of this recital was all-Chopin: a nocturne; three impromptus; the Scherzo in B minor; and the Polonaise in A flat, "Heroic."

I will speak in general terms about Kissin's playing, except to speak specifically about his Gershwin. The first of the Preludes was strange—unidiomatic. Interesting all the same, however. The second—that beguiler and luller in C-sharp minor—was a little unusual, but fine. And the third—which is almost Prokofiev-like in the brusqueness with which you can play it—was very good. Mainly, however—and personally—I appreciated Kissin's appreciation of Gershwin.

Okay, my general terms: I have never heard Kissin—whom I've been listening to since he was twelve, in 1984—play better. He has hit his stride. His playing was clean, accurate, smart, and soulful. Often dazzling, too. He had complete control of his fingers and his mind. His Chopin was full of character. In a sense, he played two program-enders: the scherzo and the polonaise. As though he couldn't decide, or wanted to have his cake and eat it too! Both were played in the grand, excellent style.

The encores were generous, as they usually are from Kissin. The third was another Chopin scherzo—the one in B-flat minor. I thought this was gilding the lily, frankly—too much, like another steak. The fourth and final encore was "Clair de lune." I couldn't remember ever hearing Kissin in French Impressionism. He played his Debussy sensitively and affectionately, if with a couple of ill-judged accents (on the blunt side).

In our program booklet, there was a note from the pianist. His teacher—the only piano teacher he has ever had—had passed away at ninety-eight. She was Anna Pavlovna Kantor. (The first two of those names seem to be a theme of this chronicle.) The two were very close, and, in fact, the teacher lived with her student and his family. "Everything I am able to do on the piano, I owe to her," Kissin said in his program note. He dedicated the evening's recital to his teacher.

Benjamin Bernheim is a French tenor, blessed with a stunningly beautiful voice. I say "blessed"—does Bernheim get any credit at all? I'm sure he has worked, and cultivated. With another Frenchman, the pianist Mathieu Pordoy, he sang a recital. The first half was all-French—and one piece: the *Poème de l'amour et de la mer*. Chausson's piece for voice (usually a female one) and orchestra? Yes. That piece is as much an orchestral work as a vocal one—arguably more so. It was very odd to hear it with voice and piano, good as Bernheim and Pordoy were. If they had wanted to do a French first half, why not a number of songs? Proper *mélodies*?

Yet the *Poème* was premiered, in 1893, by a tenor. And the composer, M. Chausson, accompanied him on the piano. So maybe I should keep quiet . . .

The second half of the Bernheim–Pordoy recital was German and English. There were groups of Schumann and Brahms songs, and three songs in English. The Schumann was not Robert but Clara. I have a rude question: would her songs be sung today if they did not have a connection to Robert? I have a second question, even ruder: would those songs be programmed if there weren't a felt need to increase the presence of female composers on programs? Honestly, I don't know the answer to either question. (There are worse songs than Clara's, trust me.)

Bernheim and Pordoy ended their printed program with those English numbers—beginning with "The Salley Gardens," in the Britten arrangement. On this occasion, it was unusual, even bizarre: fast and lighthearted. How could the last line—"and now am full of tears"—make sense? Maybe it did, to some. In the final position was that terrific program-ender, and show-stopper, of Frank Bridge, "Love went a-riding." It was fine, from our performers—but could have been sturdier. Could have had a crisper, steadier gallop.

The best was yet to come. The duo offered two encores, beginning with "Morgen!," the Strauss song, which you don't often hear from a tenor. Pordoy played the opening superbly—without sentimentalism, and with genuine taste. Bernheim was splendid. Exemplary. In countless hearings, I have never heard the song better. The

last offering was an opera aria, "Pourquoi me réveiller," from *Werther* (Massenet). Bernheim filled the hall with beauty and pathos. Everyone went home—or to a café—satisfied, I feel sure.

I have rhapsodized about Andrew Manze before in these pages, and I must rhapsodize again. He is an English conductor, and he is fast becoming a tradition at the Salzburg Festival: he conducts the Mozarteum Orchestra in an all-Mozart concert. Above, I described Teodor Currentzis as "a very musical being." So is Manze. His Mozart is sharply etched, graceful, and *alive*. Not obnoxious, rightly alive. "Dullness is the cardinal sin of performance," said Liszt. Manze is not dull. Of special note is his sense of rhythm. In music, we tend not to use the word "timing," as we do in comedy. Regardless, Manze has it. This is an asset, not least in Mozart.

About Cecilia Bartoli, I said I was avoiding the word "infectious." I should avoid it about Manze, too. But he is a leader, to whom an orchestra responds. They often smile at him, or smile *back* at him, for he is smiling, too. I think of a Leonard Bernstein book title: *The Joy of Music*.

Of a very different character is an opera by Luigi Nono: *Intolleranza 1960*. It is a one-acter, commissioned for the 1961 Venice Biennale and dedicated to the composer's father-in-law, Arnold Schoenberg. It is a political opera, dealing with injustice: dislocation, arrest, torture, and so on. It was given a vivid—and duly disturbing—performance in Salzburg. Ingo Metzmacher conducted the Vienna Philharmonic, and Jan Lauwers was responsible for the production. I would like to relate two thoughts, of a personal nature: Sitting in my seat, I could not help thinking of the horror in Afghanistan, then unfolding. I also could not help thinking: Luigi Nono was a member—a fervent, faithful member—of the Communist Party. And to hear about political injustice from such a person . . . Anyway . . .

As the *Missa solemnis* is one of the greatest works of Beethoven, it is one of the greatest works in music. Odd that there are few opportunities to hear it. In Salzburg, Riccardo Muti led the Vienna Philharmonic, and associated forces, in this work. I had heard it in Salzburg once before: at the Easter Festival in 2007, when Bernard Haitink led the Berlin Philharmonic et al. It was not that outstanding conductor's best night. Muti had a very good night in the *Missa solemnis*. You might not have agreed with every interpretive choice he made. For me, some parts were too leisurely, too easygoing—I wanted something stricter. But everything Muti did was musical, and I thought, "Jay, your problem is, you listened to the Klemperer recording about a thousand times when you were younger." A recording can get lodged in someone's head—lodged as "right," and exclusively so.

Riccardo Muti has appeared at the Salzburg Festival for a cool fifty seasons. So great is his esteem at the festival, people asked one another this year, "Are you going to Muti?" Not "Are you going to the Vienna Philharmonic?" or "Are you going to the *Missa solemnis*?" but "Are you going to Muti?"

All four soloists were commendable, but I will make particular mention of the soprano—Rosa Feola, a young Italian who is a favorite of Maestro Muti's. She sang her part with clarity, purity, beauty, directness, and strength. She negotiated Beethoven's high notes with aplomb. (He did not much care whether a singer could sing his notes. Pen in hand, he simply obeyed the dictates of music.) Another singer, in a sense, was Rainer Honeck, one of the Philharmonic's concertmasters (and a brother of the conductor Manfred Honeck). He played his solo music with sweet dignity.

To hear the *Missa solemnis*, live, every five or ten years is to hear it too seldom. What a marvelous opportunity this concert was, as was the festival at large, in Season No. 101.

The media

No regrets

by James Bowman

The headline of the year, perhaps of the century, appeared on the website of NBC News on August 19, 2021. This was four days after the Taliban captured Kabul, forcing the Afghan president to flee the country and the United States to evacuate its embassy, and three days after President Biden's address to the nation in which he said, "I do not regret my decision to end America's war-fighting in Afghanistan." Never mind that this was a fudge, one of many in the speech. "America's war-fighting in Afghanistan" had for all practical purposes ended some time ago. What he had ended was America's military presence in Afghanistan as a backstop and support for the Afghan national army, which everybody knew (or ought to have known) could hardly be expected to stand against the Taliban without it. To say that he had no regrets about *that* was tantamount to saying to hell with the Afghans, to hell with twenty years of American and allied military effort in Afghanistan, and to hell, especially, with all those, Afghan and non-Afghan, friends and enemies, who put their trust in America and America's word. We're out of here.

At the time, it seemed almost unbelievable that he could treat what was, by any reckoning, a national humiliation of the United States on a scale not seen in nearly half a century with such insouciance—even suggesting, by saying he had no regrets, that that humiliation was what he'd envisaged all along. It was nothing to do with him; he was only the commander-in-chief. The real failure was that of the Afghans themselves—or perhaps Donald Trump, who came up with the idea of the Afghan exit in the first place and who, as everyone must know by now, is to blame for everything blameworthy. The only thing his successor acknowledged as having gotten wrong was the speed of the Taliban's takeover. It all amounted to an incoherent and transparently disingenuous attempt to deny the obvious, but it should come as no surprise that some in the media were still willing to buy into the multiplying myths of the Biden administration.

One such was the NBC White House correspondent Josh Lederman, to whom the President's maunderings and wanderings all made perfect sense. He was glad to share his insight into the President's alleged thinking with NBC's watchers and listeners in a piece with the headline of the year: "What is the 'Biden doctrine'? Afghanistan pullout offers clues." And what clues they were! The beauty of Mr. Lederman's own cluelessness was that, like the proverbial stopped clock that's right twice a day, he was inadvertently correct. We have only to follow the "clues" of America's Afghanistan exit to realize that "the Biden doctrine" amounts to no more than this: when anything bad happens on account of something he has done, it's really somebody else's fault. The buck, his protestation to the contrary notwithstanding, stops anywhere but here. Against his country and against himself the world has been put on warning: believe nothing that they tell you.

It stands to reason that Mr. Biden's "imbecilic" (to use Tony Blair's word) exit from

Afghanistan prompted an equally imbecilic exegesis of it from his media allies. One of them, Eric Levitz of *New York* magazine's ironically named "Intelligencer" column, even tried to outdo Mr. Lederman for obtuseness by insisting that descriptions of the withdrawal as "disastrous" and "humiliating" were fabrications of the biased anti-Biden media—indeed, that the evacuation of stranded Americans and their erstwhile allies was "proceeding with relatively *little* chaos and tragedy." He had the bad luck to publish his piece on the eve of the August 26 suicide bombing at the Kabul airport, which killed or wounded hundreds of the refugees and at least thirteen American service personnel.

Such imbecility is not found in nature. It has to be learned, and it has been learned by the media, along with much of America's ruling class, through their indoctrination into the progressive ideology—to which they have made it their life's work to force reality to conform. The first hint I can remember of this new form of ideological myopia (those whose memories stretch back to the heyday of Soviet Communism will be aware of its prototype) came during the first iteration of the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. A liberal-minded friend of mine had sent round a petition he and some fellow progressives had planned to submit, once it had accumulated enough signatures, to whatever mullah they could find who was willing to represent the Taliban. The petition respectfully requested that the mullah and his "student" followers get with the progressive program and stop treating women so badly. You know, let them take those uncomfortable burqas off, let them vote and learn to read and write, and for heaven's sake stop executing them for adultery, or for not marrying someone their father tells them to marry. It was a long time ago, as I say, and I'm not sure that what are now called "reproductive rights" were not on the list of liberal desiderata as well.

Having a merely private prejudice against appearing a fool in public—even a public made up exclusively of Pashtun warlords and their followers—I declined to sign, much to the shock of my friend. Didn't I *care* about the plight of women in Afghanistan? No doubt if the matter were pressed further he would have accused me of closing my eyes to the *reality* of what life in Afghanistan had become under the Taliban's rule.

Perhaps he did so accuse me, too, for I remember reminding him that the operative reality in the case was that there was not a thing either he or his petition could do for the women of Afghanistan unless he was willing, first, to petition his own government to go to war on their behalf and oust the Taliban from power. The Taliban without the subjugation of women would not have been the Taliban. Nor would they be now. I don't know if the petition was ever submitted, for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, intervened, and the next thing we knew, then-President Bush *did* go to war against the Taliban and, with the help of allied forces, *did* oust them from power and bring some relief to Afghan women. But it was all done with an idea in mind almost as detached from reality as that of my liberal friend: that what would replace the Taliban, once ousted, would be a nice liberal regime that would presumably welcome petitions signed by dentists from Cleveland and housewives from Milwaukee telling them how to run their country.

Even after twenty years and many thousands killed and wounded, this delusion persisted, or else it was replaced by the one President Biden's best and brightest seem to have suffered from, namely, that we had beaten back the Taliban enough, at least, to allow ourselves a decent interval for getting out without having to rely on a substantial force of our own to protect our withdrawal. Over at the State Department they are even now unwilling to abandon the original delusion, at least to judge from the words of the Department's spokesman Ned Price, who recently called on the Taliban to form an "inclusive and representative government." Likewise, Nancy Pelosi warned that "any political settlement that the Afghans pursue to avert bloodshed must include having women at the table." I fancy the Taliban cared as little for Ms. Pelosi's "must" as they did for my friend's petition, but I'm sure they understand—as growing numbers

in this country must as well—that, in both cases, the target audience for such laughable attempts by the defeated to dictate terms to the victors was not the Yusufzai tribesmen but other virtue-signalers like themselves from the liberal internationalist elite back home.

But there I go, making the same mistake as the media. It is the mistake of disproportionality—of treating what is both a national humiliation for our country and a colossal tragedy for the Afghans as no more than an excuse to advance one's own political agenda. It was a poor pundit who couldn't find, by combing through the wreckage, some reason for self-aggrandizement or self-congratulation. Thus *The New York Times* report of the Kabul airport bombing: "Among the Troops Who Died, Two Women on the Front Line"—the putting of more women onto the Front Line being a long-time cause championed by the *Times* and its progressive confreres.

I guess it's hard in our twenty-first-century media environment for journalists to write about anything, even tragedy, without making it all about ourselves. Here, for instance, is someone called Laura Jedeed—a veteran of the Afghan war herself and a blogger of some description, but one of sufficient importance for her lucubrations to have been picked up by RealClearPolitics:

> And so I sit here, reading these sad f—ing articles and these horrified social media posts about the suffering in Afghanistan and the horror of the encroaching Taliban and how awful it is that this is happening but I can't stop feeling this grim happiness, like, finally, you f—ers, finally you have to face the thing Afghanistan has always been. You can't keep lying to yourself about what you sent us into. No more blown up soldiers. No more Bollywood videos on phones whose owners are getting shipped god knows where. No more hypocrisy. No more pretending it meant anything. It didn't. It didn't mean a goddamn thing.

You can tell by the use of obscenities and profanities how strongly she feels about it. She, certainly, is not without regrets, but, really, she's only doing here what President Biden was doing in disclaiming them: proclaiming her own virtue by strongly dissociating herself from those she thinks are to blame.

There was a lot of it about. Can there have been *any* political tendency represented in Washington that couldn't find some vindication for itself and its beliefs in the destruction of a nation ten thousand miles away? Republicans and Democrats, Trumpsters and anti-Trumpsters, neocons and neocon-hating libertarians, those who predicted disaster from the start and those who implicitly believed, at least up until a few months ago, in America's *mission civilisatrice*—all, like Ms. Jedeed, seemed to feel that same "grim happiness" at the sense of their own vindication. None—or none that I saw—paused to ask themselves what they thought the Taliban, let alone the people who once trusted the United States and who were now being hanged or eviscerated for it, cared for *their* feelings.

Much of the media coverage, too, was narrowly focused on how this national and international disaster would affect the media-favorite Joe Biden. "Biden struggles to address the most volatile crisis of his presidency," headlined *The Washington Post*. Volatile? Never before, I think, has this favorite journalistic euphemism been called on to do such heavy lifting. Meanwhile, CNN offered up some 2,500 words on the inside story of the "crisis" under the heading, " 'A direct punch in the gut': Inside Biden's biggest crisis as he races to withdraw from Afghanistan." *The Hill* was more blunt about it: "Horror in Kabul is political disaster for Biden." How awful for him! But if the media hinted at who they thought was the real victim of so much murder and mayhem halfway around the world, it was no more than Mr. Biden himself did when, reportedly, he greeted the parents, widows, and orphans of the Marines killed in the Kabul airport bombing with tales of his son Beau, dead of cancer some six years after his deployment to Iraq with the Judge Advocate General's Corps. It was no doubt an example of the President's far-famed "empathy."

All this having been said, and at the risk of sounding like the late, great comedian Spike Milligan, the first volume of whose memoir

of service with the British Royal Artillery in North Africa and Italy was titled *Adolf Hitler: My Part in His Downfall* (I don't think our media today would get the joke), I would like to adduce my own little I-told-you-so from the disaster. Fifteen years ago I published a book called *Honor: A History* (Encounter) which was in part a lament for the loss of the old Western honor culture—a loss that explains why, even as we invaded Afghanistan to avenge and thus repair the loss of national honor on 9/11, we felt we had to explain ourselves in more high-minded terms as bringing liberal democracy to the benighted Muslim theocrats. We've been sticking to this story for twenty years. Now see what it has got us.

Now the word "honor" is popping up again here and there, because honor, I think, was once, among other things, a way of being clear-sighted and not merely self-regarding about matters of war and peace. Its having been so largely forgotten about in recent years is one reason why the Afghan debacle took place, since we seemed to believe it was possible to train the Afghan national army to fight its own battles against the native honor culture of the Taliban without its soldiers' needing any sense of honor themselves. In defeat, we may be learning about honor all over again, though we're more likely nowadays to call it by some other name, like "reputation" or "credibility" or "prestige"—all of which have been referred to by more than one media commentator as what has been lost by us, along with our dead, in the ruins of free Afghanistan.

It's enough, at any rate, to make one hope that there may be those again in our public life who can see something unseemly in using the conquest of another country and the humiliation of one's own to score political points, however right or wrong their own assessment of the chances of war may have turned out to be. For such a defeat is not about Republicans or Democrats, Biden people or Trump people, but all of us. It affects our country and the way it appears before the world, and right now there's nothing in that for anybody to be proud of, or even grimly happy about.

Admittedly, it would have taken near-superhuman unselfishness and public-spiritedness for Republicans not to make every effort to have President Biden carry the political can for the disaster, especially as his media-grade level of self-righteousness did not just emerge in the notorious "no regrets" speech but has always been typical of him. But that Mr. Biden's self-satisfaction is unperturbed by such an egregious failure is no reason for the rest of us to imitate it. He at least has the excuse of having sunk into the vale of senility without ever understanding that there were bigger causes than his own or his party's to make demands upon a public servant. The rest of us once knew that but, in recent years, appear to have forgotten it. Maybe remembering it again can be the one good thing that comes out of our common defeat in Afghanistan.

Books

Citizens lamed

by Wilfred M. McClay

The title of "citizen" has lost much of the simple grandeur it once had. It deserves far better, and as Victor Davis Hanson shows in his learned, powerful, and troubling new book, *The Dying Citizen*, the steady devolution of citizenship speaks volumes about where we are today and where we seem to be heading.[1] In fact, the imperiled future of citizenship seems to stand at the very center of it all. The most destabilizing elements of today's political life—the erosion and displacement of the settled and propertied middle classes by the forces of economic globalization, by ceaseless waves of increasingly unassimilated immigrants, and by the divisive influence of the politics of identity and of post-nationalism—seem to be aimed directly at the concept of citizenship, and together work to pound it into oblivion.

Such destructive efforts cannot be allowed to succeed. If they do, it will be a loss of immense proportions for all humankind, a wanton abandonment of one of the greatest political achievements of the ages. But it could happen. There never has been anything natural or automatic or inevitable about the ideal of citizenship, or about the creation of the kinds of societies in which it flourishes. On the contrary, as Hanson says early in his book, human history is "mostly the story of non-citizenship," of various forms of coercive rule—feudalism, monarchy, oligarchy, dictatorship—in which the habits of individual self-rule are thwarted and active citizenship cannot take hold. What we have had here in the United States is something rare and hard-won. There was a "long road from antiquity to our own Constitution," Hanson argues, and the concept of self-rule that the Constitution embodies remains fragile and vulnerable. There is no guarantee that the journey could ever be retraced, should the thread be lost.

Citizenship in its most robust sense is something far more than a technical status accorded to certain residents who pay taxes and have voting privileges. Citizenship animates a free people's way of life. It draws upon a sense of membership in a society of civic equals— not fearful and dependent subjects, but free and independent citizens, who may be unequal in many ways, but who share a civic equality, in which respect for one another's equal rights and equal standing under the law is a guiding moral premise.

Citizens cannot be vassals. The concepts are incompatible. They are not merely residents of a particular geographical patch, nor are they bound together by a shared tribal or religious identity. Nor can they share together in an abstract and fanciful "citizenship of the world." Instead, being a citizen means living under a particular constitution and laws to which one has consented freely, directly or through elected representatives. Citizens are bound together by assenting to a uniquely *civic* understanding of their relations to one another, an understanding that rises above their economic status, their own ethnic and racial identities, and other

1 *The Dying Citizen: How Progressive Elites, Tribalism, and Globalization Are Destroying the Idea of America*, by Victor Davis Hanson; Basic Books, 432 pages, $30.

such primal loyalties, and which incorporates a shared culture and a shared history of the nation, along with certain privileges and duties.

Hence citizenship must be learned, and civic education should be an initiation not only into a canon of ideas, but also into a community. And not just a community of the present, but one endowed with memory—a long human chain linking past, present, and future in shared recognition and in gratitude.

That is the ideal, at any rate, and it has prevailed in America for most of our history. But in recent years Hanson sees everywhere an attenuation of the preconditions needed for robust citizenship, and a simultaneous disintegration of that very notion, a reversion to what he calls "precitizenry," a recrudescence of forms and ideas that were thought to have been overcome in our present-day institutions. Thinkers since Aristotle have recognized the need for a middle class (*mesoi*) that serves as a mediating and moderating influence between rich and poor. But Hanson sees a new kind of "peasant" emerging, from which the globalized economy has taken away the capacity for economic self-reliance that is required for civic freedom.

He also sees a growing renunciation of the bedrock principle that countries must privilege their citizens, who know their land and know its history and have consented to be governed by its laws, over mere residents. In addition, there is emergent a new tribalism, which refuses to subordinate primary identities to the discipline of civic life, even as it demands "inclusion" at every turn. As Hanson observes, "the more [citizenship] is stretched to include everyone, the less the likelihood it can protect anyone."

The elites, by contrast, are "postcitizens," who benefit from the mobility and placelessness of the global economy, and who have no particular use for national or local identity. (Roger Scruton adapted a word for this attitude: "oikophobia," or distaste for one's own home.) Hence elite opinion shows only the faintest regard for citizenship, however much it may occasionally fawn over the idea of "civic education."

Rather than seeing politics as the proper avenue for deciding contested questions, postcitizens favor a movement toward governance by unelected bureaucrats and experts, men and women with respectable academic pedigrees who operate through the instrumentalities of the administrative state rather than through Congress and other elected representatives. They see the Constitution and its constraints on the concentration of power as impediments to progress and therefore deserving of the scrap heap: the Electoral College, the filibuster, the Second Amendment, the size and shape of the Supreme Court. They swoon at the idea of world citizenship and "global tests," even as they fail to lift a finger to ensure the honesty of local elections; how they would police a global election remains unanswered, naturally. They are astonishingly blind to the desperate conditions that globalization has wrought across large swaths of the country, the places where the new peasantry has arisen, places where the economically and culturally displaced may be beginning to sharpen their pitchforks.

Hanson lays out this grim diagnosis with his usual clarity and brilliance, moving easily from his deep, specialized knowledge of the ancient Greek and Roman world to savvy observations about present-day politics and American society, with its perfervid obsessions with race and its alarming willingness to abridge fundamental civil rights, including rights of speech and expression that have always been considered fundamental to the exercise of citizenship. The specter of China—and the implications of its commercial domination of the United States—is also a presence in this book. One of Hanson's most chilling observations, made several times in the text, is that "what began as an Americanization of the globe has ended up as a globalization of America," a steady devaluation of the referents of citizenship that are uniquely American: "the Gettysburg Address, the speeches of Martin Luther King, rock, jazz, and iconic Hollywood films." Such cultural referents (and one could name many others) are among the chief things that made the melting pot work. Without them, it is no longer clear what one would assimilate oneself into.

But Hanson is not all gloom. He believes that the Trump administration, although im-

perfect in many ways, and greatly inhibited by endless lawsuits and investigations, provided a glimmer of hope that the unconstitutional tyranny of the administrative state could be countered, the economy freed, civil liberties restored, and citizenship revitalized. Perhaps, he speculates, a less polarizing figure than Trump could accomplish more in the future, particularly if he were to have a greatly energized American citizenry behind him. If Hanson is right, that energized citizenry might, by the very act of exerting its recovered powers, help lead us into to the policy changes that we so badly need. It is a slender hope, but not an impossible one.

In fact, it seems likely that such renewed activity on the part of citizens may in fact be the *only* way we will be able to restore our constitutional republic. It is pretty clear by now that the reforms we need will never come from the top. There may have been a time that Americans could allow themselves to hope for that, but not anymore. There is too much evidence to the contrary. The catastrophic acts of feckless incompetence that have stained the American withdrawal from Afghanistan in August, which cast a pall over the heroism and sacrifice of thousands of common soldiers, occurred too late to be included in Hanson's book. But no one will be able to read this book without thinking of them, and seeing in them a logical culmination to its argument. There are a great many restless people out there who are tired of waiting for Godot. The citizen is not dead, not yet.

The Bate Gatsby

Jonathan Bate
Bright Star, Green Light: The Beautiful Works and Damned Lives of John Keats and F. Scott Fitzgerald.
Yale University Press, 415 pages, $30

reviewed by Paul Dean

In 1919, Scribner's accepted Scott Fitzgerald's first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, which appeared the following year. Just a century earlier, in 1819–20, John Keats wrote the great sequence of odes that contributed to giving him first place in Fitzgerald's poetic pantheon. Fitzgerald quoted from, and alluded to, Keats many times in his work, the borrowing of the title *Tender Is the Night* from the "Ode to a Nightingale" being the best-known example. Jonathan Bate duly notes these debts in his new book *Bright Star, Green Light*, but his wider purpose is to "bring [Keats and Fitzgerald] back to life in the Plutarchian style." Plutarch wrote parallel lives: but parallel lines, as we all know, can never meet, and nor do many of Bate's arguments.

When Keats died at twenty-five, he left a body of poetry that included not only the Odes but "Isabella," "The Eve of St Agnes," "Lamia," *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, and sonnets such as "On First Looking into Chapman's *Homer*," "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again," "When I have fears that I may cease to be," and "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art," all of which can stand comparison with the best of their kind. His letters are among the greatest in the language, redolent of a captivating personality and developing profound ideas about poetry, Shakespeare, and the workings of the human mind. If Fitzgerald had died at twenty-five, we would have only *This Side of Paradise* and his first collection of short stories, *Flappers and Philosophers*, by which to estimate him. As a correspondent he is invariably shrewd about his craft, and he is movingly devoted to his wife and daughter, but neither as a stylist nor as a thinker is he in Keats's class. Finally, if we ask what Fitzgerald went on to accomplish that can be placed in the first rank, what can we add to *The Great Gatsby* and a handful of his 178 short stories? What meaningful comparisons are possible here?

Bate adds little to the existing biographies, and, again, the disparity between the lives is more marked than the resemblances. Keats's social background was modest, his financial circumstances being constrained by a mishandled trust fund; he left school at sixteen to undertake an apprenticeship as a surgeon and apothecary, which was not for the faint-hearted. He lived under the shadow of congenital tuberculosis, which killed first his beloved brother

Tom whom he nursed devotedly, then himself, and he died before he could marry his fiancée, Fanny Brawne. He moved in a radical literary and artistic milieu that was high-minded, serious, and committed to the betterment of society. Fitzgerald, by contrast, neglected his studies at Princeton in favor of socializing and left without a degree. Following brief spells in the military and in advertising, he married Zelda Sayre on the earnings from his first novel; they proceeded to whoop it up in saloons that Dangerous Dan McGrew would have envied, descending into alcoholic dissipation, chronic debt, and, in Zelda's case, mental illness (during which, to his credit, Fitzgerald's support for her never wavered). Had Fitzgerald not been blessed with a gift for writing, they would be remembered, if at all, simply as the star couple in what Fitzgerald called "the most expensive orgy in history." When one looks at the facts, it is Keats for whom one has more instinctive sympathy.

Bate feels able to judge the Fitzgeralds' relationship "more profound" than that between Keats and Fanny Brawne, because "Scott and Zelda had both been through the vale of soul-making"—a phrase used by Keats, in a letter to his brother George and his sister-in-law in America, to describe the human world, in which "pains and troubles" are inescapable by those who wish to mature. But how can one compare Keats's short-lived engagement to Fanny, whom he hardly saw for the last year of his life, with the Fitzgeralds' twenty-year marriage? Keats's image of the vale emerged from his experiences of blighted hope, physical pain, and psychological despair. These were not what are now referred to as "lifestyle choices," such as were made, to some extent, by the Fitzgeralds. To be fair, the disasters that beset them were not all of their own making: like T. S. Eliot, whom he admired, Fitzgerald was not told about the mental instability in his wife's family. One has to respect his stoical dealing with that discovery, and his unflinching diagnosis of his own breakdown in "The Crack-Up" and related pieces, but isn't it too easy to cast him and Zelda as simple victims? In an influential essay in *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), Lionel Trilling anointed Fitzgerald as a tragic figure, and many have followed his lead, but it might be thought that Keats, whose life had its own share of tragedy, bore it no less courageously.

According to Bate, Fitzgerald believed that the novel "would take up the mantle of poetry that had reached its apotheosis in the Romantic tradition," but how precisely was it to do so, and which of the several Romantic traditions was it to inherit? Bate, plausibly enough, traces Fitzgerald's ideas about the transience of beauty, the pathos of unfulfilled longing, and the power of desire to the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Ode to a Nightingale" especially. These are stock properties of one kind of romanticism, but they were not deployed in the same way by both writers. Fitzgerald's antidotes to the pretensions of romanticism are flippancy or irony, both foreign to Keats's more classical sensibility. When Matthew Arnold, in an essay on Keats which Fitzgerald admired, perceived "flint and iron" in the young man's character, he was pointing to a quality of detachment that is aware of the difference between sentiment and sentimentality. Successful romantic writing is not made simply by expressing powerful emotions in a plangent manner: feeling needs to be tempered with judgement, as Keats knew when he voiced suspicion of the cheats and deceptions of "fancy" in the "Ode to a Nightingale."

"In their literary taste," Bate writes, "both were borne back ceaselessly into the past: Keats to the romance of the Middle Ages and to the English poetry that he loved (Milton, Shakespeare); Fitzgerald, to Keats." But there are various kinds of tradition as well as of romanticism. Tradition for Keats includes Homer, Virgil, Dante, Spenser, and Chapman as well as Milton and Shakespeare, and Thomas Chatterton and Leigh Hunt as well as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron. Bate's description of *Tender Is the Night* as "an attempt at an epic of modern life" uses "epic" in a way Keats would hardly have recognized, and his comparison of Fitzgerald's struggle with that novel to Keats's labors on the pseudo-Miltonic *Hyperion*, which he abandoned with the immortal comment "English ought to be kept up," is tenuous:

Fitzgerald's problems were about narrative structure, Keats's about style. As the literary allusions in *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned* somewhat complacently demonstrate, Fitzgerald belonged to a different tradition. Besides the canonical Romantic poets of the Regency and early- to mid-Victorian era, he imbibed the later English and French Symbolists, the "decadent" school, and the aesthetic movement of the 1890s. In that climate, Keats's triumvirate of imagination, beauty, and truth had lost much of its clarity of outline and intellectual rigor, veering instead towards melodrama, self-dramatization, and brittle cynicism.

When Bate says that both writers were interested in "the opposing claims of philosophy and romance," he yet again writes too imprecisely. "Philosophy" for Keats meant empiricism filtered through Wordsworth and Coleridge: for Fitzgerald it meant Spengler, William James, and Santayana. Keats reflected on aesthetics, ethics, and metaphysics with the speculative freedom of a truly original mind, though there is nothing academic about his thinking. Despite scattered references in Fitzgerald's letters to Plato, Descartes, Marx, and others, there is little evidence that he had any taste for sustained abstract thought, and his first two novels handled ideas in an undigested and clumsy fashion. Keats was constantly testing the truth-claims of philosophy and poetry against each other, writing, "What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet," and again, "Axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses." He saw that the world of abstractions, with its hankering after absolutes, disregards the diversity of lived experience at its peril. So the conflict between the Apollonian and the Dionysiac is fully explored in "Lamia" long before Nietzsche, and the Odes work out a dialectic between classicism and romanticism whose turning point is the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which rejects the fantasy of eternal youth, recognizing that we cannot arrest emotional growth or absolve ourselves from the risk of disappointment and suffering, or from the certainty of death.

At the beginning of chapter 6 of *The Great Gatsby*, we are told that James Gatz, once abroad Dan Cody's yacht, transformed himself into Jay Gatsby by a "Platonic conception of himself":

> He was a Son of God—a phrase which, it if means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty.

(Bate, incidentally, suggests that James Gatz is meant to be a Jew, although Fitzgerald himself linked the character to the Catholic boy, Rudolph Miller, in the story "Absolution.") Gatsby's Platonic self-image is a dream from which he must learn to free himself, not a means of access to ultimate reality; at the end of Chapter 8 it's suggested that he may have done so just before his death, by admitting to himself that Daisy wasn't going to leave Tom Buchanan. This would have been a terrifying moment; as Nick Carraway, the narrator, says, the world would have seemed "unfamiliar . . . frightening . . . grotesque . . . . A new world, material without being real." Yet by recognizing that to accept the truth, however painful, is wiser than to console oneself with illusions, Gatsby would have taken, albeit briefly, a crucial step forward in his passage through the "vale of soul-making."

"The leading 'parallel'" between Keats and Fitzgerald, Bate concludes, "is that they crafted words and impressions of *beauty* in a world of mortality" (original italics). But beauty for Keats could never have been described as "vast, vulgar, and meretricious," and the Platonic idea implied by the ending of "Ode on a Grecian Urn"—that there is an ultimate Form of Beauty, whose existence we can deduce from our response to beautiful objects—is quite different from Gatsby's idealizing of himself.

When all reservations have been made, *The Great Gatsby* is Fitzgerald's indubitable masterpiece. *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned* are high-spirited, snook-cocking, swaggering adolescent productions; *Tender Is the Night*, for all its power, never found a totally coherent form; the shrewd moviemaking scenes in *The Last Tycoon* are let down by

its tired romantic plot, which revision might (but might not) have improved. It is the tightly constructed, classical *Gatsby* that manages both to portray and to diagnose the illusions of romance, the terrifying void beneath a fabricated self, and the tawdriness of a society whose god is hedonism. No wonder T. S. Eliot admired it so much. Drawing on Conrad and Ford Madox Ford for narrative perspective, and on the *Satyricon* of Petronius for moral satire, Fitzgerald "placed" his age and the values of his generation with mingled distaste and compassion, and with a degree of objectivity he never managed again.

In the end, the case presented in *Bright Star, Green Light* fails to convince. This is a pity, because Jonathan Bate tells us it is a "coda" to his purely literary activity. In his new role as Professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Arizona, he intends henceforth to devote himself to ecological issues. Fortunately, in previous books—on Shakespeare, on Renaissance classicism, on John Clare, and on the Romantic movement—he has already given us much for which we can thank him.

Conventional thinking

Gordon S. Wood
Power and Liberty: Constitutionalism in the American Revolution.
Oxford University Press, 240 pages, $24.95

reviewed by Marc M. Arkin

It is often said that the United States and Great Britain are two nations separated by a common language. It could also be said that we are two nations separated by a common belief in constitutional democracy. To a citizen of Great Britain, the English constitution refers to a combination of customs, ancient documents such as Magna Carta, and parliamentary legislation; it is generally considered to be unwritten and, possibly as a result, is subject to the same process of change and revision as any ordinary law. To a citizen of the United States, the Constitution refers to a specific document, drafted in 1787, ratified by the several states, and in effect since 1789. It proclaims itself to be the supreme law of the land (Article VI, Paragraph 2) and resides outside the ordinary legislative processes, both state and federal. It can only be changed by a specific and complicated process of amendment involving supermajorities of the states (Article V), and it is the measure of the validity of all other domestic laws. How this understanding came to be is one of the great questions of American history. That it is one of the great innovations and achievements of the American Revolution is beyond question.

According to the Alva O. Way University Professor Emeritus at Brown University and Pulitzer Prize–winning historian Gordon Wood, the divergence came about during the imperial crisis of the 1760s and early 1770s when the colonists realized they thought about political power quite differently from their British counterparts. During those great debates, the colonists came to recognize that acts of Parliament—like the Stamp Act of 1765—might be legal in the sense that they were consistent with accepted ways of lawmaking but still be unconstitutional in the sense that they did not accord with the basic rights and principles of justice that made the English constitution the "palladium of liberty" that it was. The Rev. John Joachim Zubly of Georgia drove home the Americans' position in 1769 when he pointed out that the English nation would never recognize as constitutional a parliamentary law that made the king's power absolute.

In his new book *Power and Liberty: Constitutionalism in the American Revolution*, Wood turns his attention to these and other issues in the formation of the American constitutional order. Based on a 2019 series of lectures delivered at Northwestern School of Law, it is the sort of project Wood has described as a "series of problem-solving essays." Professor Wood is the foremost contemporary historian of the Revolutionary era, known for both his scholarly monographs and his elegant book reviews for *The New Republic* and *The New York Review of Books*.

Throughout his fifty-year career, Wood has emphasized what he has called "the radicalism of the American Revolution." Although the framers came from a premodern world with a clear social hierarchy, in which servitude was a common status for whites as well as blacks and manual labor was looked down upon, the Revolution unleashed the energies of the so-called "middling sort," creating a bumptious commercial republic of easy credit and egalitarian ideals that was far from what the framers had either envisioned or desired. Informed by this fundamental tension underlying his subject, Wood has repeatedly taken issue with those who seek to create a "usable past," whatever their politics. Rather, as Wood observes in *Power and Liberty*, historians bear a heavy responsibility:

> Some have said that history for a society is like memory for an individual. Without memory, the individual is isolated, cut off from where he has been and where he is. But creating memory for a society . . . is a tricky business; it can have very perverse effects.

Instead, as he has written elsewhere, Wood views the historian's task as "understand[ing] events as they actually were," recognizing "the complexity, the nuances, the contexts, and the differences of the past." In this vein, it is difficult to do justice to the detail and insightfulness of his analysis of the politics and constitution-making of the Revolutionary era, a period he calls "one of the most creative in modern Western history," one whose documents and principles form the basis for our national identity. But if there is a common thread running through this wise work, it is the humane understanding that, in Wood's own words, "all history is ironic except when it is tragic."

Thus, the first chapter begins with the imperial crisis of the 1760s as the parties debated the nature of their relationship. It presents the most thought-provoking, concise discussion of the intellectual road to Revolution in this reader's experience. As the crisis played out, the colonists placed the blame on Parliament for infringing upon their rights as Englishmen through its laws, particularly its revenue measures. Underlying this dispute was a gulf in their respective understandings of power and representation. When the colonists claimed "taxation without representation," the bewildered British responded that the colonists were represented in Parliament because they were Englishmen; Parliament represented the interests of the entire polity, even those like women, children, or colonists who were unable to cast their votes for members. But the colonial legislatures had come to follow a different model, with a broader franchise and representatives closer to the people and their specific interests. As Wood explains, "the process of election was not incidental to representation, but central to it. People actually had to vote for their representative in order to be represented." As both sides dug in their heels, the colonists began to portray the Crown as the protector of their liberties and the sole institution that bound them to the empire. To ordinary Englishmen, this was flatly baffling: Parliament was the great bulwark of English liberty against a perennially encroaching king. This mutual incomprehension led to the Declaration of Independence.

In 1776, when the time came for Americans to frame the governments for their newly independent states, the imperial crisis had led them to the understanding that the fundamental laws had to be written and to exist outside of the ordinary legislative process. How to achieve that was quite another matter. In his second essay, Wood discusses the state constitutional conventions, an intricate subject usually reserved for specialist journals. Yet, as Wood points out, their debates illuminate the concerns of ordinary people in the founding generation, their fear of magisterial and gubernatorial authority, and their decision to grant an extraordinary amount of power to the newly enlarged lower legislative houses.

The resulting excess of democracy set the stage for a recurring series of problems, beginning with the crisis of the 1780s as the union created by the Articles of Confederation proved inadequate to the task of governing. As Wood

points out, the problems of the 1780s went well beyond the weakness of the Confederation. Put simply, the state legislatures—supported by the newly empowered middling sort—were running amok, not only, as is well known, by instituting commercial measures that threatened the interests of the rentier class, but also by the sheer multiplicity of laws they passed, many of them inconsistent with one another, and frequently repealed in the next session. With so much instability, citizens could no longer reliably transact business or plan their ordinary affairs.

Although James Madison may have been the prime mover in the Convention that created the new federal constitution, Wood stresses the breadth of participation in the Convention debates—from elite leaders like Madison and Alexander Hamilton to middling sorts like the Anti-Federalists William Findley of Pennsylvania (who later became the first Father of the House, the senior-most member of the House of Representatives) and Melancton Smith of New York. Wood also stresses the broad popular engagement in the state ratifying conventions, whose debates, unlike those of the federal convention, were held in public before a "prodigious number of People from all parts of the country," in the words of one observer. Eighteenth-century Americans had a sense of the moment: as one small Massachusetts town told its delegates, the issue they were deciding was of "the greatest importance that ever came before any Class of Men on this Earth."

Much of the Constitutional Convention was spent deliberating how to limit state power in favor of a more cohesive national government. This had significant implications for an institution prominent in today's news, the Electoral College. Delegates feared that if the president were to be elected by the whole Congress, including a Senate in which the states had equal representation, he might be captured by state interests. As a solution, some suggested a single seven-year term without the possibility of re-election. Others suggested direct election by the people. But in a world without political parties (and tickets and party-chosen candidates), where all politics was local, delegates were concerned that people in such a large nation would not know who were the best qualified candidates.

After much discussion, the Convention decided to create an alternative Congress composed of eminent persons with a single job—to select a president every four years. The Electoral College seemed to check all the boxes: it guaranteed the president's independence from Congress while mirroring the compromise that gave small states outsized representation in one house of Congress. Many expected that the Electoral College would effectively work as a nominating body, figuring that no one person would get a majority of electoral votes. In such a case, the election would be decided in the House among the top five candidates, with each state's delegation voting as a unit. As Wood drily remarks, the College "was an ingenious solution to delicate and controversial political problems, and the fact that it has rarely worked the way it was intended does not change its ingeniousness." Certainly, the framers' failure to stave off the rise of political parties did not help matters. One need only recall the unseemly scrum that followed the election of 1800—in which Aaron Burr, the putative Republican vice-presidential candidate, and Thomas Jefferson, the party's presidential candidate, tied in the Electoral College—to recognize that the institution's practical deficiencies manifested themselves early in the life of the republic. (The Twelfth Amendment, ratified in 1804, sorted out this particular problem by requiring electors to vote separately for president and vice president.)

One of the other delicate and controversial political problems that the Constitution did not deal with successfully was slavery. Wood takes the conventional position that slavery and other forms of servitude were everywhere in the colonies before 1776 and under retreat everywhere but the Deep South after the Revolution. The question is why the Constitution temporized with the peculiar institution when so many of the delegates, including those from Virginia, believed not only that slavery was wrong but that it should be abolished. In Wood's account, it appears

that the very optimism that slavery was on its last legs—evidenced by abolition measures in all the northern states by the early nineteenth century, the growth of anti-slavery societies in the upper South, and some very dubious contemporary economic assumptions about free labor underpricing slaves—caused members of the Convention to underestimate slavery's staying power. Thus, threats by South Carolina and Georgia to walk out of the Convention led to the notorious three-fifths clause (in which slaves counted as three-fifths of a person for purposes of electoral representation), a twenty-year ban on ending the international slave trade, and a clause requiring the return of fugitive slaves to their owners. The thinking apparently went, if slavery was dying a natural death, these issues were not worth breaking up the Union. It took another sixty years for South Carolina to manage that feat; by then, slavery was resurgent throughout the South and expanding into the territories. Through the three-fifths clause, it had already provided the crucial electoral margin for the slaveholding Thomas Jefferson to defeat the New Englander John Adams in that notorious 1800 election. This is history as tragedy writ large. Wood gives the framing generation more of a free pass than it deserves.

Wood returns later in the book to the theme of the legislative excesses among the middling sorts, this time to point up another irony. The Revolutionary generation saw colonial magistrates as subservient tools of the Crown administration—bureaucrats living off their fees and fines—and so defanged the judiciary, making it the "least dangerous branch" in their new governments. But faced with the explosion of laws in the 1780s, American leaders began to look to the judiciary as a potential check on the excesses of democracy rather than a danger to the democratic process. As Alexander Hamilton put it, "the courts were designed to be an intermediate body between the people and the legislature, in order, among other things, to keep the latter within the limits assigned their authority." In a nice piece of legerdemain, Hamilton argued that, through the review of legislation to assure its conformity with the Constitution, the judiciary would be effectuating the ultimate will of the sovereign people. Of course, recasting the judiciary as the guardian of popular sovereignty had an unintended consequence: a movement for an elected judiciary that persists in a majority of states to this day. Hamilton would have been aghast. In another twist of fate, as judicial review took hold in the 1790s and early 1800s, the Constitution came to be treated as ordinary law that could be construed in ordinary courts like all other law, a far journey from its status as a special body of law "of a nature more sacred than those which established a turnpike road." In contrast, many countries confer the task of judicial review for conformity with their written constitutions to specialist institutions like the French Conseil Consitutionnel.

This wonderful collection of essays offers many more delights for the specialist and non-specialist alike. Perhaps chief among them is the appreciative epilogue which begins by posing the question of why Rhode Island did not attend the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Of course, as Woods reports, no one really missed them. To quote James Madison, "Nothing can exceed the Wickedness and Folly which continue to rule there. All sense of character as well as of Right is obliterated there." Yet, as Wood gleefully recounts, what made Rhode Island peculiar also made it "precocious." Its tradition of religious freedom and individualism, its extreme localization of authority, the dominant middling character of its people, and the high percentage of its population eligible to vote all combined to create the most commercially advanced economy of all the North American colonies, right down to the sophisticated smuggling operations in its deep coves and ocean harbors. Perhaps most precocious of all was its tradition of emitting scads of paper money—and when the Constitution forbade states from establishing their own currencies, the Rhode Island legislature simply chartered scads of local banks to do it for them. Trade, credit, more patents per capita than almost any other place in the English-speaking world, all driven by

the raucous—not to say corrupt—politics of the middling sort. Is there any better tribute to the state where Professor Wood has spent the last fifty years of his career? And, to borrow an admiring line from one of Wood's own reviews, "There is no other historian in the country who could have written this book."

Clive Bell's chimes

Mark Hussey
Clive Bell and the Making of Modernism: A Biography.
Bloomsbury, 592 pages, $40

reviewed by Brooke Allen

When Charles Ryder, the protagonist of Evelyn Waugh's semi-autobiographical *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), arrives as an undergraduate at Oxford in the early 1920s, he fills his bookshelf with volumes by Lytton Strachey, A. E. Housman, Norman Douglas, Compton Mackenzie, and a copy of Clive Bell's *Art* (1914), a touchstone of modernist theory. It is a nice detail, indicating not only the boy's aspirations to intellectual modishness but his cultural insularity, a point that will be underscored later in the novel when, in thrall to the Flyte family, Charles makes an aesthetic conversion to the international Baroque.

For Bell (along with his older comrade-in-arms, Roger Fry—also featured on Ryder's bookshelf) was modern art's apostle to the Anglo-Saxons, the island nation's interpreter of the ideas behind the post-Impressionist revolution taking place across the Channel. Most famously, Bell explicated the concept of "significant form." "For a discussion of aesthetics," he wrote in his widely read *Art*, "it need only be agreed that forms arranged and combined according to certain mysterious laws do move us profoundly, and that it is the business of an artist to combine and arrange them that they shall move us." According to Mark Hussey, who has written an enlightening new biography of Bell entitled *Clive Bell and the Making of Modernism*, Bell's view was that "the represented element in a picture should be only an aspect of design and not be associated with memory, anecdote, biography or any other non-aesthetic matter." The aim was no longer beauty but the elicitation of emotion through form itself—as with the workman's boots portrayed by Van Gogh, to take an obvious example. Bell took the line (followed by the callow, impressionable Charles Ryder) that artistic genius had dimmed since the quattrocento, and he breezily dismissed most of the masterpieces of the High Renaissance and the Baroque. Art had reignited, he said, with the post-Impressionists and Cubists, who far from initiating a radical break with the past had rejoined the European tradition from which mainstream art had long deviated. Giotto, he opined, was perhaps the "greatest painter of all time."

It is telling that already in 1945 Waugh was presenting *Art* as a period piece, though Bell was to live into the 1960s. Bell himself, in later life, described the book as a record of "what people like myself were thinking and feeling in the years before [World War I]," and Hussey states that now, in the twenty-first century, it is generally "regarded as solely of historical interest." But this is not to deny Bell's importance as a cultural guide. The amateur Bell (as opposed to the scholar Fry) adopted the idea of the critic as signpost, someone who leads his readers to great works and then allows them to respond to those works in their own, necessarily subjective, ways. "Roger's careful, scholarly and putatively objective writing was markedly different from the sometimes slapdash but always entertaining narratives that gave Clive his reputation as a witty guide to high culture," Hussey points out. (Hussey refers to his subject as Clive, and hereafter I will do likewise.) As one critic commented, Clive wrote about painting "with gusto, as though art were as good fun as cricket."

In this biography it has been the purpose of Hussey, an academic who has spent decades of his life on Bloomsbury, to detach Clive from his Bloomsbury surroundings insofar as that is possible. In Hussey's view Clive has too often "been refracted through the voluminous commentary on Bloomsbury,

leaving a distorted and incomplete image of him." This, I believe, is true. It is unfortunate that Bloomsburyites on both sides of the Atlantic, in their wholesale veneration of all things Bloomsbury, have swallowed personal judgments that were often founded merely on snobbery or even anti-Semitism—"underbred" being a specially-favored Bloomsbury term of abuse. This snobbery was applied to Clive's family by most of the Bloomsbury set, particularly by his wife Vanessa. For Clive's father had made his fortune in coal, and the family was unapologetically nouveau riche, occupying a comfortable Victorian pile, Cleeve House, in Wiltshire and enjoying country pursuits; they led, in Hussey's words, a "rather Trollopesque life" and were in no way intellectuals. Clive was introduced to London's aesthetes through Thoby Stephen, his boon companion at Cambridge, the brother of Clive's future bride Vanessa and of his longtime erotic and intellectual obsession Virginia (the future novelist Virginia Woolf). "He seemed to live," recalled Desmond MacCarthy, "[h]alf with the rich sporting-set, and half with the intellectuals" (he retained this habit throughout his life) and "dressed with careless opulence." Vanessa had an exaggerated horror of Cleeve House and its denizens, explicable only by cultural condescension about its "conventionalities," for the Bell family appears to have been quite pleasant; in fact, Clive maintained close ties with his mother, his brother, and one of his two sisters until the ends of their lives. Clive was always aware of his outsider status in Bloomsbury, writing once to Lytton Strachey:

> You are painfully alive to the fact that I was trained outside the mystic circle of metropolitan culture wherein alone a young man may hope to acquire the distinguished manner. My manners you find florid and vulgar, over emphatic and underbred, whence you infer—wrongly as I think—that my appreciations are more or less blunt and that I am deficient in sensitiveness to the finer shades of thought and feeling.

To readers like myself who have long tired of warmed-over Bloomsbury gossip, Clive—at least as chronicled by Hussey—is rather appealing. He had no truck with the famous "gender fluidity" of the set, devoting a large portion of his time to a vigorous program of womanizing. Of course for all intents and purposes he was a single man: Vanessa set up house first with Roger Fry and then, for the long term, with Duncan Grant, with Clive free to come and go as he chose. "One would not say Clive was handsome, nor classically proportioned," recalled one girlfriend of the pudgy, redheaded critic, "but his physical ways with one were thrilling. He knew exactly how and when to kiss me, when and how to stroke, to coax, to light one's cigarette, to tumble or ruffle one." And according to another, "When you are with him you feel that you are the one woman in the world he has chosen to be with." Clive's energies hardly flagged with age; his son Quentin recalled playing Leporello to Clive's Don Juan in the 1930s, and Virginia, embarrassed by her brother-in-law's capers as a decrepit roué, expressed a wish that he would "progress beyond love where he has been stationed these many years to the next point in the human pilgrimage."

Psychologically, too, he seems refreshingly uncomplicated. He savored his life to the full: "There is no truth about life, he says," Virginia remarked, "except what we feel. It is good if you enjoy it, & so forth." And he set about enjoying as many things as possible: art, travel, food, drink, sex, friendship. "I always feel, how jolly, how much hunting, & talking & carousing there is in you!" Virginia commented. Many of his friends, Hussey notes, said that Clive was not happy unless his friends were happy; "his social arts were perhaps his greatest gifts." They also remarked on the high level of his conversation, but this has survived only in the occasional letter or diary entry.

Clive Bell was very much a man of his moment—that moment beginning, more or less, in 1910 when he and Fry organized the famous exhibition "Manet and the Post-Impressionists," which was followed by the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1912–13. In 1914, the

> thirty-two-year-old Clive really could believe that a new renaissance was at hand as a young generation in England laughed at the quaint beliefs of their Victorian forefathers and crossed borders both national and psychological, aesthetic and scientific, determined to create a cosmopolitan society where aesthetic ideas and one's personality mattered more than where one chanced to be born.

Such hopes were soon to be dashed, and with the advent of war Clive assumed a new role as a leader in the pacifist movement, arguing against conscription and for a negotiated peace, supporting conscientious objectors, and advising the government on the possibility of alternative modes of national service. His article "Art and War" deconstructed such abstractions as national honor and patriotism and claimed that, during wartime, artists' and philosophers' first duty is to "tend the lamp" of civilization. Meanwhile, his pamphlet *Peace at Once* (1915) asked whether "crushing" Germany was really worth "killing and maiming half the serviceable male population of Europe, starving to death a quarter of the world, and ruining the hopes of the next three generations." Excused from military service himself for health reasons, he spent the war at Philip and Ottoline Morrell's Garsington Manor, supposedly engaged in vital farm labor.

In the interwar years, traveling constantly between England and the Continent and maintaining close relationships with continental artists including Picasso and Matisse as well as friends such as André Derain and Jean Cocteau, Clive continued to develop his aesthetic theories in new books: *Pot-boilers* (1918), *Since Cézanne* (1922), *Civilization* (1928), *Proust* (1929), and *An Account of French Painting* (1931). He was an enthusiastic booster of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. (Aldous Huxley acidly remarked that "Clive doing his round of the boxes was a superb spectacle. One could almost hear his voice across the whole breadth of the building.") But the 1930s saw the end of Clive's "moment." He was decidedly out of joint with the engaged decade, persisting in his credo that art must transcend the waste of politics and war. Pacifist ideas that had been persuasive in 1914–18 now appeared dangerous in the face of the terrifying rise of dictators across Europe. And in one of those not uncommon family ironies, Clive had a son, the brilliant Julian, who theatrically rejected his parents' values and gave his life—willingly—in the Spanish Republican cause: a cause in Clive's view not worth dying for.

After World War II a series of émigré art scholars from Germany shifted English writing on art away from Clive's belletristic approach to a more academic style, and the explosion of popular interest in Bloomsbury made Clive, a central survivor of the group, increasingly in demand as a raconteur. By the 1950s he was ruefully admitting that "What people really want of me are reminiscences. It's not flattering; they don't care a fig for my ideas." True, and yet some of his ideas are still very pertinent today. He lived, and wrote, during a profound transformation in the Western aesthetic sensibility (if not quite a change in human nature, as Virginia Woolf claimed). His credo of "significant form," and his criterion that art's *raison d'être* is to express the "permanent and universal," have not been gainsaid in the intervening century. As a communicator, a popularizer, and an infectious enthusiast he has had few rivals. And from the viewpoint of our own era, with its acrimonious and intolerant intellectual camps, these qualities appear more valuable than they might have seemed a century ago.

Material objections

Tom Jones
George Berkeley:
A Philosophical Life.
Princeton University Press,
648 pages, $35

reviewed by James Franklin

According to the theory of evolution, traits that increase survival are selected for. So for animals with beliefs, belief in truth should

be selected for, since believing what is true confers advantages for survival. The theory thus neatly accounts for its own success, as our evolutionarily honed ways of knowing have finally resulted in belief in evolution.

A most telling counterexample to this smug synthesis is the eighteenth-century philosopher Bishop Berkeley, whose spectacularly false belief that the physical world does not exist secured him not only survival, but preferment. The Diocese of Cloyne to which he was appointed, which a naive physicalist geography would identify as a tract of land near Cork in Ireland, did not, in his view, consist of bogs, hovels, pigs, the bishop's palace, and so on, but only of minds. Some of those minds, belonging to educated Protestant gentlemen such as himself, were superior to others, namely those of women and Catholics, but all of them were purely mental and the perceptions and ideas in them were caused directly by the great mind, God. The superlatives bestowed on this doctrine by near contemporaries, one of whom called it "the most outrageous whimsy that ever entered in the head of any ancient or modern madman," have only increased with time. Berkeley's place in the pantheon of Great Philosophers is unassailable.

His immaterialism was by no means incompatible with an interest in relatively practical matters, including politics and education. Berkeley's opinion as to the right ordering of society is the one summed up in a later product of Protestant Ireland, the now rarely sung second verse of "All Things Bright and Beautiful":

> The rich man in his castle,
> The poor man at his gate,
> He made them, high or lowly,
> And ordered their estate.

His satisfaction with the divinely established order of society required him to defend it against its many enemies, notably freethinkers, who exalted reason over authority and wished to allow dissent in religious questions. Monarchy demanded absolute obedience. "*Thou shalt not resist the Supreme Civil Power*, is no less constant and inalterable a Rule for modelling the Behaviour of a Subject toward the Government, than *multiply the Height by half the Base*, is for measuring a Triangle." This view raises the question of why the "Supreme Civil Power" deserving of loyalty was not the Jacobite heir of the regime deposed by force only some thirty years earlier, but the argumentation needed to justify the update of loyalties was not beyond a philosopher of Berkeley's subtlety.

In education, Berkeley came to the conclusion that the Anglican church was flagging in missionary zeal and that the American colonies in particular needed an institution of higher learning in the style of his own alma mater, Trinity College Dublin. He resolved to found one. His choice of location was the counterintuitive Bermuda. He argued that the somewhat awkward location was in fact a benefit: since Native Americans would have to be kidnapped and forcibly taken there for education, a certain isolation was desirable. Bermuda also had, he believed, a better class of settler than the mainland colonies, with "more innocence, honesty and good nature, than any of our other planters, who are many of them descended from whores, vagabonds and transported criminals." After initial success raising money, or at least promises of money, he arrived in Rhode Island in 1729 to establish a base for the enterprise. He thus became probably the first famous person to visit the North American continent (in the sense of famous inherently for achievements in the Old World, rather than for discovering or settling the New).

The established institutions of society that Berkeley defended included slavery. In Rhode Island he bought at least three slaves. He baptized them, as "slaves would only become better slaves by being Christian." (It is not known what happened to them in the Colonies nor whether they returned with him to Ireland.)

The promised funds failed to materialize, for reasons not clear but probably not Berkeley's fault. He blamed freethinkers. He returned home, where after some time and lobbying he secured preferment to Cloyne.

The majority of souls inhabiting that region were harder to baptize in the true faith than slaves, as they were Catholics. They were also, he believed, much lazier. The penal codes against Catholics were at their worst in the eighteenth century, and Berkeley had no doubt about where to place blame for the dreadful poverty of the Irish. "Indolence in Dirt is a terrible Symptom, which shews itself in our lower *Irish* more, perhaps, than in any People on this Side the *Cape of Good Hope*. . . . alas! Our poor *Irish* are wedded to Dirt upon Principle." He did not, however, solely blame their Catholic faith. Having visited Italy and seen Catholics hard at work there, he wondered if the Scythian ethnic origins of the Irish might be to blame.

The Catholic problem took a turn for the worse in 1745, when the Jacobite rebellion of Bonnie Prince Charlie threatened to spill into Ireland. Berkeley prepared his own militia but, as a man of ideas, also proffered advice on military policy. One such suggestion was that shorter men be considered for military service, since a minimum height requirement is only imposed because mixed heights look bad on the parade ground. Fortunately, the crisis passed, and Berkeley was able to resume the maintenance of his post to his satisfaction. Indeed, if there is one word that best sums Berkeley up, it is "satisfaction." He says himself, in a notebook entry, "My speculations have the same effect as visiting forein [*sic*] countries, in the end I return where I was before, set my head at *ease* and enjoy my self with more satisfaction." He was satisfied with the existing political and ecclesiastical order, with God's enduring support for it, and with his own place in it.

Tom Jones's account of Berkeley's life and ideas in *George Berkeley: A Philosophical Life* is sound, readable, and complete, except for one surprising omission. Jones provides an accurate record of Berkeley's writings, and there are sufficient surviving documents (such as letters) to enable an adequately rounded idea of the man and his projects. A less informed reader might be advised to consult a potted chronology of Berkeley's life first, as the book's emphasis on thematic development sometimes makes the chronology hard to follow.

The omission is a clear account of Berkeley's *argument* for immaterialism. Jones makes it plain what purpose this astounding doctrine served—to confute freethinkers—and he also mentions Berkeley's belief that immaterialism has scriptural warrant ("In Him we live and move and have our being," Acts 17:28) and the query of a friend's wife who asked whether his philosophy was compatible with the Biblical account of creation (a good question, since Genesis opens with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," that is, a physical world).

But philosophers value Berkeley and his immaterialism for another reason. When the Australian philosopher David Stove faced a proposal that his department remove Berkeley from the syllabus, he said that an undergraduate course without Berkeley is like a zoo without elephants. That is not only because of the tremendous falsity of his immaterialism, which shakes the undergraduate mind out of its dogmatic slumber, but also because of his argument for it. Berkeley is used as target practice for undergraduates because of his ability to make gross logical mistakes clearly. His argument for immaterialism—exactly and in full—is as follows:

> But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than for me to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in *your* mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while?

In other words, "We cannot have trees-outside-the-mind in mind, without having them in mind; so there cannot be trees outside the mind." The conclusion of the argument is not only that there is no physical matter, but that there couldn't be.

Jones does not discuss this argument, except in a footnote reporting the Methodist leader John Wesley's shame that he was once taken

in by it. But for philosophers, logical errors are the whole point of Berkeley. A student who can explain what exactly is wrong with this argument, and perhaps recognize more subtle variants of it elsewhere, can be called a budding philosopher.

Berkeley had one last surprise to spring, again in the area of philosophical arguments (but this time more valid ones). He took on the most formidable opponents of all—mathematicians—and, alone among the scores of philosophers rash enough to attack mathematicians, emerged with a win. Freethinking mathematicians suppose their ideas are clearer than those of theologians, but are they talking sense when explaining the notion of calculus, then recently developed by Newton and Leibniz? The issue is the exact meaning of a speed when that speed is changing. A speed in, say, miles per hour is found by dividing the distance a body travels by the time taken to do so. Clear enough if the speed is constant, but if not, it becomes necessary to break things up, dividing smaller and smaller distances by smaller and smaller spans of time to get a better and better approximation of the true, exact speed at any given moment. But what is that exact speed? Can we divide an "infinitesimal" distance by an "infinitesimal" time to ascertain it? What would that entail? Berkeley poured scorn on these infinitesimals, which both were and were not nothing, and on Newton's effort to get around them by talking of "last ratios" of increments as they vanish. Berkeley objected: "When it is said, let the Increments vanish, i.e. let the Increments be nothing, or let there be no Increments, the former Supposition that the Increments were something, or that there were Increments, is destroyed, and yet a Consequence of that Supposition, i.e. an Expression got by virtue thereof, is retained." Things only got worse trying to explain variable rates of acceleration, on which topic Berkeley wrote of the "ghost of departed quantities." Mathematicians at the time dismissed Berkeley as a mere philosopher, ignorant of the subtleties of their art. Then in the nineteenth century they replaced infinitesimals with some fancy footwork involving the repeated quantifiers "all" and "some." What this constituted was an admission that Berkeley's criticisms had been right (thus demonstrating the excellence of the mathematicians' new answer). Berkeley's satisfaction in his own logical abilities, the source of such ludicrous results elsewhere, here proved justified.

The main outstanding question on the topic of George Berkeley is what the University of California at Berkeley is going to do about its name. In 2020 the school renamed several buildings titled after dead white men with unfortunate views, with the Chancellor saying, "Those who we choose to honor reflect who we are and what we believe in. I have committed my administration to doing everything in its power to identify and eliminate racism wherever it may be found on our campus and in our community." That does leave an elephant in the room. The university was named after Berkeley at its foundation, the trustees being particularly inspired by the line in his *Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America*, "Westward the course of empire takes its way." Will the university expunge all reference to the imperialist slaveowner it is named after? (Likewise for Yale, where Calhoun College is no more but Berkeley College still stands.) Consistency demands it. In the normal course of events, it would have been done already. The problem is that UCB is a sacred site. Can we imagine the nostalgia universally felt for the Free Speech Movement and the *événements* of 1968 without the tagline "Berkeley"? So far, it seems not. The web page of the university's Building Name Review Committee reads, "There are no proposals under review at this time."

Fierce man of the fens

Ronald Hutton
The Making of Oliver Cromwell.
Yale University Press, 424 pages, $35

reviewed by Simon Heffer

Why, asks Professor Ronald Hutton in the opening line of his new biography of Oli-

ver Cromwell, another book about Oliver Cromwell? He answers his question both in his introduction and, more extensively, in his book. There are large stretches of Cromwell's life of which there is little trace when it comes to reliable historical evidence, not least the years before he played his significant part in Parliament's victory in the First English Civil War, from 1642 to 1646. These are the years upon which Hutton focuses, and he is at pains to explain throughout his account just what he can reliably find out (often from the broadsheets of the time) and what he cannot. He is not the sort of academic who would make disrespectful remarks about his peers and rivals, and he does not, but the message one receives, from the lengths to which he goes to tell us just what can be known and what cannot, leads one to conclude that much of what has been written elsewhere is pure supposition.

The title of Hutton's book, *The Making of Oliver Cromwell*, explains its purpose clearly: it is about the formation of the man who became the Lord Protector of England, the godliness and heroism of whose rule echoed the godliness and heroism of his conduct as a soldier, in wars fought to establish what later became the principle of constitutional monarchy in England and, later, in the United Kingdom. King Charles I ruled throughout the 1630s without recourse to Parliament, which he regarded as disobedient, insolent, and tiresome. Worse for some, he threatened to undo the Protestant Reformation in both England and Scotland: his wife was a Roman Catholic, and he showed such sympathies for popish practices as to raise huge suspicions among his subjects—and not just the political class—about what his true intentions for the country were. Yet the purpose of the typical Parliament warrior was not to dethrone him, but to make him subservient to Parliament's reasonable wishes. They attempted to present him with such a settlement in 1646, after his capture and the defeat of the army loyal to him; he refused to submit, escaped from captivity, and prompted a second civil war that raged through 1648. He had invited Scots loyal to him to invade England, which the victorious Parliament saw as tantamount to treachery, and so he was tried and convicted in January 1649, being beheaded for his sins.

But that is all in the future, in terms of Hutton's book, which ends with a victorious Cromwell made famous by his military exploits first with the army of the Eastern Association and then with the New Model Army, settling in London in 1647 and resuming his career as a member of Parliament. Hutton paints an unconventional yet evidence-based portrait of Cromwell as a man who was a difficult subordinate in his early years as a soldier and who was not above misrepresenting the deeds of his superiors in order to secure his own advancement. One such maligned figure was the Earl of Manchester, about whose conduct as a military commander Cromwell seems to have told downright lies, not least in an attempt to seize the command for himself. His attack on Manchester caused a quarrel between the Lords and the Commons: Cromwell's obstinate temperament, not unknown in the Eastern Counties whence he sprang, left him entirely unabashed.

Cromwell is portrayed in many ways as an unpleasantly modern figure. His resort, as a politician, to duplicity and dishonesty has rather too many echoes at the top end of British politics today. He understood the power of the word both as a speaker and as a reader: he quickly established himself as one of the House of Commons's finest orators, and his ability to exhort people verbally was an asset he deployed when commanding troops in the field. But he also saw the power of the newspapers of the day, the broadsheets, to disseminate a picture of his own personality, capability, and achievements that created an impression not just of a man of action, but of a man to whom it would become natural for both the English public and the English political class to look for leadership. He therefore made sure that those who wrote and published these communications were given the Cromwell version first and foremost, and that they broadcast it prominently. The legend was always of the highest importance to him, and by the time the First Civil War

was reaching its conclusion he had become synonymous with Parliament's victory. His ego and self-confidence were buoyed up by such success and esteem, and his trajectory to the role of the first non-royal ruler of England and Scotland was set.

That is where Hutton's book ends. It begins, after his explanation of why the project was necessary, with the details of Cromwell's birth: into a family of minor gentry (though with a close connection to Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's loyal servant) in Huntingdon in 1599. Huntingdon is about fifteen miles northwest of Cambridge and joined to it by a straight Roman road. The university town played a significant part in Cromwell's life as a soldier, a politician, and, first of all, as a student: he was an undergraduate at Sidney Sussex College, though all sources agree he had no great interest in studying. In his thirties he moved his family to another Huntingdonshire town, St Ives, nearer Cambridge, and then to the small cathedral city of Ely, then (before the draining of the Cambridgeshire fens, which began in earnest a few years later) almost literally an island, and when the civil wars came a place easily defended and fortified.

Hutton compensates for the relative absence of facts about Cromwell's early life with substantial context about how the England he grew up in looked. The author clearly has a penchant for natural history and indulges it fully, not just in describing the Huntingdonshire of the early seventeenth century but also later in Cromwell's life, when the facts are more plentiful, giving detailed descriptions of the landscape, flora, and fauna that would have been observed on Cromwell's military campaigns. He reflects that the young Cromwell's world was one of comparative peace (by which he means silence, and not the absence of war) and, once the sun set, darkness: a darkness so intense that it prompted belief in demons and ghosts and other aspects of the supernatural. The moon, stars, and other astronomical phenomena took on huge significance because of their visibility and were looked to for grave portents. By day in summer, the fenlands in which Cromwell grew up were "a vast water meadow golden with buttercups and marsh marigold" with large areas "under water, as meres, marsh or channels, and these waved with tall stands of whispering feathery sedge, spiked teasels, dark brown bullrush heads, and the thin green spears of reeds." In this waterscape "tall grey cranes danced and trumpeted, bitterns sounded their booming cry from reed beds, ruffs displayed their great salmon-pink collars, harrier hawks planed above the sedge and rushes, and black and white ospreys, fish eagles, swooped above the open waters."

After all that, one settles in to the idea that one is experiencing the early life of Cromwell through the prism of some elaborate wildlife documentary. But this approach serves its purpose of reminding us that the England over which he would fight was one far more primitive, sparsely populated, and unchanged by the impact of humans than it is today. Hutton is careful to explain that much of what we thought we knew about Cromwell (to whom he often endearingly refers as "Oliver," rather as Carlyle, in his idolatry, did) comes from accounts written by his enemies after the Restoration. In these, a clear purpose of denigrating his memory can be discerned. Or we have hitherto learned about him from accounts written a century or two later by those who did not know him (notably Carlyle, some of whose research materials turned out to be forgeries), but who had grasped one of the ideological strains that continued to run through England long after the civil wars, of being either Royalists or Roundheads—and manipulating the memory of Cromwell to suit their historical purposes.

So it may or may not be true that as a young married man Cromwell went through a period of idleness and financial irresponsibility, lapsing into drunkenness and lechery, before having a religious revelation that put him entirely at God's disposal. Fate decreed that he become the MP for Huntingdon in 1628, just as Charles I (who had been but three years on the throne) began his confrontation with the Parliament to which Cromwell had been elected. When the wars came, and he

decided not merely to speak but to fight for his beliefs—beliefs underpinned by a militant Protestantism—he was careful, despite his own interest in self-advancement, to attribute all his successes to God. As Hutton amply relates, even after Parliament won, securing the Protestant religion, there then followed a struggle between Puritans and Presbyterians and a fight over what the Church of England should be—one every bit as fierce as the fight that just finished over what it should not be.

The author has striven to paint as honest a picture of Cromwell as is feasible and he has succeeded: the faults, some of which may surprise those brought up in the Carlylean school of worship of "the last strong man to govern England," are glaring, but the virtues no less so. Cromwell had physical courage, and he had the courage of his convictions. And, after the hypocrisies of the Restoration and the absurdities of James II, which culminated in the Glorious Revolution, Cromwell came to be recognized, at least by the enlightened, for what he truly was—the progenitor of that constitutional monarchy that the English hold so dear, and of a society in which tyranny can have no place. That is why, in an era of pygmies, his greatness remains undimmed.

A timely translation

Vergil, translated by Shadi Bartsch
The Aeneid.
Random House, 464 pages, $35

reviewed by Michael Fontaine

Boat people wash up on your shore one day, lots of them. They've come in a flotilla, begging asylum, and one of their ships has just sunk out at sea. Most of them are tough, hardened young men, coming from a war-torn country, and their reputation precedes them. What do you do? Open the border or close it? Let them stay or turn them away? Shoot them if they won't go? And how would you react if, on a whim, your own government simply declared your borders fully open, welcomed the newcomers to stay and settle permanently, and announced that, effective immediately, it will recognize no difference between the newcomers and old-stock citizens?

Such is the story at the start of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which is an epic tale of refugees seeking resettlement in a new home. Written 2,000 years ago and set 3,200 years in the past, the *Aeneid* is *the* classic text—a classicist's classic—and yet the story it tells couldn't be timelier. Humans flee a crisis only to encounter another, or even spark one.

At the deliberately disorienting start of the epic, a storm drives a flotilla of refugees from Turkey to the coasts of Tunisia. That's to use the modern country names, of course. In the story, Virgil's Turks are Trojans from Troy, and his Tunisians are Carthaginians—that is, settler colonists who recently arrived from Phoenicia (Lebanon) and promptly cheated the trusting natives out of land in a bad-faith deal.

The Carthaginians are governed by a queen, Dido, who has always been the *Aeneid*'s most memorable character. And as the story begins, her guards are turning the Trojan boat people away. Suddenly, however, and seemingly without consideration, the queen reverses policy. In this engaging new translation by Shadi Bartsch, Dido announces, to an assembled audience of Trojan refugees and native Carthaginians (here called Tyrians),

> Trojans, let go your fear and your worries.
> Harsh necessity and my new kingdom force me
> to be careful and to post guards on the
> borders. . . .
> [But] If you wish to settle here alongside me,
> the city that I'm building's yours. Beach your
> ships.
> Both Tyrians and Trojans will be the same to me.

The Tyrians must have been surprised. Why does Dido welcome the Trojans so warmly? Well, as she soon tells the Trojan representatives,

> So come, young men, enter my home.
> Fortune once

> harassed me with hardship like your own. At last,
> the fates let me settle in this land. Knowing
> pain, I can learn to help the pain of others.

While contemporary politicians' open-border policies have hardly cost them at the ballot boxes, in the *Aeneid*, by contrast, Dido's decision proves disastrous. In her dying words in Book 4, she declares she would have been happy, only too happy, had the boat people never appeared on the horizon:

> Sweet remnants of love—sweet while god and fate
> allowed—take this soul, free me from this grief.
> I'm done with life; I've run the course Fate gave me.
> Now my noble ghost goes to the Underworld.
> . . .
> happy, all too happy, if only Trojan keels
> had never touched my shores.

And with those words, Dido stabs herself—a suicide motivated by both personal and political concerns.

Those who read the *Aeneid* in Latin often come away with a vastly different impression from those who read it in English. When assessing Dido's reasons for welcoming Aeneas and the Trojans, for example, Latin students often see Dido as lovelorn and awestruck by Aeneas's good looks—like a cheerleader falling for the captain of the football team.

There's some evidence for this, but there's even more evidence that her decision is a cunning political calculation. How so? Well, Dido has just planted a proverbial "villa in the jungle" and snubbed the natives. She fears, correctly, an imminent military invasion on two fronts. So, when a small armada of experienced and civilized infantrymen suddenly just appears, *begging* for help, then . . . well, you get it.

Virgil doesn't say this explicitly. To appreciate the point, you have to read the poem in translation, because the dirty secret of the *Aeneid* is that even skilled Latinists can't keep the whole story straight in Latin the first time through. The problem is that Latin grammar is hard and slows us all down, whereas the *Aeneid*'s political rhetoric and its characters' constant calculations and attempts to manipulate each other are so subtle that they only emerge via the faster reading pace that a translation allows.

On that particular score, Bartsch's new translation deserves high praise. As she announces, speed is one of the very effects she aimed for:

> I have also tried to create a radically different reading experience by being attentive to the *pace* of Vergil's epic. . . . I did not want to write a poem in its own right; I wanted to stay as close as possible to the language of the original *and* maintain its tempo.

Bartsch acquits herself admirably. By hewing to various registers of plain English (but not slang), Bartsch has managed to make the story exceptionally clear to follow in real time. Students will no longer need online guides just to figure out what's going on. And because the translation reads so well aloud, I hope an audiobook won't be long in coming.

Virgil's poem is written in a traditional meter called "dactylic hexameter." In Latin, every line gets six beats, each of which is followed by one or two more syllables, such that a verse usually has between thirteen and eighteen syllables in all. To imitate this effect, Bartsch translates the poem into a very free six-beat iambic verse, with many variations in all six feet. Her lines are shorter than Virgil's, usually having ten to fourteen syllables, though sometimes fewer. And within that limitation—itself an impressive accomplishment for a line-by-line translation, since Latin is usually more economical than English—Bartsch achieves a lot.

Take, for example, an episode toward the end of Book 5. There, in Sicily, a group of Trojan women is fed up with wandering. They are so fed up, in fact, that they decide to burn it all down—literally, by setting fire to their own ships. Here's the buildup:

> tum vero attonitae monstris actaeque furore
> conclamant, rapiuntque focis penetralibus ignem,

> pars spoliant aras, frondem ac virgulta facesque
> coniciunt. furit immissis Volcanus habenis
> transtra per et remos et pictas abiete puppis.
>
> Now they shouted louder, maddened by
> the omen. Some snatched fire from nearby
> hearths,
> others robbed the altars. They hurled branches,
> leaves,
> and burning torches at the ships. Fire raged
> amok over the seats and oars and painted sterns.

The pace is breathless, like the action. Perhaps not coincidentally, Bartsch's best parts are in Books 6 and 12—books that are packed with action and present-tense narrative. Her combat scenes in the latter are especially skillful.

But in translation, something's always got to give. What gets sacrificed to this compressed, quick-iambic style? Ironically, one result is that very action itself. In Latin, the action is even more vivid, *more* cinematic, because Virgil tells his story in the present tense—which, unlike in English, can connote both a simple present aspect ("they shout and snatch and rob and hurl") and, as here, a continuous one ("they are shouting and snatching and robbing and hurling"). The English language forces the speaker to choose between the two aspects, and in poetry it can't possibly sustain the countless syllables that the use of the continuous present, with its helping verbs and "-ing" endings, would require. So Bartsch converts the story to past tense.

Similarly, witness the simile of the paralysis-dream toward the very end of the epic:

> It was like a dream, when drowsy sleep lies on
> our eyes: we feel we're trying to run, but
> somehow
> it's no use; we collapse weakly as we try.
> The strength we know is gone, we cannot speak,
> no words or sounds come out. Just so the awful
> goddess
> kept Turnus from success despite his bravery.

Again, Virgil is narrating the dream and the story in real time ("we're collapsing," "is keeping"). Bartsch converts or compresses the tense. She also simplifies some imagery, so that where Virgil has "our tongue isn't working" ("non lingua valet"), Bartsch writes "we cannot speak."

In compensation, Bartsch does an impressive job of replicating Virgil's love of enjambment—those spillover words like "the omen" and "amok" and "our eyes" and "it's no use." She does this to give a sense of what the Latin is like, even if not in the same places Virgil uses it. It's a smart choice, and there are many fine examples throughout the poem.

What else gets sacrificed to pace? Poetry, obviously. The *Aeneid* reads magically in Latin, with just about every poetic touch you can imagine. If poetry's your preference, then, you'll want Sarah Ruden's magnificent 2008 version—where, however, the story is harder to follow.

Less obviously lost are some subtleties of diplomacy. Frederick Ahl's 2007 version excels at conveying those, and they're especially important to Books 1, 4, and 7. At the end of Book 1, Dido practically says to Aeneas, "Tell me about your two greatest defeats," without using those exact words—not because she's gaffe-prone or naive, but precisely to signal that she already knows all about him, including the reports that he'd personally betrayed Troy to the Greeks. (Bartsch does a nice job of explaining some of this in her introduction and endnotes.)

For his part, Aeneas replies with equal subtlety. Over a sumptuous dinner feast, he explains that his people won't reach their homeland until they've suffered a dire famine. As a prophecy had warned him,

> You sail for Italy, summoning the winds:
> you'll reach her and her ports will open to you.
> But you won't set walls around your fated city
> until wrenching hunger and your harm to us
> will have your jaws gnawing your very tables.

In a modern political debate, it's not hard to see when leaders are bashing each other with brass knuckles through a smile. In the *Aeneid*, though, it's perilously easy to miss that Aeneas is declining Dido's offer to stay and settle in

Carthage. Bartsch's translation misses some such moments.

An example appears early in Book 7, which begins the second half of the epic. Book 7 is crucial to understanding just *why* the Trojans have been hell-bent on reaching Italy, why Carthage would not do: namely, for them, Italy is the ancestral homeland to which they're making a latter-day return, a homeland they've been vouchsafed and commanded by a god to seek out and resettle. The problem is that their "ancestral homeland" is already inhabited by indigenous peoples who do not accept their divine claims. Conflict is inevitable, so when the two groups meet, action and diplomacy are all-important.

Book 7 lifts the curtain on the Trojans reaching the mouth of the Tiber River—which is located just a short subway ride from Rome today, in the popular mini-Pompeii tourist site of Ostia Antica. One of the first things Aeneas does is send a hundred envoys to the local king, Latinus. (Why does he need a hundred? Virgil lets you figure that out yourself.)

Aeneas doesn't go himself, though. Instead, without asking anybody, he seizes land and begins constructing a settlement that resembles a military camp:

> Meanwhile he traced future walls with shallow trenches
> on the shore, building his first town, circling
> it with parapets and ramparts, like a camp.

Assuming his intentions are innocent, you have to admit that's odd behavior for someone requesting asylum. King Latinus assumes his intentions aren't innocent. When he receives the Trojan envoys, he all but says so. Bartsch translates,

> When they came, he said to them serenely:
> "Speak, Dardanians. We know your city
> and your race, we'd heard that you were sailing here.
> Why? What cause, what need carried your ships
> to Italy through spans of dark blue sea?"

The problem here is that Latinus sounds genuinely curious, as if he's actually asking answers to questions he doesn't know. But the Latin suggests a more pointed tone:

> Dicite, Dardanidae (neque enim nescimus et urbem
> et genus, auditique advertitis aequore cursum) . . .

That is, "Speak, Dardanians—because, yes, we're not unaware of your city and heritage . . ." Latinus is signaling that he already knows what they want—and that he's not happy about it. Hence when he offers the Trojans terms shortly after, he adds a curious coda:

> Just let Aeneas come himself, if he so much
> wants to be my guest-friend and my ally:
> he shouldn't fear kindly faces. My condition
> for this pact will be to clasp his [*tyranni*] hand in mine.

The word Bartsch translates as "his" is *tyrannus*. Greek in origin, it originally meant "monarch" or "ruler," but by Virgil's day could also have a connotation of "tyrant" or "bully," a sense which undercuts precisely what he's just said about "kindly faces" the line before. Latinus may not be able to stop these refugees, but he can at least let his people know he doesn't like it. Yet such nuances occasionally go missing here.

The last third of the *Aeneid* is the world's first spaghetti Western, complete with horse battles, forts, shoot-outs, and a final showdown at the Ostia corral. The action all takes place in locations you can still visit today. For that reason, I noted one narrative blooper. In Book 10, Bartsch writes:

> But in the dead of night, Aeneas left Evander,
> sailing for the camp of the Etruscan king.

Something's blipped. Aeneas had already left Evander and reached the Etruscan king on horseback two books ago. Indeed he had to, since the route from Evander's settlement at Pallanteum (modern Rome) to the king's camp in Agylla (modern Cerveteri) is overland. Virgil means here to connect the narrative with their meeting in Book 8 before describing how

Aeneas sails, *with* the Etruscan king and their joint forces, down the Tyrrhenian Sea from Cerveteri to Ostia, to use the modern names; he would be passing Fiumicino airport on his port side today. But apart from that continuity error and the odd typo—Gaius for Caicus, Messenus for Messapus—I found no lapses. Overall, Shadi Bartsch delivers a taut, accurate, and highly readable *Aeneid* for our times. It's impressive, and I recommend it.

Way down south

Alan P. Marcus
Confederate Exodus:
Social and Environmental Forces in the Migration of U.S. Southerners to Brazil.
University of Nebraska Press,
282 pages, $60

reviewed by Jeremy Black

Seeing themselves as members of a nation of immigrants, Americans tend to underplay their part in emigration. Americans may know about the repatriation that gave rise to Liberia in the early nineteenth century, but the extent and variety of movement from the United States to elsewhere is overlooked. Much is taken out of the equation by its being a case of movement to territories that became part of the United States or already were, notably to the West, but also to Hawaii and Alaska. Yet many Americans went abroad elsewhere, not just to contiguous Canada and Mexico but also across the sea.

Return migration to Europe was a factor from the start, particularly to Britain: think of Puritans to Interregnum England in the 1650s, the significant Loyalist diaspora in the 1780s, and others later for the full range of factors that encouraged migration, from need to inclination and all the variants of the two. American culture is as much about Benjamin West, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Henry James, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot as about others who stayed put.

On the global scale, American emigration has been and remains significant. Some relocations are permanent, some temporary and/or part-time. Nevertheless, emigration from what is the world's third most populous country should be considered in terms of a wider diaspora rather than as an insignificance. Thus, there are important American communities in London, Paris, and Israel, each with a different trajectory.

Politics played a role in emigration, most notably with the Loyalists, who provided an American color to the palette of settlement in many parts of the British Empire, including Nova Scotia and Bermuda. Escaped slaves who had sided with the British were part of this diaspora, some of them eventually ending up in the new colony of Sierra Leone.

There was also emigration in the aftermath of the American Civil War. The new order was unwelcome to most Southerners, but the majority chose to express their hostility by opposition to Reconstruction. Others took a more drastic approach, as Alan P. Marcus discusses in his excellent book *Confederate Exodus*, which details a Confederate diaspora. Southern exiles looked to settle in a range of countries, a fact providing, for example, the plot of Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Five Orange Pips" (1891), which deals with an exile in England. Indeed, as evidenced by stories involving Mormons, Molly Maguires, and Confederates, Doyle was very interested in the theme of American expatriates in England.

More urgently, Mexico, which has frequently been a source of American anxiety, both real and fantastical, became a possible base for a Confederate *revanche*, with several prominent Confederates finding shelter there. John Bankhead Magruder became one of Emperor Maximilian's major generals, and President Grant saw Napoleon III of France, Maximilian, Mexican conservatives, and Confederate exiles as the key elements in a far-ranging geopolitical and ideological cabal directed against Mexican liberals and (his view of) American interests.

In Brazil, it was not *revanche* but the attempt to settle in a slave society, one that was more promising than the Spanish colony of Cuba, that drew Confederates. Marcus skillfully examines the links between Brazil and

the settlers, and, as with immigration to the United States, individual and communal relationships were significant. As he shows, these included Baltimore's commercial world, Freemasonry, and Protestant ties. Marcus includes an interesting discussion of writers who influenced the emigrants, not only Southern ones but also other American commentators and their Brazilian counterparts. As he shows, various writers' touted different arguments in favor of migration, including ones surrounding race, slavery, and agro-economics, but this inconsistency helped ensure that the great variety of population, landscape, and culture found in Brazil could be leveraged by differing advocates for migration. Opportunities for white, Protestant, American progress in Brazil appeared certain and, indeed, providential. At the same time, in Brazil, the *Confederados* were but a small part of a wider Western immigration of whites that the Brazilian elite actively encouraged.

Marcus's book is an example of a type of scholarship that is all too rare in the American discussion of the Atlantic world, that of historical geography with a strong sense of place and networks. The study of spatial links is crucial to history as an intellectual subject, one in which America had a distinguished past. This was, however, largely discarded after World War II. Harvard, a key source of scholarship and a model for others, dismantled its Department of Geography in 1948 and was followed by other prominent institutions such as Stanford. With such a lead, it was not surprising that many state and local education systems also dropped a subject now held to be irrelevant. Although there were (and remain) significant exceptions, the teaching of geography was largely relegated to the elementary level. American intellectual life has been much impoverished by this change. In place of the sense of specificity that comes with spatial awareness, there is a broad-brush ignorance in much of the discussion, even polemic, that passes for intellectual commentary and academic enterprise, with many ill-informed comments about geopolitics and, more particularly, the West or the Atlantic world. In reality, the very different physical and human geographies are relevant, whether, for example, discussing the American South or Brazil. Marcus is good at explaining why particular sites and areas in both Brazil and the South were significant.

Not rushing to implement modern judgments is also important. As Marcus shows, alongside integration for the *Confederados* came a complex pattern of ideas, many of which conflict with current suppositions and values. This is true in both the United States and Brazil. He is perceptive about the usage of the Confederate flag by *Confederados*, reading in that symbol a multifaceted sense and presentation of identity, thereby avoiding the rush to criticism that the flag generally triggers. As Marcus points out, the Confederate flag flies at Campo cemetery alongside the American and Brazilian flags. In large part, this is because the syncretic and elastic elements that evolved out of the Confederate community in Brazil came to embody cultural interpretations that are far more Brazilian than they are American or Southern. At the same time, as he notes, the Confederate flag has become contentious of late with some Brazilians.

The task Marcus confronts is to consider ideas. It is a fruitful one. The drive here to examine the geographical backdrop as well as the historical ideas is useful, and, one hopes, can be part of a broader debate on American emigration.

Out of respect for my hat

Timothy Brittain-Catlin
The Edwardians and Their Houses:
The New Life of Old England.
Lund Humphries, 240 pages, $89.99

reviewed by Harry Adams

In the second volume of *A Dance to the Music of Time*, Anthony Powell introduces Stourwater Castle, the fictional country home of the Lord Beaverbrook-esque business magnate and government minister Sir Magnus Donners. Arriving by car on a warm September

morning in 1928, Powell's narrator, Nick Jenkins, muses on the sight before him: "Here was the Middle Age, from the pages of Tennyson, or Scott, at its most elegant: all sordid and painful elements subtly removed." For Jenkins, the combined effect of the cobbled quadrangle, manicured gardens, and tapestry-lined Great Hall is somehow disconcerting. Donners's precisely restored pile is too full of genuine antiques to be a Hollywood set, but too perfect to reflect its real history.

Save for its Georgian origins and cliff-top location, Kingsgate Castle, near Broadstairs in Kent, might pass for Stourwater. Begun as a whimsical castellated stable block for the nearby Holland House in 1762, Kingsgate had fallen into ruin by the time it was purchased by John Lubbock, first Baron Avebury, in 1901. Enchanted by the remains of this Gothic folly, Avebury commissioned the London architect William Henry Romaine-Walker to rebuild it over the next eleven years into a luxury residence, replete with a gatehouse adorned with the family arms and a garage wing for a fleet of motor cars. Yet, as Timothy Brittain-Catlin notes in his excellent recent book, *The Edwardians and Their Houses: The New Life of Old England*, the restoration of Kingsgate retained an "overall idea" of an old building. The surviving sections of original flint masonry, for example, were patched in the most conspicuous manner possible, and the ivy climbing the south-western entrance elevation was left to envelop the whole façade, as if the sham castle were, in fact, a real archaeological site. Like Donners's Stourwater, Kingsgate was a perfectly preserved survivor of a medieval world that had never existed, a dream of Old England.

For Brittain-Catlin, Kingsgate epitomizes the way in which the leading circle of the Liberal Party influenced the pattern of building in Edwardian Britain. Avebury emerges as an archetypal Edwardian architectural patron: fabulously wealthy, with a record of pragmatic legislation from the backbenches of the House of Lords and a wide circle of political and scientific acquaintances. Romaine-Walker, meanwhile, seems singularly suited to the task of manufacturing a medieval-inspired uchronia. Having trained under the eminent Gothic revivalist G. E. Street, he steadfastly avoided the clutches of International Modernism until his death in 1940, and his former employee F. R. Jelley fondly recalled him remarking that "when I enter a building designed in the so-called modern manner, I always take off my hat. Not out of respect for the building, but out of respect for my hat."

The years leading up to the First World War witnessed a remarkable flourishing of English domestic architecture. As one might expect, the protagonists of the period, including Edwin Lutyens, C. F. A. Voysey, and M. H. Baillie Scott, now command a generous literature of their own, but in this volume Brittain-Catlin finds room for the lesser-known, though no less talented, figures like Romaine-Walker, W. D. Caröe, and Horace Field, who catered to the building needs of the Liberal Party's tight-knit inner circle. Chapter Two reveals the array of housing types on offer, from "dormy" golfing villas and sand-swept beach houses, to picturesque weekend cottages in the Home Counties and Margot Asquith's Thames-side garden "Studio" (the first documented "barn conversion," apparently). These are all brought to life in superlative, specially commissioned photographs by Robin Forster, while, in the text, Brittain-Catlin identifies the elements of each house that make them particular to the period and the Liberal milieu.

Each house is treated as a highly individualized product of its specific circumstances, which makes for a refreshingly varied survey. Brittain-Catlin openly rejects the tired Pevsnerian idea that architectural styles "develop" (usually along an elaborate teleology ending with Modernism) and focuses instead on the personalities, literature, and social networks that made the buildings possible. In Chapter Two, for example, we see how Walton Heath Golf Club became a crucial meeting place for jobbing architects and profligate Liberal clients. The famous Surrey club counted David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill among its members, and it was here that Lutyens first met Edward Hudson, the proprietor of *Coun-*

try Life magazine. As Chapter Three shows, *Country Life* and its two pioneering architectural critics, H. Avray Tipping and Lawrence Weaver, exerted a substantial influence over the buying public during this period and nurtured many architectural careers, not least that of Lutyens, who was featured over fifty times and built two elegant houses for Hudson: Deanery Garden and Lindisfarne Castle.

Country Life popularized a vision of Old England that linked vernacular architecture with the Protestant work ethic and a mythical pastoral lifestyle. But, in Chapter Four, Brittain-Catlin focuses on the equally important relationship between architecture and fiction. That many houses of the period resemble fairy-tale cottages is not, it seems, entirely coincidental. Romaine-Walker, for example, enjoyed a profitable sideline as a writer and illustrator of fantastical children's books, and many of the houses presented in this volume feature playful, childlike details—for instance, the delightful simian creatures atop the newel posts at King's Close in Bedfordshire (designed by Baillie Scott)—that seem to come from the pages of storybooks.

In our age of glass-obsessed "starchitects," the houses in this book provide a welcome reminder of how delightful buildings can be. The best Edwardian architects were capable not only of looking forward to a modern world of spacious plan forms and ample public green space, but also of looking back to England's exquisite vernacular traditions and storied past. This sumptuously illustrated volume suggests that there is still much to learn from the new life of Old England.

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion*:

Western civilization at the crossroads
with essays by Michael Anton, Angelo M. Codevilla, Victor Davis Hanson, Andrew Roberts & others
Pound & Brodsky in Venice *by Robert D. Kaplan*
Homer's afterlife *by Daisy Dunn*
Archaeology amiss *by Peter W. Wood*

Notebook

Donald Kagan, 1932–2021

by Paul A. Rahe

One of the chief downsides of getting older—I am now seventy-two—is that one's friends die. On a Friday evening in early August, near midnight, it was the turn of Donald Kagan, aged eighty-nine. I am still having trouble accepting that he is gone.

I first met Don in the spring of 1968. I was a freshman, then, at Cornell. He was teaching an introductory course in Roman history—as it happens, for the very last time. I was enrolled in the class and assigned to his section, and I was mesmerized. Don was an entertaining and provocative lecturer. He knew when and how to introduce the ham, and what he had to say was invariably interesting and informative.

The section meetings in his course were organized around historical puzzles. We were asked to read the evidence and to try to make sense of it; thanks to its paucity, we could spread it all out in front of us. We were in the position of intelligence analysts at Langley. We knew odds and ends—in our case, the flotsam of fragmentary information carried down the ages by time—and we were called upon to make sense of it all. There was rarely an obvious right or wrong. There were, instead, the plausible, the remotely possible, and the completely absurd. We were not simply memorizing the facts. We were doing what all historians do. We were trying to describe what must have happened on the basis of a documentary record limited in quantity and not entirely reliable. Our task was educated guesswork. We had to put together a jigsaw puzzle, but most of the pieces were missing, and so we thrashed about in pursuit of illuminating analogy. What was required was sound judgment, and one learned it by making a case and considering all of the possible objections.

Don loved this, and so did I. He was, I later learned, a baseball fanatic, and I can easily imagine him as a boy collecting baseball cards and trying to figure out what a given player was apt to accomplish on a particular day given what he had done in the past. He liked horse racing for the same reason. You could review the record of each of the horses in every kind of circumstance, and you were called upon to predict their performance with an eye to matters such as the condition of the track on that particular day. It was, he once observed, a test of your prescience as an historian. As you can imagine, I was hooked. Who wouldn't be?

The following year, the six-year Ph.D. program in which I was enrolled co-sponsored a program devoted to classical Greece, and I signed up. That meant that I took a year-long seminar with a man then unknown to me, named Allan Bloom, on Plato's *Republic*. We read his translation of the book in mimeograph until the middle of the year when it appeared in print. With Don, I had another such course on Thucydides. It was in this year that Cornell University Press published *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, the first of the four splendid volumes he wrote concerning the great struggle between the Athenians and the Spartans.

Taking these two courses from these two men was heaven on earth, and the experience

was rendered particularly intense by the fact that an event of some historical interest was unfolding before us. In April, there was an armed black takeover of the student union, Willard Straight Hall. Ostensibly, it was aimed at overturning a decision made by the university judicial board to reprimand a handful of black students who had used toy guns to terrorize some members of the university community. In fact, it was a naked bid for power, and the leader of the takeover threatened the lives of three senior faculty members by name in an interview broadcast by the university radio station.

As it happens, I had been a columnist for *The Cornell Daily Sun* and a member of the appeals board within the university judicial system, although I had given up the latter responsibility when I was named associate editor of the paper a few weeks before the building seizure. So, into the maelstrom I was dragged. Don, who had shortly before accepted a full professorship at Yale, remained on the sidelines—watching in horror, transfixed, as the administration capitulated to the demands of the insurrectionists and as the faculty, after offering resistance, gave way in turn. I fought, writing column after column lambasting in Churchillian tones the cowardice of the university's president, drawing attention to the long-term implications of his surrender in the face of the violence threatened, and pressing, along with others, for his resignation. Along the way, I became fast friends with figures such as Allan Sindler, Walter Berns, and Allan Bloom—all of whom resigned from the faculty (the first two in the middle of interviews on national television).

During this period, I saw Don in class and spoke with him frequently after it ended. When the debacle was over, I expressed the fear that the depth of my involvement and my ongoing position on the student daily would mean that I would spend the rest of my college career tilting at windmills and neglecting my studies. He suggested that I transfer to Yale. When I embraced this suggestion, he made a phone call or two and then got in touch with me. "You're in," he said. "Now you have to apply"—and that is what I then did.

At Yale, I took the equivalent of seven courses in my first term, and, until my senior year, I joined no organizations. I was there to learn. Don and I met for lunch fairly frequently. Before the crisis at Cornell, we had both been liberals, and in the immediate aftermath neither of us thought of ourselves as anything else. But the events of 1969 had transformed the lives of both us—more or less in the same way. When the murder trial of Bobby Seale was taking place in the spring of 1970, when radical leaders from far and wide descended on New Haven and Kingman Brewster offered them hospitality, Don and I concluded that we had seen this B-movie before, and I scuttled off to Boston for the weekend.

We kept in close touch during the three years I spent at Oxford studying philosophy and ancient history on a Rhodes Scholarship. When I returned to Yale, thinking that I would do a Ph.D. in German history, Don hired me as a teaching assistant. By this time, his introductory course in ancient Greek history had so large an enrollment that it had to be taught in the law school auditorium, the largest venue on campus; the same was true of another course that he had put together—Historical Studies in the Origins of War, where I also served as a teaching assistant.

The latter course was designed to encourage comparative thinking and to initiate the education of budding statesmen. Don paired the Peloponnesian War with World War I and the Second Punic War with World War II, then tossed in the Cuban Missile Crisis so that the students could contemplate a war that very nearly happened. Later, Don turned the course into a book no less important than his multi-volume history of the Peloponnesian War. Entitled *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, it is a work that I employ to this very day in teaching the course that he designed.

Eventually, appalled that prospective German historians were being pressed into doing social history, I abandoned that field and returned to ancient Greek history. Working with Don Kagan was a delight. One could argue with the man. He was less attached to

his own opinions than to the process of probing and sifting the evidence, and he was open to changing his mind. We had a disagreement concerning the method by which the Spartans selected their ephors. The reigning orthodoxy stipulated that they were directly elected. But Plato in the *Laws* contended that their selection resembled a lottery. I argued that this ruled out direct election. Don stuck with the reigning orthodoxy but finally said, "OK, OK, leave it in the dissertation." A few months later, as I was madly preparing a lecture one evening for the first ancient Greek history lecture course I ever taught, the telephone rang. It was Don. "You're right," he exclaimed. "Right about what?" I asked. "About the selection of the ephors," he said. "Of course, I'm right," I replied.

One morning while I was still in graduate school, he called me. He was under the weather, the war course was underway, and he asked that I go to the law school auditorium to cancel class. That day, he was slated to give his final lecture on the origins of the Peloponnesian war. I offered to step in and fill his shoes. "Can you do it?" said he. "Sure," I replied, "but you know that I have a different take." "Do it," he replied. "They will get my reading of the situation anyway from my *Outbreak* volume." His aim was to provoke thinking—not to indoctrinate.

Don Kagan was also a man of courage. Freedom of speech was under siege at Yale, and Kingman Brewster, the president, was more than willing to give ground to the radicals. In the fall of 1974, Don resolved to take him on. He engineered an invitation from the Yale Political Union, and he gave a speech, which I attended, denouncing in polite terms Brewster and his minions for standing aside while visiting speakers were shouted down. It was an exceedingly risky move. College administrators may not be able to fire tenured professors outright, but they are skilled in making them miserable. Don might very well have been driven out, and he knew it. Instead, however, to his great credit, Brewster appointed a commission, headed by C. Vann Woodward, to come up with a report. At least in principle, that document forms the basis for university policy in the case of such incidents to this very day.

At Yale, over the years, Don went from strength to strength. He was regarded as indispensable—especially when things had gone awry. He took over the Directed Studies Program and saved it from destruction. He became the master of Timothy Dwight College and, at a critical moment, even the director of athletics. He did two stints as the chairman of the classics department, and he served as the dean of Yale College.

His last years at the institution, however, Don spent in the wilderness, more or less isolated, teaching gigantic classes, writing on a wide variety of subjects, and defending liberal education against those intent on greatly narrowing the range of debatable political opinions. In a time of increasing madness, his was an all-too-rare voice of sanity—and, outside the university, when he spoke or wrote on liberal education, on the unique achievements of Western Civilization, or on the need for a superintending international power, it received a great deal of attention.

Forty years ago, when my father died, my mother told me, "You will not know the meaning of the word *loneliness* until both of your parents are gone." Perhaps because I was on the verge of marrying a wonderful woman when my mother died, I did not feel great loneliness then. But I do so now. For more than half a century, I had in Don Kagan a surrogate father. I doubt that I will see the like again.