the weekly standard

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BY ROBERT MESSENGER

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Young Guns II

Back in 2007, The Weekly Standard heralded the arrival of three rising Republicans in the House who weren't then household names. We dubbed them the Young Guns. Eric Cantor of Virginia was the deputy whip, a backbencher elevated by then-whip Roy Blunt. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin hadn't quite come into his own yet as an influential policy maven. Kevin McCarthy of California was a freshman with a gift for understanding the ups and downs of electoral politics. The three were "agitating for the party to return to its small-government roots and to retake the House."

Admit it, you'd never heard of these guys back then. If you still haven't, you soon will. In 2007, they hadn't thought of themselves as a team, either. But the stories noted their complementary talents: Cantor as party leader in the House, Ryan as policy thinker, McCarthy as strategist and candidate recruiter. They were galvanized into action. They formed a fast-on-its-feet campaign outfit to help GOP challengers win House seats. Its name was inevitable . . . Young Guns.

The three have now become major players in Washington and around the country. Should Republicans win back the House on November 2, Cantor will be a shoo-in for majority leader. With his Road Map for America's Future, Ryan is the party's leading policy wonk and will be chairman of the budget committee. McCarthy is the favorite to be majority whip. He's been the chief recruiter of an impressive army of House candidates this year.

Meanwhile, Young Guns has become the gold standard of Republican campaign crews. To be dubbed a Young Gun, candidates must meet benchmarks: a campaign staff, a detailed plan for winning, fundraising goals. Potential donors, particularly PACs, ask if a candidate is a Young Gun. It's become a mark of credibility.

Now the three have published a book, titled *Young Guns: A New Generation of Conservative Leaders*. They're not only tough on Democrats but also on the Republicans who controlled Congress from 1994 to 2006. Advance copies distributed in late August stirred hyperbolic Democratic attacks and overwrought media analysis. Nancy Pelosi's office issued a "fact sheet" under this headline: "Congressional Republicans Release Details of Agenda; Includes Privatizing Social Security, Ending Medicare." The press tried to foment conflict between Cantor, Ryan, and McCarthy and other Republican leaders, citing the book to suggest Cantor might challenge John Boehner for House speaker if Republicans take over. "Typical media wedge-driving," one Republican said.

It's the attention the book has gotten that's most revealing. In 2007, it was a bit farfetched to think the trio of young guns would soon become important political figures with national influence. But they have. ♦

Voting Rights Update

As Jennifer Rubin recently reported in these pages ("Voting Rights . . . for Some," August 23), the Justice Department has been pressuring the Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Board of Elections to use bilingual ballots countywide based on Section 4(e) of the Voting Rights Act, which assures Puerto Ricans will not be be prevented from voting because they do not speak English. The County Board of Elections commenced extended negotiations with the Department of Justice. Sources tell The Scrapbook that there was vigorous discussion and that the board repeatedly offered to provide targeted bilingual ballots in specific precincts where large numbers of Puerto Rican voters were registered. This was not good enough for the Obama Department of Justice.

What may have been at play was the administration's desire for implementation of bilingual ballots countywide for the 2012 presidential election. But the statute that would apply to Spanish language speakers other than Puerto Ricans—Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act—requires 5 percent of voters, or 10,000 in this case, to be "language handicapped" (i.e., Spanish speakers). Some county officials do not believe that trigger would be reached. So what to do? Ah, use the Puerto Rican statute, propose a jumbo, overreaching remedy for the entire county, and get bilingual ballots that way. Rob Frost, a GOP member of the board, proposed to the DOJ that they just wait for the 2010 census numbers to see if Section 203 would be applicable. But that was unacceptable.

The board was unanimous that there would be no countywide remedy in time for the September primary or the November general election. But the board was faced with the threat of litigation, which the DOJ attorneys said would be filed September 2. The board in a public meeting September 1 deadlocked in a 2-2 party-line vote for countywide bilingual ballots in the future. Outgoing Democratic secretary of state Jennifer Brunner broke the tie. Countywide bilingualism will now kick in next year in myriad local elections and could could cost up to half a million dollars. A voting rights expert tells us, "Making sure Puerto Ricans had access to a Spanish language ballot

could have been done at far less cost and with better results."

Plainly, the Democrats felt beleaguered. One Democratic member came with pre-printed postcards to Eric Holder complaining of his attorneys' bullying tactics. All were unanimous that the department's legal basis was weak, but under state law, Brunner got the deciding vote.

She made very clear—and the Justice Department was keenly aware—that she was "going to be the one to bring bilingual ballots to Cuyahoga County." She leaves office in January, and a Republican is leading in the polls to replace her. So time was of the essence. The strong-arm tactics would only work so long as the Democratic secretary of state was there to break a tie. And apparently the Justice Department was unwilling to bet that the 2010 census would give the feds the legal basis to demand countywide bilingual ballots.

Frost told The Scrapbook that one Democrat on the board expressed the view that if even one person was hindered this sort of remedy would be justified. What about the tens of thousands of new European immigrants (who speak Polish, Lithuanian, and other Eastern European languages), whose numbers vastly exceed Hispanic voters? No one really seemed to care.

Former Justice Department Voting Section lawyer J. Christian Adams explains to The Scrapbook that the issue is not closed. "Because this remedy may not be consistent with federal law, a citizen's group could still intervene before the court enters any proposed consent decree and challenge the court's jurisdiction over the case, and the power to impose a potentially extralegal remedy. It would force the court to question whether it could impose a remedy that goes beyond what the law allows."

Time will tell whether such a group steps forward. But for now the Obama voting rights attorneys—who couldn't be bothered to collect a default verdict against the New Black Panthers or vigorously enforce requirements for providing military ballots—have won. Chalk one up for the bullies. ♦

Twitter Derangement Syndrome

The Scrapbook understands how annoying the media's irrational exuberance about the power of Twitter is. But last week Twitter Derangement Syndrome caused a columnist at the *Washington Post* to go barking mad. *Post* sports columnist Mike Wise decided to post some fake news on his Twitter account. The point of this ruse, he explained on his radio show a couple of hours later, was to spur other reporters into passing along the fake news, highlighting (a) how Twitter can undermine newsgathering by creating a cascade of unsourced "reporting"; and (b) how unscrupulous reporters not named "Mike Wise" can be.

In short order: Other reporters did recycle Wise's fake news (mostly using the formula that "Mike Wise reports . . ."); the *Post*'s management issued a testy email to the newsroom restating the company's social media policy; Wise apologized and was then suspended by the paper for a month.

Wise's gambit wasn't particularly well conceived. For one thing, the fake news was coming from him, and not from an anonymous or obscure

source. Which means that the logic of Wise's trick was not "people shouldn't trust anonymous sources" but rather, "people shouldn't trust the *Washington Post*." Perhaps Wise could have gotten away with it if his Tweets had been more Swiftian. If he had said that Tony Kornheiser was now wearing a toupee, it would have been one thing. Instead, Wise's claims were all football-beat fare—exactly the kind of stuff Wise would be reporting if it were genuine.

But perhaps the most interesting part of the story was the leaked email about the *Post*'s social media guidelines. The official policy states

> All *Washington Post* journalists relinquish some of the personal privileges of private citizens. *Post* journalists must recognize that any content associated with them in an online social network is, for practical purposes, the equivalent of what appears beneath their bylines in the newspaper or on our website.
>
> What you do on social networks should be presumed to be publicly available to anyone, even if you have created a private account. It is possible to use privacy controls online to limit access to sensitive information. But such controls are only a deterrent, not an absolute insulator. Reality is simple: If you don't want something to be found online, don't put it there.
>
> *Post* journalists must refrain from writing, tweeting or posting anything—including photographs or video—that could be perceived as reflecting political, racial, sexist, religious or other bias or favoritism that could be used to tarnish our journalistic credibility.

Good advice! Of course, the *Post* has other reporters who made much worse use of social networks by being involved in the now-defunct Journolist—simple membership in which would seem to have been in direct conflict with this policy. Only one of them was disciplined—and a few weeks after he resigned, he was hired by *Slate*, another division of the Washington Post Company.

If only Mike Wise had been Tweeting about Republicans. ♦

Understatement of the Year

'In 2010, Obama's poll numbers [are] less of an asset for congressional Democrats" (Chris Cillizza, *Washington Post*, August 30). ♦

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Second Sight

Judy was my mother's best friend from the time they were both 13. Neither girl had a sister, and Judy didn't even have brothers, and her parents were a bit offbeat, besides. Her father, Mr. Williams, was an internationally known astrologer whose counsel, I was told, was sought by major companies. Mrs. Williams was a nervous sort. She used to go up to the school at the start of classes every year to instruct the teachers and staff that Judy was to be called only by her full name, Judith Ellen. At home, Mom remembered, Mrs. Williams liked to economize by wearing old cocktail dresses to clean the house.

Judy and Mom lived about a block apart in Bayside, Queens. They went to the same public high school, where Judy was valedictorian, and they went off to college together, at Syracuse, and were sorority sisters and roommates. They both majored in political science, and they both married men they met through one of their instructors. Mom got the lanky Texan who shared his office, and Judy, in an attested case of love at first sight, fell for his cousin from Ellsworth, Maine, Bob Brown.

Mom and Judy never lived in the same place again after college, but the Browns and their three children visited us in various locations, and several times on family trips we went to their house outside Rochester.

It was a long, one-story house in a wooded neighborhood with a huge screened porch for barbecues and kids' roller skating. Judy and Bob had built it themselves. They'd spent their savings on an architect and materials, then recruited friends to help them with the actual construction. Bob, ever ingenious, used to get tools free. He would contact a company to complain about the impenetrable instruction booklet that came with, say, its power drill. Then he'd offer to rewrite the instructions in exchange for the drill. For him, this worked like a charm.

Though he never went to college, Bob became an executive with Eastman Kodak, mainly, I suspect, to support his many avocations. He was a potter and cabinet maker, and a birder before it was cool. He made wine. For years he owned a pig farm and relished learning about, and writing about, the raising and marketing of hogs. But the farm turned out to be a sinkhole for money, and eventually he had to give it up.

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My move to nearby Buffalo for a job at the (now defunct) *Courier-Express* happened to coincide with the Browns' dismantling of their pig farm, and they generously let me take my pick of the farmhouse furnishings. To this day I have in my living room a pair of 1920s torchères that came from the Williams's house in Bayside by way of rural upstate New York.

Along with his zest for making things, Bob had about him a nice spark of irreverence. I called him once to ask what kind of bird seed we should put in our feeder. I've forgotten his advice, but his opening words still delight me: "The first thing you have to understand is that most commercial mixtures aren't worth the powder to blast them to hell."

In their later years, after Judy retired from her longtime job as director of public relations for the University of Rochester, she and Bob spent as much time as they could at their rustic cabin near Ellsworth. My mother, widowed by then, would visit. I'd hear about Bob's mussels and his beans baked in beer in a stoneware crock. He took up pen and ink drawing, too, and his favorite subject, adorning every note and Christmas card for years, was the coast of Maine.

Recently, The Weekly Standard cruise out of Boston put in at Bar Harbor. I was up early the morning of our arrival and saw the sunrise over the open sea, then watched the ship turn inland. For some while, we steamed past uninhabited shores, and I stayed on the balcony outside our cabin reading.

At one point, I looked up and was startled to find myself face to face with a Bob Brown landscape: a panorama of pine-covered islands and scattered islets barely big enough for three trees, in a wide expanse of silver water, with long, low tiers of mountains stretching the length of the horizon behind. It was exactly as Bob would have drawn it—did draw it. I had the uncanny feeling of seeing through Bob's eyes.

Judy and Bob have been dead for years, of course, as have my parents—my father since 1968. In my experience, one doesn't entirely get used to the gone-ness of the dead. Stranger still is their sudden presence, as if fully alive.

Claudia Anderson

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Beck to the Future

The rally on August 28 in Washington, D.C., was about many things—some high, a few low (very few, as these events go), and many in-between, and is worth considering from various angles, from the political to the cultural to the sociological. We offer two excellent analyses in the following pages, by Harvey Mansfield and Lee Harris.

But stop for a minute before you hasten to Mansfield and Harris. The obvious starting point for thinking about the event is to take seriously its claim as to what it was about—God and country. The event's host and organizer, Glenn Beck, dwelt on God. His special guest, Sarah Palin, focused on country.

NEWSCOM

Beck placed his hopes for America's future on moral reform, even a religious awakening. What the rally meant to Beck was that "America today begins to turn back to God. For too long, this country has wandered in darkness." Beck's speech was an urgent appeal to Americans to look into themselves and commit to doing better.

Palin joined Beck in claiming to want to look beyond ordinary politics. She emphasized that she had been asked to speak not as a politician, but as "something more—something much more. I've been asked to speak as the mother of a soldier, and I am proud of that distinction." Palin went beyond politics to patriotism. She didn't picture Americans as wandering in darkness. Rather, she began by asking, "Are you not so proud to be an American?"

Now Palin did say she was humbled—but less by her failures in the eyes of God than by the patriotic surroundings and commitments of her audience: "It is so humbling to get to be here with you today, patriots." And she devoted most of her remarks to praise for the finest of our patriots, our men and women in uniform who have been willing "to sacrifice, to restrain evil, to protect God-given liberty, to sacrifice all in defense of our country."

Indeed, Palin's wish to honor that service led her to acknowledge some tension with the theme of the rally, selected by Beck: "We honor those who served something greater than self and made the ultimate sacrifice, as well as those who served and did come home forever changed by the battlefield. Though this rally is about 'restoring honor,' for these men and women honor was never lost. If you look for the virtues that have sustained our country, you will find them in those who wear the uniform, who take the oath, who pay the price for our freedom."

So Beck wants to restore honor. Palin thinks honor was never lost. There's a tension between the rally's twin messages: "We're a great country" and "We're wandering in the darkness." But each side would acknowledge an element of truth in the other's formulation. Beck's call for a religious awakening has a patriotic theme and intention—it was Beck, after all, who arranged that proceeds from the gathering were to go to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. And Palin's patriotism is religion-friendly (e.g., "God-given liberty"). The two make common cause against a liberalism that is often made nervous by religion and uncomfortable by patriotism.

Now it goes without saying that God and country are not the property of one political party. It goes without saying that religion and patriotism are not properly claimed by any one part of the political spectrum, let alone by participants in one rally convened by one television personality. It should further go without saying that much that is wrong can be and has been done in the name of God and country. Much that is right can be and has been done without invoking them. And it's also true that there often is a tension between the claims of God and country.

Having granted all that, we would add that (as Mansfield also notes) most conservatives are more friendly to the invocation, and more responsive to the claims, of God and country than are most liberals. For better or worse, where conservatives tend to look to God, liberals tend to look to mankind; and where conservatives tend to think first of country, liberals tend to think first of humanity.

President Obama, asked about the rally the next day, said he hadn't watched it. He nonetheless analyzed it: "So, given all those anxieties . . . it's not surprising that somebody like a Mr. Beck is able to stir up a certain portion of the country."

That certain portion of the country was "stirred up" at the rally to express pride in America and faith in God.

That certain portion of the country is about to show itself (at least for this election) as a majority of the country. If that majority is animated not just by limiting government or living within our means or getting power back to the people—important though those are—but is also moved by the notion of rededicating oneself to God and Country, it could well be a lasting majority.

—William Kristol

Marching Off the Cliff

President Obama sure did cover a lot of ground last week in his address to the nation announcing the end of combat operations in Iraq. At times the speech resembled one of those late-night, beer-fueled freshman dorm bull sessions, where you start off discussing Led Zeppelin and end up ten hours later debating the ontological principle.

In between appropriate references to the Iraqi people, the Afghan surge, al Qaeda, George W. Bush, and the sacrifice and heroism of the American soldier, the president mentioned such unrelated topics as the deficit, economic turmoil, energy policy, unemployment, innovation, education, and the "billions of young people" across the globe who "want to move beyond the shackles of poverty and conflict." By the time Obama started talking about "our manufacturing base," we were scratching our heads, wondering why the commander in chief was devoting so much time in an 18-minute war speech to the financial crisis. And as with those college-era drunken colloquies, the major aftereffect of Obama's talk was a bad headache.

Look closer at Obama's text, however, and the rhetorical thread intended to connect geopolitics and the U.S. economy becomes clear. The president did not argue that foreign policy is a function of domestic politics. Nor did he exactly make the case that a booming economy is a necessary condition for American primacy. What Obama said was that the nation ought to approach the recession the same way it approaches a war. "As we wind down the war in Iraq," the president said, "we must tackle those challenges at home with as much energy, and grit, and sense of common purpose as our men and women in uniform who have served abroad." Indeed, the president continued, the American people share a collective responsibility to honor our veterans by "coming together" to restore economic growth.

Now, the president's attempt to invoke a patriotic sense of national community is well within the boundaries of American political discourse. But it's also a pretty lousy way to understand the economy. Fighting a recession is not the same thing as fighting a war. The U.S. military is a hierarchical organization in which orders are dispersed through a top-down command structure. Every soldier has an assignment, with every assignment comes orders, and if a soldier does not follow his orders, he's in a lot of trouble.

The economy is different. It is not a closed system like an armored cavalry regiment, where everything (and everyone) has a place. The economy is open and dynamic, the agglomeration of billions of individual consumers and producers and investors. An army belongs to a particular nation, but today's economy is global: The high price of Japanese money lowers the cost of German exports, which depresses American manufacturing, which increases demand for Chinese imports, and so on. An army has officers who process and analyze the available information, then plot strategy accordingly. It is impossible to do this in an economy. There is too much information for a single mind, or a group of minds, to comprehend. And there is no way to know for sure which strategies work and which do not—or whether a strategy had any effect in the first place. An army fights and destroys an enemy. But who is the economic enemy and how does one "defeat" them? When Obama said "our troops are the steel in our ship of state," he rightly implied that he, as commander in chief, is the ship's pilot. But the economy is not a ship. The economy has no captain.

The equivalence between recession and war is what's gotten Obama and the Democrats into so much trouble. Liberals like the president and the congressional leadership honestly believe that they can command the economy to recover. By pushing and pulling the correct monetary and fiscal policy levers, the Democrats say, government can manipulate aggregate demand and bring back jobs. By redistributing wealth and regulating the insurance market, the Democrats promise, Americans can achieve universal health care while reducing health spending. By delegating authority to unelected bodies and issuing hundreds of new rules, the Democrats believe, regulators can eliminate credit bubbles and financial crises.

But it's not that simple. The economy and society are too complex. Expert knowledge is too limited. The science of economics is too primitive. Ordinary human beings do not respond like soldiers to government's commands. Nor should they respond to government this way.

The real puzzle is that, despite all of the political and economic setbacks they have encountered over the last year and a half, for some reason the president and his party cling to their mistaken belief that the economy is an army. There is still time to embrace a different course, and last week's report that the administration is considering a payroll tax holiday is an encouraging sign. For now, though, the Democrats just keep on marching. Right off the cliff.

—Matthew Continetti

Partisanship Isn't Enough (but It *Is* Essential)

Reflections on the Glenn Beck rally.

BY HARVEY MANSFIELD

GARY LOCKE

Glenn Beck's rally for Restoring Honor on August 28 took most everyone by surprise with its nonpartisan appeal. With the design of preventing grumpy or sneering messages, he allowed no signs, and in fact few were brought. No references to politicians or elections were made. More remarkably, an even temper prevailed. The speeches were strident in describing our ills and grandiose with hopes, but the speakers were not spiteful and did not blame anyone.

Critics were confounded. It's hard to get angry with the innocent, even with innocent dopes or dupes. Where was the hatred that liberals love to hate? Surely this nonpartisan appearance was tactical, but then how could so large a crowd sustain the discipline of apparently sincere nonpartisanship through the whole event? Their favorite, Sarah Palin, got a big cheer, but by being on message she disappointed her enemies without disappointing her fans. Some conservative commentators, marveling at Beck but uneasy with him, noticed that he had somehow managed to imitate Barack Obama's nonpartisan campaign so as to capture a different or opposite audience on the right, a mirror image of Obama's successful nonpartisan appeal to the left. Why the sudden appearance of nonpartisanship in a time of divisive parties they left a mystery.

To consider it, let's examine Glenn Beck's rally more closely. It offered two nonpartisan notions designed to bring us together despite our differences: patriotism and religion. Everyone regardless of party can be patriotic, and everyone can believe in God; all we need is for everyone to do what everyone can do. Beck has set forth a "9-12" formula of 9 principles and 12 values. The first principle is that "America is good"; the second that "God is the center of my life." Each of them, if followed, joins everything together either in country or God. One

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might think that two unifying principles is one too many, but the assumption is that these two will not conflict. If God speaks against country, that is only for a while and won't last.

Obama's nonpartisanship also has two principles, which might be identified as universal empathy rather than patriotism and human rights or humanity rather than God. These two are also assumed not to conflict. For example, the defense of human rights won't be embarrassing for universal empathy—or vice versa.

Yet of course this nonpartisanship, however grounded in principle, seems under the least analysis to be quite bogus. Who are these nonpartisans kidding? The nonpartisan disguise they use seems to betray them as quickly as does their partisan rancor, when they show it. To any observer only somewhat detached, it is both comical and endearing that our two parties reveal themselves more, indeed, by their assumed nonpartisanship than by their avowed partisanship. Who does not know that speakers invoking patriotism and religion are conservatives, and those demanding empathy and human rights are liberals? From this standpoint the partisan views of the parties are tactical and temporary; the principled nonpartisanship of each is permanent and fundamental. Partisans are best identified by what they think is nonpartisan.

Beck titled his rally "Restoring Honor." Surely this was a jab at President Obama. If honor needs to be restored, it must have been lost, or at least be at risk right now. What could that refer to if not the president's apologies for America's misdeeds, his half-hearted support of the military, his unwillingness to claim victory for America? None of this was said, but it didn't have to be.

To this one might reply that as opposed to Beck's allusion to Obama's foreign policy, Obama's own nonpartisanship has explicitly and repeatedly blamed President Bush for everything that was wrong, implying that Bush with his divisive policies was the sole cause of our partisan divisiveness. Unlike Beck, Obama was running for president, and he could not avoid opposing someone openly. Whether open or implied, partisan advantage must lurk within nonpartisan policies.

Yet it would be wrong to dismiss nonpartisanship as the insincere tactic of parties. In truth, all parties aim at nonpartisanship when they aspire to establish some principle or principles intended to put an end to partisan conflict, at least for the present. Party is a temporary division created for the purpose of overcoming divisions. The more temporary it wants to be, the more fervent it needs to be. A party wants to prescribe for the whole country, for the common good; it is not satisfied with self-interest, not even if its principle is self-interest.

Glenn Beck is a kind of libertarian, and he has made a fair amount of money. But he rejects the private life that libertarians seem to recommend. He goes public with his distrust of everything public and thus requires libertarians to march behind patriotism, religion, and honor—all things not in your immediate self-interest. Though not an educated man, he seems quick-witted: When he discovered that in choosing the date of his rally he had stumbled upon the anniversary of Martin Luther King's great speech, he quickly adopted the coincidence as if he had intended all along to celebrate King for restoring honor to blacks in America.

A partisan tries to make himself consistent, and thereby exposes himself to the charge of inconsistency. But the centrist—for whom I have no great admiration—merely picks what he likes. He cannot decide between low taxes and more programs, and votes for both. His centrism is nonpartisan without any partisanship behind it; it lacks the public-spirited anger of a partisan and reveals the weakness of a neutral. His vote may decide a contest, but others will decide its meaning.

The aspiration for consistency makes politics both partisan and nonpartisan, and our self-government depends on it. Glenn Beck—like President Obama—is unafraid of calling attention to himself, but—again like President Obama—he does us all a favor when he seeks to bring others to live as he does. ♦

Beyond the Tea Party

The broadening of a movement.

BY LEE HARRIS

Lively debate continues about just how many people showed up to attend Glenn Beck's rally at the Lincoln Memorial, but there has been less interest in exactly why they showed up.

To many hostile observers, the event was simply the latest installment in the ongoing antics of the Tea Party. But the keynote of the occasion, "Restoring Honor," along with its celebration of "traditional American values," suggests a decided movement, if not away from, then at least beyond the Tea Party. Far from being directed exclusively at Tea Partiers, Beck's rally addressed those millions of ordinary Americans who are deeply resentful at what they perceive as a massive and well-coordinated attack on traditions they hold sacred. From this perspective, Beck's rally signals a potentially major shift in the dynamics of today's populist

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discontent. A political movement that can galvanize those who are united in defending "traditional American values" can have far more clout and influence than the Tea Party movement by itself can ever hope to have.

The Tea Party began as an antitax and anti-big government movement. Many of the most prominent Tea Party spokesmen showed little interest in the vexing cultural issues that have increasingly divided Americans for several decades—indeed, most seemed quite happy to distance themselves from such hot button topics as abortion, immigration, and gay marriage. Out of the gamut of "traditional American values," the Tea Party focused almost exclusively on our Founding Fathers' preference for limited government. Scant attention was paid to the emotionally charged themes celebrated in the Beck rally—the sacred causes of national honor, patriotism, God. To the Tea Party, the only sacred cause was liberty, including the liberty to ignore or even to flout traditions venerated by other people in their society.

Philosophically speaking, the Tea Party movement was libertarian in its inspiration, but the spirit of libertarianism has always been opposed to the spirit of traditionalism—the very spirit evoked at the Beck rally. Those who faithfully adhere to a tradition, and who are dedicated to preserving it intact from generation to generation, must often be willing to curtail their own personal liberty out of respect for the traditions they hold sacred. They will often feel it their duty, moreover, to curtail the individual freedom of other people for the same reason, including those who do not share their own veneration. A somewhat trivial example of a sacred tradition trumping personal liberty are the blue laws in many states that forbid the sale of alcohol on Sunday. To the libertarian, nothing could be more objectionable. Why should an antiquated tradition, and one resting on purely sectarian religious ground, keep me from buying beer on Sunday? But the strict libertarian will be apt to have the same negative attitude to the claims of other so called "sacred" traditions. To the extent that they stand in the way of the exercise of one's personal liberty, they are simply a violation of one's natural rights.

In many ways, the intense media scrutiny that accompanied the birth of the Tea Party movement, focusing on its antitax and antigovernment message, obscured the real split in the American psyche, which is essentially a cultural divide. On the one side are those Americans for whom nothing can be more sacred than honor, patriotism, and God, and who get goose-bumps at the very mention of these words. On the other side are those who instinctively cringe at what they regard as the shameless display of such manipulative emotionalism. Similarly, to his admirers, Glenn Beck has been a voice crying

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in the wilderness, a prophet who warns us that we have been wandering in darkness too long. To detractors, he is a clown and a buffoon, at best, a dangerous demagogue, at worst. And the same holds true for the heroine of the rally, Sarah Palin.

Yet those who deplore Beck or Palin fail to see that the reason for their popularity stems from their uninhibited willingness to evoke and champion precisely those values and themes that the overly fastidious and sophisticated perceive as crude and corny. It is when Beck and Palin are behaving most boorishly in the eyes of their cultured despisers that they are most apt to win the enthusiastic cheers of their devoted admirers.

By centering the rally on the defense of "traditional American values," Beck deftly managed to reach out to those many Americans who, while mildly sympathetic to the Tea Party, were by no means prepared to commit themselves to doctrinaire libertarianism. No doubt these Americans hold liberty to be sacred, but they also regard as sacred precisely the same "traditional American values" that were the subject of the Beck rally—honor, patriotism, and God. The tens of thousands who flocked to the Lincoln Memorial on August 28 are only a small sample of those Americans who are deeply worried that their most cherished values and traditions are under attack by an arrogant elite that wishes to impose its own supposedly more "enlightened" values on the nation.

The Beck rally bore abundant witness to the profound degree of alienation that American traditionalists feel when they look at the mass culture that surrounds them, and which they see as intent on mocking everything they hold to be sacred. Sure, they might want lower taxes and smaller government, too; but they also want to return to an era in which their own traditional values were reflected in the TV shows they watched, the movies they went to, the education that their kids received in the public schools paid for by their tax dollars. They do not want to see what they cherish most in the world held up to ridicule, especially when the ridicule is presented in attractively packaged forms that are designed especially to appeal to their own kids. They resent what they perceive as the indoctrination and brainwashing of the next generation. They feel that their own deeply held "traditional American values" are under attack—and they are right.

In short, the Beck rally marks a significant turning point in today's people's revolt—away from the narrow issues of the Tea Party—while initiating a new stage of the culture war, which is what the great American divide is really all about. ♦

The Very Model of a Modern Midterm

This fall's election looks unusual—just like the last few. BY DANIEL DISALVO & JAMES W. CEASER

Most analysts have overlooked a remarkable fact about recent midterm elections. The last four—1994, 1998, 2002, and 2006—have all been strikingly atypical.

Students of congressional elections have labored to distill a "standard outcome" or benchmark norm for midterms, namely, for the president's party to lose a limited number of seats. When this occurs, opposition leaders may shout victory, but the public pretty much ignores them, realizing that such small losses for the president's party merely reflect the wear and tear of governing. These "normal" elections occur in normal times, when the president's popularity may have fallen slightly from the height of his election, when the state of the economy has not changed dramatically, and when there is no crisis in foreign affairs. In such cases, local issues tend to predominate in most of the races.

But the last four midterms all deviated from this norm. Deviations on the "upside," from the point of view of the president and his party, occur when they hold their ground or even gains seats. This can result either from a strong reaction against the opposition party or from growing approval of the president.

In 1998, the electorate was punishing Republicans for their handling of the Clinton impeachment process and rewarding Democrats for a rapidly growing economy. In 2002, voters expressed approval of George W. Bush's initial response to the foreign policy crisis provoked by the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Election results of this kind are exceedingly rare.

Deviations on the "downside" occur more frequently, and they reflect a strong negative judgment of the president. Pundits usually describe these elections in geological terms, some preferring terrestrial analogies ("landslide," "earthquake"), others aquatic ones ("wave," "tsunami"). The most dramatic of these deviations involve not just the loss of a large number of seats for the president's party, but also a reversal of party control in one or both houses of Congress. The shock in these cases is both political and psychological: New committee chairs take up their gavels, and a new majority confronts the president.

The 1994 election, in which Newt Gingrich helped Republicans capture both chambers of Congress, was one of the most spectacular instances of party reversal in American history. The 2006 election, when the Democrats replaced the Republicans in both houses, was not far behind. In 1994, the campaign turned on the Republicans' policy platform—the Contract With America—and their rejection of President Clinton's health care program. The big theme of 2006 was the Bush administration's handling of the Iraq war.

Four straight unusual outcomes in a row, with a fifth on the horizon, raises the question whether the conventional wisdom about midterm elections any longer applies. The common denominator of all these elections is that they were all dominated by a national issue or theme that penetrated the competitive local races to an unusual degree. It may well be that nationalized midterm elections are the new norm in American politics.

From all indications, 2010 is shaping up to be at least as extraordinary as the last four midterm contests, if not more so. At stake is Barack Obama's dream of being the transformative president who would consign conservatism and the memory of Ronald Reagan to the dustbin of history and inaugurate an age of revived and renewed liberalism.

Everything hinges on the numbers. To overturn the current Democratic majorities, Republicans need to flip 40 seats in the House and 10 in the Senate—gains that, given the advantages incumbents enjoy, are difficult to achieve in modern politics. Leading electoral analysts nevertheless give Republicans a good chance, better for the House than for the Senate.

Democratic leaders, for obvious reasons, publicly dismiss prognostications of defeat. Vice President Joe Biden recently guaranteed the party faithful victory, adding, "Were it not illegal, I'd make book on it." But beneath his bluster, the vice president was already defining victory down, such that it would encompass any result short of the Democrats' relinquishing control of both House and Senate.

No one today is even talking about the possibility of the Democrats' gaining seats—a fact that represents by far the most important story of this election season. Just two years ago, following the 2008 election, the cover of *Time* magazine featured Barack Obama's head superimposed on FDR riding in his convertible. For *Time* and so many others, Obama was to be the new Roosevelt, inaugurating an enduring Democratic majority. Today, Democrats will be thrilled if they fare no worse under Obama than

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they did under Jimmy Carter in the midterms of 1978.

How unusual 2010 will be turns on whether Democrats lose control of one or both chambers of Congress. There have been only six instances where the party holding all three national electoral institutions going into a midterm election lost both the House and Senate, and eight where it lost one chamber. Facing high unemployment, an anemic recovery, and a precipitous loss in the nation's confidence, Obama and the Democrats stand on the precipice of just such a rejection.

Whether midterm elections that topple the governing party provide "mandates" for the new majority is another matter. The incoming party has every incentive to portray the results as not only a rebuke of the president, but also an indication of public support for its agenda.

This year, if Republicans capture one or both houses of Congress, they will undoubtedly argue that they have a warrant to pursue their policy goals: revisiting Obamacare and altering the stimulus policies. Yet, two leading electoral analysts, Norman Ornstein and Alan Abramowitz, recently cautioned the GOP against pressing its case too assertively. They argue that such tactics can backfire and cite the example of Gingrich in 1994 to make their point.

While Gingrich's grandstanding may have helped Clinton win reelection in 1996, Republican majorities did force major changes in public policy. Of course, such changes only happened because Clinton was flexible enough—and found it in his interest—to play ball. If Republicans are victorious this fall, they may wish to gently remind Obama what he peremptorily told them after dismissing their complaints about the stimulus bill: "I won."

In an age when so much attention is focused on the president, midterm elections spotlight the separation of powers. Congress doesn't speak with the same unitary voice as the president, but a decisive outcome in congressional elections can still send a message loud and clear. ♦

There Goes the Neighborhood

Rage against the 'breeders.'

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

Like a puckish uncle determined to cause trouble at Thanksgiving dinner, the *Washington Post* periodically homes in on the existential conflicts that divide its readership. Earlier this summer, the *Post* Metro section headlined such a story "With City's Baby Boom, Parental Guidance Suggested." The article opened in Capitol Hill's Lincoln Park, where a sudden outpouring of babies has caused altercations between parents, who bring their children, and childless adults, who bring their dogs, to play in the park.

The 'childfree' differ from the merely 'childless' in that they want the world to know that their situation is no accident. A spinster or an infertile couple might be childless by bad luck. The childfree are childless by choice.

The Lincoln Park neighborhood is gentrified and expensive—the median price for a rowhouse is in the $900,000s—and the dog owners there are annoyed at having to share space with human dependents. In an attempt to bring peace, a local pet coach who calls herself the Doggy Lama has been holding "dog citizen" workshops to help pet owners learn to deal peaceably with the interlopers. But it's tough sledding. One dog owner interviewed by the *Post* said that she wished the kids could be confined to a fenced-in area of the park. "I find people with children to be tyrants," she explained. "As someone who doesn't have children, I think children are fine. I don't think they own everything."

The *Post* story detailed similar scuffles in other trendy Washington neighborhoods and generated 479 comments on the paper's website before commenting was finally shut down. Readers ran about 60-to-40 against parents and children. Some sample entries:

> CAC2: keep your nasty little snotty kid away from me, PLEASE!!!! Do not let your stickly offspring rush up to me in Whole Foods and grab my $250 Ralph Lauren silk skirt with it's grubby, crusty hands. One of the benefits of not having children is not having to wear the Mommy Wardrobe. Do not make those of us who are not forced into wash and wear to pay extra for the dry cleaner to remove child goo. Do not allow your offspring to lean over the seat of a restaurant and try to initiate "conversation" with me when I am enjoying a meal with friends

> graylandgal: I won't make any apologies: I hate kids, especially babies. If parents can't afford or locate a sitter, then stay home. I am bloody sick of having my feet and Achilles tendon rammed by knobby-tired strollers the size of Smart Cars; I am bitter about extortion for baby showers, christening gift, etc., for droolers who won't thank me now any more than they will when graduation extortions start; I am nauseated by the stench of dirty diapers changed in public areas because a lazy-ass parent won't

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adjourn to a restroom I am tired of "friends" dragging their hyper-active germ-spreaders to my antiques- and breakable-filled home for events clearly meant for grown-ups because, gee, everybody thinks they're SO cute; and I weary of replying "hi" 467 times to a toddler who hangs over the back of an adjoining restaurant booth because the parents won't make it sit down and shut up. Bitter? You bet. . . . My parents did not inflict me on society until I developed continence, self-ambulation, and social skills.

Knowingly or not, the *Post* had wandered headlong into a movement that has become increasingly militant in recent years: the childfree.

The term refers to adults—many of them married or cohabiting couples—without children. These people differ from the merely "childless" in that they want the world to know that their situation is not an accident. A spinster or an infertile couple might be childless by bad luck. The childfree are childless by choice.

As you already suspect, the childfree movement has its roots in the 1970s. After Paul Ehrlich's (now discredited) *Population Bomb* became a sensation predicting hundreds of millions of deaths as the planet convulsed from overpopulation, clubs such as the National Organization for Non-Parents and No Kidding! sprang up. But what was once a hippy-crank affectation has in recent years become a wide-ranging attack on the societal machinery which supports and encourages baby-making.

The assault has been waged in large part through books, of which there are quite a few—people without children apparently have a lot of time to write. There's Terri Casey's earnest *Pride and Joy: The Lives and Passion of Women without Children* and Nicki Defago's out-and-proud *Childfree and Loving It!* (Defago explains that "Choosing to be childfree brings with it a fantastic sense of freedom for which I feel grateful every day.") There's childfree self-help (*Two Is Enough: A Couple's Guide to Living Childless by Choice*) as well as chin-tugging, childfree introspection (Bill McKibben's *Maybe One: A Case for Smaller Families*).

In 2007, Corinne Maier's saucy *No Kids: 40 Good Reasons Not to Have Children* became a sensation in Europe. It was translated for American audiences two years later, and Maier's quips—"Breastfeeding is slavery," "Motherhood or success: Pick one"—were just as welcome here. Maier's book is meant to amuse, but her conclusion is serious: "No kids, thanks. It's better that way." She would know. Unlike most people in the childfree movement, Maier has two children of her own.

There is more, so much more. In 2006 David Benatar, a philosophy professor at the University of Cape Town wrote *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*—a book which argues that all births are harmful. "[T]he quality of even the best lives is very bad," Benatar explained, "and considerably worse than most people recognize it to be. Although it is obviously too late to prevent our own existence, it is not too late to prevent the existence of future possible people."

Ever since 'The Population Bomb' appeared in 1968, hostility to babies has been at the core of the environmental movement. In 2009, Canada's 'Financial Post' called fertility 'the real inconvenient truth.'

In *The Baby Boon: How Family-Friendly America Cheats the Childless*, Elinor Burkett argues that the childfree are forced to work harder to compensate for their loafing, child-loving colleagues. The entire family-benefits system, she cries, is "affirmative action for mothers." It's a sign of how angry she is that Burkett—a liberal in excellent standing who almost certainly embraces actual, race-based preferences—would imprudently compare the unfair advantage mothers get from "the system" to affirmative action. Another sign: Burkett was the crazed woman who stormed the stage and hijacked an acceptance speech at this year's Academy Awards.

It is a quirk of the movement that while the most committed childfree people tend to be women, being childfree is not primarily a feminist pose. In *The Childless Revolution*, Madelyn Cain describes three types of childfree women: "those who are positively childfree, those who are religiously childfree, and those who are environmentally childfree." It is this last aspect that undergirds much of the movement, particularly at the policy level.

There is, of course, a public policy component to the childfree lifestyle. Ever since *The Population Bomb* appeared in 1968, hostility to babies has been at the core of the environmental movement. The group Californians for Population Stabilization claims that "population growth [is] wildly out of control" and is causing "further degradation of America's natural treasures." The Dalai Lama in 2008 warned that overpopulation is "very serious—very, very serious." A 2009 study at Oregon State University warned that children are terrible contributors to global warming. Dave Foreman, the cofounder of the group Earth First!, went so far as to say "The AIDS epidemic, rather than being a scourge, is a welcome development in the inevitable reduction of human population. . . . If [it] didn't exist, radical environmentalists would have to invent [it]." In 2009, Canada's *Financial Post* called fertility "the real inconvenient truth" and called for a "planetary law" limiting women to a single child in order to "reverse the disastrous global birthrate" which is responsible for climate change.

It's a credit to America's childfree that they believe population control should begin at home. Though sometimes they are willing to go the extra mile. The environmentalist group Optimum Population Trust (OPT) has as its motto "fewer emitters, lower emissions." OPT runs a program whereby environmentally conscious

Westerners can purchase carbon-offsetting family-planning credits. In other words, concerned citizens give the OPT money to be used for funding birth control in developing countries. In case you're curious, the OPT estimates that it takes $144.20 per year to keep enough of the great unwashed from reproducing to offset a typical American's existence.

Yet for all the Malthusian worrywarting, at the street-level, being childfree is mostly about disdain for conservative traditionalists. Thus, the childfree refer to parents as "breeders" and mothers who breastfeed as "moomies" (as in cow). Those are the nicer terms. (The site happilychildfree.com cheerfully catalogues childfree slang.) The great joke, however, is that the childfree rarely bump up against actual conservative traditionalists. One of the motivating presumptions of the lifestyle is that being childfree lets you live the fabulous life in a glittering metropolis. But real breeders can't afford hip urban living. So the type of childfree conflicts we see in the *Post* are really schisms in the great urban liberal order. Childfree liberals aren't chafing against minivan-scale, Republican families. They're chafing against neighboring liberals who choose to have one, or at most two, children. (The *Post* identified three District wards where a minor "baby boom" was producing parent/nonparent conflicts. Those wards went for Obama 83 percent to 16 percent; 97 percent to 3 percent, and 99 percent to 0.8 percent.)

Last January, Ken Archer posted an essay to the urban planning website GreaterGreaterWashington.org. Archer is chief technology officer at a local tech-company and lives in Georgetown with his wife and child. In his piece, Archer noted that one of the D.C. bus lines had recently adopted a policy requiring baby strollers to be folded while on board, making it nearly impossible for parents with small children to ride the bus. Archer suggested that D.C. should follow European and Canadian transit models which make special allowances for strollers in order to (1) cut down on car use and (2) make city cores more accessible to families.

It's hard to imagine a more politely liberal solution to a politely liberal problem.

But the comment board erupted in childfree rage. "Why do people with children always think that they should be catered to? Fold your damn giant stroller," replied one typical correspondent.

Archer attempted to sooth his critics by explaining that he wasn't an entitled breeder and that he really just wanted to make sure that urban families could be carless and still do necessary trips, such as grocery shopping. But the mob was not mollified. "People should think about how they're going to get their food once they have a child BEFORE they have a child," said a perturbed reader. "Maybe have your neighbor watch your kid for an hour or two. . . . Maybe move closer to a store so you can walk. . . . Maybe don't have kids." ♦

The Scarlet 'D'

It's hard out here for a Democrat.

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

Hot Springs, South Dakota

Want a measure of how bad November 2 could be for the Democrats? Take a look at South Dakota—home of the Badlands, the Corn Palace, Mt. Rushmore, and a Democratic party that we know isn't dead only because from time to time it twitches in its sleep.

Here's one sign of how far the tide has ebbed: Eight years ago, Republican John Thune lost, by a slim margin, to Democratic senator Tim Johnson. Two years later, running for the state's other U.S. Senate seat, Thune managed to slip past the Democrats' Senate leader Tom Daschle—a close race that seemed, at the time, a major upset.

As, perhaps, it was. But the fact remains that, through all the elections of those years, the state was a contestable place for both parties, at least for local candidates. And this year? Thune is up for reelection, an attractive but challengeable first-term senator without a lot of legislative success thus far. And to fight him, the Democrats in South Dakota nominated . . . well, no one, as a matter of fact. The party is so demoralized it couldn't even persuade anyone to act as the sacrificial offering, and John Thune will appear unopposed on this year's ballot.

And here's another sign that the Democrats may be washing out to sea.

South Dakota is one of those western states, big in land and small in population, that manages to have two senators and only one representative. Since 2004, that congressional seat has been held by Stephanie Herseth Sandlin.

Now, Herseth Sandlin ought, by rights, to be unbeatable. She's relatively young, she's cute, and she's something of a Blue Dog in a state that likes a little contrariness in the people it sends to Washington. What's more, she comes from an old political family that knows everybody in the state. Which is why, in 2006, she trounced the Republican Bruce Whalen by 69 to 29 percent, and in 2008 she handled Chris Lien by 68 to 32 percent.

Yes, South Dakota tends to turn against the politicians it thinks have become national figures—witness George McGovern's defeat in 1980 and Tom Daschle's in 2004—but Herseth Sandlin is still a long way from the ignominy of actually mattering in Congress. A bad year for her ought to be one in which she decides she shouldn't try to trade up to a Senate seat.

Instead, running this year to retain the congressional seat that she should own till the cows come home, she's trailing 51 to 42 percent, according to the August Rasmussen Reports poll. Worse, she's that far behind, basically, a nobody.

No, that isn't true. The Republican nominee is a 38-year-old woman named Kristi Noem, and, in fact, she has emerged during the campaign as a vibrant candidate: smart, sharp-tongued, strong willed, and possessed of some real political skills. South Dakota is basically ranchers and ranch-minded town-dwellers in the western half of the state, and farmers and the farm-minded in the eastern half. Noem comes from well east, over toward the Minnesota border—but she comes from a ranch there, raising Angus cows and quarter horses, which puts her in well with both sides of the ancient prairie divide.

Still, Noem is merely a two-term state representative, without much statewide recognition to work from. Yes, she impressed her colleagues enough to be chosen as assistant majority leader in the state House of Representatives. She convinced Ted Hustead, of the family that owns Wall Drug, a major tourist attraction, to be the official treasurer of her campaign, and she got the Thune campaign to back her during the primaries. But she also drives like a maniac on those lonely South Dakota roads: over 20 traffic tickets since 1989, with the most recent this year, for driving 94 miles an hour—a record unfortunately reminiscent of Bill Janklow, the longtime Republican power in the state, whose manslaughter conviction in 2003 opened up the congressional seat for Herseth Sandlin.

What's more, Noem never graduated from college. (The lengths to which her official website goes to explain this seem mostly embarrassing; Noem would be better advised to run against Herseth Sandlin's boast of an out-of-state law degree from Georgetown.)

In other words, during any normal election cycle, we wouldn't have found out what a terrific candidate Kristi Noem is because she wouldn't have gotten an opportunity to show us. But that's the point. This isn't a normal election cycle.

Noem's stands on the issues are pretty standard-issue conservative—strongly pro-life, hardline on support for the military, against gun control—with a little Tea Party tinge to her rhetoric on economics (although, in response to ads targeted at senior citizens, she's recently announced that she opposes privatizing Social Security). And Herseth Sandlin is a pretty standard-issue centrist Democrat who voted, for instance, against the enormous health care bill this year (although, the *Rapid City Journal* has reported, she kept a potential challenger out of the Democratic primary by promising secretly that she would not vote to repeal the bill).

Campaigning back home, far from her Washington haunts, Herseth Sandlin has already tacked about as far to the right as she can possibly manage. It might not be enough to save her. Do some traveling across the state, from Edgemont to Sisseton along one diagonal or Buffalo to Elk Point along the other—miles of broken country to the

Joseph Bottum, a native of South Dakota, is editor of First Things *and a contributing editor to* The Weekly Standard.

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west and flat prairie to the east. And what you'll learn is that there's one problem Stephanie Herseth Sandlin can't talk or wiggle her way out of: the "D" that follows her name.

Kristi Noem would make a good, conservative congresswoman, but if she wins, it will be in large part because her state can't bring itself to vote for anyone on the Democratic ticket this year. If South Dakota is a bellwether, a synecdoche, and a marker, November 2 will be truly abysmal for the Democrats. Just when you thought the tide had slipped out about as far as it was going to, out it slips some more. ♦

Endangered Species

The Christians of the West Bank.

BY FRED BARNES

Jerusalem

Sister Sophie is a French-speaking nun from Lebanon who runs the Creche, an orphanage in Bethlehem sponsored by the Vatican. She's maybe 80 years old, though she won't say. And it doesn't matter. She shows the energy of a teenager as she takes care of 40 infants whose prospects of adoption are close to nil. Sister Sophie also has the heart of a saint.

Adoption isn't banned in the West Bank, but there's a catch. It is subject to *sharia* law. Orphans can only be adopted by Muslim families. But they rarely adopt. It's frowned upon in Muslim culture. So the orphans, some with serious birth defects, stay with Sister Sophie until they're passed on to an orphanage for older children.

Their sad plight is a reflection of the adversity endured by Palestinian Christians in a largely Muslim society. They do wonderful things. They operate colleges, schools, and hospitals, open to all. But from the Palestinians and the Israelis who control the West Bank, they get little in return. Their motivation comes from Christ's teachings, their thanks from the grace of God.

Christians play an important institutional role here, taking care of many holy sites. (This is what the Crusades were about.) But the various Christian sects, small as they are, bicker among themselves, notably over who should control the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem. As a result, a prominent Muslim family handles access to the church.

The custodial job at sacred sites will get more difficult as the Christian population continues to dwindle in Israel and the West Bank. "It's been declining since 1948 [when Israel became a state] and is declining very sharply," says Alex Awad, dean of students at Bethlehem Bible College. "I'm afraid in 15 years, forget about Christians in the Holy Land." In the West Bank and Gaza today, Christians are probably less than 2 percent of the population.

"Who's emigrating?" says Mitri Raheb, a Lutheran pastor, whose International Center of Bethlehem is the town's third largest employer. "The best educated Palestinians, especially Christians." Many emigrants have family connections in America. They leave because they can.

Life is hard for Christians in the West Bank. Even on holy days, Palestinian Christians have trouble getting through Israeli checkpoints in time to worship at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the site of Christ's crucifixion. The wall between Israel and the West Bank has dramatically reduced terrorist attacks, but it's also made it difficult for Palestinian students to reach a school run by the Sisters of Charity on the Mount of Olives.

Those are petty inconveniences. For the most part, Israelis are oblivious to the Christian community. One Israeli who sympathizes with the Palestinians told me he's scarcely aware of a Christian presence at all. And as a marginalized religious minority in the West Bank, Christians face restrictions.

"Our evangelism is not accepted in any Islamic society," says Awad. "But we're allowed to have our colleges, our schools, our hospitals." Missionary work is limited to "indirect evangelism." That's like don't ask, don't tell: Whatever you do, keep it out of sight.

There's another problem. The growth of radical Islam among Palestinians in recent years is "an increasingly dangerous threat to Christian communities, to individuals, and to the mode of life they practice," says Justus Reid Weiner, an Israeli, in a report on the "human rights of Christians in Palestinian society." The owner of a Christian bookstore in Gaza was murdered in 2007.

Christians in the West Bank are fortunate to have at least one powerful defender, Palestinian prime minister Salaam Fayyad. He says he will do everything he can to keep the Christian community from shrinking. And he says he wants to hear immediately of any persecution of Christians.

As part of a Christian group that spent a week in Israel and the West Bank last month, I talked to numerous Palestinian Christians. I was struck by the lack of evidence for the idea that Christians are a buffer between Israelis and Palestinians, an impediment to conflict. They aren't.

They are highly critical of Israel and strongly support a Palestinian state. "I am more willing to live under an Islamic state with *sharia* law than not have a Palestinian state," says Awad. Coming from a deeply committed Christian, that's quite a statement and, to me, an appalling one.

But Awad, a genial and gracious man, tempered it. "The more Christians you have, the more blessings we can have on this land," he says. "Once we have a Palestinian state, hopefully more Palestinian Christians will move back." Maybe they will, but I wouldn't bet on it. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Theirs But To Do and Die

Dien Bien Phu and the twilight of the warrior.

By Robert Messenger

I would like to emphasize that, in my opinion and insofar as the free world is concerned, the French Union forces at Dien Bien Phu are fighting a modern Thermopylae.

—General Walter Bedell Smith,
Undersecretary of State, April 19, 1954

Caution and cynicism are safe, but soldiers don't want to follow cautious cynics. They follow leaders who believe enough to risk failure or disappointment for a worthy cause.

—General Stanley McChrystal,
from his retirement remarks July 23, 2010

Marcel Bigeard, who died on June 18 at the age of 94, was a paragon of a new type of professional warrior that arose during the Cold War. For while the United States and the Soviet Union (and their many allies) built large-scale militaries for an eventual hot war, what came instead were proxy wars in places like Vietnam and the Congo. These did not require the technology-laden and discipline-heavy units prepared to fight in the Fulda Gap, but instead small, mobile units of soldiers dedicated to an intense operational tempo. And they required resourceful officers, able to adapt the methods of guerillas and willing to lead by example. Bigeard, who rose from the ranks to four-star general, was such a soldier: emphasizing physical fitness and endurance, preferring to live rough with his men, and a master of the topography of battlegrounds. He refused to carry a weapon into combat, feeling his job was to lead not to fight. (In the U.S. Army, men like Charlie Beckwith, the founder of Delta Force, and Richard Meadows, leader of the Son Tay Raiders, had similar careers and maintain similar legends.)

Bigeard thrived in the dirty war (*guerre sale*) of the postcolonial era, amassing an extraordinary combat record at the head of paratroop units he trained to fight in his image and helping to develop the most successful counterinsurgency strategies of the postwar era. Yet his obituaries this summer were dominated by a continuing dispute within France over the use of torture during the Battle of Algiers in 1957—action sanctioned by the French government of the day. Such is the fate of even the greatest warriors in the West's post-military popular culture. Nations are no longer grateful to "The Glorious Dead," and soldiers are no longer heroes. Yet this does not change the fact that Bigeard can be spoken of in the same breadth as men like Leonidas, John Chard, and Anthony McAuliffe: leaders whom soldiers fol-

Paratroopers landing at Dien Bien Phu, November 20, 1953

POPPERFOTO / GETTY IMAGES

Robert Messenger is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

lowed to the extremes of endurance. What Bigeard and the rest of the "para mafia" did at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu should be remembered in the way that the 300 Spartans' defense of the Hot Gates has stirred boys' dreams for 2,500 years. Few do so remember it, but among their number are the American generals who have been prosecuting our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Battle of Dien Bien Phu passed from history into legend almost the moment it ended in the early hours of May 8, 1954. Popular conception is that colonialism's days in Indochina were numbered, and there was nothing French soldiers could have done to arrest the forces of history. The Indochina War that ebbed and flowed after 1945 tends to be presented as either a small episode in the story of postwar Asian nationalism or the opening act of a long war that ended in 1976. These are handy tales for textbook writers and newspaper columnists, but the facts don't support them. Even a cursory study shows that Dien Bien Phu was a viable military gamble and one that the French came close to winning. Indochina might just as easily have been another Malaya as a precursor to U.S. failure in Vietnam. As so often when political issues are intertwined with military, hindsight is blind.

The French in Indochina cooperated with the Japanese during World War II—taking their orders from far-off Vichy. In March 1945, the Japanese, fearing an Allied invasion, suddenly interned the French troops and administrators and took over the country's defense. Ho Chi Minh had been sent by Mao to build up the Indochinese Communist party in 1941. He conceived of the Viet-Minh (a shortening of the words for "League for the Independence of Vietnam") as a nationalist front for the Communists to hide behind until the French and Japanese had been defeated. Ho got arms from OSS operatives by promising to fight the Japanese, but all his efforts went toward organizing his cadres and assassinating nationalists who might potentially prove a rival to the Communists. They moved swiftly when the war ended, marching armed bands into Hanoi and proclaiming themselves the national government. The French had no trouble reestablishing themselves in the south of the country and outright war between the Viet-Minh and the French broke out in December 1946, when Ho ordered his troops to attack the French installations in Hanoi. He based his calculations on the Socialist party, which he assumed would be sympathetic to his aims, having come to power in Paris. He was wrong, and French troops rapidly routed the Viet-Minh in and around Hanoi.

So began the first phase of the war. The fighting was bloody and constant, but by 1948 the insurgency was waning. Ho and his main general, Vo Nguyen Giap, were reduced to hit-and-run tactics and acts of terror, but they weren't wiped out and were invigorated with the Communist victory in China. Mao and Stalin both offered full support to the insurgency. Materiel and advisers poured in, and Viet-Minh soldiers were trained in China and organized into real divisions. In 1949, French troops were suddenly facing soldiers in steel helmets and armed with light artillery. That was the year, moreover, that the war became controversial in France itself. The Fourth Republic was unstable—20 heads of state between 1947 and 1958 and periods without any executive at all. In the wake of Mao's victory, France's powerful Communist party began to organize opposition to the war in Indochina: Stories of supposed French atrocities ran in its papers; dock workers refused to load ships bound for Indochina; and the party-adopted slogan—"Not one man, not one *sou*"—appeared as graffiti.

In the fall of 1950, Giap's troops scored their first victories in a sequence of attacks on the French forts along the border with China. Vietnam was a difficult battleground for a modern army. The country had a primitive road network, much of which dissolved during the long rainy season. It

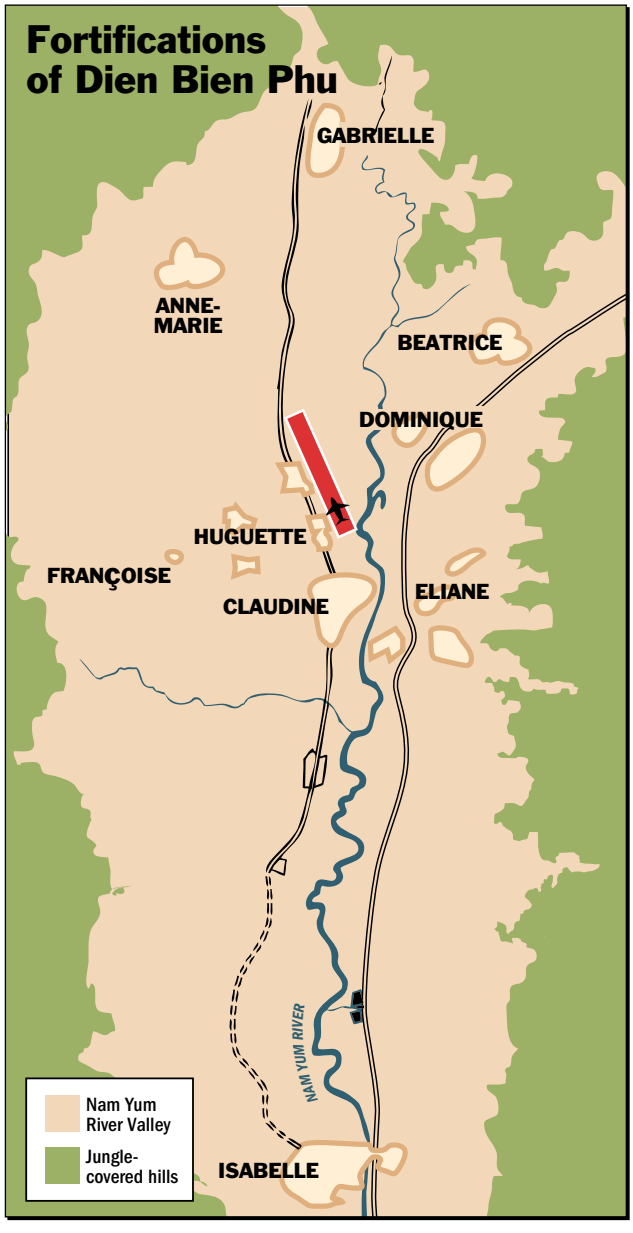
became dense jungle just a few miles outside of even the largest cities. The hills were vast canopies of forest, and the unforested plains networks of streams and rivers. French troops and supply columns could not leave the roads and made easy targets for all-but-invisible guerrillas. The battles around Cao Bang were products of this environment—and of martinet French generals far away in Hanoi who kept insisting that preset plans be followed despite the changing circumstances. Of the 5,807 French troops in action, only 1,338 survived. The French pulled back completely from the border, giving the Viet-Minh control of Northern Tonkin. This proved the most disastrous decision of the war, allowing the free flow of arms and aid from China to the Viet-Minh.

So began the second phase of the war, and France's response was to appoint its best general (though the third offered the command), Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. Presented with the job by the defense minister, de Lattre replied, "I have nothing to gain and everything to lose, and that is why I accept." He set up a fortified line defending the Red River Delta—home to the vast majority of the people in the north—to deny the Viet-Minh access to the villages where they collected supplies and money while creating mobile columns to hunt down the insurgents. De Lattre also set about building a self-sufficient local army. By 1953, the Vietnamese National Army would be 200,000 strong and holding down much of the south (with a further 128,000 people serving in the militias and police). There were also 100,000 native Vietnamese in the French army itself as de Lattre focused initially on recruiting them into regular French units as a way of training soldiers who could form the backbone of a disciplined force. (Such troops would make up a third of the soldiers fighting at Dien Bien Phu.)

After the successes of Cao Bang, Giap thought that 1951 would be the year of the "counteroffensive." In January, he attacked at Vinh Yen; in March at Mao Khe, and in May along the Day River in the twin battles of Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh. In each case, de Lattre's mobile forces inflicted heavy casualties—kill ratios running at ten to one. Giap's "General Offensive" was a disaster, and the Viet-Minh returned to guerrilla tactics. While the French victories were good for morale and garnered positive headlines—de Lattre was a press-savvy general—they did little to improve the overall situation. The de Lattre Line was porous. The French simply did not have enough men to deny the Viet-Minh access to the population of the delta. And de Lattre, who had done so much to hearten the French effort in Indochina, was dying of cancer. He had to be relieved in December 1951, after just one year in command, and died on January 11, 1952.

His successor, Raoul Salan, maintained the strategy but with little of the active leadership that had made it work, and the manpower issues grew ever more severe. Throughout 1952, the French looked for battles where they could inflict heavy casualties on the enemy, but for the most part they remained trapped in their static positions—they had more than 900 fortified positions in the country, employing 84,000 soldiers. Each had to be supplied, and every relief column was targeted on one or another "Ambush Alley" or "Street Without Joy."

The final phase of the war began in May 1953 with the appointment of Henri Navarre as commander in chief in Indochina. He was met in Saigon by an old academy chum whose first words were, "What are you doing in this shithouse?" Navarre's assignment was not to



win the war, but to create the conditions for an honorable peace. He needed to take the offensive using his best troops while continuing to stand up the Vietnamese National Army. What had bedeviled French commanders was the inability to bring their heavy advantages in firepower to bear against larger Viet-Minh units. In late November and December 1952, French paratroopers had achieved a major success at Na San in the High Region where a heavily reinforced airstrip—a *base aéro-terrestre*, generally called a hedgehog—had held out against heavy assault. A sequence of fortified positions offered dense fields of fire, and the airstrip allowed continual resupply. Na San had been irresistible to Giap, and he committed enough troops to allow the aggressive defenders to score a major victory. The hedgehog seemed to offer a way to meet the Viet-Minh on its own terrain without sacrificing the French military advantages.

Navarre knew that Giap would take the offensive in the spring and feared that Laos would be the objective. (In its endless political maneuvering to maintain a pretense of offering national determination, the French had just signed a mutual defense treaty with the nominally independent Laos and such calculations were a part of Navarre's burden.) He eventually settled on a massive version of the Na San hedgehog on the open plain around Dien Bien Phu (the words mean "Big Frontier Administrative Center") in the Nam Yum River Valley on the Laos border. It was to be the bait for a trap for Giap's best divisions. On November 20, 1953, paratroopers were dropped on Dien Bien Phu and began building a base. Around a central airstrip were Centers of Resistance (CRs), each bearing a woman's name, from Anne-Marie to Isabelle, and each in turn containing small supporting fortified entrenchments called by number—Eliane 1-12, Huguette 1-7, and so on. Dien Bien Phu was not intended as an all or nothing gamble for the future of Indochina. It was a gesture toward Laos, bait for the Viet-Minh, and a base for offensive operations that might relieve pressure on the delta. Navarre's plans still pointed toward 1955 as the year of stalemate when he hoped to have enough Vietnamese troops to reinforce the idea that while the French might not be able to defeat the Viet-Minh, they could hold the country indefinitely.

Navarre had been prophetic in his decision to fight in the highlands. Giap had already sent two of his five divisions to campaign in Laos, and they were quickly moved to the hills around Dien Bien Phu. A captain in the Foreign Legion wrote home to his wife, describing the base as "an immense stadium twenty kilometers long and eight wide. The stadium belongs to us, the bleachers in the mountains to the Viets." By the end of December, there were 12,000 French troops at Dien Bien Phu (including, in classic French style, two *Bordels Mobiles de Campagne*, "mobile field bordellos," one for the French soldiers and one for the Vietnamese). Giap initially planned to make an assault on the base in the last week of January, just as soon as his troops and supplies were in place. But he held back. With the encouragement of his Chinese "advisers"—they had to approve every decision Giap made—he concluded that this was now the crucial battleground. The French could not easily evacuate their troops over such a distance. Time was on the Viet side. Giap resolved to concentrate all his forces and materiel in hopes of winning a large conventional battle.

Dien Bien Phu was 500 miles from the Chinese border: too far, Navarre and his officers had felt, for even the able Viet-Minh to drag artillery pieces and set up the supply lines to maintain a large army in the field. They thought they would have the advantage thanks to airpower. Yet it proved impracticable to supply such a large base so far forward. It was 185 miles from the French airfields in Tonkin, at the limits of many planes' range, and morning fog cut the available flying hours. Delivering the supplies necessary to build the Dien Bien Phu hedgehog to military standards to withstand sustained artillery fire would have required 12,000 sorties by the entire French airfleet in Indochina—five months of flying. And lack of planes was a problem from the first; the original paratroop drop was done in two waves as there weren't enough C-47s to drop both battalions simultaneously.

By the end of December, there were 12,000 French troops at Dien Bien Phu (including, in classic French style, two Bordels Mobiles de Campagne, 'mobile field bordellos,' one for the French soldiers and one for the Vietnamese).

The French overestimated not only their planes' ability to supply the base, but much more their ability to hamper the Viet-Minh supply chain. French intelligence estimated that Giap would need 30 tons of rice each day to sustain his divisions in the High Region, which would take 2,000 trucks, a fleet easily spotted in action from the air. Yet tens of thousands of coolies performed miraculous feats. Trees were tied together to form canopied tunnels that kept the supply route from aerial view, log bridges were built below the surface of streams and rivers to disguise them, bicycle companies were organized where men rode and pushed their machines with as much as 400 pounds of rice across hundreds of miles of jungle path. The Communist Viet-Minh, with an emphasis on unified work and simple slogans, was well organized for such efforts: "Zealously to build roads

for artillery is zealously to work for victory. To build fortifications an inch thicker is to create more favorable conditions." The French pilots searched and searched, bombed and bombed—and still troops and supplies descended on Dien Bien Phu.

Any idea, moreover, of Dien Bien Phu being a base for offensive operations was quickly given up. The casualties from French sorties into the jungle were too high and the gains negligible. The French hunkered down to await attack, still confident in their superior firepower. By March, Giap had 150 artillery pieces in place to the French defenders' 60. And political considerations had completely altered the importance of the battle. Yet another weak French ministry had forced the Americans to agree to include the Chinese at a conference of the big four powers in April where Korea—the war there had just ended—and Indochina would be the main topics. The Geneva Conference was quickly perceived as a deadline for victory. Navarre knew it. Giap knew it, too. The battle for Dien Bien Phu was suddenly for Indochina.

It began on March 13. The volume of Viet-Minh artillery was a surprise to the defenders, who had been relying on aerial reconnaissance and counterbattery work to destroy the enemy guns almost as soon as they started firing. But the Viet-Minh had spent six weeks studying the French positions and from the first volleys were hitting the French planes on the runway and hammering the artillery crews in their open pits—as the French guns needed to be able to fire the 360 degrees of the valley, they had been built without shelter. The Viet-Minh had set their batteries in hillside dugouts to protect them from counterfire and had established a wide range of anti-aircraft batteries which made the French flyers' strafing runs of napalm and even reconnaissance increasingly suicidal.

The Viet-Minh objective on the 13th was the easternmost Center of Resistance, Béatrice. The most in danger, it was also the most lightly held—by a single depleted battalion of Foreign Legionnaires, about 450 men. They were elite troops, but there were so few that each of the four strongpoints had but a single officer. The French commander at Dien Bien Phu, Christian de Castries, was a dashing tank commander. He had been put in charge when it was expected the base would be a center of lightning offensive operations and had no knowledge of fortified defense. Though the timing and objective of the Viet attack were clear, Castries made no provision for counterattacking (key in the defensive battles that hedgehogs were designed to wage) and even turned down Navarre's offer of three additional battalions (which would have increased his fighting manpower by 25 percent). While Castries was correct that he didn't have the supplies for additional men, he would need them almost immediately after fighting began.

The battle for Béatrice began at dusk after a two-hour barrage. The Viet-Minh almost always attacked at night to deny French planes the ability to influence a battle. (Much of the eight weeks of combat at Dien Bien Phu occurred in the ghostly green light of high-intensity parachute flares dropped by aircraft circling above.) The first assault was overwhelming—two full regiments employing 4,000 men with half again as many in reserve—and almost the entirety of the Legion battalion was wiped out, though taking many times their number in Viet-Minh lives. (One of the battalion's few remaining officers, Captain Philippe Nicolas, was reading a letter from the Ministry of Finance when the shelling began. It informed him that his wages would be garnished if he did not immediately pay his back taxes. He was killed defending his post later that night.)

Vietnamese paratroopers reporting for duty at Dien Bien Phu, December 1953

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Béatrice fell just before dawn, and no attempt was made to recapture her. Castries would later say it was due to the lack of air support caused by heavy fog, but the French commanders were really in shock at the ferocity of the Viet gunnery. Castries's chief of staff had a breakdown, and the artillery commander, Charles Piroth, who had repeatedly expressed the sentiment that five minutes after the Viet-Minh guns began firing there would be no more Viet-Minh guns, committed suicide on the night of the 14th by holding a grenade to his chest. (When the news of Piroth's act came out days later, a paratroop officer remarked that if everybody

responsible for this mess were to take such a way out, Dien Bien Phu and Paris were both going to be pretty empty.)

Gabrielle, though defended in force, fell the next night. Anne-Marie would be abandoned on March 17 by the Thai troops who held her. Giap called a halt to the attack and settled in to dig trenches. His tactics were not far removed from the siege warfare conceived by Vauban in the 17th century—surround your enemy, cut off his offensive abilities, deny him supply, strangle him with tighter and tighter rings of trenches allowing your guns to pound his strongpoints, and take them one by one.

Navarre was dismayed by Castries's failure to fight for the CRs. He sent reinforcements of the best troops in Indochina—the paratroopers who had originally been dropped on Dien Bien Phu in November and then pulled out to fight in Laos and the Delta. These units fought at an operational tempo rarely seen in modern warfare and exemplified the great divide in the French military between the traditional spit-and-polish army with its clear class distinctions in the officer corps and the colonial and African armies that did the overseas fighting. The paratroop ranks drew heavily on former Resistance fighters and had a healthy contempt for the hidebound regulars who had lost so quickly in 1940. They emphasized intense physical fitness and the improvisation necessary to war light and fast. On March 16, the already legendary Bigeard led his 6th Battalion in their second drop over Dien Bien Phu in a matter of months. One of his officers briefed his heavy weapons company on the jump, "All I can tell you is I know how we're going to get in, but I don't know how we're going to get out."

A Viet-Minh bicycle company bringing rice to the troops at Dien Bien Phu

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The success at Na San had been thanks to the union of aggressive paratroopers and hardened Foreign Legionnaires. They had prepared a defense in depth and counterattacked immediately. A defender must await the attacker's pleasure, but at that moment he can become the aggressor. The Viet-Minh's mass attacks on a strongpoint were an invitation to slaughter if met not just by prepared fire, but also by waves of resistance that forced a violent struggle for every inch of ground. During the pause in fighting, operational command at Dien Bien Phu passed to Pierre Langlais, a paratroop lieutenant-colonel. He set the conditions for fighting along the lines that had been successful at Na San. (An endlessly gruff officer, Langlais had been berating Piroth just before the artilleryman's suicide.)

On March 31, Giap resumed the offensive, targeting the CRs that guarded the base's eastern approaches: Dominique and Eliane. He hoped in a single night to take the five main strong points. Dominique 1 and 2 fell, as did Eliane 1, but at Dominique 3, intricately prepared gunnery fields wreaked havoc on the attackers. And Eliane 2 held thanks to repeated counterattacks. Langlais and Bigeard (acting essentially as the former's executive officer for the rest of the battle) committed troops piecemeal as needed: a broken company to retake a hill would be followed by a few hundred Legionnaires to hold it. Troops were held in reserve to see where next a leak would spring, though Langlais had no fear of committing them all when the crisis came. What mattered was acting with dispatch and hitting hard enough to make the enemy's attack falter until daybreak forced retreat.

The battle for Eliane 2 raged for five nights, but the French held. Giap then turned his attention to the western approach and tried again and again to take Huguette 6. By April 10, the "Battles of the Hills" were over. Giap again paused, but not to prepare for a new assault. Casualties were threatening to make the battle unsustainable, and Ho investigated the possibility of drawing Chinese troops and bombers into the fight. This was the crisis point of the whole battle. As well as the Viet-Minh had prepared and despite their major early successes, they had been fought to a standstill by an aggressive defense. The tiny French band was stretched thin and taking fearful casualties, but dealing them in much greater numbers. On the five hills, Giap had committed 30,000 men against some 2,000 constantly replaced defenders. Viet-Minh casualties were likely 12,000 killed and wounded.

Here, as so often in the wars for Vietnam, Giap showed

himself a disastrous commander—it would be hard to find a more overrated figure in military history. He had achieved artillery supremacy on the first day of battle, yet never systematically destroyed the French guns as tactics require (and which he had the direct observation and fire supremacy to accomplish with ease). French howitzers and mortars were devastatingly effective in the battles for Eliane and Dominique. Giap was content to pour his numerous forces before the French emplacements as if it was September 1914. He rapidly needed reinforcements and was pondering circumstances that might make him retire from the Nam Yum Valley.

By all military logic, Dien Bien Phu should have fallen. But war happens in the specific and is prey to strange turns. Thanks to the resilience of the defenders, it had survived. With enough men, Langlais and Bigeard could have retaken the lost forts and set the terms for the type of victory earned during 1951's spring offensives and at Na San—for the Viet-Minh to decide there were better ways to fight than by dying by the thousands in front of heavy French fire. This was the chance to achieve Navarre's objectives and set the ground for Geneva. Yet the high command in Hanoi dithered. A promised airborne brigade became a battalion, and even that was delivered piecemeal and too late. Giap ordered two divisions of raw troops to come from the Viet bases and doubled-down on Dien Bien Phu, but the French, who had no alternative, did not.

The French were stretched thin and taking fearful casualties, but dealing them in greater numbers. On the five hills, Giap had committed 30,000 men against some 2,000 constantly replaced defenders. Viet-Minh casualties were likely 12,000 killed and wounded.

Popular historians tell us the French staked everything on Dien Bien Phu. But just 4 percent of the French troops in Indochina were holding down 60 percent of Giap's fighting units. Navarre had been searching for a place where the Viet-Minh would not simply retire if they took heavy losses. Despite all the mistakes, he had actually found it. He had 400,000 troops at his command in Indochina. He could have made the decision to reinforce in strength—not just by air, but by setting in motion a mass long-range relief column from Laos. But Navarre weighed too many factors—the general in charge of Tonkin did not want to give up men, and many senior army figures in Hanoi viewed Dien Bien Phu as just an irregulars' sideshow—and he was actually waging a simultaneous operation in the south using 25,000 troops in a series of amphibious landings. Operation Atalante was indecisive, while at Dien Bien Phu, Bigeard's troops retook the lost strongpoints but did not have the men to hold them. This was when the battle was lost. The para commanders had redeemed Navarre's strategy, and he failed to support them.

The story of Dien Bien Phu's fall is an epic of endurance—like Bataan or Stalingrad—of men fighting to the limits of body and spirit. Though Langlais never got the reinforcements he wanted, each day volunteers parachuted into the camp, between 1,800 and 2,600 soldiers during the battle's last month, most at night, through heavy flak, and uncertain they would even land on French-held ground. Some arrived the night before it fell, jumping into a fortress that they knew was doomed.

The conditions in the base were inhuman. By late April, there were more than 3,000 wounded men—850 critically—trapped in close, dark bunkers subject to constant shelling. As the battle reached its end, even the severely wounded returned to fight rather than stay in the dungeon-like triage centers. There are accounts of double amputees helping to hold the lines by firing machine guns as their comrades counterattacked. Battalions were nonexistent, and companies reduced to the size of platoons. Those that held the flashpoints like Eliane 1 used 3,000 grenades to hold their lines each evening and fought in a manner reminiscent of the Western Front. (Castries at one point requested World War I-style trench periscopes. None could be found in Indochina.) The days were an endless attempt at gathering in the airdropped supplies—180 tons were needed daily and the drops were far from accurate—or digging new trenches and fortifications. The nights were pitched battles for the remaining CRs or to destroy the Viet trenches closing in.

The monsoon came on April 25 and turned the valley into a sea of mud. Trenches were two- and three-feet deep in glue-like muck. The soldiers were always wet and had little time to eat or sleep. It was a second Passchendaele, and the tactics were the same: mining, sniping, hand-to-hand combat with grenades and entrenching tools. Studies of World War II combat show that after 45 days of constant combat, soldiers became automatons, unable to think and with slowed reactions. But the new arrivals reported the paratroopers' and Legionnaires' unwavering conviction that they would win.

In mid-April, Huguette 6 was cut off by the tight network of Viet trenches, and after three bloody nights trying to get ammunition, grenades, and food across, the decision was made to abandon her. On April 21, Huguette 1 was

lost. A counterattack by the last arriving paratroop companies failed, and it would be the last offensive measure the French attempted. Giap had planned his third offensive for May 1-5, timed with the opening of the Geneva conference. But he was still far from certain of final victory and estimated the French would hold out until the end of June. The French high command's hope lay in a deus ex machina of direct American intervention, but Eisenhower declined to act. The French at Dien Bien Phu had found their Thermopylae, but there would be no Salamis or Plataea.

At 8 P.M. on May 1, a heavy barrage hammered the frontline CRs. Eliane 1 fell that night. Dominique 3 and Huguette 5 on May 2. Huguette 4 held yet one more day. On the night of May 6, Eliane 2 was finally taken, and the following morning Eliane 4. There were fewer than 650 French defenders still fighting, and a ceasefire was organized to save the thousands of wounded in the hospital warrens of the final French bastion: Claudine. The remaining defenders, strung out amongst the destroyed remains of various strongpoints, were too tired and too few to even need to surrender. By all accounts the battle simply stopped. The siege was over, and the war quickly followed. A ceasefire was agreed at Geneva on July 20 and the country partitioned pending elections. Hundreds of thousands of Tonkinese and Annamites headed south overwhelming expectations. (The Viet-Minh made sure to infiltrate a cadre of 6,000 hardcore Communists into the south to continue their war.) The French were simply in a hurry to recover their soldiers and leave.

French soldiers take cover in a trench near the end of the battle, May 4, 1954

Precise casualty figures for Dien Bien Phu are impossible to come by. The best estimate for the French side is that of the 15,090 men who fought there between March 13 and May 7, about 1,500 were killed and close to 5,000 wounded, with another 1,600 missing in action—some lost to the vagaries of jungle and trench warfare, many simply deserters (especially from the weaker Thai and Vietnamese units). Viet-Minh casualties were between 25,000 and 30,000, with 40 percent of those killed-in-action. The Viet-Minh captured just over 10,000 men at Dien Bien Phu, 4,500 of whom were wounded, 900 so severely they were kept with their doctors until the truce came and they could be evacuated. The rest were plunged into the jungle and one- to two-month marches to prison camps on the Chinese border—12 miles a day with limited nourishment. Four months of marching and captivity proved far more deadly than the battle. Only 3,900 returned home. This was not due to sadism on the part of the Viet-Minh. Without sufficient food or fresh water, without medical supervision, with a third of the prisoners wounded, and having fought a continuous eight-week battle, men rapidly succumbed to disease. Photographs of the survivors returning to Hanoi show the hollow-eyed, emaciated figures we know from Holocaust histories.

So ended the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. History has ruled the French defeat inevitable, which demeans the sacrifices made by the soldiers on each side. The Viets won thanks to the unstinting efforts of their army. And even so, the decision hung in the balance. With better command and support, the base could have held out and possibly set the ground for a sensible peace like that allowed by Britain's victory in the 1950s Malayan Emergency. The war, moreover, needn't have ended because Dien Bien Phu was overrun. The severe losses forced upon the Viet-Minh made their victory pyrrhic. The Viet-Minh were in no position during the height of the monsoon to move their shattered units to threaten Hanoi. Just as conditions on the ground had not changed much after de Lattre's 1951 victories, so they hadn't in summer 1954. What had changed was France's willingness to continue the fight—politics, not combat, decided the war. Ho's strategy had proved far more adept than Giap's tactics.

The failure to understand this was one of the chief legacies of the war—and the catalyst of a second. In 1963, Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, asked France's best chroniclers of the Indochina War, Bernard Fall and Jean Larteguy, to talk to senior

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U.S. commanders and diplomats. In his memoirs, *The Face of War* (1976), Larteguy summarized the talk:

> "You seem to suppose that France's defeat was because she was a colonizer. In reality it was due to her hesitations and shifts, to her inability to choose and maintain a political stance. The French government had only one idea—negotiate—but the conditions for negotiation were never the same as those of the Vietminh. The Viets are remarkable soldiers, and their political organization is at all times subordinated to the exigencies of their struggle: to have an immense army where an entire people is formed into brigades. You said that the Ngo family [Ngo Dinh Diem was the president of South Vietnam. He and his brother were killed in a U.S.-organized coup in 1963] is a bad lot. It's true. You said that the democracy you're going to establish here, after the elimination of the Ngos, will propel the people to take part in the contest for freedom. False! The kind of democracy you propose to the Vietnamese is yours. It won't work for them! Finally, France fought this whole unpopular war with professional soldiers. Above all, do not use recruits. And you have to forget your wealth in this war. You have to make it a war of the poor. You have to ask infinitely more of men than the materiel. And you must see to it that your fighting man knows the reason for your intervention here, reasons that touch him personally, in order for him to be able to accept the sacrifices demanded of him."
>
> We talked into a void, reduced to playing a role of Cassandra.

Larteguy, a former paratrooper who had served with Orde Wingate's Chindits during World War II, was the great chronicler of the war's second legacy: the growing divide between professional soldiers and representative governments. For while Dien Bien Phu is the end of one story—of French rule in Indochina—it is the beginning of another, of the battle over a certain idea of France. The soldiers who had fought so valiantly at Dien Bien Phu formed the core of the army that would fight the same war with different results in Algeria. They returned from Indochina to a hostile France. Many were disembarked at night to avoid the Communist stevedores who threw rocks at veterans. They were encouraged not to wear their uniforms, and the French government nickel-and-dimed them. (Survivors of the prison camps were asked for documentation on just when they acquired dysentery.) Langlais fought an angry two-year paper battle against the military establishment to get paratroop wings awarded to every one of the volunteers who had jumped into the besieged Dien Bien Phu—military regulations required six jumps. He lost.

The French government had discovered that two armies were needed in the postwar world: a very regimented one to take France's part in holding the lines for the conventional hot war that would never come and one to fight the revolutionary wars that did. Larteguy captured this divide in a famous statement—delivered by a

Dien Bien Phu: A Reader's Guide

DIEN BIEN PHU HAS BEEN WELL SERVED BY CHRONICLERS in English. No battle that did not feature English or American units has received comparable treatment. Bernard Fall's path-breaking *Hell in a Very Small Place* (1966) is a combat narrative of the first order and retains its drama. Howard Simpson, who like Fall both saw the base in action and knew many of the participants on the French side, wrote a fine update in 1994 that drew on the immense amounts of material produced in France over three decades. He had more than 20 years experience in U.S. diplomatic posts in Indochina and, quite appropriately for a man of his generation, drew some of the wrong lessons from the battle, which is not something one could accuse Martin Windrow of. His *The Last Valley: Dien Bien Phu and French Defeat in Vietnam* (2004) is one of the most judicious military studies of our era. The battle is not just narrated, but each factor described and considered to the extent the available materials make possible. Even the maps are exceptional. *The Last Valley* is a brilliant analysis that lays out the conditions and actions of this battle clearly and at not excessive length; there could be no need for another account.

Yet now, just a few years later, comes Ted Morgan's *Valley of Death: The Tragedy at Dien Bien Phu that Led America into the Vietnam War* (Random House, 752 pages, $35). Morgan is an excellent writer, who long ago served in the French army during the war in Algeria. His *My Battle of Algiers* (2006) is a strong book, managing to tell a complex tale in detail but lightly and compactly. Such strengths are not much in evidence in *Valley of Death*, which plows furrowed ground and, moreover, at extreme length. The battle begins on page 200 of a 750-page book. (Read Windrow and Morgan together, and you'll quickly notice that the archival record is not so vast as to need multiple editions.) Morgan has filled out his book with hefty sections of American diplomatic history. He does tell a fuller story, but an unbalanced one. The battle is a microcosm, while the American politics and diplomacy are broad strokes: An excellent account of the fight for a CR will be followed by 50 pages explaining the American situation as regards Asian communism with potted biographies of Arthur Radford or John Foster Dulles. Morgan's trying to convince us that Dien Bien Phu is a key moment in American history. It's not. Far more important are events like the sending of Edward Lansdale to Saigon or the death of FDR, whose policy had been to keep the French from reoccupying Indochina. There are already fine diplomatic histories of these events and fine battle histories. How much more interesting it would have been for this French-American writer—real name Sanche de Gramont—to have presented a political history of the war as it was experienced in France itself.

character modeled on Bigeard—from his novel *The Centurions* (1963):

> I'd like France to have two armies: one for display, with lovely guns, tanks, little soldiers, fanfares, staffs, distinguished and doddering generals, and dear little regimental officers who would be deeply concerned over their general's bowel movements or their colonel's piles: an army that would be shown for a modest fee on every fairground in the country.
>
> The other would be the real one, composed entirely of young enthusiasts in camouflage battledress, who would not be put on display but to whom all sorts of tricks would be taught. That's the army in which I should like to fight.

The Centurions and its sequel, *The Praetorians* (1964), tell the story of a group of paratroopers who fight at Dien Bien Phu. They survive the brutal march and in the camps study the Communist methods of war. They then use them when called upon to fight in Algeria. This is a true story: The losers of Dien Bien Phu did learn the Viet-Minh methods and did employ them in Algeria after they were told by their political masters to win at any price. Algeria became a paratroopers' war. But they were robbed of their victory by politicians, and the closing chapter of France's great military tradition was a pair of coups: a successful one (1958) ending the Fourth Republic and bringing de Gaulle to power, then a failed one (1961) to keep de Gaulle from making peace in Algeria. Old Indochina hands formed the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS), which sought to assassinate de Gaulle, refound the republic, and keep Algeria French. In the wake of these events, some of France's most eminent soldiers were condemned to death or life imprisonment. (So associated were the paratroopers with the revolt that de Gaulle had the old regiments disbanded.) France's army, which had been a dominant force in the West for more than a millennium, passed into history.

Under Johnson and Westmoreland we lost a war the establishment said we were winning. Under Abrams and Nixon we won one they said we were losing. The Vietnam war tells us a lot more about American government and popular perception than it does the quest for a victory of arms.

Larteguy's novels capture this world, and they are revered in American military circles. Admiral James Stockdale was a particular fan, as today are Generals David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal. (Petraeus once kept a signed photograph of Bigeard in his office.) The novels deliver a clear picture of the unit cohesion that leads to battlefield excellence and of the problems that professional warriors face in modern democracies. We need rough men standing ready while we sleep, but we don't want to know what they must do if we are to be kept safe. Our popular culture is dominated by a post-1960s generation that simply cannot imagine undertaking military service. Soldiers in mainstream books and films are presented mostly as guilty, haunted, and dangerous. (You get none of this in Larteguy, perhaps explaining his appeal to soldier-readers.)

We've been at war for nearly nine years, and we've yet to create a single popular military hero. How many Americans have heard of Mike Monsoor or Doug Zembiec? They served and died in Iraq in manners that would have brought them national reverence in any other era. But soldiers only make the news today for negative reasons. The end of McChrystal's career is the perfect example (as with Bigeard, the McChrystal obituaries will be dominated someday not by the glory of his record, but by the controversy surrounding the end of his tenure in Afghanistan). While his resignation was made necessary by the intemperance of much of the material in the infamous *Rolling Stone* article, he is, nonetheless, possessed of the sort of combat record that makes us all hold our manhood cheap. Yet, in the wake of the article's publication, his service and that of those under his command was widely impugned in the press.

In his retirement remarks, McChrystal noted:

> With my resignation, I left a mission I feel strongly about. I ended a career I loved that began over 38 years ago. And I left unfulfilled commitments I made to many comrades in the fight, commitments I hold sacred. My service did not end as I would have wished, and there are misperceptions about the loyalty and service of some dedicated professionals that will likely take some time but I believe will be corrected.

McChrystal was concerned only for those he led and who must continue the fight. He finished nearly four decades of honorable service with the words:

> If I had it to do over again, I'd do some things in my career differently but not many. I believed in people, and I still believe in them. I trusted and I still trust. I cared and I still care. I wouldn't have had it any other way. Winston Churchill said we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. To the young leaders of today and tomorrow, it's a great life.

Our most recent presidents have known nothing of that great life having nothing in the way of war records,

which were once a prerequisite for the highest executive power. Men like McChrystal and Petraeus do the bidding of men like Bush and Obama, but can there be any doubt as to where the honor in the relationship lies? (This is one of the underlying currents in the *Rolling Stone* piece that led to McChrystal's resignation.) Just consider the fate of Stockdale. To a small percentage of Americans, he is a hero of incomparable stature; to the rest, because of an ill-fated few weeks on a presidential ticket with Ross Perot, he is the butt of late-night comedians' jokes.

Our warriors today are drawn from a small segment of a large society—geographically and economically distinct. The war is an abstraction in our big cities, and large percentages of Americans know no one fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan. While it's impossible to imagine the U.S. officer corps revolting in the manner of the French in Algeria—our national traditions are far too different, and we have none of France's lengthy history of generals refounding the republic—it's nonetheless worth pondering that we have set up the conditions for such a revolt. The military we developed to fight Soviet troops in Europe is, moreover, deeply unsuited to the post-Cold War world. But Mother Army resists change, and the difficulties have played out in public during nearly a decade of hard warring. Like France in Indochina and Algeria, we have been changeable in our political goals while asking immense efforts of our combat troops. Efforts that have not always been supported back home.

'They Sacrificed Themselves for Liberty': A poster honoring the French soldiers who fought at Dien Bien Phu

It's a truism that conventional armies cannot win revolutionary wars—that for all their resources and firepower, they will be defeated by guerrilla insurgencies. This lesson of Vietnam is rarely questioned, but it is false. Under Johnson and Westmoreland we lost a war the establishment said we were winning. Under Abrams and Nixon we won one they said we were losing. The Vietnam war tells us a lot more about American government and popular perception than it does the quest for a victory of arms. Conventional armies can easily defeat revolutionary ones if they adapt to their means and methods. (We did it in Afghanistan in 2001, for instance.) Our armies lose, though, because our governments are incapable of pursuing victory in revolutionary war—which requires the methods that built the great colonial empires and are no longer palatable to the society that our wealth and relativism have created. What the military can accomplish must be backed by political certainty and national commitment.

The Viet-Minh were successful on both the battlefield and in Paris and Geneva because their leadership was ruthless and unwavering. The French paras were told by the politicians to win the Battle of Algiers by any means. Against omnipresent urban terror, they acted swiftly and brutally, torturing those they captured and using the information gleaned to capture and torture the next. Those responsible for acts of terror were executed as soon as their usefulness was finished. It wasn't long before the paras reached the top of the pyramid. Horrible methods, illegal, but they restored peace to a large city. The soldiers were condemned by their own country, and the war ended to suit politicians. Such things are worth pondering as we fight a difficult war in Afghanistan and simultaneously search for the exit. As George Orwell noted: "The quickest way of ending a war is to lose it."

In victory or defeat, the soldier never forgets what was sacrificed. Marcel Bigeard's final wish was that his ashes be scattered at Dien Bien Phu where he might lie for all time with his "fallen comrades." The Vietnamese government rejected his request for fear of "setting a precedent." ♦

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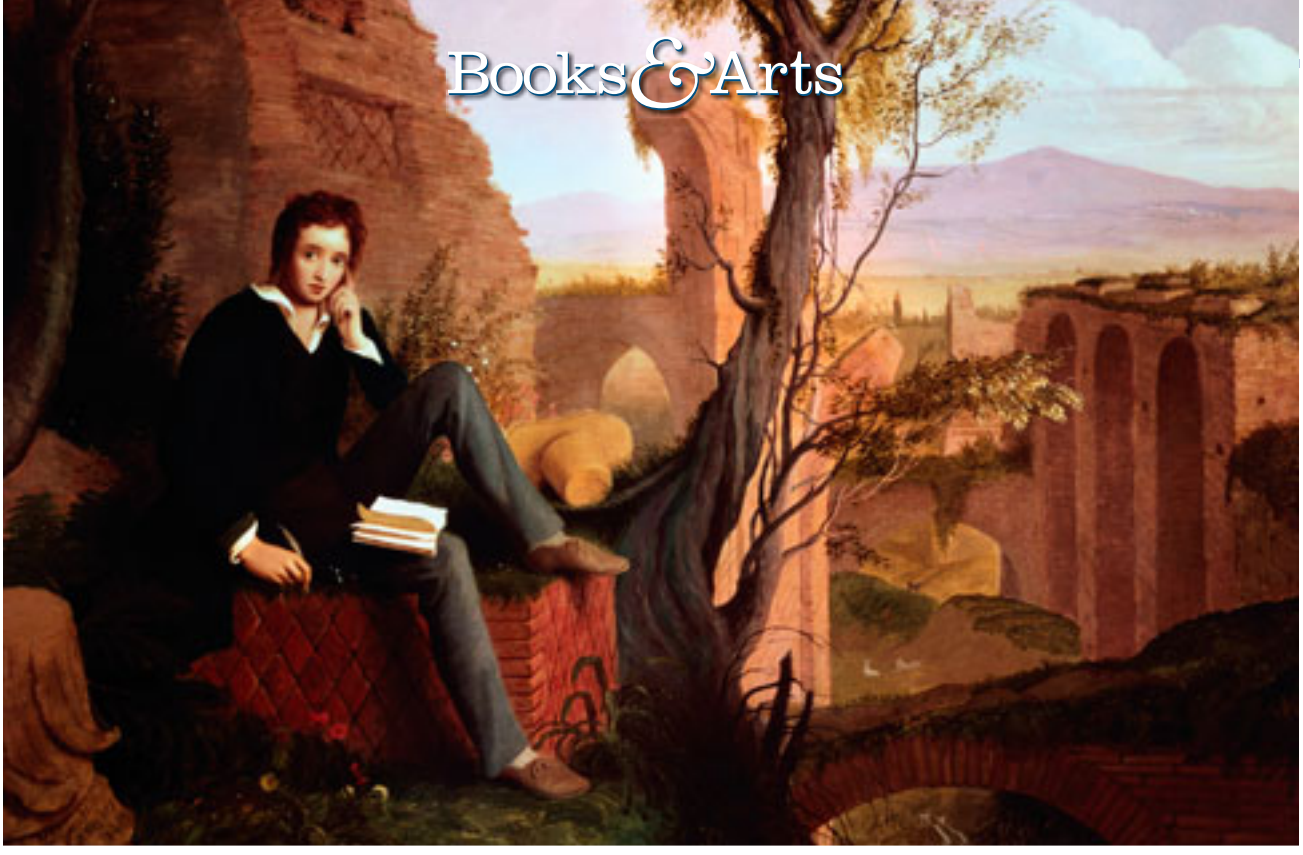

'Shelley in the Baths of Caracalla' (1845) by Joseph Severn

Young Poets in Love

The romance of the Romantics

BY SARA LODGE

All of us, at some time in our lives, have wanted to be part of a brilliant circle, a club of vivacious and talented people whose conversation is electric, whose parties are unforgettable, whose visionary schemes conjure new possibilities for living. To be part of such a coterie is to rise to the challenge of producing one's best ideas, to look through a telescope and share the excitement of viewing a new land—The Future—that will, whether in its main thoroughfares or on its wilder margins, bear one's own name. Of course, like fairy rings, such circles never last. Their members quarrel, or marry. Subunits form and disperse. People age and suffer: Their waistlines expand and their optimism contracts. The sparkling circle becomes a ring of memory, something lost whose magic lies in its irrecoverable energy.

Young Romantics
The Tangled Lives of English Poetry's Greatest Generation
by Daisy Hay
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 384 pp., $27.50

The group that formed around the Romantic writers Leigh Hunt, John Keats, Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and Lord Byron is the epitome of all brilliant circles, a ring—or rather a series of interconnected rings—that has continued to exert such a powerful hold over our collective imagination that it seems we will always be trying to recapture it. Here, Daisy Hay retells the story of how these authors met, inspired, and infuriated one another, loved, lost, and labored to create not only works of genius but also a new kind of society—an experiment that began with their own lifestyles but extended to a radically imagined, less rule-bound, more democratic and uncensored state, the kind of state that Britain in the early 19th century, governed by a bloated and weak regent, and tyrannized by a repressive and corrupt legislature, emphatically was not.

Hay stresses the importance of the group dynamic to the creation of second-generation Romantic writing. Once there was a tendency to view Byron, Keats, and Shelley as solitary stars; over the last 20 years, academic studies have placed a contrary emphasis on the intellectual constellations within which these authors moved and on sociability itself as a form of political resistance to an establishment that often condemned its rebels to actual and virtual forms of imprisonment, isolation, and exclusion. Hay adopts the insights developed by

GUSTAVO TOMSICH / CORBIS

Sara Lodge, a senior lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews, is the author of Thomas Hood and Nineteenth-Century Poetry: Work, Play, and Politics.

scholars such as Jeffrey Cox, Nicholas Roe, and Greg Kucich, transmitting for a lay audience a narrative of friendship, collaboration, and creative disagreement, in which the links in the chain that connects the Romantic circle are the main point of the story.

Thus she begins with Leigh Hunt and his imprisonment in the Surrey Gaol. Hunt was a campaigning journalist and poet, the son of a loyalist refugee from Philadelphia, who began with his brother John a weekly London journal, *The Examiner*, that dared to speak truth to power. While establishment newspapers cooed about the appointment of the future George IV (fat, fifty, and financially feckless) as prince regent, *The Examiner* coolly noted that George was "a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in debt and disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties . . . a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity." All of this was indisputably true. But in 1812 it was political suicide to say so. *The Examiner* had already survived three government-sponsored libel suits; this time Lord Ellenborough was determined that the Hunts were going down. A hand-picked jury condemned both brothers to two years' imprisonment in separate jails.

Remarkably, however, the blow intended to kick *The Examiner* to kingdom come made the Hunts into heroes. Leigh Hunt covered his rooms in Surrey Gaol with wallpaper depicting rose trellises; he imported busts of poets, bookcases, and a piano. He planted a miniature garden. He thumbed his nose at authority by turning his cell into a bohemian salon—and in it he wrote and entertained distinguished visitors from the literary world. *The Examiner* continued to appear every week of the Hunts' two-year incarceration.

One of Hunt's visitors was Lord Byron, then in his early twenties and caught in the trammels of a miserable marriage and impossible love affair with his half-sister Augusta. Another of his admirers was the 20-year-old Percy Bysshe Shelley, a radical antimonarchist who had just been expelled from Oxford for publishing a pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*, and who impulsively promised £20 to begin a subscription for Hunt's support. When Hunt was eventually released, an apothecary's apprentice, the young John Keats, would write a sonnet to celebrate the event. It was Hunt, then, who was initially responsible for drawing into his ambit and his magazine a number of young antiestablishment voices, who would outgrow and outshine him. But the seeds of those friendships were planted in Hunt's ironic, rose-tinted prison cell.

In the 19th century, prisoners like Hunt could live with their family in jail. Hunt was attended by his wife, Marianne, and their two children. When the elder child became sick, however, and Marianne took them to healthier quarters, Hunt was joined by his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Kent, who became his housekeeper and helped him to host literary parties. Although there is no evidence of an affair, the fact that Hunt lived so intimately with his "sister" would become part of the heap of insulting insinuations about Hunt and his "lascivious" and "vulgar" poetics leveled by the reactionary press.

'But for Missolonghi': Byron imagined in old age by Max Beerbohm

Daisy Hay is particularly interested in the unacknowledged importance of sisters in the Romantic circle. Bess Kent was a complex character, probably manic-depressive: A sensitive writer herself, she enjoyed a late and well-deserved success with her *Flora Domestica*, an account of flowers that might be grown in pots and gardens, which is scattered with erudite botanical quotation from Romantic poetry. But her life as second female fiddle in the Hunt household, while it offered opportunities to move in exalted artistic circles, also demanded terrible self-control. A spinster, the object of gossip, she unsuccessfully attempted suicide-by-drowning in Hampstead ponds in 1817—a cry for help that some of the male members of Hunt's literati were sufficiently callous to find amusing.

As Hay's story makes clear, women bore much of the emotional cost of the great Romantic experiment in living outside convention. Percy Bysshe Shelley, an odd, pale, thin, high-voiced sprite of a man who could charm women away with him like the king of the fairies, shares center stage here with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Claire Claremont, the two remarkable teenage stepsisters with whom he ran off to France and Italy in 1814, an elopement that would change the course of literary history. Shelley was married, so Mary became his mistress until the suicide of Shelley's pitiable first wife, Harriet, allowed their union to be legitimized. Meanwhile, Claire, although she did not (or did she?) ever share Shelley's bed, also put herself beyond the social pale when she entered Shelley's Dover-bound carriage. There could be no going back to the parental hearth. Claire became part of the Shelley ménage and, in a further act of courage and recklessness, offered herself to Byron. Byron accepted, but quickly became bored, and one of the most poignant and terrible episodes of these years is Claire, heartbroken, ceding her infant daughter Allegra to Byron—fathers had custody in those days—who denied Claire visiting rights and farmed the child out to an Italian convent, where she died, aged five.

It was Claire's negotiations with Byron that took the Shelleys back to Italy and led to encounters between Percy and Mary Shelley and Byron that would be formative for each of these writers. Hay reminds us that most of the Romantic texts we continue to study (and many we don't) had their genesis in shared discus-

sions, readings, manuscript copying, translations, and competitions. We see, for example, Byron offering edits on Hunt's poem *The Story of Rimini*, a retelling of Dante's tale of Paolo's illicit romance with his sister-in-law Francesca, and note that Byron in 1815 was also working on a poem, *Parisina*, about an incestuous union. We see Shelley exploring, in Julian and Maddalo, his relationship with Byron and the limits of "friendship as a vehicle for philosophical enlightenment." We also see Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a meditation on the essential value of fraternity to preserve the creative spirit from fatal solipsism.

There is little in *Young Romantics* that is strictly new or that will come as a surprise to anyone already familiar with the biographies of its principal actors. The sweep of the volume, which chiefly covers the period 1813-24, does not allow for detailed discussion of the literary works these writers produced: If you don't already have a sense of what Keats's or Shelley's poetry is like, and why it matters, you will not make close acquaintance with it here. Indeed, Keats, after he breaks with Hunt, tends to fall off the map. There is some danger, then, that *Young Romantics* is insufficiently basic to brief the complete amateur and too light to satisfy the Romanticist.

Occasionally, I was also moved to wonder whether there has always been an element of scholarly soap opera to this story: an interest that claims to be intellectual and historical, but is at bottom pruriently personal. Did Claire really sleep with Shelley? Who were the parents of the foundling Elena Shelley, whom the Shelley party abandoned at Naples? And can the greatness of *Don Juan* and *The Triumph of Life* ever justify Byron and Shelley's careless fatherhood, which cost several children their lives?

The story of *Young Romantics* is, however, indubitably a ripping yarn, and Daisy Hay tells it with both page-turning skill and scholarly care. She evokes characters well: You can feel Shelley's mercurial, unstable energy; Mary's cold exterior and livid inner life; Hunt's odd combination of neediness and generosity, arrogance and warmth. Hay is good at weighing blame, looking squarely at situations from different viewpoints. She has a witty and shrewd turn of phrase, particularly when evoking the misperceptions and dramatic ironies that frequently characterize relations between her leads.

The minor characters in the drama also receive pleasing credit. Thus, we make more than passing acquaintance with Vincent Novello, the musician, publisher, and founder of the London Philharmonic Society, whose democratic views on accessible music-making accorded with Hunt's; with Thomas Love Peacock, the classicist and satirist who, in *Nightmare Abbey*, produced a loving spoof of the Shelley ménage; and with Edward Trelawny, a piratical fantasist who egged on Shelley and Byron to boyish escapades with boats and guns that played a part in both men's ends.

If, then, you want to know how the different territories of Hunt, Byron, the Shelleys, and their friends fit together, this book will complete the jigsaw that connects them. It is a good vacation read, both racy and intelligent. But if you are anything like me, when Shelley's boat capsizes in 1822 in the Bay of Lerici, you will feel both a terrible literary and emotional loss and experience a pang of relief, as when a whirlwind subsides. Brilliant circles are both irresistible and unbearable. That is why we need to keep conjuring them before consigning them, and their dangerous spell, back to the deep. ♦

B&A

Mysteries of Israel

Four unexpected thrillers from the Jewish state.

BY ABBY WISSE SCHACHTER

Jonathan Marcus, the hottie hero of Daniel Levin's religio-thriller *The Last Ember* (2009), is back in Rome seven years after a tragedy cut short what was supposed to be his brilliant archaeological career. A high powered New York law firm has jetted Marcus, a former star classics student and Rome prize-winner, to the Italian capital to defend a client accused of stealing antiquities. The case brings Marcus face to face with his old flame Dr. Emili Travia, and lands him deep inside a complicated and dangerous thrill ride in this cross between *Indiana Jones* and *The Da Vinci Code.*

Marcus and Travia race around, but mostly underneath, Rome and Jerusalem trying to piece together a 2,000-year-old mystery. What really happened to the eight-foot solid gold Menorah that supposedly stood in the Holy of Holies of the second ancient Jewish temple destroyed in 70 A.D., the menorah so famously depicted on the Arch of Titus? Was Flavius Josephus really the most famous Jewish turncoat, or some kind of double agent? What "mistake" was Emperor Titus referring to on his deathbed?

First-time novelist Levin does a great job of weaving together fast-paced action sequences with a mass of historical detail. But rather than keep his story planted in 70 A.D., he makes his tale relevant to present day controversies. "Archaeology is politics," one character avers. Levin's heroes risk their lives, not to solve an academic puzzle but to thwart

The Last Ember
by Daniel Levin
Riverhead, 480 pp., $16

The Last Secret of the Temple
by Paul Sussman
Atlantic, 560 pp., $24

The Hidden Scroll
An Archaeological Adventure
by Avraham Anouchi
Xlibris, 376 pp., $19.99

The Menorah Men
by Lionel Davidson

Abby Wisse Schachter, an associate editor at the New York Post.

an ideologically motivated effort to erase what Levin calls the "Judeo-Christian past." As the novel's villain Salah ad-Din exclaims, "Let other people talk nonsense about religion and mythology . . . who controls the past controls the future."

Indeed, recent news reports support Levin's thesis. Concerns have been mounting about excavations under the al-Aqsa Mosque, which was built over the destroyed Jewish temple, while at the same time denials of Jerusalem's centrality to Jews are commonly repeated among Palestinian leaders. Sheikh Tayseer Rajab Tamimi, chief Islamic judge of the Palestinian Authority, declared last year that Jerusalem is solely "an Arab and Islamic city and it has always been so." His comments followed those by Shamekh Alawneh, a lecturer in modern history at al Quds University, who on a Palestinian Authority TV program said that Jews invented their connection to Jerusalem.

"It has no historical roots," he said, and opined that the Jews are engaging in "an attack on history, theft of culture, falsification of facts, erasure of the truth, and Judaization of the place." Just the opposite is, in fact, happening; and *The Last Ember*, though a fantasy, does a good job of highlighting the urgency of the problem.

Levin's book isn't the only example of this type of religious/archaeological thriller-with-a-message. It also isn't the only recent story obsessed with supposedly uncovering what happened to the Menorah that used to stand in the Jewish temple sacked by the Romans. Whereas Levin imagines that Josephus was the one who helped to save the Menorah by secreting it out of Jerusalem, Paul Sussman, in *The Last Secret of the Temple* (2007), has the Menorah under the protection of generation after generation of Jewish caretakers. Sussman's story also has a strong message, but it is less about the politics and power of archaeology and more about the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Sussman's book weaves together four stories: one about a shattered Jerusalem police officer who lost his faith because he lost his fiancée; an Egyptian detective who, in his search to uncover the truth about Nazis who received shelter in Egypt after the war, ends up fighting his anti-Semitic instincts; a Palestinian journalist with a secret and a serious daddy fixation; and finally a crazy, right-wing Jewish zealot who spends some of his time leading similarly minded Israelis to take over Arab homes in Jerusalem's Old City.

Like Levin, Sussman is trying to make an overarching political statement. Sussman's message is about the hopes for peace between Palestinians and Israelis. I'm sure that if asked, Sussman would say he is pro-peace and that, as such, his overinflated critique of Israeli motivations is meant to dramatize the depth of the conflict. But the plain fact is that the "bad guys" here are either Nazis or right-wing Jews, and of the "good guys" it is the Egyptian detective for whom one has the greatest sympathy.

As with Levin's novel, the search for the Menorah is at the heart of Sussman's story, with more than one character arguing like the terrorist in *The Last Ember* that he who controls the past controls the future. What Sussman gets wrong, however, is overestimating the importance of relics for Jews. He has set up a scenario where the relic serves to justify the Jewish claim to the land of Israel and, therefore, to the existence of the modern state of Israel. But it cannot be revealed because Jews are not ready for the truth. The Menorah, as Sussman has it, is the source of God's light and revelation, and its presence in the world must be earned by righteousness. Sussman attempts to explain the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis and lays much of the blame at Israel's feet, so he puts the case against revealing the Menorah in the mouth of his Israeli hero: "It's just too . . . powerful. Too special. If it was to go back [to Jerusalem] . . . I just don't think we're ready for it. Things are complicated enough as they are."

But devotion or belief in Judaism doesn't revolve around icons and relics, such as the Menorah. Judaism is based on the word, not an object. And placing so much importance on the actual discovery of the Menorah is one of the reasons Sussman's book is less successful than Levin's—though it is certainly better written.

Like Sussman, Avraham Anouchi's *The Hidden Scroll* (2009) is caught up in Nazis and archaeology, and like Levin's *The Last Ember*, Anouchi is also concerned with recent attempts to undermine the legitimacy of Israel by undermining the archaeological evidence of the biblical land of Israel. Anouchi's story happens on dual tracks: One tells of an Israeli's search for an ancient scroll from the time of the Second Temple and the Maccabean revolt; the other is of the fictional organization Bismillah, founded in 1935 by the mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, for the purposes of waging an ideological war to delegitimize Israel. One of Bismillah's main covert operations is to try and acquire archaeological evidence of the Jewish claim to Israel, in order to destroy it.

Anouchi's novel is the least professionally written, which doesn't make the plot easier to swallow. And he has let his support for Israel cloud his creative impulses. His mufti is a virtual Nazi, and his organization is going to replicate what the Nazis are trying to do in Europe.

On the other hand, a recent op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* provided evidence that Anouchi wasn't exaggerating much. As Paul Berman explained it, the mufti had a very close relationship with the Nazis, one that continues to influence the fight against Israel and the West today.

> "Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history and religion," said the Mufti on Radio Berlin in 1944. And the Mufti's rhetoric goes on echoing today in major Islamist manifestos such as the Hamas charter and in the popular television oratory of Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a revered scholar. . . . "Oh Allah, count their numbers, and kill them, down to the very last one."

Finally, for great storytelling and writing the best of these novels by far is Lionel Davidson's *The Menorah Men* (1966). In this book we are once again dealing with scrolls and the ancient Menorah that stood in the Jewish Temple until 70 A.D. The story focuses on

a non-Jewish British archaeologist who is enlisted to help an Israeli colleague come to the Holy Land to locate a scroll that accurately points to the location of the menorah. Once again, there is a race to find the scroll before competing Arab archaeologists can find it, and once again it takes amazing powers of deduction and reason for our hero to uncover the mystery.

Beyond the basic plot, however, there is a huge chasm that separates *The Menorah Men* from the others in this genre. First, Davidson's story is much less concerned with actually locating the Menorah. When it turns out that modernity and the politics of a new country trump actually digging up the relic, our protagonist is disappointed—but he hasn't failed. He has taken his search as far as it can go, and ultimately it matters less that the treasure is uncovered than whether he knows its fate.

Whereas the more recent novels all are arguing for the legitimacy of Israel's existence, Davidson published his novel in 1966, when Israel's place in the family of nations was a given. Davidson describes a poor country and a country that has a variety of problems, but he isn't questioning whether Israel should exist. Levin, Sussman, and Anouchi, writing in the first decade of the 21st century, and six decades after the modern Jewish state was founded, are, from a variety of angles, arguing for Israel.

Shouldn't it have been the other way around? It would make more sense if the book written less than 20 years after Israel's founding were more attentive to the question of her legitimacy, while the novels written a half-century later accepted the state's existence without question. And yet, the opposite is the case. Sadly, the more recent novels suggest this: While the country may have succeeded beyond anyone's wildest imaginings, the dream of "normalization"—that the creation of Israel would result in the full and free acceptance of the Jewish state as a state like any other—has been eroded even to the point where those who write thrillers are turning their fiction into a forum for defending her against the charge of illegitimacy. ♦

B&A

Commie Dearest

The tangled web of the KGB and the Eitingon clan.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Freud and his coterie (1922). Max Eitingon, standing second from right.

The history of Soviet communism resembles a hall of mirrors. The juxtaposition of the real horrors of the gulag and the common entertainment of the circus and funhouse may seem provocative, but it's appropriate. You have to look into Communist history knowing that much is distorted, much is hidden. If you have a past of active involvement with communism—as I confess to have had—you will perceive personalities in its chronicles both familiar and unexpectedly strange. Yet the mirrors convey truth, even when their images are deformed and shocking. The dictators of Communist Russia and, especially, the heads of its domestic and foreign spy services, understood this convoluted reality, and exploited it to their maximum advantage. They mastered the art of disinformation.

The Eitingons
A Twentieth-Century Story
by Mary-Kay Wilmers
Verso, 496 pp., $34.95

That sense of a hall of mirrors came into full play for me when I learned that a certain Mary-Kay Wilmers had published *The Eitingons*.

You could say that the story of this book begins with a 1988 article I wrote for the *New York Times Book Review* entitled "Intellectuals and Assassins: Annals of Stalin's Killerati." In it I described how, in the latter half of the 1930s, a gang of killers appeared in Western Europe whose accumulated crimes—considering their impact on history—are perhaps unequaled in the annals of homicide. They were agents of the Soviet secret police—then called the NKVD, later the KGB—operating in a special

IMAGNO / GETTY IMAGES

Stephen Schwartz, a frequent contributor, is the author, most recently, of The Other Islam: Sufism and the Road to Global Harmony.

"mobile unit" dedicated to terrorism.

The unit's existence became known through a series of sensational incidents almost 75 years ago, including the 1937 assassination in Switzerland of Ignacy Poretsky-Reiss, a KGB defector, and the kidnapping from the Paris streets of an anti-Communist White Russian general, Yevgeni Karlovich Miller, only weeks after Reiss's death. In 1940, a leading member of the terror group, Soviet secret police general Naum Eitingon—known as "Leonid" Eitingon and generally as "Tom" in secret police communications—directed the assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico. The unit's activities involved a remarkable assortment of individuals, none of whom resemble the typical denizen of crime stories. Many of the key figures were intellectuals—poets, artists, and psychiatrists—and they were talent-spotters, agents of influence, and sleepers.

Probably the most just comment on the series of killings in which Poretsky-Reiss and Miller were victims was delivered in 1999, when Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin wrote, in the *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, that "many otherwise admirable studies of the Stalin era fail to mention the relentless secret pursuit of 'enemies of the people' in Western Europe." Known agents in the hunting and slaying by the special unit included another anti-Communist White Russian general, Nikolai Skoblin, his wife Nadyezhda Plevitskaya, a famous folk singer, and Sergei Efron, husband of the poet Marina Tsvetaeva.

But John J. Dziak, a historian who worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency, called attention to an incredible chapter in this history—largely forgotten before him, although notorious when it transpired. In *Chekisty: A History of the KGB* (the subject of my *Times* review), Dziak reported that one of the group's key agents in the kidnapping of General Miller was a close personal associate of Sigmund Freud and pillar of the psychoanalytic movement, Dr. Max Eitingon, a relative of the aforementioned General Naum Eitingon.

Early in 1937 Ignacy Poretsky-Reiss defected from the KGB and went underground. He was tracked down near Lausanne and assassinated on September 4, 1937. An accomplice of the murderers was caught by Swiss police, and the conspiracy began to unravel. On September 22, news of the kidnapping of General Miller swept Paris. He had left a letter behind, stating that he was to meet with General Skoblin. Working with the Swiss, the French police discovered that someone named Vadim Kondratiev, complicit in the murder of Reiss, was a subordinate and friend of Skoblin. Skoblin disappeared immediately. His wife Plevitskaya was arrested and sentenced by a French court for complicity in the kidnapping of Miller. She died in a French prison during World War II, and it was through the Skoblin-Plevitskaya case that the revelations about Freud's colleague, Max Eitingon, were made.

In his book Dziak concluded that Eitingon had recruited Skoblin and Plevitskaya into the special unit, and at her trial, Plevitskaya described Eitingon as her financial angel. You would think that the shy, retiring Eitingon, the only member of the Freud inner circle never to have written extensively for the analytical public, would have done his best to steer clear of the Plevitskaya proceeding, the most sensational trial of its time in France. But in a series of strange contretemps, Eitingon attempted to assist Plevitskaya. He did not, however, go to Paris himself; even more peculiarly, he wrote evasive letters to the dying Freud in which he sought to dismiss "the affair of the Russian singer" as an expression of petit bourgeois French stupidity.

The key to the Eitingon affair lies in the source of his income—as well as that of the psychoanalytic movement. Max Eitingon lived off the profits of a fur company, the Eitingon-Schild, which had been established in Russia long before the Bolshevik Revolution and which maintained branches throughout Europe and America. After 1917, Eitingon-Schild was granted a monopoly for the sale of Russian furs abroad, a major source of hard currency for the Soviet regime. Max Eitingon used his share of the family wealth to pay for the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute and the official publishing house of the Freudian movement. Under the Soviets, this money came through Moscow's official hands as well.

In any event, Eitingon had been under suspicion for a long time before the Miller kidnapping. Indeed, the first story published in English by the young Russian émigré Vladimir Nabokov, "The Assistant Producer," was a recounting of the Skoblin-Plevitskaya affair, in which Eitingon appears (under a pseudonym) as a sinister presence. His relative Naum Eitingon was considered the KGB's outstanding expert in operations against Russian anti-Communist exiles, as well as Trotskyists, and Moscow used the family fur business as a cover for clandestine operations.

Until Western historians are granted full and unrestricted access to Soviet biographical information on him, much about Naum Eitingon will remain unconfirmed. Even the relationship between him and Max cannot be fully documented. In 1988 I believed they were brothers, but came to perceive that they were more likely cousins, or uncle (Max) and nephew (Naum). In her account, Wilmers also avers that the family link existed but cannot be clarified. We will probably never know, in full, how Dr. Max Eitingon, the pioneering psychoanalyst, felt about his and his relative's KGB activities.

If there is a moral to be drawn from all this, it must be something along the following lines: When Stalin's men sought agents for their most depraved and criminal tasks, they found them among not only the brutes of the underworld but also sensitive, cultivated people in the highest levels of intellectual society who became conspirators and spies.

The publication of my article caused something of an uproar. It was described by the historians of communism Theodore Draper and Walter Laqueur (borrowing the acronym popularized by Conor Cruise O'Brien) as GUBU: "grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre, unprecedented." I am pleased

to report that the preeminent investigator of Stalin's criminality, Robert Conquest, sided with me, as did a number of Russian historians. The disappearance of Skoblin was turned into a feature film, *Triple Agent* (2004), by the French director Eric Rohmer.

Now comes Mary-Kay Wilmers, editor of the *London Review of Books*, to disclose her membership in the Eitingon family, and her desire to redeem it. Wilmers admits that every detail in my now 22-year-old article bearing on Max and Naum Eitingon is correct—with the exception of their specific positions in the Eitingon family tree, although she notes that it would not have been unusual for a cousin to have been described as a "brother" in Russia. Otherwise, the basic facts are now stipulated by her: Skoblin and Plevitskaya were Stalinist spies, as everybody in Paris said at the time; Max Eitingon's relationship with them was suspect, at the very least, as was also widely known; and the Eitingon clan included the Moscow assassin Naum Eitingon no less than fur merchants and colleagues of Sigmund Freud. As if carried away by the narcissism of it all—disoriented by the hall of mirrors, you might say—Mary-Kay Wilmers has added more evidence against her relatives than I presented.

All of which would be welcome, except that she still holds to the GUBU theory of my work. She writes that she began her research "reasonably certain of Max's innocence" but "Now I'm more perplexed." On Draper, she has mellowed to the point where she is "reasonably confident that, had Theodore Draper known as much about Max as it's possible to know now, he would have been less sure of his ground. . . . The mystery remains and I don't see how it can go away." But Wilmers has also excised from her narrative the central issue of the original episodes: the recruitment of intellectuals as murderers in Stalin's Western raids. She has also chosen to ignore the solidarity with my position expressed by Conquest. I am castigated for "paranoid invective."

Wilmers has chosen to flatter Naum Eitingon, her KGB family elder, and draws on confidences extended to her by Zoya Zarubina, a KGB functionary and stepdaughter of the KGB general Eitingon, and the offspring of another fearsome agent, Vasily Zarubin, who served as a head of Russian espionage in the United States. Zarubin was involved in the 1940 Katyn Forest massacre of Polish military officers by Stalin's agents. Wilmers also has her share of eccentric views. She writes that a street in Leipzig had been named for one of the Eitingons but had been renamed during the Third Reich to honor Hitler. Her reaction to this development is that she is "pleased at the idea of Eitingonstrasse becoming Adolf-Hitler-Strasse—it would . . . give more oomph to my story."

In every one of the several cases of Soviet-directed "individual terror" about which I have written, before and since the Eitingon debate, and notwithstanding the continuing impenetrability of numerous Russian archives, much information has either been newly examined or released since the end of the Soviet regime. We now know a great deal more than was ever suspected about Moscow's interest in penetrating and manipulating intellectual circles—a habit Russian spies have not given up. So I am happy to remain in the company of those who truly understood the Skoblin-Eitingon-Tsvetaeva-Efron cases, such as Vladimir Nabokov, Robert Conquest, and even Eric Rohmer. And I, too, have some people whose honor I will defend: the victims of the Soviet army of assassins, and especially the young Western intellectuals who were seduced and betrayed, and who in many instances paid for their naïveté with their lives. ♦

Andrew Cusack blogs at andrewcusack.com.

B&A

Secret Splendor

Pictures from the Counter-Reformation in Protestant Holland. BY ANDREW CUSACK

This book is the first major overview and exploration of the art of the clandestine Roman Catholic churches in the Netherlands. It is not a study of paintings so much as a history in which art is like the evidence in a detective story, or perhaps even the characters in a play. It might seem extraordinary that there was a place for large-scale Catholic art during the Dutch Republic: Pre-Reformation churches had been confiscated and were being used for Calvinist services, while priests offered the Mass secretly in makeshift accommodations. Eventually a bargain between Dutch Catholics and the civil authorities emerged, trading Catholic nonprovocation in exchange for private toleration of the practice of the faith. Catholics began to purchase properties which, for all outward appearances, maintained the look of ordinary residences but whose interiors were transformed into resplendent chapels and churches.

Clandestine Splendor
Paintings for the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic
by Xander van Eck
Waanders, 368 pp., $100

Xander van Eck provides verbal portraits (often accompanied by contemporaneous painted ones) of several of the important clerics of the Dutch church during this period: Sasbout Vosmeer, the Delft priest influenced by St. Charles Borromeo; Philippus Rovenus, the vicar-apostolic who placed greater emphasis on clandestine parishes having specially dedicated churches, even while they kept an outward unecclesiastical appearance; and Leonardus Marius, the

priest who promoted devotion to the 14th-century Eucharistic "Miracle of Amsterdam." Marius was of such prominence that, after his death, shopkeepers rented out places on their awnings for punters to view his funeral procession. Van Eck includes a handful of amusing asides, such as the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Netherlands as a result of their constant discord with the secular clergy. Mass continued to be offered at the Jesuit church of De Krijtberg in Amsterdam "in the profoundest secrecy"—thus creating a clandestine church within a clandestine church!

The role of the clergy in sustaining the Dutch Church is unsurprising, but it is instructive to learn how instrumental laity were to keeping alive the light of Catholic faith in the Netherlands at the time. Clandestine churches relied on the generosity of Catholic families. Prominent families often provided their own kin as consecrated virgins who brought large dowries into the church, or as priests with suitable inheritances to maintain or endow clandestine parishes. The clandestine church of 't Hart in Amsterdam, built by the merchant Jan Hartman for his son studying for the priesthood, is still open today as the Amstelkring Museum and Chapel of "Our Lord in the Attic."

While van Eck explores the extent to which Dutch art from the period followed European norms, an emphasis on the particularity of the art of the clandestine church is to be expected. The sheer volume of art produced during this period—for just three Amsterdam churches alone there were 16 altarpieces—is partly explained by the phenomenon of "rotating altarpieces." The paintings above the altar would be changed according to the feast or season—a practice sometimes seen in Flanders or parts of Germany but never nearly so widespread as in the Netherlands proper.

Constrained as clandestine churches were on the narrow plots typical of Dutch cities, there was no room for side chapels that might include the large funerary monuments prominent families would construct. This left altarpieces as the most convenient way for munificent Catholics to provide art for their churches: Rotating the altarpieces provided a handy way of displaying numerous commissions rather than just the donation of whoever had been generous most recently, and the themes of these commissions tended to vary in appropriateness to different feasts and seasons.

Some found fault with this method: Jean-Baptiste Descamps, visiting Antwerp in 1769, complained that the most interesting altarpieces were not permanently displayed and were more likely to be damaged in the process of being moved so often.

While the accomplishment and ingenuity of Dutch Catholics in keeping their faith during the Republic was striking, the ill-defined administrative structure of the persecuted church allowed conflicts between clerics to thrive, and doctrinal disputes emerged and festered. The disputes over Jansenism that swept over France and the Netherlands, for example, only exacerbated the administrative problems of the clandestine church. Like their Calvinist compatriots, the Jansenists tended to frown on indulgences, the veneration of saints, recital of the rosary, and private acts of worship, putting greater emphasis on the Scriptures and a more rigorous asceticism. As van Eck points out, this difference in emphasis was not exclusive to the Jansenists, but their novelty (and their heresy) was in preaching the exclusivity of their approach above all others.

Numerous vicars-apostolic had written to Rome arguing for the re-establishment of the episcopacy in the Netherlands to solve the disputes over authority, but their appeals fell on deaf ears. In 1723 a large portion of the Jansenist clergy reinstituted the episcopacy by electing an archbishop of Utrecht from their number—and were subsequently excommunicated, splitting the clandestine church and its clergy in two. (This excommunicated rump united with the opponents of papal infallibility in the following century to form a body that still calls itself the Old Catholic Church.)

When one looks at all this glorious art, not to mention the lives and pious ingenuity of the persecuted, it's difficult not to feel a little poorer, considering the fruits of our churches in an ostensibly free era. Why does the church today commission painters who are either mediocre or trendy—or both? Artists like Hans Laagland and Leonard Porter show that good art—good liturgical art, even—is possible today, but commissions from the church for traditional artists are sadly few. ♦

'The Conversion of Guillaume d'Aquitaine by Bernard de Clairvaux' by Wouter Pietersz (1641)

B&A

Vintage Virginians

The palatable saga of wine in America.

BY SUSIE POWELL CURRIE

My favorite Dilbert cartoon starts with Dilbert trying to impress a date at a fancy restaurant. Holding his goblet aloft, he begins to wax poetically about bouquet, finish, and undertones . . . until the waiter says, "That's your water glass, sir." That's what I feel like saying when I read most articles about wine—not because I think I know more than your average suburbanite staring vacantly at shelves of Chardonnay while trying to pick one, but because I have a sneaking suspicion that the writer doesn't, either. Or if he does, it's unlikely that a rube would get past the pedantry to learn at the master's feet.

The Wild Vine
A Forgotten Grape and the Untold Story of American Wine
by Todd Kliman
Clarkson Potter, 288 pp., $25

Todd Kliman is not that kind of writer. And this debut book is not all about wine. He describes it as "part travelogue, part biography, part memoir, and part history." It's also part mystery, all somehow woven together seamlessly into a story that's hard to put down.

It began at a candlelit dinner party during Hurricane Isabel, the deadly 2003 storm that left hundreds of thousands of homes along the Eastern seaboard without electricity for days. That night, Kliman's host poured a Virginia wine made from what he called the only American grape to produce drinkable wine: the Norton. If you've never heard of it, don't feel too bad; neither had Kliman, and he was an award-winning food writer. But that first taste left an impression. He made a mental note of the bottle's source: Chrysalis Vineyards, near Middleburg, which has the largest single planting of Norton grapes in the world. Later, he tracked down the vineyard's owner, one Jenni McCloud. A self-described "Nortonian," McCloud transmitted her enthusiasm for the obscure grape and served as muse when Kliman set out to unravel the story behind it.

It turned into the story of winemaking in America. Spanning four centuries, the tale hopscotches from Virginia to Missouri to California and back again—with side trips to France thrown in for good measure—and includes all manner of European grapes, nobles, and vignerons (who cultivate the vineyards). Along the way, we meet the 19th-century Richmond physician who created his namesake grape almost by chance; the flamboyant London publisher who judged Norton wine one of the best at two international competitions in the 1870s; a *Gourmet* magazine critic who helped bring it back from the brink more than a century later; Missouri bootleggers who tended the grape during Prohibition; and contemporary Norton evangelists and detractors, among many other memorable characters.

Daniel Norton, on the brink of suicide since his young wife and first child died during the birth, succeeded in solving the dilemma that had baffled all who tackled it, from Jamestown colonists to Thomas Jefferson. In a nutshell:

> The problem with native grapes was that they were a poor match for winemaking. The problem with European grapes was that they were a poor match for American soil and climate. The vines were ill-suited to the heat and humidity of Virginia and unable to adapt to the inevitable diseases and pests that preyed upon them. It ought to have been a mighty lesson learned. But the mistakes were repeated, over and over, for nearly two centuries.

It became nearly an obsession to some. In 1619 the Jamestown burgesses required all households to plant 10 vines a year—"on paine [sic] of death." Later, Jefferson picked up the baton. More than a hobby, his passion for wine translated into more than 20,000 bottles purchased during his eight years as president: In his first term, he spent a third of his income on wine. If you don't associate Jefferson's name with wine, writes Kliman, that's because creating a native varietal is one of his very few failures. Something else I learned: In America, "the Napa before there was really a Napa" was, of all places, Hermann, Missouri. In the 19th century the town was home to a thriving community of German immigrants who quickly discovered that the unforgiving landscape meant that "wine was to be not one among many pursuits, but for all intents and purposes, the one and only."

By the time of the Civil War, Missouri was producing more wine than any other state. The Norton grape had migrated there by a strange twist of fate, and its hardiness appealed to some vintners. Nortons from one Hermann winery captured medals at international wine festivals in Vienna in 1873 and Paris in 1878. Then came Prohibition. Kliman is understandably chagrined to note the catastrophic setbacks to the wine industry when whole vineyards were ripped out and the work of decades vanished.

It might be a stretch, though, to say that "[Prohibition was] nominally a war against drink, [but] the war of the Drys was also indisputably a stand against modernity, against openness, against tolerance, against immigration, against the growing influence of the cities." Or maybe Carrie Nation had seen too many lives and families ruined by drink? Yes, there was mental illness in her family, but her first husband was an alcoholic who died before their daughter was a year old. And while we're quibbling, I would like to have seen more background about one of the characters, a parent of six children who undergoes a sex change. The change, apparently something that had been contemplated for some time, occurred "[after] four decades." Nothing is said about the children—surely still

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young?—or the spouse—ex?—much less what they thought about the solo flight from Florida to Virginia to start a monument to an unknown grape.

Still, part of a writer's job is pruning away elements that aren't essential to the story, and this is a tale of the grape and the people responsible for keeping it alive. One such person is Hermann native Dennis Horton, who bridged the gap between Missouri and Virginia in 1988 when he ordered a shipment of Norton vines from a winery in his hometown to his newly purchased property near Charlottesville. Then he "buried the borrowed roots in the soil that spring, eight acres' worth of Norton—the first planting of the grape in Virginia since Repeal." And so the grape is back where it started. ♦

B&A

The Age of Shatner

From 'Star Trek' to 'the greatest TV star the medium has yet produced.' BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Last year, a man named Justin Halpern started posting the irascible mutterings of his own father on Twitter, followed by the phrase "s— my dad says." Within weeks, a million people were "following" Halpern's Twitter feed, and the publication of a collection of these sayings has been on the bestseller list for weeks now in preparation for the launch of a new CBS sitcom slightly more euphemistically titled *$#*! My Dad Says*.

I have no idea whether the show is good or bad, though it is likely to score huge ratings upon its premiere, since it follows television's second most successful sitcom, *The Big Bang Theory*. What I do know is that the premiere is a landmark cultural moment, because *$#*! My Dad Says* will enshrine its leading actor as the greatest TV star the medium has yet produced.

His name is William Shatner, and stop laughing.

How can I make such a claim about William Shatner, of all people? What of Bill Cosby? Or Lucille Ball? What of James Gandolfini, Jerry Seinfeld, Andy Griffith, even Dick van Dyke? He is not taken seriously as an actor, even though he won two Emmys for his work on the shows *The Practice* and *Boston Legal*. In truth, he's something of a joke, the pitchman for Priceline.com, the fat old guy with a toupee who happily performs numbers from an embarrassing and self-serious rock-folk album he recorded back in the 1960s.

Here's my case. No other television presence has endured longer as a leading performer—across five decades now. He held the spotlight on long-

running shows in radically different genres from 1966 to 1969, from 1982 to 1986, and from 2004 to 2009. He is now bidding for another major hit in 2010, as he pushes 80, his first time as a regular in a half-hour format. They advertised Polaroid on *Star Trek*, Atari on *T.J. Hooker*, the Xbox on *The Practice*, and will be advertising the iPad on *$#*! My Dad Says*. And he was then and is now the draw.

What's even more striking is that no other TV actor has succeeded both in inhabiting and transcending the shadow of his most significant and iconographic role as completely as Shatner has. He will always be James T. Kirk, the captain of the Starship Enterprise, as he was on *Star Trek* from 1966 to 1969 and in a series of seven hugely successful movies based on the series made between 1979 and 1994. But he is also T.J. Hooker, L.A. cop, from the series of the same name that ran from 1982 to 1986; and he is Denny Crane, the wild and occasionally senile powerhouse Boston corporate lawyer on *The Practice* and *Boston Legal*.

From *Star Trek* onward, Shatner has demonstrated that he was an actor of great intensity, no range, and a colossal propensity to overdo. A Canadian Jew, Shatner is a walking contradiction, a kosher ham. But he also has, oddly enough, a sense of humorous modesty. He knows he's a joke, and he's in on it, and people cannot help liking him for that. He decided he would be good-humored and good-natured about poking holes in his own reputation for grandiosity and vanity, and that proved essential to his longevity. He does a glorious comic turn in a winning little 1998 movie called *Free Enterprise* in which he plays an insanely vain version of himself intent on filming a version of *Hamlet* in which he plays all the parts.

He didn't have to wrestle with the intolerable shadow of James T. Kirk, the way most television actors who create famous characters have, and have failed at, because at some point he realized he was a human cartoon no matter what part he played and he was fine with it.

The difference between television stars and movie stars is scale. Movie stars stretch out before us; television stars fit on the dressers in our bedroom. Shatner is a bite-sized hero, who acts larger than life but is comfortable being smaller than life. By embracing his two dimensionality, he transcended it. Plus he made hundreds of millions off Priceline, making him one of the most successful TV pitchmen in history. And for his unique role in unifying broadcast television's real purpose (the selling of commercials) with its purported purpose (making programs), Shatner is the perfect representative and creation of the age of the small screen. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) . . . says he believes it's "a possibility" that there might not actually be any gold in the vaults of Fort Knox or the New York Federal Reserve Bank. **—News item**

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