

just for the causes they have adopted, but for the denominations and creeds they represent. The experiences of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition present many such examples.

Ultimately, Carter warns, the danger is that, as religion “gets into” politics, it becomes no more than politics—and what a fall that is. At worst, in such instances, religion really *does* become the worst kind of hypocrisy, even a mask for demagogues. We recall Santayana’s celebrated definition of fanaticism as redoubling your efforts when you have forgotten your original goal. Carter concludes with a plea never to forget the heart of the matter: “Without renewal, without a retreat from the wilderness and a return to the garden, without more time spent listening to the voice of God . . . without these necessities, religion will be nothing too.”

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The Lewis Gun

by J.O. Tate

Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer

by Paul Edwards

New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 584 pp., \$75.00



Professor Edwards has set himself to a daunting task in taking on Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957). Lewis the painter is a difficult task for many reasons: first, because he attacked the British art establishment early on, trashing Roger

Fry and Bloomsbury and later Kenneth Clark, thereby laying a groundwork of controversy and contempt; second, because his shattered career caused much of his early work to be lost and some of his later work to be less than excellent; and third, on account of the nature of much of that work (sometimes representational, sometimes abstract, but always lacking in obvious appeal and certainly no part of any school except perhaps Lewis’s own Vorticism). Edwards has shown Lewis’s graphic work to have been driven by his obsession with what we may call the modern metaphysical. In his paintings, we hover over Cartesian vortices, as Melville’s Ishmael did. Let me add (as if you could stop me) that Edwards’ treatment of Lewis’s graphic art is the most persuasive and instructive I have ever seen: well worth the price of admission. The comparison here would be with Walter Michel’s authoritative catalogue and Hugh Kenner’s essay in *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (1971) as well as Richard Cork on Vorticism (1976), but Edwards’ analyses seem both superior and needed.

But though that is much, it is not all—far from it. Edwards has also addressed himself to Lewis the writer, of itself a challenging, even treacherous subject, again for a host of reasons, among them (1) that Lewis was (is) the most politically incorrect major author in modern British literature, having explored with brilliantly analytical hostility the meanings of feminism, the youth cult, homosexuality, the “gilded bolshevism” of the 20’s, and all the other idols of the *Zeitgeist* triumphant today; (2) that he puffed Adolf Hitler more than once in the early 30’s in a misguided attempt to avert a second world war; and (3) that Lewis sometimes published hastily and assembled his books badly, adding further damage to his reputation. Straightening all this out (50 books in 50 years) in what Carolyn

Heilbrun has called “the Age of Woolf” (yes, Virginia was one of Lewis’s favorite punching bags) is no task for the faint of heart.

Add to all the textual, aesthetic, and political problems the challenge of Lewis’s prophetic insight, idiosyncratic expression, and extensive historical and philosophical reading, and there is inherent difficulty in the complexity of the material and therefore in its exposition. Edwards has performed brilliantly and incorporated many new insights of his own, as well as of other recent critical and scholarly work. One more reason to have a copy of this book, then, is for the notes and bibliography, quite valuable in their own right. I must say that I regret that the comments on Lewis’s writing aren’t complete. Two of the stories in *Rotting Hill* are masterful, and *The Red Priest* has something going for it as well.

But never mind, for we come then to the point: The paintings and the writings were the product of one man, though not perhaps of one unified sensibility. The sense of crisis in Lewis’s work is not finally his but rather his modernist sense of our crisis. That crisis took many forms, religious, philosophical, aesthetic, and other; above all, it was that of human identity—both individual and in the mass—in the machine age. As we begin the 21st century, we can find no better explorer of the “metaphysics of the not-self” than Wyndham Lewis. On the shelf beside Lewis’s best work (*Tarr*, *The Childermass*, *Time and Western Man*, *The Apes of God*, *Snooty Baronet*, *The Revenge for Love*, *Malign Fiesta*, and others: I am thinking of the scholarly editions of Black Sparrow Press), this integrated exposition by Paul Edwards has a valued and necessary place. I think I can close nicely with his own closing words:

[Lewis’s] work provides the most comprehensive critique we have of the Modernist urge to overcome our dereliction by violently breaking through to a realm of authenticity, a reality transcending our divided condition; driven by such urges himself, he yet knew that it was our privilege to be no more than imperfect imitators of that authenticity, and urged us to realize that we must be Apes of God rather than gods ourselves.

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RECEIVED WISDOM

Raphael and the Noble Task by Catherine Salton (New York: HarperCollins, 157 pages, \$20.00)

Catherine Salton has produced a stunning debut novel, just in time for Christmas. Raphael is a chimère—not a gargoyle, it must be understood—on the west façade of a great cathedral in the Middle Ages. His noble task I will leave to each reader to discover, for this is a beautiful fable: whimsical, reverent (Salton is a devout Catholic), witty, and deeply moving. I fully expect *Raphael and the Noble Task* to take its place on the shelf of Christmas classics, alongside Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s “*Christmas Jenny*,” Truman Capote’s “*A Christmas Memory*,” and, yes, Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*.

—Bill Kauffman

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

The Constitution, R.I.P.

On July 22 of this year, the *Washington Times* published, as the weekly installment of its “Civil War” section, a long article by a gentleman named Mackubin Thomas Owens, described as “professor of strategy and force planning” at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, under the headline, “Secession’s apologists gut Constitution, history.” The burden of the article was to argue that both the Confederate defenders of secession in 1861 and their intellectual descendants today (in what is sometimes dubbed the “neoconfederate movement”) were and are full of beans. Professor Owens, a disciple of Lincoln apologist Harry Jaffa, expressed the view—shared by Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, Daniel Webster, and Abraham Lincoln, among others—that the U.S. Constitution, far from being a “compact among the states” as the Confederates claimed, is really an act of a single united people. It follows from that view, of course, that neither “states’ rights” in any significant sense nor secession, let alone such doctrines as “nullification,” are constitutionally valid; that the seceding states of 1861 were engaged in acts of treason and rebellion; and that those who support their doctrine today are not only in error but also probably of dubious loyalty themselves.

It was not the first time that the *Times*, whose editor likes to describe it as the “official voice of the conservative movement,” gave prominence to what is generally (but not very usefully) known as the “nationalist” theory of the Constitution. In 1998, the editorial page published a long letter from a reader articulating the same view of the Constitution, which was challenged in a subsequent letter, published some days later. In the case of the Owens article this year, however, no one seems to have bothered to question the accuracy of his interpretation.

Yet the truth is that Professor Owens—as well as Hamilton, Marshall, Webster, and Lincoln, not to mention Professor Jaffa—is the one who is full of beans. The “nationalist” (let us, for the sake of clarity, call it the “unitary”) interpretation is wrong; indeed, it is so obviously

wrong that its partisans have to rely almost entirely on unsubstantiated assertions to make the case for it.

My purpose, however, is not to rehearse the argument for the compact theory or to refute the unitary interpretation. The simplest way to substantiate the compact theory is to point to both the content and the grammar of the Declaration of Independence, in which the “representatives of the United States” declare that “these united colonies” are “free and independent states” and assert that “they” (the “states”) possess “full power . . . to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do.” The point is that the Declaration does not establish a unitary state but recognizes 13 states, which are consistently spoken of in the plural throughout the document (as they are in the Constitution). The other obvious point is that at no time did the American people as a whole vote on national independence, adoption of the Declaration, or ratification of the Constitution, nor indeed do they so vote today. They assented to independence, the Declaration, and the Constitution as and by the states, and even today there is no single elected federal officeholder who is chosen by the vote of all the American people apart from the states. This is clearly true of senators and congressmen, but it is also true of the president, who remains chosen by the votes of the Electoral College, which is appointed by the states. Moreover, it is three fourths of the states that are able to amend the Constitution, not a majority or super-majority of the American people as a whole. The primacy of the states is and always has been obvious, and there is little more to be said about it.

Nevertheless, as Professor Owens’ article and similar expressions make clear, the compact theory of the Constitution, regardless of its historical and legalistic correctness, is virtually defunct as an operative doctrine of constitutional interpretation; and with its consignment to oblivion, the rest of the Constitution has vanished as well. Although there seems to be some revival of interest in the Tenth Amendment, states’ rights—the heart of real federalism—died with the compact theory. States’ rights make no sense if the compact theory is false, the union was

really formed by a single act of the whole people, and states are mere administrative units of the central government. Along with states’ rights vanishes much of the rest of the Bill of Rights, at least in its original and correct function as a restraint on the federal government, as well as any other restraint on big government. If the federal government is the direct representative of the “people” as a whole, then it can do pretty much whatever it wishes to do, and we are delivered into territory perilously close to Rousseau’s General Will. The use of the Commerce Clause and the “Incorporation Doctrine” to overturn state and local laws has largely completed the process. Today, the United States simply no longer has a constitution at all, apart from what the ruling class and its running dogs on the Supreme Court say is the constitution. Moreover, so defunct is the real Constitution that neither most academics, like the learned Professor Owens, nor most self-described conservatives, such as a good many of my former colleagues at the *Washington Times*, any longer know what the real Constitution was or even that there used to be a Constitution quite different from the one that now is purported to prevail.

There is, of course, sort of a constitution, and you may discover something about what it says by listening to the college students surveyed several years ago who believed that the statement “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need” came from it. This passage from the *Communist Manifesto*, which served as the official motto of the Soviet Union, is in fact a fairly accurate description of what the current constitution holds. How the new constitution came to be adopted has been the subject of several expositions in recent years by, among others, Garry Wills, James MacPherson, and Columbia University law professor George Fletcher.

Last year, in this space, I quoted Professor Fletcher’s view, published in the *New Republic* in 1997, that the original Constitution was abolished by the American Civil War and that Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address “signals the beginning of a new Constitution” in which “equality, absent from the original document, comes front and center. . . . the United