

niently limited Greene's involvement with them.

Hazzard writes that "the anxiety of men, women, and children living close to the bone and the abyss is a climate of the early fiction, which frequently takes place in wet, cold, sunless settings." And she shrewdly notes that many ridiculous characters in his novels are called "Henry," "a byword for naiveté and impotence" as well as Greene's real first name. But her comments are never as acute as Orwell's devastating criticism of the hero's suicide in *The Heart of the Matter*: "If Scobie believed in Hell, he would not risk going there merely to spare the feelings of a couple of neurotic women." Greene's novels, filled with spiritual malaise and flirtations with God, put him "on Colonel Gadaffi's cultural black list with D.H. Lawrence and curiously enough Henry James."

Greene liked to use old-fashioned expressions like "fall guy" and "what swank." Recalling the transformation of mores after the Lady Chatterley trial in 1959, he wittily remarked that, "among publishers, indecency was now becoming a competition rather than an obstacle." Once in close touch with the world's pulse, in old age Greene came understandably to loathe "the self-engrossed lassitude of hippies and yuppies": "I would like to take a machine gun to the young," he exclaimed. His decline seemed to match the decline of the island—part of a sad but inevitable spectacle I witnessed in the Spanish village where I lived at the time. As early as 1907, Rilke lamented the blight of hideous new buildings which, after the Great War, was compounded by Capri's characteristic "indolence, near-nudity, and egoistic hedonism," often ending in tragedy and suicide. As tourists invaded the island, fishermen abandoned the sea and peasants left the land for more profitable if less satisfying enterprises. "Solitary cliffside walks," Hazzard notes, "fell into dangerous decay, while green sites considered sacrosanct were obliterated by new hotels."

Hazzard admires Greene and understands that he required agitation as a defense against boredom. But she is also sharply critical of his increasingly rude behavior, which she contrasts to the courtesy and kindness of the aesthete Harold Acton (who makes a cameo appearance). Greene felt compelled "to foment trouble, to shake up tameness and disturb the peace . . . [and] often appeared indiffer-

ent to harm done, hurt inflicted, trust eroded." If she tried to avoid his evil temper, he asked why she stayed away; if she appeared as usual, he tended to hector and upset her. On one occasion, prompted by his disapproval of Hazzard's habit of feeding stray cats, "Graham flared into mindless rage. These were the worst moments I ever had with him, irrational and cruel: paroxysm of the playground."

Greene called himself "a Catholic agnostic" and told her that he hadn't been to confession for more than 20 years. But, she felt, he found excitement in sin, "in guilt and fear, even in being un-

masked." He made his last visit to Capri in 1988, to which he was unable to return; ten months before his death in 1991, he wrote me that he had been forced to cancel a trip to England, adding, "my health is too bad for me to receive visitors" in Switzerland. Weary of the world, his last words before lapsing into a coma were "I want to go."

*Jeffrey Meyers, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, will publish his literary memoir, Privileged Moments: Encounters With Writers (University of Wisconsin Press), in September.*

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## A Marathon

by Lawrence Dugan

Tired runners all over the place,  
An occasional happy face.  
A high school friend waves hello,  
The rest might be shoveling snow  
They seem so tired, so intent,  
Absorbed in groups to come unbent  
From the race, the amateur strain,  
The release from pleasure and pain.  
They fill the park with dull faces  
And colorful shirts, trading places  
As they fight off cramps and stretch,  
And the sicker ones even retch  
Into the street, while the older  
Still run, shoulder to shoulder,  
The names of banks on their backs,  
The Irish flag or union jacks,  
An old peace group's faded dove  
Or just a bar they used to love.  
I thread through them to church  
Newly pulled from another lurch  
By two more jobs—part-time teaching.  
Everywhere yuppies are reaching  
For water, something cold to drink,  
Then heads bent down to knees to think.

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# Principalities & Powers

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by Samuel Francis

## A New Majority?

“This way to the egress,” P.T. Barnum used to direct the stooges stupid enough to buy tickets to his traveling shows of bunco and blather. The “egress,” of course, was the exit to the street, where the stooges should have stayed. Would that we had a P.T. Barnum today who could direct us to an egress from the political hall of mirrors in which we have foolishly allowed ourselves to be trapped.

The latest clown to dance through the hall is Sen. John McCain of Arizona, who entertained the nation and quite befuddled much of its political class with his antics during the presidential primaries last winter. Before McCain’s victory in New Hampshire over Texas Gov. George W. Bush, most observers predicted he would indeed win there but nowhere else, though no one anticipated a victory as smashing as the one he actually pulled off. No sooner had the Arizona solon won in New Hampshire than an entire regiment of journalists and commentators fell into a swoon. Mr. McCain beat Mr. Bush by an impressive 18 percentage points, and by the following day, some pundits—particularly neo-conservative chatterbox Bill Kristol—had glimpsed nothing less than the bright dawn of political revolution.

Writing in the *Washington Post* the very day after the New Hampshire primary, Mr. Kristol announced that “It is John McCain and Bill Bradley who each now have a chance that occurs only once a generation—to articulate a new governing agenda for a potential new majority.” So much for the prophetic insights of Mr. Kristol, but while he was almost unique in thinking Bill Bradley could shatter the Clinton-Gore juggernaut, he was by no means alone in trumpeting what Mr. McCain was about to accomplish. A few days later, his fellow neoconservative Charles Krauthammer also started booming Mr. McCain, assuring us that, although Mr. Bush was “more reliably conservative,” it was Mr. McCain who was the sure winner. To the neocon mind, of course, that pretty much clinched it. Why the hell would anyone support a candidate he actually agrees with on principles when he can go with an alter-

native who’s sure to grab the power? “The question for Republicans,” the intrepid Krauthammer assured us, “is not who will make the better president but who is more likely to *be* president.”

The neoconservative fascination with Mr. McCain, however, had only just begun. As the Mother of All Neocons herself, Midge Decter, told a writer for the *New Republic*, “We decided that we liked McCain, then we came up with our justifications.” Nor indeed was it only the neocons who signed on with the McCain fan club. Liberal John Judis was soon scribbling in the *New Republic* about the “new voting bloc” that Mr. McCain had uncovered that could carry the country to a wave of “reforms” analogous to those of the Progressive era. In the *Washington Post*, political reporter Thomas Edsall glowed that the McCain campaign “has revealed the weakening of the conservative Republicanism that dominated national politics from the late 1960’s into the mid-1990’s, according to a growing number of GOP strategists.” The first such “strategist” Mr. Edsall quoted to prove his point was none other than Mr. Kristol himself, followed by a McCain supporter and the ubiquitous Paul Weyrich, who last year was advising conservatives to get out of politics altogether. By the time of the South Carolina primary, the chatterpunks of the Beltway had not only all but convinced themselves that Mr. McCain would be the next president but also written the epitaph of the American right.

But as South Carolina proved, the epitaph was rather premature. Mr. Bush smashed Mr. McCain there precisely by relying on the very “conservative Republicanism” that supposedly had vanished into the political gloaming. He declined to demand the removal of the Confederate flag from the state capitol building, while Mr. McCain blundered, at first denouncing the flag as a “symbol of racism and slavery” and then more or less retracting that remark and agreeing with the Texas governor. (The retraction did not help; exit polls showed that 61 percent of South Carolinians who support the flag voted for Mr. Bush.) The governor also huddled close to the religious right that has remained more powerful in South Carolina than in many other ar-

reas, and he constantly depicted himself as the “real conservative” and his rival as a “liberal” interloper. Mr. Bush, of course, is no more a serious conservative than Mr. McCain or even Mr. Gore, but his own political image was still sufficiently malleable that he and his shape-shifters could twist and mold it into the forms they wished to be perceived. In the event, the voters saw what they were shown, and subsequent exit polls in later primaries showed that Mr. Bush consistently won the rank-and-file members of his own party. Mr. McCain did well for a few more primaries only because he managed to attract some union members and independents, but his claims of constructing a “new coalition” or a “new majority” fell flat. As political pollster Andrew Kohut wrote in the *New York Times*, “Across the country, McCain backers do not share values or care strongly about the same issues, and they are not drawn from a common demographic base.” Indeed, “moral values” were more of a concern for Mr. McCain’s supporters in New York than his much touted (and imitated) “campaign finance reform.” The “conservative Republicanism” that Mr. Edsall had embalmed so easily remained sufficiently powerful to reject Mr. McCain decisively and communicate to any politician or pundit willing to hear it that the American right at the grassroots level remains so strong that it cannot safely be ignored or dismissed.

Nevertheless, the epitaph writers did have a point. In his op-ed in the *Washington Post* the day after New Hampshire, Mr. Kristol remarked: “leaderless, rudderless, and issueless, the conservative movement, which accomplished great things over the past quarter-century, is finished.” Mr. Kristol is usually wrong, but this time he was actually half right. If the primaries proved anything, it was that the “conservative movement” is indeed dead, though the world hangs breathless to learn of the “great things” it ever accomplished. As Mr. Kristol remarked, the three GOP candidates identified with the “conservative movement” this year—Gary Bauer, Alan Keyes, and Steve Forbes—all together received fewer votes in New Hampshire than Mr. Bush won in second place, and most of them dropped out in the next few weeks. In lat-