

The first section of *The Kennedy Imprisonment* is called "Sex," and it establishes the psychological viewpoint on which the whole book is based.

Joseph P. Kennedy, the founding father, was a tireless womanizer. He always had a beautiful secretary ready at hand. At Kennedy's invitation, his Hollywood bedmate, Gloria Swanson, accompanied him and his wife on an ocean liner to Europe. He took his sons' girlfriends out to dinner, quizzed them closely about their personal lives, invariably demanded and got a goodnight kiss, and sometimes tried to become more familiar. Openly proud of his skirt chasing, he dared his sons to try and outscore him. "The Kennedy boys," writes Garry Wills, "were expected by their father to undertake a competitive discipline of lust."

John F. Kennedy pursued more movie queens than his father did. And whereas old Joe had not hesitated to entertain his mistresses at the family home at Hyannis Port, Jack trumped that piece of audacity by making love to Judith Campbell Exner in the White House. The father was sexually bold, but his second son was bolder, while his fourth son simply threw caution to the wind. In the words of one of Senator Edward M. Kennedy's congressional friends, "I have told him ten times, 'Ted, you're acting like a fool. Everybody knows wherever you go. . . . Jack could smuggle girls up the back way of the Carlyle Hotel. But you're not nearly as discreet as you should be.' He looks down with a faint smile and says, 'Yeah, I guess you're right.' But he never listens." Although by comparison with his brothers Robert F. Kennedy was a Puritan, Wills believes that Bobby's daring river trips and mountaineering exploits were a substitute means of showing his father that he, too, was a chip off the old block.

"An Adlai Stevenson with balls," Joseph Alsop is reputed to have said of President Kennedy. In any event, such language characterized the obsessive masculinity of the New Frontier. Courage was "ballsiness"

Kenneth S. Lynn teaches American history at the Johns Hopkins University and is the author of books on Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and other American writers.

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A MEDITATION ON POWER
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Kenneth S. Lynn

and tight situations such as the Cuban missile crisis were "nut-grabbing time." The ruthlessness that had characterized Old Joe's wheeling and dealing as a financier was translated by Jack and Bobby, says Wills, into a fascination with the macho toughness of guerrilla warriors and the disdainful coolness of Ian Fleming's 007. Enemies in the Kennedy scheme of things were never forgiven, while old friends who made the mistake of thinking for themselves were cut off without a qualm. Arthur Krock, for instance, had served Joe Kennedy for decades, and as the boys grew to manhood he took a special interest in Jack. He catered to Jack's sexual needs by introducing him to a toothsome Scandinavian blonde named Inga Arvad; he supplied Jack's first book, *Why England Slept*, with what little

style it possesses; and he successfully campaigned, against very considerable odds, for the awarding of a Pulitzer Prize to *Profiles in Courage*. But because Krock was bitterly opposed to the 1960 Democratic platform statement on civil rights, he refused to endorse Jack for President. Once in office, Jack was not too busy to arrange for attacks on Krock to run in *Newsweek*. "Tuck it to Krock," he urged one of the magazine's editors, Ben Bradlee. "Bust it off in old Arthur. He can't take it, and when you go after him he folds."

For the most part, though, JFK was not nearly as hard-nosed a President as Wills makes him out to have been. Despite the fact that the rhetoric of his Inaugural had proclaimed America's willingness to pay any price to enhance the cause of freedom, Kennedy withheld air cover

at the Bay of Pigs, thereby dooming the effort to overthrow Castro. He spoke of his ability to put an end to ancient forms of racial discrimination with the stroke of a pen, but once again he found it easier to speak than to act. He took us into Vietnam "slow and small," rather than "fast and big," which some of his advisers told him was the only means of achieving victory. And in spite of Wills's insistence that the United States, not the Soviet Union, was the aggressor in the Cuban missile crisis (those missiles, Wills erroneously states, were meant only for defense), Kennedy was in fact offering an irrelevant response to a dire threat to American security. For by ruling out an air strike in favor of a blockade, Kennedy failed to come to grips with the problem of the missiles already in the ground in Cuba. As Dean Acheson later observed, the Cuban missile crisis was happily resolved because Khrushchev lost his cool, not because Kennedy's strategy was well conceived.

There are many ways in which analysts of the Kennedy presidency might attempt to account for the timidity that was woven like a yellow thread through the ostentatious aggressiveness of the New Frontier. A psychological explanation is one such possibility, but if that route is followed, then the analyst must be prepared to tell us why Kennedy's brand of leadership struck a responsive chord in the psyches of his followers. Were they, too, caught between self-confidence and self-doubt? And, if so, why? Wills does not even acknowledge the existence of such questions. All he is interested in is the psychology of the Kennedy family. Yet even within this narrow area, *The Kennedy Imprisonment* does not offer us anything like an adequate assessment.

Old Joe Kennedy did not simply dare his sons to be like him. He urged them to fight their own battles—and then helped them to do so. His debilitating interventions in Jack's life alone ranged from rescuing his wartime career in the Navy after it was virtually ruined by the FBI's discovery of his entanglement with Inga Arvad, who had Nazi connections, to arranging for the rewriting and publication of *Why England Slept*, to the mobilization of endless amounts of money and influence in the senatorial contest with the popular Henry Cabot Lodge in 1952. At



one and the same time, the father urged the son to be a man and forever made him feel like a boy. Wills is amazed that none of the Kennedy sons ever rebelled against Old Joe, whereas the fact is that they were too weakened by his awesome power ever to consider such a course.

The Kennedy Imprisonment is even more simple-minded about the role of Rose Kennedy, the boys' mother. Her nobility, Wills says, lay in patience, silence, and suffering. Her children ignored her, he continues, while her husband ran over her roughshod. When Old Joe brought Gloria Swanson to their home in Bronxville, Rose accepted her presence without a murmur; years later, Wills emphasizes, she wrote of that episode in her autobiography as if she did not even understand the nature of her husband's relationship with the movie star. Wills's interpretation, in sum, reduces Rose to a plaster statuette of a madonna: Although she was revered in the Kennedy household, she was much too passive to have had any significant influence upon it.

Rose's autobiography, however, is not the chronicle of a latter-day Holy Mary. Rather, it is the work of a passive-aggressive woman who understood that making explicitly bitchy remarks was not the only way to repay one's husband for his philandering or to make his mistress look like a slut. "Don't get mad, get even" was the bristling slogan of all the male Kennedys, but Rose got even in her autobiography by concealing her vengefulness behind an impeccable courtesy.

In addition to misconstruing Rose's personality, Wills errs in thinking that the personalities of her sons were entirely shaped by their father. Even if the author of *The Kennedy Imprisonment* is ignorant, as apparently he is, of the voluminous psychiatric literature of recent decades that stresses the fundamental importance of mothering in the formation of children's attitudes toward life, could not Wills have looked about him, at the children he himself knows, and realized what a foolish argument he was making? In the case of the Kennedys, it was the mother, not the father, who raised the boys from day to day. On whirlwind trips from the Coast, Joe swept in, gave orders, and departed; Rose was left to carry out those orders. On the basis of her published letters to her sons, one must assume that "if you don't do thus and so, I will tell your father" was her controlling theme, and if it was, then the child-

ishly irresponsible risk-taking to which the boys would be given as adults becomes comprehensible. The sons of Joe and Rose Kennedy had many impressive qualities. Their fatal flaw, however, was that these naughty boys never fully grew up—and their mother as well as their father played a role in their infantilization.

That Garry Wills does not perceive, let alone understand, the psychological immaturity of Jack, Bobby, and Teddy Kennedy may have something to do with the fact that he himself as a writer seems to be frozen forever in

the role of boy wonder. Fifteen years ago, his precocious productivity and *enfant terrible* iconoclasm were the hallmarks of a brightly promising career. In 1982, his performances are shadowed with the pathos of arrested development. Significantly enough, the only Kennedy for whom he feels compassion is the paunchy, defeated Teddy. "Why is he, how can he be, so bad?" asks Wills, far more in sorrow than in anger. One has to wonder whether the author unconsciously senses the applicability of that question to himself. □

THE BRANDEIS/FRANKFURTER CONNECTION: THE SECRET POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF TWO SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

Bruce Allen Murphy / Oxford University Press / \$18.95

Edwin M. Yoder, Jr.

This already much-discussed book explores, with sometimes impressive scholarship, an intriguing institutional issue: How much do Supreme Court justices distance themselves from the political hurly-burly? How much should they?

Professor Murphy selects as the lab specimens for this inquiry two justices, Louis D. Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter, whose personal integrity has been regarded as unassailable. Murphy is forced to build his case upon a mosaic of activities each of which considered singly is usually less than shocking. A further curiosity is Mr. Murphy's historical appendix, a survey of the off-the-bench political activities of Supreme Court justices since 1789, which in listing egregious examples tends to reduce, even more, the impression that the Brandeis-Frankfurter "connection" was extraordinary.

Indeed, Mr. Murphy insists that it is not his intention to diminish the reputation for probity of either Louis Brandeis or Felix Frankfurter. Yet there is an unmistakable premise here that much of what they did off the bench and after hours was improper.

There can be only two bases for such a judgment—judicial and legal custom and tradition, and the Constitution. As Murphy himself shows,

Edwin M. Yoder, Jr. is a nationally syndicated columnist for the Washington Post and former editorial page editor of the Washington Star.

however, the tradition is mixed, while the Constitution as usual is silent or sibylline on the degree to which justices may permissibly function as informal political operators or advisers. Presumably everyone would agree that Justice John McLean of the pre-Civil War era offers a limiting case: "He became a sorry figure," writes Mr. Murphy, "placing his hat in the ring in every [presidential] election from 1832 to 1860 and never even getting a party nomination." Otherwise, the due constraints are obscure.

What is Murphy's case against Brandeis and Frankfurter? First, that almost from the day he took his seat on the Court in 1916 Brandeis engaged Frankfurter, for most of the period a teacher at Harvard Law School, as a confidential lieutenant in advancing political causes he could no longer personally and openly pursue—from soak-the-rich taxation to unemployment compensation to the de-monopolization of American business.

Second, that between 1916 and Frankfurter's own appointment to the Court in 1939, Frankfurter received a steady subsidy from Brandeis for expenses incidental to Frankfurter's work as an informal Brandeis operative: some \$50,000 in all.

Third—this is perhaps the gravest of the revelations—that Brandeis's private comments were often funneled via Frankfurter into the col-

umns of various publications, including the *New Republic* and the law journals. These shrouded manifestations of Brandeis's political agenda were obviously calculated to shape opinion, even on matters that might conceivably arise before the Supreme Court.

Fourth, that both Brandeis and Frankfurter, working through a network of strategically placed Washington protégés (usually former law students or clerks) continually sought to influence administration policy, especially during the New Deal period.

Finally, Murphy surveys extensively Felix Frankfurter's already familiar role as a Roosevelt adviser, both before and after Brandeis's retirement (February 1939) and death (October 1941). For instance, he discloses that Frankfurter not only advised on Lend-Lease legislation in 1941 (which was already known) but vetted some 30 drafts of the bill: a fact made apparent for the first time, he says, by the Oscar Cox diary at Hyde Park.

There are long discussions of all these activities, but Mr. Murphy concentrates on the thirties. Then, Justice Brandeis, fondly known as "Isaiah," took a dim view of the centralizing tendencies of some advisers around Roosevelt. For instance, he abhorred the National Industrial Recovery Act (except for its provisions favorable to laborers) and was mortally embarrassed when the inept Hugh Johnson, the NRA chieftain, artlessly declared in a radio broadcast in September 1934 that throughout his ordeal as NRA administrator, "I have been in constant touch with that old counselor, Judge Louis Brandeis." This, ironically,

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