

of Soviet agents such as Duggan and Alger Hiss is possible without recognizing the existence of the conspiracy.

Still, Gellman has combined meticulous research with Washington gossip for a fascinating piece of history. He originally intended to write a biography only of Welles, and one remains needed to answer questions not asked here: How often did

his sexual behavior impinge on his official duties? Who among his associates knew about his secrets and how did they react to them? What was the impact on Welles of covert Communists who were among his closest associates at State? The answers might well suggest that we were fortunate to emerge from World War II with only the loss of Eastern Europe. □

ble quotes are appropriate, because a term may seem apt in a relative sense, but not necessarily in any absolute way. References to the “so-called ‘right-wing’ Laborites,” the “‘liberal’” strains of Judaism, the “‘rich’” and the “‘relatively deprived,’” “‘higher needs’” and “‘low’” conceptions of human nature, and “‘containment’ vs. ‘liberation’” in American foreign policy: all are testimony to an era of ever-shifting meaning. In fact, phrases like “so-called,” “we call them,” “as we say,” “as it were,” “what we call,” “what is commonly called,” “what . . . contemporaries called . . .”—even, occasionally, “as the British would say” and “as the British call it”—appear throughout. While they in no way hang heavily and are never inapposite, they make their presence cumulatively felt—as they should. They are the inscriptions, the deposits, of an age of euphemism.

NEOCONSERVATISM: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN IDEA

Irving Kristol

Free Press / 512 pages / \$25

reviewed by ANDREW STARK

Something almost literally leaps off the pages of Irving Kristol’s absorbing “Autobiographical Memoir,” the piece that opens his latest collection of essays, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea*. It is the number of quotation marks surrounding different words and phrases. As his friend Nathan Glazer recently observed, Kristol’s essays contain no footnotes, so the quotation marks that appear here are not generally the sort that embrace utterances made by others. Instead, they are the kind represented nonverbally by two crooked fingers on either hand repeatedly wagging in the air, the kind that surround euphemisms and neologisms.

Kristol’s memoir—and the forty essays that follow—recall his fifty years as author of some of the century’s most influential essays in social thought. *Neoconservatism* also recounts his role as founder of three journals (and editor at two others) that, without ever descending to the level of *agitprop*, were instrumental in defeating Communism abroad and dethroning liberalism at home. The collection is studded with gems large and small; among the latter is this prescient observation

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from a 1975 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed: “Ronald Reagan was a two-term governor of California, and whatever his accomplishments, the restoration of ‘free enterprise’ was not one of them. Had he become a two-term President, he (and we) would have found that, after the ideological smoke had cleared, not all that much had changed.”

Kristol’s writings span a half-century when words became untethered from their original meanings (the “severest critics [of] liberal institutions,” he noted in a 1975 essay, “are today commonly called ‘liberals’”) and where, consequently, much of what was meaningful required new words to express it. (“I think it fair to say that what might be called a ‘neoconservative imagination’ is something that I have always possessed, long before the very term itself was invented.”) In other words, euphemism abounded and so neologism was required.

Euphemism abounded: Words like “progressive,” “intellectual,” “advanced,” and “enlightened” merit the quotation marks Kristol gives them; they are terms with positive connotations which, having been appropriated for political purposes, came unmoored from their original meanings and acquired often perverse usages. On less nefarious occasions euphemism emerges, and dou-

In such an age, where old usages are dying and sometimes distorted beyond recognition, the birth of new phrases is the natural order. And Kristol devised or gave currency to at least three of permanent and revolutionary import—one in the economic sphere, one in the political, and one in the theological. Few had heard of “supply-side economics” before Kristol championed Jude Wanniski’s ideas; though now part of the language, the term first appears in quotes when Kristol discusses its coinage in the late 1970s. Few—before Kristol gave the term currency—had heard of “neoconservatism,” which Kristol distinguishes “in one crucial respect from its conservative predecessors: its chosen enemy was contemporary liberalism, not socialism or statism in the abstract.” But perhaps the most important neologism in *Neoconservatism* is “theotropic.”

“All people, everywhere, at all times,” Kristol writes, “are ‘theotropic’ beings, who cannot long abide the absence of a transcendental dimension to their lives.” Liberal intellectuals, as Kristol notes, have derided neoconservatives for stressing the “importance of religion in the political life of the community” while remaining nonobservant in their personal lives—a criticism Kristol easily deflects by distinguishing between “being observant and being religious.” But there is another, deeper prob-

lem with the neoconservative approach to religion's political utility that Kristol also attempts to confront.

Neoconservatives have been critics both of multiculturalism, the fracturing of American identity, and of the more secular or humanistic varieties of American religious-moral experience, insisting that only theologically-steeped virtues and values can sustain a social order. But the impulse away from *pluribus* toward *unum*, and the drive from the secular toward the theological, have historically been thought to point in opposite directions: as individuals repair to their own orthodoxies the differences between them should grow, not diminish. Certainly, this is what liberalism conventionally propounds. Hence, a third and innovative line of argument—an attempt to reconcile these two potentially warring impulses—appears in Kristol's recent writings. Speaking of Christianity and Judaism (but the argument would presumably apply to other faiths as well), Kristol raises the possibility that even at the deepest levels of orthodoxy—indeed, precisely at the deepest levels of orthodoxy—"the two faiths" are capable of living "most amicably together." Citing Franz Rosenzweig, he invites us to consider to what extent Christianity is a sister religion to Judaism, a form of "Judaism for Gentiles"—and vice versa. It is a provocative line of thought, but one which, Kristol's writings suggest, it is necessary to work through if we are to overcome what could be a major tension in neoconservative thought.

There is a sense, though, in which Kristol is not just a sociologist of religion, concerned with its social utility, but a theologian, concerned with its truths. Perhaps he would dispute this. Early in his "Memoir," after discussing his own neo-orthodox religious beliefs, Kristol writes, "I have emphasized the importance of religion in my personal and intellectual development because, in my writings, it is only on rare occasions evident. I am not a theologian, after all, though reading theology is one of my favorite relaxations." But religion is more than evident in most of the essays collected in *Neoconservatism* no matter what their official topic—whether politics, economics, Einstein or Freud—hap-

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pens to be. And intimations of an intriguing and attractive theological approach do emerge.

Those intimations, on a thumbnail sketch, might go something like this: The good news is that the ultimate objects of human longing—immortality and eternity, love and recognition—exist and are manifest. Problems arise, and theology becomes necessary, because immortality and eternity are characteristics of the universe, not of man; while love and recognition are traits of man, not of the universe. Thus, Western religions concern themselves with arguing the possibility that it is God's love and not indifference that suffuses the universe, and that immortality is available to the soul if not the body. While Kristol never disavows this basic theological impulse, one gets the sense that, for him, the manifest good news—the eternity of the universe and essential human kindness—are sufficient to generate a rich spiritual life. Toward the end of the "Memoir," Kristol suggests that he will be turning more of his attention away from everyday politics to some bigger questions. One hopes he will write on religion as an end, and not only as an instrument of social cohesion.

There is, finally, something else, evident enough in these essays when taken singly, that emerges with considerable force when they are collected between covers. It is Kristol's prose style. Early on he came across John Crowe Ransom, whose writing, Kristol notes, "was lucid, straightforward, unpretentious, but brightened with flashes of irony and wit." "That's the style for me," Kristol reports himself thinking at the time, "I can do it!" He certainly can. The observation that American workers have always been "conscientious objectors" in the war between the classes, to take just one example, speaks volumes. For those who have known him in his capacity as friend and mentor, *Neoconservatism* is a reminder that Irving—as everyone in this ever-growing class calls him—has evolved a style that cannot be duplicated. But if Irving's writing and career are such that imitation has been impossible, his friendship and accessibility are such that emulation has been easy. The result is a matchless body of work, and a generation of talented conservative writers and thinkers. □

WAITING FOR THE WAVE: THE REFORM PARTY AND PRESTON MANNING

Tom Flanagan

Stoddart (Toronto) / 243 pages / \$C22.95

reviewed by MORDECAI RICHLER

Don't—pace Andrew Lloyd Webber—cry for Argentina. Weep for Canada instead. Poleaxed by a national overdraft of \$C540 billion—\$C717 billion if you factor in what the provinces owe—our indigenous wampum is now worth only 72.8 cents U.S., making it expensive just to take a junket to New York, where even muggers are said to scorn our currency.

Such humiliations are the unhappy rule up here in North America's attic. The fabled Royal Canadian Mounted Police, whom many long took to be a Mickey

than traditional Liberal policies, would dictate his program. "Every house has the mortgage," he said.

So not much ever changes here, except for the composition of our parliamentary fun-house. The surprising federal election of October 1993 more than decimated the then-governing Tories, reducing their 157 seats to a humiliating two. The election also marked the arrival of the malcontents, boosting two all but brand new regional parties into prominence, and deepening the fractures in this already fragile country.

Lucien Bouchard, a very natty dresser with undoubted charisma, won the separatist Bloc Quebecois 54 seats, all of them gained in Quebec. And Preston Manning, riding out of fulminating Alberta, led the Reform Party's takeover of 52 seats in parliament. Bouchard and Manning are now the most interesting politicians in Canada. But if Bouchard's bunch, given their agenda—a perspicacious comedian described it as wanting an independent Quebec within a strong, united Canada—have been performing with élan in parliament, Manning's lot have proven themselves sadly inept. Out of their league. Embarrassing. When an Ottawa reporter asked the Reform Party's spokesman on foreign affairs what, exactly, were his qualifications for the job, he replied, "I was a travel agent."

If Reformers have been a disaster in the House, they have nevertheless been enormously influential, shifting both fearful Tories and Liberals, fingers held to the wind, to the right. Deep thinkers in both parties have been obliged to take heed of the deficit and contemplate unpopular cutbacks in welfare, medicare, and other costly social programs.



Mouse bunch anyway, recently made it official. They have closed an exclusive deal with Disney, which will market the RCMP's emblem on tea trays, beer mugs, T-shirts, jock straps, and panties. And our prime minister, Jean Chrétien, is inarticulate in two languages. The only time I interviewed him, in January 1994, shortly after the Liberals had assumed office, I asked if our huge national debt, rather

Mordecai Richler is the author most recently of This Year in Jerusalem (Knopf).