

the arts of decadence and class snobbery in northern New Mexico, where they flourish today.

At heart, *mythopoesis* simply means the creation of a story, but in Mr. Work's usage it suggests the formation of a canon. There are a few cracks in the argument—is Luther Standing Bear, for example, to be reckoned as a writer in the same way as John Muir and Stephen Crane? Such questions go unanswered in the interests of cultural inclusiveness, and the editor might have taken a bit more time to explain why it is that one should read (as indeed anyone with an interest in Western writing should) the work of Isabella Bird and Sharlot Hall, the latter being Arizona's first territorial historian (as well as, although Mr. Work does not address the issue, one of the West's most vocal and virulent racists).

Mr. Work continues his canon-building theme with his third section, "The Neomythic Period (1890-1914)," offering such writers as Wallace Stegner (who properly belongs next to Edward Abbey, figuring here in the closing section, "The Neowestern Period," as one of the West's great iconoclasts), the late A.B. Guthrie, Wright Morris, Mari Sandoz, Frank Waters, and John Steinbeck, each of whom contributed to the development of a truly Western literature. In terms of literary quality, this is the best section of the book. Among its many pleasant surprises is the inclusion of Dorothy Johnson's superb short story "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance," a masterwork of compression that is today known mostly through John Ford's film adaptation.

Mr. Work closes with selections from Ann Zwinger, whose scientific precision and literary skills place her in the forefront of contemporary nature writing; Gary Snyder, the one-time beat poet whose work now stands at the center of American literary environmentalism; N. Scott Momaday and James Welch, who can be jointly credited with the flowering of Native American literature in the last three decades, and Rudolfo Anaya, who holds a similar place in Chicano writing. He also rightly includes work by the Laguna Pueblo poet and novelist Leslie Silko and a harrowing sequence of poems by Jimmy Santiago Baca,

whose Albuquerque echoes Dante's hell. These two writers, like their older contemporaries, extend so-called ethnic literature into the universal.

The occasionally errant organization aside, *Prose & Poetry of the American West* is a highly useful collection. The editor has taken pains to select works of high quality, as many previous anthologists have not. This critical stance necessarily pushes aside the generic "Western," the Colt revolver of

literature, mass-produced and made of interchangeable parts. Mr. Work's intelligent headnotes add substantially to the value of the collection, which, despite its high price, will be of interest to a wide audience.

Gregory McNamee, a regular contributor to Chronicles, is now editing a literary anthology on the natural environment of Arizona.

BRIEF MENTIONS

LEFTISM REVISITED: FROM DE SADE AND MARX TO HITLER AND POL POT

by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn

With a Preface by William F. Buckley, Jr.

Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway; 520 pp., \$29.95

About sixteen years ago, when the first edition of the present volume was published, the *nouveaux philosophes* were attracting attention in France, on the rest of the Continent, and in the United States with their discovery of what they called "socialism with a human face." Since that time, they have been eclipsed totally by a series of historical events that Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the Austrian writer and scholar, would be the first to warn us against celebrating prematurely. The face of socialism is no more human than it ever was—or can be.

Kuehnelt-Leddihn believes leftism in all its manifestations (communism, socialism, nationalism, national socialism, and democratism) arises from maladjustments of the spirit, perversities of the heart, and weakness of the intellect, either singly or together. In his view, nearly everything bad in human history has come from leftist tendencies, and nothing good can be set to their credit. *Leftism Revisited* traces this history of leftist heresy from the Greek democracies to (as promised) the Cambodia of Pol Pot, a depressing history that Kuehnelt-Leddihn furberishes with stimulating illustrative accounts of leftist inhumanities, brutalities, and atrocities, such as the Parisian mob's display of the Princess de Lamballe's private parts on the end of a pike, the frying alive of a kitchenmaid at the Tuileries after she had been rolled in butter, and the burial, up to the chin, of a Benedictine monk by the Vietcong, who left it to the ants to finish the job.

In preparing the new edition of his book, Kuehnelt-Leddihn has made a particular point of contrasting American with Continental "conservative-Rightists." As a High Church Catholic and a self-described "liberal of the far Right," he foresees that many of his opinions are likely to offend certain American readers, as for example that "Democracy is the concept of the totally politicized nation; it is a populism, like ethnicism (nationalism) or racism, and therefore leftist—and consequently totalitarian." Among the "false but clear" ideas that the left has succeeded in imposing on the modern world are "nationalism and democracy, two forms of collectivist horizontalism" that Kuehnelt-Leddihn thinks must be replaced if we are to find our way out of the postmodernist predicament.

When Kuehnelt-Leddihn writes that "in a way, and unrealized by most, the democratic age is over—even for the United States," he is in substantial agreement with the Hungarian-born American historian John Lukacs, whose *Outgrowing Democracy* is a book-length treatment of this idea. While I take their argument seriously, neither Kuehnelt-Leddihn nor Lukacs seems to recognize how the federal principle, properly regained, might be made to compensate—even yet!—for the failure of the democratic principle in America. But it would have to be pretty damn quick.

—Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Letter From Academia

by Murray N. Rothbard

Life Lessons

Academics have no more human frailties, I suppose, than are rampant in any other occupation. But those frailties are far more repellent, and far funnier, in a profession ostensibly dedicated to the disinterested search for truth.

1. *The pettiness of the stage.*

Backstabbing and politicking in the Executive Suite to obtain a million-dollar post as head of a corporation has a certain grandeur, or at least it sets the stakes high enough to make the poltroonery understandable. But how about similar knifing and backstabbing to get a five-hundred dollar "merit" increase in salary? Or a thousand-dollar research grant?

2. *The meeting.*

There is nothing on this earth as boring, as stupefying, as a typical departmental or faculty meeting. The intensity of discussion and debate is inversely proportional to the importance of the topic, and since academic meetings almost always dwell on trivial issues, the boredom is intense. Often professors use these trivial occasions to inflict "self-expression" upon their colleagues—with extensive soundings off on their philosophy of teaching, their views on the meaning of life, and on and on. Once, at the importuning of colleagues, I was elected to the seemingly august and all-powerful Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate. At last: a peek into the corridors of power! I found that the committee met diligently for several hours each week, at which the chairman would lovingly read a chapter from the by-laws (treated with the reverence due the Bible, but scarcely as poetic or instructive). We were engaged in a multi-year process of suggested revision of this set of meaningless gabble, after which the administration would solemnly take

this nonsense under advisement. Needless to say, I quit after one meeting.

3. *Busywork.*

I once taught at an institution where the only, and I mean only, concern of the administration was do-re-mi. Instead of professors being monetarily rewarded according to merit, their "merit" consisted entirely of bringing research funds into the university, preferably grants that used the labs so that the university could get a rake-off for so-called "overhead." Social scientists or historians, who didn't use labs, were therefore necessarily at the low end of the totem pole. One year, our social science department was cursed with a determinedly gung-ho chairman who had a bizarre view of faculty grants. Since it was implicitly recognized that there was precious little chance of *getting* any, he focused on writing grant proposals—"Hooray! Jim has written four grant proposals this term!" Applause. This was a demented version of the Marxian labor theory of value.

The president of this installation, by the way, was a native of Europe, and on his summer trips abroad, he would find that I had a considerable reputation in his native country. (A prophet honored everywhere but at home?) Did this make him think better of me, and give me more "merit points" in his eyes? Quite the contrary. He became increasingly mad: if I was such a big shot, why wasn't I bringing money into the school? Sort of: if you're so smart, why aren't you making me rich?

4. *The unacknowledged class struggle: the nonpublishing Old Guard vs. the young hotshots.*

This class conflict has been going on for the over forty years that I have been in academia. My first job was at a prestigious business-oriented college at which the tenured Old Guard all had Ph.D.'s all right, but none of them in economics. One professor had a Ph.D. in industrial engineering, another in German literature, another in philosophy, and so on. How did they wind up

in economics? Who knows? But they did, and their ignorance of the field was cosmic. Naturally, they had published nothing on economics, as well as nothing, so far as I could make out, on any other subject. The only professors who knew anything about economics were the few younger ones, who predictably went on to publish and make a mark in the profession. The tension between the two groups was profound. University administrators (except for the benighted case I've mentioned) generally like to build up the prestige of the university and therefore the scholarly reputation of the professors. The professors themselves, however, are ambivalent; while enjoying the "externalities" of the prestige of colleagues; how do they (the Old Guard) look, and what happens to their own "merit" (invariably gauged in relative terms, since only a limited amount of merit funds are available)?

One favorite memory is of the edifying sight of the Old Guardsmen sitting around with their canned multiple-choice questions to the elementary courses they were teaching, trying to puzzle out the answers a bit before their students were to be subjected to the tests. The chairman said, "We'll have to teach them something about this guy Ky-ness" (Keynes).

5. *The New Left Episode.*

Since many conservative academics seem to have been permanently traumatized by the New Left revolution on campus, I should say that I found the experience far more amusing than traumatizing. During that period, I was hired by a largely Marxist (and at the same time highly productive) social science department, which functioned as a left-wing island in a fairly conservative sea of engineers. Why was I hired? Three reasons: (1) I, like them, was strongly opposed to the war in Vietnam, and we had mutual friends such as the historian William Appleman Williams and his disciples; (2) I could be used as an ultra right-wing offset to the charge of the department being commie (Absurd! We've got