



## BOOKS IN BRIEF

*Greatness: Reagan, Churchill & the Making of Extraordinary Leaders*, by Steven F. Hayward. Crown Forum, 194 pages, \$22

What is political greatness? Is it still possible in these egalitarian times? Were Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan great statesmen? If so, how so? In *Greatness*, Steven Hayward responds briskly, engagingly, and respectfully: Read Aristotle; Yes; Yes; and Glad you asked.

Applied to the life and times and statesmanship of Churchill and Reagan, *Greatness* is, in effect, an extended essay answering Leo Strauss's frequently quoted charge to his students on the occasion of Churchill's death: "We have no higher duty, and no more pressing duty, than to remind ourselves and our students, of political greatness, human greatness, of the peaks of human excellence."

As usual, Hayward leaps to his subject with zest and writes with verve, proceeding from surface similarities to important differences to "the fundamental traits of statesmanship" that made each man great in his own way and time. Against the various familiar hangdog intellectual trends that reduce human beings to "corks bobbing on the waves of history," Hayward offers the noble words and deeds of Churchill and Reagan as anecdotal proof—is there any other kind available?—of the permanent possibility of heroic achievement.

It was worthwhile for Hayward to divert himself from his larger work (his two-volume biography of Reagan) to give us this one. Like its heroes, *Greatness* lifts the spirits and makes the world look fresh again.

—Christopher Flannery



*Our Culture, What's Left of It: The Mandarins and the Masses*, by Theodore Dalrymple. Ivan R. Dee, 356 pages, \$27.50

In his plaintively titled new collection of essays, *Our Culture, What's Left of It*, Theodore Dalrymple, an English physician and journalist, writes, "The problem with upholding virtue and denouncing vice without appearing priggish, killjoy, bigoted, and narrow-minded has become so acute that intellectuals are now inclined either to deny that there is a distinction between the two or to invert their value." The intellectual villains he has in mind are D.H.

Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Joan Miró, and Karl Marx, each of whom gets strung out on the rack of Dalrymple's pithy prose.

The problem with *Our Culture* is that so many of these portraits turn out to be caricatures (one of Dalrymple's heroes is the 19th-century English cartoonist James Gillray). When he writes about Lawrence or Woolf, Dalrymple focuses exclusively on their worst books with nary a mention of their masterpieces, *Women in Love* and *To the Lighthouse*. Of course, Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* was a provocative, poorly written novel that unleashed an endless stream of smut, but the same could be said of James Joyce's vastly superior *Ulysses*. Can conservatism actively nurture aesthetic experimentation or is its role limited to passively preserving great works once they've entered the canon? Mr. Dalrymple hovers around this question, but he never adequately answers it.

When he writes more generally about the depravity of our time—teenage prostitution, serial killers, hooliganism—Dalrymple treats it as if it were a unique outgrowth of Western culture. He is more persuasive about the negative side effects of many so-called "humane" European social policies, but his intention seems to be more to arouse our indignation than encourage any thoughtful realignment of values. Moral pessimism may be a perfectly valid response to modernity, but too often Dalrymple's essays are dogged by the same intellectual complacency he is so quick to sniff out in others.

—Thomas Meaney



*Democracy and Populism: Fear and Hatred*, by John Lukacs. Yale University Press, 256 pages, \$25 (cloth), \$16 (paper)

Profoundly illuminating and deeply infuriating at the same time, John Lukacs's latest book will alternately attract and repel thoughtful conservative readers. Taking Tocqueville and Churchill as his guides, Lukacs brings a humane European conservative sensibility to bear on the tragedy of the 20th century and on our present discontents.

Lukacs's book recovers fundamental distinctions between conservatism and populism, patriotism and nationalism, and fascism and every genuine form of conservatism. But the

book is marred by his tendency to confuse pronouncements with reasoned argument. He refuses even to consider the possibility that the liberal nation-state is the only available political vehicle for patriotism in the contemporary world. His ever more insistent anti-anti-Communism knows no bounds (he perversely confuses Stalin, the partisan of nihilistic Soviet modernity, with Russian nationalism *tout court*). And he implausibly insists that George W. Bush went to war in Iraq "for the main purpose of being popular." The book thus reveals the two faces of John Lukacs: the wise moralist and historian, and the cantankerous polemicist who rejects nearly everything about contemporary American conservatism.

—Daniel Mahoney  
Assumption College



*Thomas Paine and the Promise of America*, by Harvey J. Kaye. Hill & Wang, 336 pages, \$25 (cloth), \$14 (paper)

Harvey Kaye, a professor of Social Change and Development at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, explores the life and especially the long-term political significance of the author of *Common Sense*, *The Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason*. Kaye's point is that Thomas Paine, though often relegated to the founding generation's lower ranks, was in fact highly consequential, serving as an inspiration for "progressives" ranging from abolitionists to suffragettes to socialists to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Kaye believes Paine could be the Left's hero once again, even though nefarious conservatives like Ronald Reagan have more recently tried to appropriate him.

Conservatives long shied away from Paine. In the dispute between Paine and Edmund Burke over the French Revolution, they took Burke's side. Paine had difficulty coming to grips with the fundamentally totalitarian character of egalitarian, secular utopianism (at least until he was imprisoned by Robespierre).

But Kaye undercuts his own argument by noting Paine's eclecticism and the difficulties in categorizing him. Just as Jefferson was revered by both Lincoln and the Confederates, and by both FDR and Reagan, Paine offers something for everyone. His attachment to natural rights, his affection for commerce and



free markets, his disdain for centralized power, and his eagerness to take up arms against tyrants hardly puts him in the company of today's Left.

—Andrew E. Busch  
Claremont McKenna College



*Augustine: A New Biography,*  
by James J. O'Donnell. HarperCollins,  
416 pages, \$26.95 (cloth)

In his "new biography" of Augustine, Georgetown University Provost and classicist James O'Donnell tries to strip the Church Father of his sainthood. For O'Donnell, Augustine was a mendacious autobiographer, an opportunistic cleric, a supercilious human being, a polarizing historian, a dogmatic political philosopher, and a tiresome apologist. He never overcame his Manicheism, and today we are bound to his "binary" mode of thinking. Christendom's insistence upon univocal truth bears the unfortunate imprint of its Augustinian founding. Modernity, too, in its unrelenting pursuit of objectivity, is beholden to Augustine's thought: his spiritual imperialism deforms contemporary political discourse and his mortification of the flesh corrupts our culture.

All of Augustine's arguments (which the book uniformly mistreats) conceal his will to power, O'Donnell charges. Sadly, the author's own assertions attempt to obscure the truth of Augustine's greatness.

—David J. Bobb  
Hillsdale College



*Queer Wars: The New Gay Right and Its Critics,* by Paul Robinson.  
University of Chicago Press, 192 pages,  
\$25 (cloth), \$18 (paper)

Stanford professor Paul Robinson has written what he calls an introduction to "intellectual gay conservatism," which is "arguably the most important new development in the gay world." *Queer Wars* examines the movement through four of its most public, prolific, and allegedly conservative intellectual voices: Bruce Bawer ("enthusiastic" 1992 Clinton voter), Gabriel Rotello ("I'm pro-choice, anti-war, pro-feminist, anti-racist, pro-environment, anti-death penalty, and...pro-sex"), Michelangelo Signorile (whose mission is "converting people

from that nasty, vicious, perverted and insane right-wing agenda to a more fun, fabulous and enlightened one"), and the more genuinely conservative Andrew Sullivan.

They have one thing in common: they're all enemies of the radical "queer activists" who see the gay world as one of perpetual victimization in which "queers" must band together to fight common enemies on their right—and everyone is to their right. Unfortunately, this point of view limits the book's discussion, and so this isn't really a book about gay conservatives, or the arguments and energy they bring to the broader gay (not to mention conservative) movement. Robinson's analysis of the battles between his subjects and their detractors over sexual politics and the nature of gender identity is well done, but you won't find significant discussion of Sullivan's support for the Iraq war, for instance, or literary critic Bawer's poetry. Their often poignant writings have been reduced to a caricature—all sex, gender, and campus politics.

—Brandon Michael Brod



*The Progressive Revolution in Politics and Political Science: Transforming the American Regime,*  
edited by John Marini and Ken Masugi.  
Rowman & Littlefield, 400 pages,  
\$70 (cloth), \$27.95 (paper)

Edited by Claremont Institute senior fellows John Marini and Ken Masugi, *The Progressive Revolution in Politics and Political Science* brings together eleven essays to explain the conflict between classic natural right and historicism that has been at the core of the Western philosophic tradition, and which plays itself out in an American context as the conflict between our country's founding principles and the modern administrative state. Incisive essays by Will Morrissey, Peter Meyers, Scot Zentner, Paul Carrese, and John West show both the intellectual foundation of Progressivism and the institutional changes required by it, while allowing Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and other Progressives to present their own justifications for replacing the Constitution with the State, and politics with administration. Larry Peterman highlights the incorporation of Progressive ideas into the universities in a chapter aptly titled, "Aimless Theorizing: The Progressive Legacy for Political Science." Thomas West shows how Progressivism has undermined and replaced much of the American constitutional order, and Edward Erler contrasts the constitu-

tional jurisprudence of Chief Justice Marshall with the living constitutionalism of modern jurisprudence. Eric Claeys and Tiffany Jones bring these lessons up to date by exposing the Progressive influence on modern zoning policies and campaign finance reform. And John Marini, who perhaps more than anyone has plumbed the depths of Progressive thought and found its source in Hegelian historicism, provides a breathtakingly accurate account of the Progressive transformation of the American mind.

—Thomas L. Krannawitter  
Hillsdale College



*Black Rednecks and White Liberals,*  
by Thomas Sowell. Encounter Books,  
355 pages, \$25.95

Through mastery of his subject, meticulous destruction of popular shibboleths, and bracing discussion of so much that is taboo in modern America, Thomas Sowell has cemented his reputation as one of America's leading public intellectuals. His latest offering, *Black Rednecks and White Liberals*, presents six cogent, painstakingly researched essays in which the author seeks "to expose some of the more blatant misconceptions poisoning race relations in our time."

The book's title essay tries to establish a linkage between the ghetto subculture of inner-city blacks and the so-called "redneck" culture brought to America by its earliest immigrants from the English borderlands, the Scottish highlands, and Ulster County, Ireland. Another essay challenges the notion that Nazism was an inevitable function of German civilization. But Sowell is at his sharpest, and most poignant, when probing the stubborn racial gap in American education. "This cannot be explained away by poverty, racism, or innate inferiority," he writes. Sowell chooses instead to stress cultural pathologies. He regrets that so few Americans have the stomach for such debates. "Whites walk on eggshells for fear of being called racists, while many blacks are preoccupied with protecting the image of black students, rather than protecting their future by telling the blunt truth."

Luckily for us, "telling the blunt truth" is a reliable hallmark of Sowell's work. Equally at ease as economist, historian, and cultural archaeologist, he keenly—and unapologetically—explores why various racial and ethnic groups have prospered while other have lagged behind.

—Duncan Currie  
*The Weekly Standard*