

career as a monarchist close to those who had supported the wartime Vichy government of Marshal Pétain. His family had ties to the Catholic nationalist Right, and although in his later life he became fiercely anti-Christian and neopagan, Benoist has continued to criticize the Enlightenment, whose abstract universals, he maintains, led to the bloodbath of the French Revolution. In Benoist's worldview, anti-Americanism has supplanted the traditional right-wing position of anti-communism. From the 1980s on, his major periodicals have been full of tirades against all things American, from New England Puritans, American intervention in European struggles, American commerce, and most recently the "empire with clay feet" that has launched wars in the Third World. In the '80s, the diminutive, soft-spoken Benoist attracted attention for his remark that he found Soviet uniforms less offensive than American fast food. He tried to reconfigure the Cold War as being mainly an American attempt to exploit Europe and the Third World economically. The Soviets came into this struggle only parenthetically, as a military empire that might be directed against what Benoist called "*l'ennemi principal*," namely, the United States.

Benoist has spent the last 25 years unsuccessfully trying to reconcile elements of the interwar European Right with the European Marxist and now post-Marxist Left. "Conservative revolutionary" and "revolutionary nationalist," both terms that belong to the pre-World War II Right, have honored places in his lexicon. At the same time, Benoist has tactically allied himself with the Communist Party and the Greens. He has also taken pains to separate himself from the "nationalist" Front National and other similar groups. He has outlined a regionalist plan for Europe that would not exclude further Third World immigration. European communitari-

### **The Pentagon is involved in a major disinformation campaign designed to intimidate Syria.**

The program employs the operating principle of the widely criticized and recently defunct Office of Strategic Influence, referred to as "perception management." Perception management has been resurrected by Undersecretary for Policy Doug Feith and is being implemented through selective leaks to the media about plans to launch strikes deep into Syria to interdict jihadi networks. There have been a number of public references by top U.S. officials suggesting a leading Syrian role in supporting and co-ordinating Iraqi Ba'athist insurgent operations, and President Bush has several times warned Syria to stop meddling in Iraq's internal affairs.

Syria's government has taken notice of the leaks and has demanded that imams discourage calls at Friday prayers for jihadis to go and fight in Iraq. It has also begun tightening border security in an admittedly difficult to police region and appears to be cracking down on Islamists perceived as a potential internal threat. Sixteen Sunni clerics were arrested in early December for recruiting jihadi volunteers, and several Islamist fighters who fought in Iraq and returned home have been detained.

The Pentagon's claims regarding the influence of foreign fighters on the Iraqi insurgency have been generally exaggerated, judging by the small numbers of foreign Arabs and Iranians that have actually been captured or killed in action. Of Iraq's four Arab neighbors, only Syria is being singled out for blame, even though a larger percentage of the identified foreign jihadis have entered from Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

The problem with the Pentagon's perception management is that it deliberately disseminates misleading information through the American media that then is picked up by global news sources, contaminating the information cycle. The program is being conducted with some circumspection now, tailored specifically toward Syria, but some officials at the Pentagon are concerned that it will be expanded.



### **The United States is putting pressure on Tel Aviv to block the return to China of Harpy attack drones sold to Beijing in the 1990s and currently being upgraded by the Israeli defense industries.**

The drones contain no U.S. technology, but the Pentagon claims that the sale was carried out in secret, involving very sophisticated weapons that could easily be used against the United States. Doug Feith has been leading the offensive to stop the return of the drones and has called for the resignation of Amos Yaron, the Israeli Defense Ministry's director general, for failure to keep the Pentagon informed of the sale. The Israelis have documentation that proves that Feith is mistaken but have not pressed their case energetically, possibly because they have often illegally sold U.S. military technology and do not wish to open that can of worms. Some believe that the complaint against Yaron is not intended to go anywhere and is designed to defuse possible criticism of Feith's unseemly close relationship with Israel's Likud government.

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ans, we are led to think, would feel happier with Muslim and Hindu traditionalists than with those who have been influenced by American globalists.

Despite this outreach, Benoist's career has taken a dive. In the late '80s, the French multicultural Left pressured *Le Figaro* into dropping his columns and in 1992 published an "Appeal to Vigilance" in *Le Monde* that targeted Benoist's no longer very new Nouvelle Droite. Benoist has suffered increasing ostracism as a *fascisant* while courting the anti-American Left and distancing himself from anti-immigrationists.

Similar problems have plagued the Italian "postfascist" head of the Alleanza Nazionale, Gianfranco Fini, who started off on the ultra-nationalist Right. Because of Fini's association with a party that enshrined Mussolini into the '60s and beyond, the head of the Alleanza has spent decades protecting his left flank. In the last two years, he has apologized several times for the Holocaust (a crime in which neither he nor his family was remotely implicated) and has endorsed Third World immigration.

Benoist and Fini have been caught between two stools, unable to move from an antediluvian Latin fascism into a modernized European Right. A time lag also afflicts Germany's National Democratic Party, which has been picking up votes in Thuringia, Saxony, and Brandenburg. This right-wing party and its new ally, the DVP (Deutsche Volkspartei), have captured upwards of 10 percent of the votes in regions of the former German Democratic Republic. They happily serve as the nationalist alternative to the reconstructed East German Communist Party, which garnered more than three times as many votes as the NDP in the German provincial elections in September. The electoral returns of the NDP drove to distraction Socialist interior minister Otto Schily and the head of the Central Com-

mittee of Jews in Germany, Paul Spiegel: both have called for a ban on right-wing "xenophobic parties."

Neither Spiegel nor Schily has to stay up nights worrying about the NDP. Though youthful party members have clashed with Muslim militants in Berlin, the NDP is no more critical of immigration than other right-wing populist parties. So far it has done nothing more on this issue than call for restrictions on further immigration and for "forcibly Germanizing" the predominantly Turkish Muslim population in German cities.

There is a difference between this archaic European Right and one that adapts without ceasing to appeal to the anti-establishment. This second model is the one doing well in Europe, despite the fact that Bossi in Milan and Haider in Austria have harmed their careers with personal blunders. The type of party they constructed in the '70s and '80s can exploit both the ideological fixations of the multicultural Left and the avoidance of hard stands by the acquiescent center. And as long as cultural and social clashes between Europeans and Third World Muslims go on, these parties can count on the votes of those who feel most threatened. Thus the new populists have amassed from a fifth to a quarter of the votes in federal elections in Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, and Denmark and far more in certain regional elections in France, Germany, Italy, and Norway. They have also taken their place in national governments and in the Italian and Danish cases have brought about at least part of the immigration reform they advocate.

Equally important, most European countries have multiparty systems, which redound to the Right's benefit. This is not the case in England, which has had a flourishing anti-immigration movement but also the equivalent of the American two-party system. Thus an eloquent MP, who at the time was to

enter the next Conservative cabinet, Enoch Powell, destroyed his career by giving a speech in April 1968 about the contradiction between English stability and Third World immigration. Although Powell gave this speech in a country that did not have to agonize over a Nazi past and was considered the cradle of Western constitutional liberty, he might as well have spoken his bitter truths in Berlin. The very establishment leader of the opposition, Edward Heath, vowed that the brilliant classicist and monetarist economist would never hold national office. And Powell never did. The present English National Front, which combines Powell's immigration views with intermittent racist positions, has trouble, outside of the ethnically divided Manchester area, pulling up its vote above the low teens. The Front does not have the resources to replace either national party and in the English electoral system cannot have an impact proportionate to its votes.

America's old rightists would likely feel comfortable in a European proportionate system where they would not always have to choose between the "lesser of two evils." In a contest among multiple candidates and multiple parties, the electoral adversaries of Islamic immigration and the political establishment that pushes it can climb into municipal, regional, and federal positions.

It is not only Europe's cultural Right that is now resisting what French journalist Edgar Morin celebrates as "the European order becoming the disorder of a tumultuous work in progress." Opposition to this work in progress seems likely to grow larger, if European administrations refuse to rethink the present forced march into diversity. ■

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# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Million Dollar Baby*]

### Eastwood's Girl in Gloves

By Steve Sailer

CLINT EASTWOOD'S sentimental, old-fashioned boxing movie "Million Dollar Baby" arrived accompanied by such a chorus of critical hosannas that, sadly, moviegoers have little chance to discover its modest pleasures for themselves.

Despite Eastwood's limited gifts as a visual artist (which aren't helped by his being such a tightwad of a producer), reviewers worship him as a director because his 25 films are readily analyzable within the *auteur* theory, that system of intellectualized hero worship espoused by critics to make film history seem less chaotic than it really is.

In "Million Dollar Baby," Eastwood directs and stars as a grouchy Irish Catholic widower with the standard-issue heart of gold. Each morning, before checking in at The Hit Pit, the dilapidated L.A. gym he owns, he attends Mass to ask forgiveness for somehow driving away his only daughter.

The film is narrated portentously by the gym's wise and saintly old black janitor, played by—you guessed it—Morgan Freeman. This superb actor has long complained that, although he first broke through as a vicious pimp in 1987's "Street Smart," the public now won't let him play anything besides what Richard Brookhiser calls the "Numinous

Negro." But he has only himself to blame for taking this role, a near-parody of the overly familiar Morgan Freeman Character.

A perky Irish-American waitress, conveniently missing a father, shows up at the gym and asks Eastwood to train her. After some gruff dismissals, Eastwood finally takes her on and turns her into the #1 contender, but the heartwarming main story is the father-daughter bond they forge.

Willowy starlet Hilary Swank, an Oscar-winner for "Boys Don't Cry," isn't exactly convincing as a boxer (the fight scenes are shown in slightly fast motion to make her look quicker), but her exuberant presence is a delight. We never learn why such a cheerful, attractive lady wants to beat up other women because when the ham-fisted script by Paul Haggis isn't telegraphing its emotional roundhouse punches, it's leaving much else unexplained.

In reality, women's boxing is a pseudo-feminist trash sport that briefly flourished in the 1990s when impresario Don King noticed that Mike Tyson fans got some kind of weird kick out of preliminary catfights between battling babes.

Traditionally, society objected to women brawling because (to paraphrase the answer the shady doctor in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" gives to the question of whether his memory erasure technique can cause brain damage), "Technically speaking, boxing *is* brain damage."

If a man gets his head caved in during some pointless scrap, well, some other man will just have to step in and do double duty carrying on the species. But women are the limiting scarce resource in making babies, so each woman lost lowers the overall reproductive capacity.

That kind of proto-sociobiological reasoning is unthinkable today, but a feminist utopia hasn't arrived. Instead, men employ gender equality slogans to badger women into doing things guys enjoy.

Still, female fisticuffs have faded recently due to the supply-side problem of finding enough low-cost opponents for the handful of women stars. While the number of male palookas who will fight for next to nothing in the hope of becoming Rocky Balboa is ample, managers needing fresh meat for their female champs to bash frequently have to hire hookers and strippers to take dives—and working girls don't work for free.

"Million Dollar Baby" simply ignores all this and asks you to believe that women's boxing today is a thriving duplicate of the men's fight game of half a century ago, which allows Eastwood to make a 1955-style boxing movie. This offers some almost-forgotten payoffs, but Eastwood doesn't have the courage to make a genuinely out-of-fashion film.

When his protégé gets her neck broken by a dirty fighter, she asks him to kill her rather than make her live as a quadriplegic. His priest explains the Church is utterly opposed to euthanasia, which in a 1955 movie would have been the end of it. If, however, "Million Dollar Baby" had concluded with Eastwood's character helping her to find some new meaning in life, as Christopher Reeve's wife did for the "Superman" star, the reviewers would have lambasted it as TV-movie fare. So to the wild applause of the critics, he poisons her.

But the obvious question is left hanging: without his surrogate daughter to care for, what meaning will his life have for him? ■