

The ascendance of conservatism the marketing label has coincided with definitional instability. Clearly, conservatism means dramatically different things to different people. Popularity has come at the expense of coherence. But if conservatives can't conserve their own philosophy, what are the prospects for their more grandiose aims of conserving the Republic?

Consider the inclusion here of essayist Joel Pollak. So fervent a liberal that he won election to the leadership of Harvard Law's Democratic Party auxiliary, Pollak toyed with the idea of penning speeches for Barack Obama during his 2008 campaign. In 2010, he was the Republican nominee for Congress in Illinois's 9th district and is touted in *Proud to Be Right* as a voice of young conservatives. Replenishing the ranks with the other side's disillusioned is a good idea; taking your marching orders from them is not. An intellectual inferiority complex seems to compel conservatives to advance as spokesmen any and all men of the Left who turn rightward. The result of this may be displacement rather than assimilation: to what degree have these periodic influxes of liberals into the ranks of conservatism made it resemble earlier versions of liberalism? Then again, Frank Meyer, Max Eastman, Whittaker Chambers, James Burnham, and Ronald Reagan worked out well.

Perhaps Pollak will similarly become a valued thinker or leader on the Right. Or he might wander into some other movement two years from now; worse still, he might maintain a conservative identification while pushing many of the same ideas he held as a young Democrat not so long ago. If conservatism is a strictly political movement, additions can only be welcomed. But if it is something more than a numbers game—anything as ambitious as a philosophy of life or as modest as a general attitude—then the increased supply of conservatives, insofar as it results in the dissolution of conservatism, can't be viewed as an unmitigated boon.

The flaws of *Proud to Be Right* are the flaws of youth. There is the occasional

confusion of the transitory for the enduring—the first essay begins, “Before there was Sarah Palin, there was Mike Huckabee.” Few of these writers on conservatism exhibit any evidence that they are also readers of conservatism. And youth's fetish for the personal narrative, perhaps here editorially imposed, leaves the reader groaning ay-ay-ay at the frequent appearances of “I.”

What shines is the scribblers' flair. Levity abounds. “The best way to convince someone you're right is to make what you're doing look good,” Helen Rittemeyer explains, “and a cigarette properly held goes a long way in that direction.” Todd Seavey is perplexed by the hipster's embrace of political slogans in light of his cynicism toward corporate marketing: “If TV is lying to you with its advertisements, what on earth is the government doing when it promises to end poverty or racism?” Michael Brendan Dougherty can put a clever phrase to page, dubbing the Iraq War with its dubious justifications “a casus belied,” John T. Flynn and Felix Morley “conservatives before the movement,” and today's begrudging appreciation of yesterday's losers as “a bipartisanship of the past.” Juxtaposing the family-values furor over Murphy Brown's single motherhood with the yawning reaction to the recent Pentagon arrest of an army cook who opted to raise her toddler instead of going to Afghanistan, Dougherty notes of the television character: “If only she wore combat boots.”

Amid its cacophony of voices, *Proud to Be Right* leaves the reader debating whether the future of conservatism is saved by its unwieldy diversity or doomed by its rigid orthodoxies. James Poulos persuasively makes the case that conservatism has embraced a company mentality of conformism. Yet his argument is surrounded by divergent essays that collectively say otherwise. Like most good books, *Proud to Be Right* provokes rather than settles an argument. ■

Daniel J. Flynn is the author of A Conservative History of the American Left.

[The Betrayal of American Prosperity: Free Market Delusions, America's Decline, and How We Must Compete in the Post-Dollar Era, Clyde Prestowitz, Free Press, 340 pages]

[How the Economy Was Lost: The War of the Worlds, Paul Craig Roberts, CounterPunch, 264 pages]

Evening in America

By Eamonn Fingleton

GEORGE W. BUSH'S under secretary of commerce for international trade, Frank Lavin, was once described in an official press release as “America's Salesman-in-Chief.” He emerges in a less glorious light in Clyde Prestowitz's new book, *The Betrayal of American Prosperity*.

In a lengthy anecdote, Prestowitz cites Lavin as an archetypal example of the sort of thinking that engineered America's economic trainwreck. Prestowitz, who is president of the Washington-based Economic Strategy Institute, recounts how he contacted Lavin on behalf of FormFactor, a small American technology firm whose patents were being stolen by a Korean competitor. A weakened FormFactor was considering drastic layoffs and being tempted by large grants to move its operations to Singapore. But the firm's founder, a fiesty Russian émigré named Igor Khandros, wanted to save as many American jobs as possible.

Naïvely, perhaps, he set out to enlist the U.S. government's help in cracking down on Korean intellectual property theft. So, accompanied by Prestowitz, he did the rounds in Washington. Lavin was more or less their last hope. Prestowitz writes: “If there was one person in the U.S. government responsible for promoting American exports and the interests of American business abroad, he was the guy. Imagine our sur-

prise then when he responded to our request for help by asking: 'Have you considered moving your operations to Korea or maybe Singapore?'

"Igor nearly fell out of his chair. We didn't bother to tell Lavin that we were talking to him in an effort to avoid moving the company, jobs, and technology out of the United States. ... He wouldn't have understood our values and intentions."

The anecdote goes some way toward explaining why America's trade deficits went from disastrous under Bill Clinton to totally catastrophic under George W. Bush. The result is what will surely be seen by future generations as the fastest implosion of any great power in history.

Again and again Prestowitz shows how for nearly 40 years the American economy has been sold down the river by a dogma-crazed American elite. It is hard to imagine a more depressing story—until you read *How the Economy Was Lost*, a compilation of fiery essays by Paul Craig Roberts.

The two authors share similar backgrounds in that they both served under Ronald Reagan in the "morning in America" years of the early 1980s. In his capacity as an assistant Treasury secretary, Roberts was a principal architect of supply-side economics; Prestowitz was

a top trade negotiator in Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Prestowitz was one of the earliest and most influential experts to hit the panic button about America's deteriorating trade position. His 1988 book *Trading Places* caused a sensation with its superbly written insider's account of Japanese intransigence toward countless American market-opening efforts. He went on to rank with James Fallows, Pat Choate, and Chalmers Johnson as one of the key American "revisionists" who inspired a brief, much publicized spell of hawkishness towards Japanese trade practices two decades ago.

Thereafter he seemed to lose heart. His standing among fellow trade hawks was notably dented in the mid 1990s when he reversed himself on NAFTA—although he had originally pronounced it a job killer, he sided in the end with the globalist lobby in helping ram it through Congress. (His earlier view has, of course, been resoundingly vindicated.) Perhaps even more disappointingly, he remained invisible in the late 1990s as Congress debated China's entry into the World Trade Organization. He now brands that "one of America's dumbest deals."

Roberts came to the trade debate much later than Prestowitz. As his

impassioned essays show, however, he has been making up for lost time. His epiphany came as part of a general disgust with George W. Bush's agenda, not least the Iraq invasion.

While Roberts's essays focus mainly on recent developments, Prestowitz takes a more expansive approach, devoting much space to an extended historical sketch of American trade policy over the last two centuries. The truth, as Prestowitz points out, is that in the country's years of fastest growth, American markets were protected by high tariffs.

As the United States unilaterally dismantled its trade barriers after World War II, other nations predictably increased their share of American markets. Yet this provoked little more than a yawn from the American establishment. He recounts a conversation in the mid 1980s with Herbert Stein, a former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Prestowitz voiced concern about Japan's increasing penetration of the American car market. A serene Stein replied, "They will sell us Toyotas and we'll sell them poetry."

This was an elliptical allusion to the then emerging consensus among economic policy analysts in the United States that manufacturing was yesterday's game. Thus nations like Japan and Germany were more or less doing Americans a favor by vaporizing America's "smokestack industries." As the world's leading economy, America supposedly no longer needed manufacturing, and the sooner its workers were redeployed in the all-digital postindustrial economy the better. Uniquely creative Americans would leave the "Rust Belt" behind to provide the world with advanced services such as computer software, financial engineering, various forms of consulting, product design, and scientific research.

As some of us showed at the time, this argument was based on trick logic and ignorance. Yet because it helped justify the elite's free-trade agenda, it continued to be widely promoted until the current crisis hit in 2008.

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One of the most obvious flaws in the postindustrialism story is that, in contrast with advanced manufacturing, most service industries are poor exporters. Worse, to the extent that certain advanced service products such as computer software can be exported, it has been clear all along that in an age of cheap, instantaneous communications, the jobs would rapidly gravitate to low-wage nations like India and Russia. Computer software has in fact proved even more vulnerable to outsourcing than advanced manufacturing. (Software writing is generally extremely

kept pace with America's over the last two decades. Japan lost ground only in the sense that its population growth was much slower than America's, causing a lag in total Japanese output.

What's more, there are strong grounds for believing that Japanese growth is calculated on more conservative accounting principles than America's. Certainly in many key aspects of consumer welfare Japan visibly outperformed the United States. Prestowitz points out, for instance, that Japan has raced ahead in telecommunications: there were recently about 40 million third-generation cell

argues convincingly that the world economy has changed in ways that render the classical case for free trade inapplicable. He repeatedly cites a 2001 landmark mathematical analysis in which Ralph Gomory and William Baumol holed the classical theory below the water line.

A major subplot in Roberts's book is the amazing growth of H-1B visas, by which corporations in industries like software can bring in thousands of workers from India and other poor nations to labor on American soil at wages far below U.S. norms. He points out that although such visas were originally conceived to address narrow cases where there was a real and serious shortage of capable American workers, they have been issued so promiscuously that they have depressed wage rates. Roberts asks a pertinent question: "What economist has ever heard of a labor shortage leading to flat or declining pay?"

Roberts's diagnosis is dire:

A country whose workforce is employed in domestic non-tradable services is a Third World country with nothing to export. How will the United States pay for its heavy dependence on imports of manufactured goods and energy? ... As long as narrow private interests can cloak themselves in free trade's claim of increased general welfare, the American economy will continue its relative and absolute decline, and American taxpayers will continue to bear the cost of workers displaced by offshoring and work visas.

Of these two authors, Roberts is clearly the more pessimistic. It would be nice to suggest he has overdone the gloom. Unfortunately, the unimpeachable quality of the evidence he brings to the discussion leaves little doubt that America's fate has already been sealed. ■

Eamonn Fingleton is the author of In Praise of Hard Industries: Why Manufacturing, Not the Information Economy, Is the Key to Future Prosperity.

U.S. CORPORATIONS ARE TAKING ON **THE ROLE OF TROJAN HORSES** IN AMERICA'S INCREASINGLY **FRAUGHT RELATIONS WITH CHINA.**

labor intensive, whereas advanced manufacturing is very capital intensive.)

Even many of postindustrialism's erstwhile proponents have come to admit that manufacturing still matters. Better late than never—but it is easier to destroy a nation's industrial base than to rebuild it.

China, of course, has notably employed the one-way free-trade policies by which Japan, Korea, and Taiwan earlier catapulted themselves to the leading edge in key manufacturing industries. Ominously, however, Prestowitz suggests that in the long run America's problem with China may turn out to be more political than economic. As he points out, U.S. corporations are taking on the role of Trojan horses in America's increasingly fraught relations with China. To maximize profits on their China-related activities, such corporations increasingly must pander to Beijing's authorities. One way of doing so is to manipulate American politics to suit China's growth agenda.

A disappointment in Prestowitz's analysis is that he has little to say about Japan. This is a missed opportunity: *pace* American press reports, Japan did not stagnate after the Tokyo stock market crashed in 1990. As Mark Skousen has pointed out, measured on a per capita basis Japan's GDP actually

phones in Japan versus just 1 million in the United States. And thanks to greater deployment of fiber-optic networks, the Internet runs about 16 times faster in Japan than in the United States. A slew of other facts could usefully have been added. Prestowitz makes no mention, for example, of the remarkable strides Japan has made in life expectancy since the 1980s. (The Japanese now outlive Americans by fully five years.)

Prestowitz also overlooks Japan's remarkable trade performance. In the teeth of two back-to-back supposed "lost decades," Japanese exporters have never performed better. Exports to China have done particularly well, with the result that Japan ranks virtually alone among major nations in enjoying a broadly balanced bilateral trade relationship with the new East Asian juggernaut—on China's numbers, Japan actually runs a bilateral surplus. Moreover, a so-called stagnant Japan boosted its overall current-account surplus more than threefold between 1989 and 2008. By contrast, a supposedly vigorous United States saw its current-account deficit balloon sixfold in the period.

Roberts's book is notable for the depth of his intellectual case against globalism. Although he regards himself to this day as a true free trader, he

[*Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth*, Oliver Hilmes, Yale University Press, 354 pages]

Wagner's Valkyrie

By R.J. Stove

IMAGINE IF BILLIONS of words had been published about Albert the Prince Consort but nothing of consequence about Queen Victoria. Such is the situation with Wagner historiography: the composer has been analyzed in stupefying depth, but the literature in any language—let alone English—dealing specifically with his relict Cosima is as slender as it has been largely fallacious. Part of the trouble lies in the sheer length of Cosima's lifespan. Born in 1837, she lived till 1930, and throughout her 47-year widowhood she wielded a veto over commentary about either her husband or herself. She could never altogether suppress stray voices of incisive disparagement, but Cosima exerted far more control over her husband's reputation than most artists' spouses ever attain.

For Wagner there had been certain musical precedents; for Cosima as estate-manager there were none. Earlier wives of great composers, even when avoiding poverty, had been content to die in obscurity. Bach's widow escaped outright hunger solely thanks to welfare payments, most of them from Leipzig's city council. Only Mozart's widow Constanze managed to make her relationship to genius a profitable one, and her reward was to be despised by her husband's biographers as little better than a greedy airhead.

Despising the imperious Cosima was not an option. She saw herself not just as custodian of Richard's legacy—above all in the festival town of Bayreuth—but as chief mourner at a never-ending funeral. She fired off commands to family members, friends, and foes alike with a diligence exceptional even by the

pre-telephone era's graphomaniac standards. To Bavaria's King Ludwig II she sent 127 letters and telegrams; to one of her daughters, Daniela, she wrote no fewer than 2,346 epistles. No detail of her husband's art was too trivial to attract her—usually censorious—concern. And no admirer of this art was so sycophantic that she could not cut him off at the kneecaps if he suddenly displeased her.

One persistently hostile journalist named Maximilian Harden concluded, in a reluctant tribute to her strong-arm tactics, "Bayreuth is the creation of her [Cosima's] own brain, and she alone is its destiny." That about sums it up. So overachieving a woman should have been a godsend for numerous scholarly biographers, surely; but no. Before the present study appeared, much of Bayreuth's archival material by or about Cosima had scarcely been looked at by researchers. Most previous books about her have been either novels—including one from 1939 entitled *The Young Cosima* by Australia's Henry Handel Richardson, to which for some reason Oliver Hilmes nowhere alludes—or hagiographies. At first, Cosima-related literature consisted largely of family-authorized exercises in pan-German

his mistress, Marie d'Agoult, than his itinerant impulses became irrepressible. Not once did he condescend to visit Cosima between her seventh and her 16th years. After being more or less dumped upon Liszt's patient mother, who gave her whatever family affection she had, Cosima was subjected to the remote-control tyranny of Liszt's new innamorata: Carolynne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, whose 24-volume theological *magnum opus* ended up on the Vatican's Index, and whose notions of child care consisted of inflicting on the child a governess fully comparable in ferocity to her counterparts in Victorian England.

Repeated reading of Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* helped keep Cosima sane, both in youth and later. (In her 39th year she confided to her diary her taste for "this strange ecstasy of suffering.") Eventually she paid back her father and stepmother with interest. When Liszt fell fatally sick, she refused to let him be given the last rites. She also helped to ensure that at the obsequies, as Hilmes writes, "not a note of Liszt's own music was heard," and no flag at Bayreuth would fly at half-mast. Carolynne had hoped that Liszt would be buried in Hungary, but Cosima would have none of that either. Within

THE IMPERIOUS COSIMA SAW HERSELF NOT JUST AS CUSTODIAN OF RICHARD'S LEGACY—ABOVE ALL IN THE FESTIVAL TOWN OF BAYREUTH—BUT AS CHIEF MOURNER AT A NEVER-ENDING FUNERAL.

humbug. Later efforts included *Cosima La Sublime* by the late French women's magazine editor Françoise Giroud, better known, ungallant critics maintained, for sporting Resistance medals well in excess of those which her actual Resistance record justified than for any feats of academic investigation.

"More or less everything about Cosima Wagner," as Hilmes notes, "seems extraordinary." She never recovered from the stigma of her, and her two siblings', birth out of wedlock. Scarcely had Franz Liszt fathered this brood upon

seven months of being thus vanquished, the once domineering Carolynne breathed her last. "I genuinely think," Cosima mewed sweetly to her daughter Daniela, "that the defeat that she suffered over the transfer of Grandpapa's remains dealt her a blow from which she was unable to recover. She had to submit, and with that she died."

Cosima's relations with her first husband, the brilliant and neurotic pianist-conductor Hans von Bülow, are best described in Lord Tennyson's words about Thomas and Jane Carlyle: "had he