

generation has the good fortune to live in a period when things fit together, when literature, for instance, is intimately bound up with life. The relationship is an intricate one in which art—and in this case specifically literature—both shapes and reflects your values and life style. This, of course, is what accounts for great literature and great societies, and the minute you hear a gaggle of academic critics begin to say something like the novel is dead, you can bet that your society has become a fractured one. And one in which, once the necessary inter-relationships are no longer possible, no first-rate literature will be produced. This does not mean that certain periods are too complex to give rise to literature. It simply means that in certain periods people become so caught up in the transient topical concerns of the day that they lose sight of the essentials, confuse the trivial with the significant. In such periods great literature is not possible, for great literature is about values, and in times such as the one we live in now, people cannot remember what values are.

Hemingway knew and he taught us. He knew what life was about. You begin with a head full of slush, as did, for instance, the characters in *The Sun Also Rises*, and the process of living, if it is to be a meaningful process, consists of clearing out that slush, narrowing things down. In the background, of course, is always a vague awareness of how it should be: "Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing you had it," says Jake Barnes. But the problem was, of course, how to get there. Jake and the other characters of *The Sun Also Rises* never quite made it. Thomas Hudson did. "Out of all the things you could not have there were some that you could have and one of those was to know when you were happy and to enjoy all of it while it was there and it was good."

Thomas Hudson—and Hemingway—had made the full trip. You begin, perhaps, by making a list of those things which are most important in life. If you're eighteen you may put down as many as fifty items, and you must try them all, for this is what it's all about, working your life down to manageable units after you've tasted everything. Then, in your thirties, you make that list again, and this time, if you've learned anything at all, there'll be about a dozen entries. It's through this winnowing process that one experiences and appreciates the fullness of life. Jake Barnes' list was a long one. Frederic Henry, walking out into the rain at the end of *A Farewell to Arms*, had a much shorter list (and does it strike anyone as significant that *Love Story*, a sort of classic-comics version of *Farewell to Arms*, has so surprisingly caught on among the urchins of this generation?), and Robert Jordan, the hero of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, having done the job expected to him, volunteers at the end of the novel to die. Jordan had had his money's worth and he was happy. The list was finally reduced to one item, by far the most important one.

It is this winnowing down process which forms the pattern for the body of Hemingway's works. And the whole pattern is repeated in *Islands in the Stream*. Work and pleasure, life and death, related

in the same way. Hudson knows that the single most important thing in life is to do something and do it well and take pride in it. How alien an idea today. Yet how important, for without work there is no pleasure. "You see," says Thomas Hudson of the cook Eddy, one of the most consistently admirable characters in *Islands*, "Eddy's happy because he does something well and does it every day." Eddy cooks well and takes pride in it, just as Hudson paints well and takes pride in it (and, of course, just as Hemingway wrote well and took pride in it).

If anything characterized Hemingway's life (and the life of his best characters) it was a sense of fierce joyousness. Sure, he drank like a fish and womanized. But he had earned the right to do so, and his understanding of the dignity of work allowed him to understand the joy of play. It was a hard lesson for many of us to learn, the crucial difference between celebration and dissipation. Some of us still too easily forget that without meaningful work, only the latter is possible.

Some of the other things—taste and sense, honesty and courage—were the only standards Hemingway ever demanded. And he demanded them of women just as much as men. As my suffragette wife points out, Kate Millett and her militant sisters steer clear of Hemingway, for in no sense (though he is perhaps the most masculine of our writers) could he be thought of as a male chauvinist. That whole business would have been about thirty-fifth on the list, crossed off long ago. The women in Hemingway's novels are judged only by how well they meet the few important standards. Lady Brett was a bigger and fuller character than any of the others in *The Sun Also Rises*; Frances Clyne, Robert Cohn's mistress, was a bitch, but only because she found herself stuck with an imitation man. Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* is the stronger of the two lovers, and although Maria is not well-done in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Pilar is one of the great figures in literature.

But there's already too much flapdoodle abroad about men vs women. Hemingway was concerned with essentials, and especially that last item on the list. This is not to suggest that he was, as the dons

forever blabble, morbidly preoccupied with death. It is to say, however, that he knew it was there and wasn't afraid to face it. Life is to death as work is to pleasure. Pleasure is valuable when you work well; death is meaningful only when you live well. Otherwise, it's a rather tasteless cosmic joke. Hudson lays dying at the end of *At Sea*, shot up in ambush. He'd known the ambush was there, but he felt it necessary to carry out his mission. And so he accepted the challenge, won, and was rewarded with the right kind of death. He could have avoided it all, I suppose, lived a few more years, and then died of lung cancer. But it's rather important not to live out a cowardly life.

It's time to stop. I've said only part of it. Hemingway taught us something, back in those days when it was still possible to learn from literature. And he reinforced the lesson by the way in which he practiced his art. Each novel is a tangible example of all those intangible but real values he represented. *Islands in the Stream* brought much of this back to me. I wish, of course, that he had been around to revise the novel, to make it as perfect as he would have been able to. And I also wish that his own life hadn't ended quite in the way it did. The perfect chance came in that plane crash in Africa. Hemingway somehow survived, but he probably shouldn't have. His time had come and he was cheated out of the kind of death he deserved. I admire the courage it took to commit suicide and I think it was proper. He could no longer work, pleasure was no longer possible, and had he hung on much longer he would have become a vegetable.

Still, I wish it could have been different. In the best short story Ray Bradbury ever wrote, he had a character in a time machine disguised as a Land Rover drive to Ketchum, Idaho, where Hemingway shot himself. The traveller picked up Hemingway and drove him back in time to Africa, where he dies on Kilimanjaro.

It would have been right. Yet somewhere, I suppose, Hemingway is getting a big chuckle out of the whole idea, thinking perhaps, of the last line of *The Sun Also Rises*, the best last line in American literature: "Isn't it pretty to think so."

John R. Coyne Jr.

The First Great President in the Last Great War

Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom

by James MacGregor Burns
Harocourt, Brace,
Janovich, \$10.00

Writing the history of a controversial public figure in a tumultuous era is a hazardous endeavor made all the riskier when the historian is himself something of a public figure in his own troubled time. Franklin D. Roosevelt possessed almost an impregnable character; only a very confident historian would attempt to penetrate its workings during World War II, what with the shifting political terrain of that era, the animosities he aroused, the devotion he inspired.

It must have been difficult for James MacGregor Burns, an erstwhile political activist, to write *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* during the sixties—a time which belied some of the wisdom of the New Deal without ushering in a more satisfying politics. The last decade has experienced the triumph of Rooseveltian liberalism in every sphere of American life. Yet the denouement has been bitterness and frustration. During the Eisenhower calm of the fifties, Burns could write a political

biography (Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox) which was first-rate. Writing in the sixties was not so easy for a Rooseveltian liberal.

In the early years of the sixties, John F. Kennedy restored Roosevelt's graceful ethos to the White House. In the middle years a genuine son of the New Deal, Lyndon B. Johnson, wheeled a surprising array of restyled New Deal legislation through Congress. Working the old Rooseveltian coalition and adroitly unbalancing budgets, he even followed his master's example in foreign policy with the Tonkin Gulf incident of 1964—an affair with a surprising likeness to Roosevelt's naval tactics in the North Atlantic in 1941. Yet the supposed recipients of all that welfare legislation, and those liberals who have made liberalism a fetish, ambushed him. In the later sixties, everything began to come apart, and has been coming apart ever since.

Johnson's legislation was unsatisfying and the tergiversations of the intellectuals exiled him to the Pedernales. Today that very White House which Roosevelt made into a cathedral of hope is for Richard M. Nixon an embattled bunker, from which he gingerly attempts to deal with Roosevelt's enraged constituents. Though Nixon has brought forth programs that the New Dealers could only have dreamed of, and his legislation has been more innovative than anything since Roosevelt's first hundred days of 1933, the ethnics snarl, students urge his impeachment, blue-collar workers follow their own muse, and the intellectuals—men who praised Roosevelt's idealism while recommending his pragmatism—deride Nixon's unsuitable moral vision while adjudging him politically devious. The elements of that constellation of interest groups which has for forty years received government's extraordinary attention is tearing itself apart. Any man who has—like Burns—grown up wise in the convictions of the New Deal, run for office on its principles (Burns ran for Congress), and lectured on politics in the academy, would have to be insulated not to feel disoriented by its sudden disesteem.

Burns is an excellent writer and a talented historian, but his active public life has not left him well insulated. He has had to overcome both a bewildering past and a disconcerting present, and the confusions in his narrative manifest his frustration. The author's theme is sound enough. Roosevelt, he writes, entered the war years with a divided mind. This is an extension of a theme from the author's earlier volume and deserves elaboration for many of the problems of the period, 1940-45, trace to FDR's divided conscience. In fact, the best explanation of the Cold War's origins (Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Origins of the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967) builds from a similar position.

Roosevelt was always crossed by contradictions. The education of an aristocrat does not often anticipate the experience of a politician. Roosevelt's patrician upbringing was secure and obviously quite special. From the eminence of Hyde Park, a young man living at the turn of the century came to view the world with

assuredness, optimism and a vague sense of suzerainty. Roosevelt's teachers inculcated self-righteousness, didacticism and a strong sense of what early Americans called "Republican virtue." Persons of his background needed not trouble themselves with introspection, for their thoughts were high-toned.

Yet when Roosevelt the proctor of the public interest ventured down into the grubby world of politics, he immediately learned that if he were to survive he had best put aside his moralism and pursue power. Unpleasant experiences at Harvard made him ambitious and disdainful of tradition. His desire for power encouraged a cunning which complemented his neglect for punctilio. All these qualities rushed him along in the political undercurrent of the twenties—an undercurrent which became the wave of the thirties, cresting with the New Deal, the modern liberal state characterized by enormous concentration of power, insouciance to tradition, ephemeral but potent moral concerns. Roosevelt's growth is a kind of Burkean nightmare, and it is little wonder Burns finds him complicated and contradictory. Unfortunately such complications and contradictions have blurred the vision of an historian who is himself unclear as to the soundest means of statecraft. Long portions of this six-hundred-page book simply sprawl.

It is *Federalist Ten* which raises most poignantly for Americans the questions of whether politicians should be "Representatives, whose enlightened views and virtuous sentiments render them superior to local prejudices" or merely obliging voices for passing majorities. Should Americans in 1940 have elected Roosevelt for his mind or his mouth? James Madison would answer that citizens should have elected him for his "enlightened views." Burns does not seem to have an answer—though the question nags him. Early in his narrative Burns celebrates the virtuosity of FDR's opportunism. As the German menace grows and FDR awaits a bellicose shift in public opinion, Burns suddenly takes on a querulous tone. Members of Roosevelt's cabinet urged the President "to take the

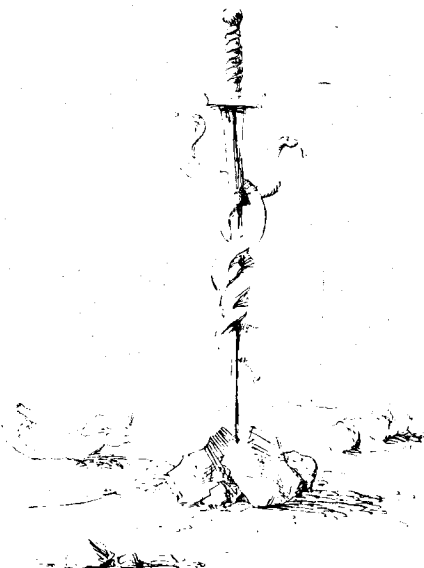
lead" against Germany, but "the President would not lead." As Burns puts it, "The master interpreter to the American people of complex problems at this point seemed to have lost his touch. As usual the President was trying to gauge public opinion, and as usual public opinion was blurred and drifting."

I use the phrase "querulous tone" advisedly, for it is Burns' tone which manifests displeasure with Roosevelt's prewar leadership. In this whole discussion, extending over 150 pages, Burns is perplexingly ambiguous. If he has an opinion on the proper relation of the President to his constituents he is not saying what it is. The history he is writing about, and the later history in which he played a minor role, has confused him and this confusion reveals his own fretful dissatisfaction with Roosevelt.

Consider the author's treatment of events of 1941 in the North Atlantic. In October of that year German submarines torpedoed the USS *Kearney*, and FDR's ringing speech to Americans stopping just short of demanding a declaration of war stirred the American people into a thunderous snore. Legislation to revise the constricting neutrality laws cleared the Senate (4 November) by only 50 to 37 and the House by 212 to 194. The *Reuben James* was torpedoed, with loss of 96 of its crew (Burns claims 115 were lost). Still Congress and the people were unmoved. Burns asserts that "the United States seemed deadlocked—its President handcuffed, its Congress irresolute, its people divided and confused." In such doldrums Burns, the apologist for FDR's opportunism, cannot fault the great opportunist's inaction—there were no opportunities. But from his tone it is obvious that Burns attributes the languid state of public opinion in and out of Congress to FDR: "the immediate proximate reason lay with the President of the United States. He had been following a middle course...; he had been stranded midway between his promise to keep America out of war and his exhortation of Nazism...He had called Hitlerism inhuman, ruthless...He had even issued the ultimate warning: that if Hitler won in Europe, Americans would be forced into a war on their own soil...Now—by early November 1941—there seemed to be nothing more he could say. There seemed to be little more he could do."

Exactly! If there is "no more he could say...no more he could do," how can Burns lay the fault with the President? How much control does a President have? If FDR agreed with Madison he would have spoken forthrightly in favor of aiding the Allies, even to the reaches of war with the Axis, he would run for re-election in 1940 frankly proclaiming his "enlightened views and virtuous sentiments"; but he would no longer be Burns' great opportunist and—remembering the power of isolationists and other antiwar elements—he might no longer be President. Burns cannot have it both ways.

If a President is an opportunist he will have to follow a policy of *laissez faire* with the American people. He can discreetly urge them to act, but if they fail to respond he must patiently await events. Conversely a President may force public



Monument to the
Liberalized Abortion Laws

opinion to his enlightened views, but if the public refuses to follow, he either loses his freedom or they lose theirs. Bearing in mind the fate of our most recent Rooseveltian opportunist, President Johnson, I sympathize with Burns' befuddlement. But Burns is befuddled.

And the confusions continue. After criticizing FDR's reluctance to lead and then stating that FDR was unable to lead, the author commences to discuss morality in politics—a preposterous topic if ever there was one, but an interest Burns insists on dragging through this biography. FDR was “assuming the imperfect moral stand of condemning Hitlerism as utterly evil and bent on world domination without openly and totally combating it, he faced a thicket of secondary but irksome troubles.”

I am always a little uneasy when scholars begin elucidating “moral stands” as reasons for political action. One statesman's morality is another's atrocity. Yesterday's moral missions are today's abominations. Our trials in Vietnam should have presented Burns with evidence enough that thickets of “irksome but secondary problems” are not obviated by moral stands. Though I am unsure as to what Burns considers a “perfect moral stand,” it does seem that a man could possess enough fissionable material for the moral stand of an archangel and still refrain from “openly and totally combating” evil—especially if that man were President of the United States.

After all the American constitutional process does (as Senator Fulbright reminds us) restrict the action of the executive even in matters of foreign policy. Here Burns is caught in the present's conflict with the past, and if we want evidence of how the tumult of the sixties has done violence to those New Deal verities Burns once endorsed we need look no further.

In the early sixties the aging Rooseveltian liberals urged that the chief executive receive increased power over foreign policy. As Senator Fulbright said in 1961, “the overriding problem of inadequate presidential authority in foreign affairs, however, derives not from internal relationships within the executive branch, but from the ‘checks and balances’ of congressional authority in foreign relations.”

Then came Vietnam. Today the Fulbrights are urging Congress to limit the chief executive's power over foreign policy. Those individuals who only ten years ago wished to rearrange constitutional process want today to restore it. For a Roosevelt biographer and card-carrying liberal such an alteration must have appeared insidious. Burns' problems with American constitutional process run deeper than the vagrant priorities of liberal convention, and they flaw his biography of America's wartime President.

Some years ago Burns while arguing for changes in the American system of government (*The Deadlock of Democracy*) introduced the theory that America's two-party system is actually a four-party system, composed of Presidential Democrats, Presidential

Republicans, Legislative Democrats and Legislative Republicans. Those parties resident in Congress are generally provincial, while those in the executive are more cosmopolitan. This division seems contrived. Most evidence indicates that the national parties are loose amalgamations of fifty autonomous organizations. At best Burns' thesis is bizarre, and most political scientists dismiss it. Unfortunately he has brought this whole daft contrivance into Roosevelt: *The Soldier of Freedom*, and if his yearnings for a more importunate prewar President render his grasp of American democratic process suspect, his insistence on this singular notion of American politics reinforces the suspicion.

Thus far the confusions I have found in Burns' book are confusions arising from shaken convictions or at least issues he has not resolved. Two final points perhaps indicate that even his recording of events is unfocused.

When I first read his version of America's drift toward war with Japan, I felt he had merely underemphasized an issue which I am convinced had crucial significance—to wit, the question of oil. By the late thirties eighty per cent of Japan's

oil came from the United States. When Roosevelt for strategic reasons curtailed that oil flow in 1940-41, Japan moved toward war. From the summer of 1940, Washington was embargoing the shipment of strategic materials to Japan, especially high octane gasoline. Japan now looked to the Dutch East Indies for oil, though Japanese planners realized that to take the Dutch Indies meant war with the United States.

On 27 January 1941 Admiral Yamamoto began planning for Pearl Harbor. When on 26 July 1941, FDR froze Japanese assets, both nations moved into a collision course. The President nationalized the Philippine army, making Douglas MacArthur commanding general of Far Eastern Forces; Japanese planners drafted plans for attacks on the Malay Peninsula, the Philippines and Hawaii. Though the bewildering lurches of diplomacy between governments, and strategic disagreements within governments, shrouded reality, the fact remains that from the summer of 1940 powerful elements in Japan were looking greedily to the south rather than the north (that is, to Russian Siberia which of course became

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highly vulnerable when Germany attacked Russia in June 1941).

The Japanese, then, were anticipating war with America. Burns, however, does not make this point clear, and merely confounds things when he writes that: "Eventually an open conflict with Germany must come; if Japan had not yet entered the war, perhaps it would stay out for the same reason it had kept out of the Russo-German conflict." Indeed America might go to war with Germany; but Japan could not remain neutral for the same reason it remained neutral with Russia, because Japan was planning war with America—the strongest elements in Japan wanted war with America. With exception of Foreign Minister Matsuoka no important Japanese desired war with Russia. The two nations had signed a neutrality pact (13 April 1941); Japan desired oil in the south, not war in Siberia.

This curious slovenliness in the author's discussion of the origins of war with Japan seeps into his treatment of the origins of the Cold War. The issue itself is an exceedingly hot item in historical circles at the present time, due to the work of the New Left revisionists who ascribe the Cold War not to Soviet truculence but to avaricious or ill-advised American liberals. I find the new revisionists tendentious and occasionally dishonest (the September *Alternative* will feature a thoughtful account of this controversy by a gifted young historian).

Unfortunately, though most historians disagree with the new assault on Rooseveltian foreign policy, few have bothered to refute it. Burns is no exception. In spite of his claim that this Cold War issue is a "subtheme" of his biography, he does almost nothing with it. In light of the work of men like George F. Kennan, Burns is really not telling us much when he says that: "While the roots of post-World War II hostility between Russia and the West are of course multifold, lying deep in Russian, European, and American history, I have concluded that the decisive turn toward the Cold War came during the war...." There are formidable arguments against the revisionist position. This book would have been a splendid opportunity to set, or reset, the record. But Roosevelt's legacy seems decrepit today, and Burns is not sure he wants to defend it.

All this is not to say that the book is without merit or that it is uninteresting. I recommend it, shortcomings notwithstanding. No American historian has depicted Roosevelt's life during the Second World War with Burns' eloquence and care for detail. No other historian whom I have read conveys so sensitively the temper of the American people in the early forties. His major theme is sound, and his lesser themes—that the third term, rather than the earlier New Deal, transformed our government into "modern presidential government," and that the war years worked vast and subtle changes on American society—are informative and convincing. The author is an artful writer, and I believe a man of high ideals—the only problem is that those ideals have lost their magic.

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Dream from the Glands

Revolution as Theatre

by Robert Brustein
Liveright, \$1.95 (paper),
\$5.95 (cloth)

"Something," Robert Brustein says in the "Introduction" to this collection of essays, "is eating me. I have the conviction, and it grows rather than lessens, that we are living in a profoundly decadent society. Worse, I suspect that some of the very things that are taken as symbols of transformation are themselves further signs of decline." Among the things which many people take as "symbols of transformation" or liberation or revolution but that Brustein sees as "further signs of decline" are the thoughtlessness, impulsiveness and meanness of the New Left and the attack on professionalism in the universities (an attack that often is led by members of the New Left).

In the book's title essay, Brustein says that, in America, a paradoxical situation now exists. On the one hand, there is increasing political repression. The Nixon Administration is unresponsive to protest while calling for social change and powerful enough to ignore and even suppress its opponents. Yet, on the other hand, there is unprecedented freedom of expression — unprecedented not just for America but perhaps for the whole world. America, Brustein contends, is a "culturally open, politically closed society."

Brustein believes that, given political repression, freedom of expression should be most valuable not to political activists but rather to "artists and thinkers." But, at least for the time being, many artists and thinkers have stopped doing serious aesthetic or intellectual work (often in order to do work that is more lucrative or politically useful), and the people who have exploited most fully the new freedom of expression have been "militants and radicals." Not only have militants and radicals been free to say and, to a large extent, do what they want, but as a result of a new receptivity in the mass media to radical political views, they have been seen and heard by millions of people.

(I should stress here that the mass media have given new attention and prominence to "radical" and not all "unfashionable" or "unpopular" political views. For example, traditional conservative as well as libertarian political views have received relatively little mass media exposure. This is not wholly the result, as some people suppose, of the liberal political bias of workers in the mass media. The fact is, if mass media organizations are to survive, they must attract and hold mass audiences, and what these audiences want above all is entertainment. Many conservatives are pleasant but they are not entertaining. They tend to engage in such boring activities as reasonable discussions in peaceful settings. This, many radicals sense, will never do. Such activities will not sell newspapers or raise a network's Nielsen ratings and, therefore, they will

not receive much coverage. But visually exciting and socially outrageous events that are part of ongoing political controversy will receive lots of coverage, and so many radicals, who if they want nothing else want attention, stage such events. Conservatives like to talk about the free market, but at least as far as the entertainment industry is concerned, radicals know what sells.)

Brustein feels that freedom of speech and access to the media have provided radicals with a magnificent chance to present ideas and programs, but what many radicals have done instead is to furnish entertainment, with a special emphasis on violent rhetoric. This rhetoric is intended neither to enlighten nor to persuade anyone and according to Brustein, it indicates that the radicals are not strong but weak and that they possess no coherent ideology. The radicals, however, do possess "passions" and this explains their "weakness for rhetoric and gestures, rather than programs and organization."

In Brustein's view, the radicals' tough talk and ludicrous posturing amounts not to revolution but to theatre, "a product of histrionic personalities and staged events." The actors in this theatre include not only militants and radicals but also some "successful, wealthy liberals." From out of the ranks of these liberals comes what Brustein calls "the cocktail party revolutionary": "Trailing excitement through the corridors of universities, museums, courtrooms, and publishing houses, always certain (in Saul Bellow's words) to enact his 'revolutionary passions against a background of institutional safety,' he dreams fantasies of violence within a context of hedonism, usually stopping short of physical danger or property loss."

Brustein sees decent and intelligent men "stranded between two ignorant armies [I take it he means the Left and the Right], each dedicated to obliterating the other, each identifying everyone else as the enemy." He asks "what to do," and he answers that, to begin with, there must be a recognition that political revolution in America is "a stage idea" and a rejection of those who play at acting out this idea. Brustein maintains that the only revolution that is at all feasible in America at this time is "a revolution of character," and this revolution would require "an act of moral transcendence, humane intelligence, and deliberate will." It is not clear to me what the content of such an act would be, but presumably it would not be what either radicals or reactionaries have in mind.

While American society needs "a revolution of character," American universities need a defense of professionalism. Brustein roughly defines professionalism as "a condition deter-