

had the misfortune to be a military genius as well as a good composer and passable writer of French prose. And since Hitler extolled his military abilities (though not his nationalism), Frederick must surely have been a proto-Nazi. The reasoning is open to question, but recurs with regularity, especially in tasteless reports about Frederick's bones being dragged from a West German castle (where his descendant placed them after World War II) and reinterred, with state honors, at Potsdam. Both the journey and reinterment have been condemned by Western journalists (as well as by Thomas

Mann's usually intelligent son, respected historian Colo Mann) as an ominous evocation of Germany's militaristic past.

Perhaps the Germans could avoid a repetition of this contretemps if they could figure out the historical figures whom they believe are worthy of note. Such a list might eventually include Brandt, Marx, and Bertolt Brecht, among other interwar German Stalinists. A list of this kind would not be hard to compile, for all the historians of my acquaintance whom the Germans have paid to study and teach in their country hold proper views on this

subject. In fact, I have never known an American scholar of German history who did not leave his host speaking of that "pathological nation" with that irredeemably wicked history. The Germans' record of support for their loudest detractors may bear witness to their collective masochism, but it could also help identify those who are able to provide acceptable role models for a nation seeking to "overcome the past." In the meantime, there will be more finger-wagging about Old Fritz—and about others who have gone from being good to bad Germans.

—Paul Gottfried

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Back in the days when Southern merchants had to take the Ku Klux Klan seriously, the knights of the Invisible Empire liked to play a neat little trick on a store owner who had strayed too far from the path of racial rectitude the secret society demanded of him. Several Klansmen in plain clothes would drop by the store and leave calling cards among the items of merchandise on display. When the merchant or his clerks found the cards later, they would read, on one side, the polite inscription, "You have just been visited by the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan." Turning it over, they would see another, more ominous message: "How would you like another visit?"

In October 1990, fresh from winning 60 percent of the white vote in Louisiana's senatorial election and forcing the Republican candidate to withdraw, former Klansman David Duke called on the U.S. Senate. The occasion was the Senate's effort to override President Bush's veto of the so-called "Civil Rights Bill of 1990." Brooding silently in the gallery above the Senate floor, Mr. Duke didn't leave any cards, burn any crosses, or lynch any lawmakers, but the senators below nevertheless understood the message. By one vote they failed to override the veto, and the Civil Rights Bill died. They didn't want another visit.

But that was less than a month before one of those nasty little inconveniences of American government known as

congressional elections, and even without Mr. Duke's presence in the gallery, it's unlikely the senators would have proceeded to pass the bill over the veto. In November, Senator Jesse Helms won reelection after deploying on television a savage advertisement attacking his black opponent's support of affirmative action, quotas, minority set-asides, and the Civil Rights Bill itself, and in California Pete Wilson won the governorship by making similar noises about white racial discontent. For all its flaws, nothing concentrates the mind of a sitting politician so wonderfully as an approaching election.

By January 1991, however, the crisis was over. There would be no election for another two whole years, and so literally the first thing the new Congress did was to reintroduce the same bill. Last spring, the House again passed it, and Mr. Bush, who never fails to mention the bill without swearing that he really wants to pass some kind of civil rights measure but just not this one, again threatens to veto it.

The House passed the bill by exactly the same margin as last year and therefore failed to cough up sufficient votes to override yet another veto. For opponents of the measure, that might seem to be good news, but in the absence of an impending election, celebration is unwarranted. No matter how concentrated their minds were in the fall of 1990, politicians characteristically suffer from short attention spans, and it may

require some further mental concentration on their part for them to remember who it is they really work for.

Nor, perhaps, can we rely on Mr. Bush to cast his veto as he did before. Even as he slew the civil rights beast in its legislative cave in 1990, he was preparing to violate his most vocal pledge against raising taxes, and his blood-oaths of another veto can be taken no more seriously than his now notorious line in 1988 about "read my lips." Mr. Bush may do a mean Clint Eastwood when he's dealing with Saddam Hussein, but when it comes to domestic affairs, he's Alan Alda.

Moreover, the pressures on the President from the bowels of his own party and its allies are such that he may wobble. Earlier this year, the Business Roundtable, a gaggle of Big Business managers ever ready to do deals with the hard left, sought to make friendly with the civil rights elite to push the main features of the Democratic bill through. The bill's close regulation of hiring and promotion practices within private business firms would create burdens mainly on small, Middle American enterprises, and the commodores of high capitalism have ever been prepared to pitch their smaller brethren over the topsides. As the *Congressional Quarterly* pointed out in trying to explain why Big Business favored a civil rights bill that would place legal and political restrictions on its own employment practices, "companies such as AT&T

and American Express could gain the good will of working with civil rights groups and the opportunity to address their interests in the bill. Public relations is important to consumer-driven businesses such as AT&T, which in 1989 was threatened with a boycott during labor talks."

Big Business, furthermore, is also getting dressed for the day when whites will be a minority in the United States, and, unlike some people, its hard-eyed managers know very well that the racial and demographic revolution is going to change some things. William Coleman, who was President Ford's transportation secretary and is now chairman of the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund, is pretty explicit about this. "A chief executive officer of a major corporation today has to realize that by the year 2000 more than half of his work force will be women and/or minorities," he says. "It's in their best interest to get the best qualified people."

The eagerness of corporate magnates to clink their glasses with the civil rights elite, even at the expense of small business, the qualifications of white male workers, and the freedom of their own firms, was matched by the defection from Mr. Bush's ranks of Missouri's Republican Senator John Danforth and a flying squad of liberated Republicans last summer. Mr. Danforth, after the House failed to muster enough votes to override a veto of the Democrats' civil rights bill this year, sponsored his own bill in opposition to both the President's and the Democrats'. If Mr. Bush doesn't buy the terms of the Danforth measure, the Missouri Republican and his band of stalwarts could help override his veto in the Senate.

And, finally, Mr. Bush's own bill is not all that different in basic concept from what the Democrats are pushing. The major objection to the Democratic measure is that it would require employers to prove that they're not discriminating in hiring practices on the basis of race and sex. It reverses five Supreme Court decisions that relieved employers of that burden. (It's amazing, after all the whining during the Warren and Burger eras that the Court's rulings were the voice of God, how quickly Congress can gut the Court's decisions if they transgress the

divine revelations of the civil rights scriptures.) Though Democrats make much of the absence of the word "quota" in their legislation, Mr. Bush is no doubt correct when he argues that their bill's requirement that employers would have to prove they're not discriminating means in effect that businesses would have to establish racial and gender quotas.

But, as liberal pundit Michael Kinsley rather gleefully points out, Mr. Bush's own bill does pretty much the same thing. While the Democrats' measure demands that employers prove that hiring standards have "significant and manifest relationship to . . . job performance," Mr. Bush's bill would require them to prove that a hiring practice "serves in a significant way . . . legitimate employment goals." The opacity of such weasel-words as "manifest" and "significant" is such that whole armies of bureaucrats, lawyers, and judges can make sport with them for decades, and both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans nowadays don't even blink at passing federal legislation that prescribes what "goals" employers must have, whether their "goals" are "legitimate" or not, and how the "legitimate goals" must be legally fulfilled.

The whole upshot is the very unpleasant truth that Republicans and mainstream conservatives are no more reliable than the hard left when it comes to resisting the perpetual revolution that "civil rights" involves. Wedded to an ideology that espouses "equality of opportunity" as the sole legitimizing principle of the "American experiment" and to the system of produce-and-consume capitalism that the egalitarian slogan is supposed to justify, Republicans care for property rights and limited government only insofar as they can be persuaded that these are effective instruments of the *summum bonum* of economic growth and mass affluence. Married to corporate and political interests that are themselves dependent on immigrants and minorities as workers, consumers, and voters, the Republican Party and mainstream conservatives are unable to resist the demographic, racial, political, and cultural revolution these interests and their underclass allies drive.

But many Middle Americans who

have long since tumbled to the Democrats' prostration to special interests and elites seem to remain blind to the same phenomenon among Republicans. Last June, just before the House passed the Democrats' bill, the *Washington Post* interviewed white ethnic workers in southwest Chicago, the location of "trim 1950's style neighborhoods that are home to thousands of city workers and utility company employees." The debate about the civil rights bill there, reported the *Post*, concerns "more than a political struggle" between Democrats and Republicans. "It's about who gets hired and who gets promoted, who gets ahead enough to send his kids to college and who gets left behind."

The Democrats, city fire fighter Mike Callaghan told the *Post*, are "creating a new class of the downtrodden, and that's us. The guys they are stepping on are middle-class white Americans, and we are leaving in droves to vote for the Republican Party." Faced with the disintegration of their culture and their way of life, citizens like Mr. Callaghan now encounter the last, logical turn of the leviathan state's meat grinder in the politically engineered destruction of their jobs and careers and the material security the leviathan has always claimed to guarantee them.

But Mr. Callaghan ought to be advised that George Bush, the Business Roundtable, Senator Danforth, and the other chiefs in the Republican wigwam aren't very different from their Democratic rivals and that simply changing parties won't save Middle American scalps. Mr. Bush, of course, will make sure that Mr. Callaghan knows all about Willie Horton and the Pledge of Allegiance and will wave plenty of yellow ribbons to stir authentic Middle American patriotic juices. But after the President wins his vote, his mind will wander off to the New World Order, a thousand points of light, and other luminescent cow droppings that do nothing to protect the core of American civilization from its coming cultural and economic dispossession. If the "new class of the downtrodden" in America's suburbs and farms wants to save itself from that destruction, it will have to do more than vote Republican. One visit, it turns out, wasn't enough. How would Washington like to have another? <



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Western Is as Western Does

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"People first, place second," William Faulkner wrote; while Ford Madox Ford—whose last book was *The March of Literature*, described by its author as a survey of world literature from Confucius to Conrad—believed that great writing transcended not only national and cultural boundaries but those of time itself. There is, nevertheless, descriptably such a thing as English or Russian or French or American literature; and, within the last category, New England and Southern and Western literature, provided we do not attempt to define these according to preconceived notions but are willing to take them as we find them, while recognizing that they are marked by generalized characteristics shared by the individual works to a greater or lesser degree. For the most part, any debate concerning what is and what is not a "Southern" or a "Western" novel is almost certain to be as trivial as it is futile and boring, but that does not mean that the Southern or Western novel does not exist.

In the present number of *Chronicles*, the subject of which is Western writing, Gregory McNamee considers the question of the American West as a literary colony of the American East. He means by this the exploitation by Eastern publishers and readers of the Westerner's portion of the raw material of experience that is the literary capital of any literary tradition, but there is another sense as well in which the East may be said to have colonized the West, and that is by the great number of writers it has exported here. "Like most literary Westerners," Edward Abbey wrote of Mary Austin, "[she] was born in the east—east of the Mississippi. . . ." He was right, of course. What J. Gordon Coogler wrote exaggeratedly of the South ("Alas, for the South! Her books have grown fewer— / She never was much given to literature") is, in its second line if not in its

first one, a fair description of the West, where for reasons that are wholly understandable people have historically had little time to spare for the bozart. Abbey himself was a native of Home, Pennsylvania; and from Owen Wister to Thomas McGuane—but excluding Wallace Stegner and A.B. Guthrie, Jr., Harvey Fergusson and Eugene Manlove Rhodes—your typical Western writer is an Easterner in bison's clothing. On the other hand, Willa Cather, who grew up in Nebraska, moved to New York City where she lived in Greenwich Village for the rest of her life and became an opera fan. Are we therefore to consider the author of *O Pioneers!* an Eastern writer? You tell me: I don't know, and frankly I don't care. So far as I am concerned, what has a Western setting, derives from Western experience, and is written by somebody who has actually set foot in the West is Western literature—provided, of course, that it is literature at all.

It is Western experience, finally, that most distinguishes Western from other categories of American literature; and it is primarily that experience, rather than the literary treatment of it, that has denied it, especially in the East, the wider readership that it had lost by the time of the young Wallace Stegner and perhaps as early as the heyday of Frank Norris. Long before the earliest of the stock-in-trade "Westerns" appeared, Mark Twain's *Roughing It* and Bret Harte's stories were major publishing successes along the Northeast seaboard, which had not yet developed its prissy distaste for life as it is lived west of the Delaware River. The rise of the "Western" novel, intervening between Stephen Crane's career and Willa Cather's, has been blamed for alienating Eastern (meaning "sophisticated") sensibilities from all Western writing, but even if that were so it is insufficient explanation for the endemic uninterest of back-East folk in every aspect of Western culture and history, except those which (like environmental damage or race relations on the

Chilton Williamson, Jr. is senior editor for books at Chronicles.