

Times of London, where he came under the editorial wing of Francis Wyndham, a legend in British journalism. Chatwin ranged far, and in his reportorial wanderings interviewed Indira Gandhi and André Malraux (among others), all the while reinventing the travel genre. Remembering Hemingway's advice to a young writer to ditch journalism as soon as one can, Chatwin took a sabbatical in 1974, leaving Wyndham a terse note reading: "Gone to Patagonia."

It was Chatwin's long-held ambition to visit the sparsely populated, 800,000-square-mile amorphous region in the southern reaches of Argentina and Chile, ending at Tierra Del Fuego: the "Land's End" of the Americas. The fruit of his four-month sojourn was *In Patagonia* (1977), a potpourri of history, archaeology, anthropology, and paleontology, seasoned with his usual dollop of chaotic travel method. The book was an international bestseller and won its author numerous awards, including Britain's 1978 Hawthornden Prize. To this day, it inspires legions of less talented writers and ordinary trekkers clutching their dog-eared paperback copies, reinforcing the idea that the best way to cheapen a pristine place with commercialization is to write well of it.

Chatwin's late 70's trips to Brazil and West Africa resulted in the short novel *The Viceroy of Ouidah* (1980), an historical fiction whose main character is the real-life Francisco Felix De Souza, a rags-to-riches-and-back-to-rags figure involved in the 19th-century transatlantic slave trade. This dark novella has been compared to the works of Conrad.

In 1987, Chatwin published *The Songlines*, finally putting to good use his theory of nomads: that is, how certain tribes living in some of the world's most inhospitable places managed to endure, and even to thrive, for centuries as empires and nation-states crumbled around them. According to Nicholas Shakespeare, the aborigines of the Australian outback were for Chatwin "a structure on which to hang not only his nomad theories, but more or less everything else in his notebooks . . . whether [noted] in an Afghan bazaar, a Sudanese desert or a New York drawing room." The 80's also saw the publication of *On the Black Hill* and *Utz*, two novels that garnered critical acclaim.

At the same time, the author's growing fame encouraged his worst excesses. Sexual tourism resulted in an HIV-positive

diagnosis in Zurich in 1986. Chatwin refused to accept it; until his death three years later, he steadfastly insisted that he was suffering a chronic infection caused by the bite of a "Chinese bat." During those years, Chatwin struggled to put together a collection of miscellaneous pieces called *What Am I Doing Here* (published posthumously), before dying in Nice surrounded by his wife and a few close friends.

Bill Croke writes from Cody, Wyoming.

Kissing the Toad

by Jeffrey Meyers

The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Picasso, Provence, and Douglas Cooper

by John Richardson

New York: Random House;
318 pp., \$26.95



John Richardson, the brilliant biographer of Picasso, resembles (by his own account) those charming and attractive young men of limited means and boundless ambition—right out of the novels of Stendhal and Balzac—who use any means to make their way in the world. The son of an English soldier, educated at Stowe school and the Slade School of Art, Richardson was invalidated out of the army in World War II. After failing as a painter, and with a trust fund of only \$500 a year, he toiled away for a time as an industrial designer and journalist.

In 1949, when he was 25 years old, Richardson met Douglas Cooper, "a stout pink man in a loud checked suit." Cooper (1911-84), the homosexual son of an Australian tycoon who had made his fortune in gold and real estate, was obsessed with Picasso, Braque, Léger, and Gris, and had the finest collection of modern art in England. (It would now be worth about half a billion dollars.) A repulsive rotten pear of a man who looked for all the world like Henry Kissinger, Cooper was consumed with self-hatred and seemed to identify with the screeches, self-display, and wanton havoc of the peacocks that decorated the gardens of his lavish French château. A witty and clever connoisseur of art and artists, Cooper—who had hoped to see

more amputees in postwar Germany—was a nasty piece of work. Both arrogant and sycophantic, he was also petty, malicious, spiteful, overbearing, greedy, and dishonest.

When someone displeased him, he would ring him up and shriek: "You filthy little sh-!" Ironically enough, this old scourge of the art world had, before Richardson revived him, been virtually forgotten. In a crucial passage, Richardson writes that, when they first returned to Cooper's house in a wasp-colored Rolls Royce and Cooper made the inevitable pass:

Out of courtesy and curiosity, I lurched upstairs after him. . . . Alcohol overcame my initial revulsion. A kiss from me, I fantasized, would transform this toad into a prince. . . . However, Douglas turned out to be as rubbery as a Dalí biomorph. No wonder he was mad at the world. This realization triggered a rush of compassion, which enabled me to acquit myself on this ominous night. . . . For the next twelve years Douglas would play on my compassion, alternating cajolery with brute force, psychic cunning with infantile bellowing. The tension was often excruciating, but the . . . bond forged out of a passionately shared experience of works of art made it all worthwhile.

Richardson seems to have been driven less by compassion than by his desire for a hedonistic existence (back in London, after a luxurious trip to Holland, his "hitherto humdrum life became a round of pleasure") and, as the novelist Angus Wilson noted, by a "fixation on worldly success." To achieve these goals, Richardson forfeited his personal freedom and frequently suffered public humiliation. When he offered his own opinions on art, Cooper would scream: "How dare you pontificate to me about Léger!" and, as if he were a houseboy, order him to get their guests a drink.

The toad never turned into a prince, and Richardson certainly earned his keep. The biggest payoff was friendship with Cooper's friend Pablo Picasso. "For me this would be the greatest possible privilege," Richardson states, "and it would enable me, decades later, to embark on my biography of the artist with more insight and sympathy than would otherwise have been possible." Indeed,

when he was working on a study of Picasso's portraits and going through hundreds of photographs with him, the artist "pointed out the iconographical complexities involved [and revealed] how certain images represented not only Dora Maar but also her predecessor, Marie Thérèse, as well as Lee Miller and Inez, the maid."

The Picasso that emerges from this book (foreshadowing the later volumes of Richardson's biography) is small and delicate, with unassuming courtesy and a radiant smile. He had to be surrounded by an entourage who believed in him and his work. He received or refused visitors, playing them off against each other in kingly fashion. When eating fried octopus, he would wipe his oily fingers on his bald pate to make his hair grow. He loved to get unusual gifts and generously gave away his own drawings. (Cooper kept all those given to both himself and Richardson.) Like a magician, Picasso could transform old rubbish into sculpture. His astonishing personal magnetism lasted right into his 90's, and he would feed on the energy of his followers and use it to fuel a night's work in his studio. Superstitious about the merest mention of death, he always remained an exile from Spain. Richardson describes him in the frontier town of Port Bou, "glowering at his beloved country, a few hundred yards away, which he had been unable to visit for almost twenty years and would never visit again."

Just as Fitzgerald observed that Hemingway "needs a new woman for each big book," so Dora Maar, one of Picasso's many mistresses, said that when the woman in his life changed, "virtually everything else changed: the style that epitomized the new companion, the house or apartment they shared, the poet who served as a supplementary muse, the *tertulia* (group of friends) that provided the understanding and support he craved, and the dog that rarely left his side." But Picasso devoured women like a minotaur. He reduced Dora to tears, long after he'd left her, by compelling her to show Richardson an old sketchbook that portrayed her sexual organs, reasserting his rights over her and turning her back into a tearful victim. After he'd left Françoise Gilot, he severely tested the limits of her successor's devotion. No matter how callously he treated Jacqueline Roque, "she referred to him as her God, spoke to him in the third person and frequently kissed his hands." After his death, she shot her-

self.

Richardson's fascinating, stylish, and perceptive portraits are etched with acid. Writer Bruce Chatwin wore "a supercilious smirk on his pretty face." Sir John Rothenstein, director of the Tate Gallery, was a toady and a smug chauvinist. Angus Wilson moved from writing catty short stories to turning out turgid *romans à thèse*. Henry Moore's assistants would blow up his "maquettes into something airport-sized, or shrink them into saleable Kleinkunst, or slice them, eye-catchingly, in half." The pain and degradation of Francis Bacon's imagery was based on "the violence that he challenged his lovers to inflict on his infinitely receptive body." Richardson, unable to resist even pulling down his idol, quotes Braque's clever but meaningless *mot*: "Picasso used to be a great painter. Now he is merely a genius."

No one has ever been subjected to more mythologizing and denigration than Hemingway. Richardson, professionally dedicated to establishing the truth, offers an eyewitness account of an event that supposedly took place during a *corrida* at Nîmes in the summer of 1959:

As the band struck up the Marseillaise, we all stood. Suddenly Picasso laughed and pointed down at Hemingway. The author of *Death in the Afternoon* was standing rigidly to attention, his right hand up to his peaked cap in a military salute. When Hemingway looked around and saw that nobody else was saluting . . . he withdrew his hand and ever so slowly repositioned it in his pocket.

Richardson, having concluded from this incident that Hemingway's stories were spurious, proceeds to call the boring and pretentious Michel Leiris "a great writer."

The point of the anecdote is to show Richardson's intimacy with Picasso and the artist's superiority to the naively absurd Hemingway (an old and greatly respected friend of Picasso). The incident, however, seems out of character. Hemingway, having attended thousands of bullfights in France and Spain under the gaze of many eyes scrutinizing his behavior, would surely have known how to act when the national anthem was played. In fact, he was not even present at the *corrida* to which Richardson refers. In *The Dangerous Summer*, Hemingway's ac-

count of the bullfights of 1959, he wrote: "I love Nîmes but did not feel like leaving Madrid, where we had just arrived, to make such a long trip to see bulls with altered horns fought, so decided to stay in Madrid." And, since Richardson is such a smarty-pants, it's worth pointing out some other notable errors: Helena Rubinstein's first husband was Edward (not Horace) Titus; Connie Mellon was the ex-wife of a trustee (not the director) of the National Gallery in Washington; Brian Urquhart was Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs (not Secretary-General) of the United Nations; the Schatzalp (not the Waldhaus) Hotel in Davos inspired the sanatorium in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*; Captain Cook was killed and eaten in Hawaii (not Tonga); and *Ferragosto* is not Italy's Fourth of July—the latter is a patriotic holiday, the former (the Feast of the Assumption on August 15), a religious one.

Richardson's 12-year connection with Cooper ended badly. When he decided to leave, having learned all he could from his mentor, he tried to recover his possessions before moving to New York. Cooper spitefully burned all of Richardson's clothes and papers, and refused to return the precious gifts he'd received from Picasso, Braque, and several other artists. There being no locks or burglar alarms at the château, Richardson raided the place, filled a car with his valuables, and drove off.

At one point in the book, Richardson compares Cooper to the English critic Cyril Connolly: "Whereas Douglas used his wit to wound, Cyril used his to seduce. Otherwise they were too alike—too bullied and bullying, bossy and babyish, vain and self-hating and fat—to stand each other for long." Reviewing Connolly's novel *The Rock Pool* (1936), about English expatriates in France, George Orwell defined the moral chasm between his own values and the hedonistic and decadent life that Connolly—like Cooper and Richardson—chose to lead: "even to want to write about so-called artists who spend on sodomy what they have gained by sponging betrays a kind of spiritual inadequacy."

Jeffrey Meyers will publish, this fall, a life of George Orwell (Norton), *Privileged Moments: Encounters with Writers* (Wisconsin), and Hemingway: *Life into Art* (Cooper Square).

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Capitalism the Enemy

By a margin of 63-56, the South Carolina House of Representatives voted on May 10 to pull down the Confederate battle flag that has fluttered above the state's capitol dome since 1962 and to remove it to "a place of honor" on the capitol grounds. The vote was the grand (or perhaps the petty) finale to a controversy that has lurked below the surface of South Carolina's politics for much of the last decade and has now begun to haunt the politics of other Southern states and, indeed, of the whole nation. Proponents of removing the Confederate flag argued that it is, in the immortal and typically stilted phrasing of a 1991 resolution of the NAACP, "an odious blight upon the universe," or, in the lesser eloquence of Sen. John McCain, "a symbol of racism and slavery." Supporters of the flag argued, generally, that it was not a symbol of racism and slavery, though they seemed to disagree as to what it actually does symbolize—states' rights, Southern independence, cultural tradition, or simply the martial virtues of honor, loyalty, courage, and willingness to sacrifice for a cause that most Americans associate with the Confederacy and its hapless warriors. Like all real symbols, the flag represents many different things, most of them intimately connected to each other in the enduring bond called "civilization." If the meaning of symbols could be translated into simple and clear language, there would be no need for symbolism at all.

The absence of a simple and clear slogan that encapsulates the real meaning of the flag, as opposed to the simple, clear, and false slogans that encapsulated its meaning for its enemies, may tell us a good deal about why the defenders of the flag lost and its foes prevailed, and it is ever thus in the continuing conflict between the forces of civilization and tradition, on the one hand, and barbarism, on the other. At no time since the French Revolution have the forces of tradition been able to enlist simplicity and clearness on their side, and the immense power that simplicity and clearness exert on the human mind is a major reason the enemies of tradition triumph. The pow-

er of tradition and its allies lies not in their ability to justify themselves through logic but in their capacity to mobilize those who remain attached to tradition; in a declining civilization, or one challenged by the enemies of tradition, that capacity will dwindle as the power of the challengers grows. So it was in South Carolina, where, as in most of the South, the memory of its traditions has been dwindling for the last century, even as the power of its enemies—simple, clear, and profoundly evil—grew.

The NAACP and nitwits like John McCain are by no means the most dangerous enemies of Southern traditions. The NAACP has been crusading against the Confederate flag since at least 1991, but only this year was its crusade successful. It is impossible to account for this victory without considering the immense assistance the NAACP received from the Republican Party and the "capitalism" before which the party loves to prostrate itself. If it's dangerous enemies you're looking for, those two will give you a fight to the death any day.

The unreliability of the Republicans on the flag has been manifest since at least the early 1990's (some would say since the 1860's), when South Carolina's Republican Gov. David Beasley violated a campaign promise he had made in 1994 not to try to remove the flag from the capitol dome. He soon gathered the support of Sen. Strom Thurmond, former Gov. Carroll Campbell, and the Christian Coalition. As it developed, a populist movement centered on defense of the flag stopped the Republican establishment. Governor Beasley—whom Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed had boomed as a possible presidential candidate—was promptly bounced from office in the following election, largely because of his treachery over the flag issue.

The Republican betrayal in the earlier flag controversy was grounded in a lust to gain black votes (which never materialized), but in the most recent battle, it was compounded by greed and fear, which the NAACP cleverly managed to incite. The campaign against the flag was joined to the NAACP's national boycott of the state until the flag was removed from the capitol building, and since the boycott

struck directly at the capitalist heart of the Republican Party (indeed, at capitalism itself), it was a far more efficacious tactic than simply threatening to vote against politicians who refused to remove the flag. By targeting the business elites who call the shots in the GOP (which has a majority in the South Carolina House) and the \$14 billion tourist industry of the state, the NAACP actually struck at the heart of the modern South.

The role of Big Business in forcing the flag off the dome was clear at least as early as last year. In a report in the *New York Times*, Paula Harper Bethea, chairwoman of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, offered up most of the clichés put forward to justify removing the flag. "The shrinking world in which we live, the way technology has brought us together," Miss Bethea beamed, "has made us come to realize that we are not islands unto ourselves. If we're going to be part of the next millennium, we have to move that flag off our Statehouse dome and put it in a place of honor elsewhere." Of course, the reason the NAACP demanded its removal was that it claimed the flag is a symbol of racism and slavery, and if that were so, why on earth would anyone want to "put it in a place of honor elsewhere"? The statement made little sense, but what was driving it was not sensibility so much as the mere determination to make the controversy go away before it hurt business. Michelin Tire Company, which has constructed a new plant in South Carolina to replace the textile mills put out of business by free trade, was also "particularly vocal about the need to move the flag off the dome," the *Times* reported.

In Alabama, the same dynamic was evident. Neal Wade, of a group called the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, told the *Times* that the Confederate flag had to go because "Anything that causes division within a state makes it less attractive to a potential employer, particularly from overseas," and the *Times* itself commented that "the pressure is even greater to join the global economy, and foreign employers do not want the slightest hint of a divided work force or a reputation for backwardness."

Conservatives—real conservatives, at least, not classical liberals or neoconser-