

stance, I agree with those who argue that Marshall pusillanimously failed to defend the prerogatives of the Court when his colleague Samuel Chase was being impeached by the Jeffersonians in 1805. At that time (though Newmyer doesn't tell us) Marshall, contrary to his holding in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), was prepared to lodge the power of judicial review in Congress, not the courts.

Moreover, the piece of federal legislation Marshall found unconstitutional in *Marbury* was the law giving the Court jurisdiction to grant relief to a litigant who had been wronged by the Jeffersonians' refusal to deliver a commission for federal office. Thus, when Marshall exercised judicial review in *Marbury* and ruled, on what have come to be seen as questionable grounds, that he had no jurisdiction, he deftly avoided a confrontation with the President. That was the first and last time Marshall's Court ever voided a federal statute. Marshall picked his battles carefully and appears only to have moved against state legislation in *Dartmouth College*, *McCulloch*, and *Gibbons* when he knew that strong interests supported his decisions and, therefore, that they would be carried out.

Even so, I came away from this biography touched by Marshall's sagacity, his humility, and—*mirabile dictu*—his piety. This is not the Marshall that William Brennan would have recognized, but it may be as close as we are likely to get to the real one. The paleoconservative legal proposition, borrowed from the Federalists, is that there can be no order without

law, no law without morality, and no morality without religion—to which John Marshall, as the leader of the Virginia Federalists, would have assented. If Newmyer's book, like other Marshall biographies, veers toward hagiography, then hagiography, after all, is the literary form appropriate to writing about a saint.

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Talking Person

by Jeremy Lott

**Now Let Me Tell You
What I Really Think**

by Chris Matthews
New York: The Free Press;
220 pp., \$25.00



Most political junkies in the United States are at least marginally familiar with Chris Matthews. The dust-jacket of his most recent book—with a goofy, grinning Matthews in suit and tie superimposed over an image of the Capital dome—is meant to jog these people's memories as they browse the local

Barnes & Noble: *Oh yeah, there's that guy from MSNBC who talks a million miles a minute.* And talk, he does (and talk, and talk).

"Five nights a week" (as Matthews says several times in *Now Let Me Tell You What I Really Think*), he wears his guests down not by condescending to them (like Peter Jennings) or yelling at them (*à la* Bill O'Reilly) but by speaking in such rapid-fire bursts that they, and the audience, have to struggle to keep up. His machine-gun mouth has been his greatest asset.

However, since the format of Matthews' show is more interrogative than polemical, and since his previous books—*Hardball* and *Kennedy & Nixon*—were not manifestos, many listeners and guests began to speculate on where he stands politically. This book is about "forfeiting my *Miranda* rights" by responding to those speculations. As he says, "everything I say will be used against me."

After reading the book, I can only wonder if it is meeting a real need. It isn't as if your average dullard couldn't accurately pigeonhole Matthews after pursuing the voluminous and publicly available clues. Matthews is a practicing Catholic from a working-class background. He served in the Peace Corps in Africa rather than go to Vietnam. He worked for Democrats on Capitol Hill, wrote speeches for Jimmy Carter, and was one of Tip O'Neill's top aides. He got his start in journalism at the *New Republic* under the aegis of then-editor Hendrick Hertzberg. His syndicated column, though more reportorial in tone, reserves most of

Syzygy

Catharine Savage Brosman

Sun, earth, and moon aligned tonight
in crystal winter cold—first teasing us,
the sun descending in a rose farewell,
the moon in coppery fullness rising
from the river, just beyond the bridges,
hanging for an hour among the lights,
then creeping toward its rendezvous.
The way the soft penumbra lessens

makes me think of time, unnoticed
nearly, till one sees that it is waning;
so the moon appears, as if its edge
were etched by acid, nibbled evenly.
As the silver disk ascends to zenith,
I must circle with it, changing places
at the windows, pivoting, and finally
kneeling by the glass—to see the half-

moon, then a quarter, then a solitary
slice; and I, a poet and a lunar spirit,
frenzied with the spectacle, imagine
how a mortal felt his flesh turn cold
with fright, to see the heavenly lamp
extinguished, as the angels chattered
in anticipation of nascent light. It's
done: Diana is eclipsed. "Come now,"

I beckon to my cat, who does not seem
excited being a philosopher. "I've had
enough of cosmic comedy. The actors
must be tired. Goodnight! Our minds
are well aligned; our dreams will play
in a proscenium with suns and planets
tumbling in the shadows, juggling stars,
laughing all the way to God's own stage."

its fire for the GOP and most of its constructive criticism for the Democrats. If it walks like a liberal, quacks like a liberal, and votes like a liberal . . .

The features that keep the book entertaining are the same ones that keep the television show mildly so: the often dead-on political analysis, the biographical disclosures, and the occasional intemperate outbursts. Here, for instance, is Matthews on the kind of candidate the public prefers in presidential elections: While political scientists attempt to use sophisticated models, Matthews' model "has just one variable: Look for the candidate you picture with the sun in his face."

I present you a slide show:

FDR arriving in his open roadster to visit the troops.

Harry Truman giving 'em hell from the back of a train.

Ike riding down the canyons of Wall Street, the ticker tape streaming down from the high floored windows, his hands raised up with the V-sign, his smile as wide as Kansas.

The point, colorfully made, is that Americans prefer active candidates to desk jockeys. These populist instincts helped Matthews call the third presidential debate of 2000 for George W. Bush over Al Gore, in defiance of elite opinion. "The media cognoscenti had made their call," he writes. "Gore had not only won, he had cleaned Bush's clock!" However, both Matthews and

[t]he debate audience preferred the notion of having a guy in the White House who often spoke English as if it were his second language to one who spoke to us as if English were *our* second language.

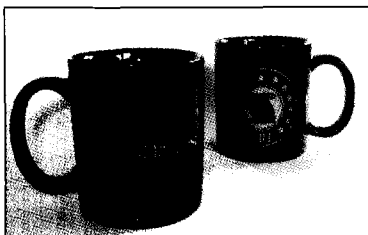
For someone who went out of his way to avoid active military service in Vietnam, Matthews is surprisingly hard on the former Soviet Union and its useful idiots in the United States. At one point he asks, "Why do I still hate the Communists?" The answer is as nationalistic and biographical as it is moral and deftly manages to rope the antiwar left in with the Kremlin: "Because we could have lost it all to them." All that time under his desk for air-raid drills, overseen by Sister Mary Somebody-or-Other, appears to

have left an indelible impression.

Reading the chapter "Truth," in which Matthews sounds off on various pressing issues of concern, I wished that his Jesuit education had left a still stronger impression. On abortion, Matthews writes that polls showing "the American people will not exact a token punishment from a woman who seeks an abortion" should tell pro-lifers "something very basic." "The criminal code," he opines, "is not the right instrument here." Rather, the solution is for foes of abortion to make common cause with proponents to find ways to reduce the numbers of abortions while keeping abortion constitutionally protected. Safe, legal, *and* rare, remember?

Most of what Matthews "really thinks" is just as muddled as his alleged thinking on abortion. His politics "begin and end" with freedom, but not the freedom to opt out of Social Security or Medicaid or any other vote-buying handouts. Reparations for slavery are bad, but not if they are called "affirmative action." Republicans should welcome gay-rights crusaders with open arms, even if that is unlikely to get them enough gay votes to replace the fundamentalist voters they will lose. AIDS in Africa is somehow a pressing

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