

whole of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, of which "The Bear" is a part, rather than just "The Bear" alone. I would choose William Graham Sumner's *Folkways* or *The Conquest of the United States by Spain* instead of Henry Adams to represent "Progressive Era" conservatism. But I quibble. There are not many books that can be named "a lasting achievement." *The Conservative Bookshelf* is one.

The editor would doubtless be accused of dereliction if he had not included the *Federalist* among the classics of conservatism. Contrary to accepted opinion, this work does not contain the wisdom of the Founding Fathers. It is neither representa-

tive nor authoritative. It is a work of special pleading. The truly representative and authoritative wisdom of the Founding Fathers is to be found in the debates in the Philadelphia Convention, in the debates and documents of the ratifying conventions, and in the federal and state documents of the 1790's. John C. Calhoun's *Disquisition on Government* and *Discourse on the Constitution* would be better choices here. The *Federalist* is full of shallow speculation (Madison) and insincere argument (Hamilton), all in the service of aggressive centralization, which every classic of American conservatism, in one way or another, warns against. ~c



## Paleos in Context

### Good Company

by Samuel Francis

The significance of Chilton Williamson's new book, *The Conservative Bookshelf*, is that it is the first general account of the conservative tradition to place what is now called paleoconservatism in the context of that tradition. Once upon a time, the connection would have been obvious because all conservatives were paleoconservatives, or close to it. Today, however, it is not so obvious and has to be explained, even to readers who regard themselves as "conservatives" and who labor in the delusion that Bill Kristol, David Frum, Rich Lowry, and Ramesh Ponnuru are of the same cast.

Section VI of Chilton's book on the "present day" contains accounts of books by Pat Buchanan, Peter Brimelow, Tom Fleming, Clyde Wilson, and me, all of whom can fairly be lumped into the paleo persuasion, even if they don't much like the term (as I don't) or apply it to themselves, and even if we do not really deserve to be in the same book with Cicero, Burke, and Saint Augustine. He also includes Joe Scotchie's useful but too short book on paleoconservatism, *Revolt From the Heartland*. The fly in the ointment, of course, is the inclusion of *Treason*, by Ann Coulter. I have no problem generally with Miss Coulter, who is an articulate and sharp-witted (and -tongued) polemicist, and I even wrote a column defending her book against anti-McCarthy attacks by neocons (Arnold Beichman and Dorothy Rabinowitz), but I have to say that the book does not belong in *The Conservative Bookshelf*. I think Chilton knows this, and his account of *Treason* makes it pretty clear to the reader that he doesn't think it really belongs, either.

What did he leave out? Well, in my book (no pun intended), he left out probably the major work of conservative political and social theory of 19th-century Britain, Fitzjames Stephen's *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. Today, you don't hear much about Stephen's book, published in 1873, but Russell Kirk has a chapter on it in *The Conservative Mind* and actually engaged in a polemic with Frank Meyer about it in *National Review*, back

in the days when there was a conservative mind.

Stephen's book is a rebuttal of Mill's *On Liberty*, and it proceeds from the view that force—not "liberty"—is the fundamental fact of human society: that, without force (not just coercion, but any kind of constraint), human society cannot exist. We may jabber all we want about "freedom," "rights," "liberty," and the "progress of mankind," but all these good things exist only because, somewhere, somebody holds the gun or wields the sword. For those who know it, that's the real message of John Ford's great film, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*.

Chilton included James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution*, which is entirely appropriate, though it is not really a conservative work but a brilliant piece of social and political analysis. I would have suggested also (maybe instead) Burnham's later book, *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom*, still the best account of the "neo-Machiavellian" tradition of classical elite theory as formulated by Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Roberto Michels, and Georges Sorel. The main insight of these thinkers is that all human societies are ruled by minorities (elites) and that "democracy," the "consent of the governed," and similar abstractions are largely mythical. That thesis is vital for an accurate understanding of what happens in any society and why it is happening, but it is also an important means of evaluating and judging whether a particular society is good or bad—depending on what its elite is, how it rules, and what kind of culture it creates. It is a mode of thinking that real conservatives, whatever they call themselves, need to know about and start understanding as they continue to sink or be pushed out of America's new ruling class.

It will be interesting to see what sort of reaction to Chilton's book comes from the neoconservatives, whom he generally does not bother to include (also rightly). Whatever tradition they come out of—Straussian, Social Democrat, Trotskyist, Wilsonian—there is nothing conservative about it or them and no reason they belong in a book about the real conservative tradition. ~c

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# Cataloguing What's Been Lost

## A Conservative Requiem

by Paul Gottfried

Chilton Williamson's study of the sources of American conservative thought presupposes certain assumptions about his subject that may not be universally shared but are defensible nonetheless. Williamson suggests that American conservatism is essentially paleoconservative, and both his choice of current conservative authors and his comments on Joe Scotchie's *Revolt From the Heartland* underline this association. Furthermore, Williamson's contemptuous references to the neoconservatives and his scathing comments on the marital infidelity of the libertarian Albert J. Nock indicate that there are positions often identified with the contemporary right that Williamson does not consider "conservative." He comes back repeatedly to the Christian roots of conservative thought, and, from the repeated citation of Catholic thinkers and the conspicuous absence of the Protestant Reformers, who heavily influenced American religious and political culture, his conservatism, it may be concluded, is largely (if not exclusively) a function of his Catholic beliefs. Williamson justifies this linkage by locating the heart of conservatism in the inseparably Catholic principle of "subsidiarity." To this, one may respond by pointing out that European Lutherans and Calvinists defended the same principle in early-modern times; also, Thomas Fleming's *The Morality of Everyday Life*, which Williamson discusses, documents the widespread nature of subsidiarity even in non-Christian societies.

Having pointed this out, allow me to dwell on the positive features of Williamson's discussion of conservative thinkers and their sources. His prose and expositions—unlike those, for instance, in *Commentary*—are marvelous to read. Even more important, Williamson sets up a plausible model of conservative thinking that, despite his courteous nods in the direction

of "conservative" TV celebrities, underscores the gulf between the present alliance of country-club Republicans and neocon talking heads and those who understand the value of tradition and the destructive aspects of Progress. Were I doing a similar project, my list of thinkers and advocates would overlap his. Although I would have focused more on Continental authors, Williamson can properly claim that, like Russell Kirk, he is looking at a specifically Anglo-American conservative mind.

What is troublesome in his analysis, but is clearly not Williamson's fault, is the problem of taxonomy. Despite the earnest attempt in the Introduction to distinguish "conservative," "rightist," and generic Republican and to show in which ways they dovetail (or do not), one is still left, as Williamson concedes, with definitional and contextual loose ends. The reason is that, while we can find conservative impulses in 20th-century America, one is not describing in any way a conservative society. The American conservatism represented by Robert Taft was essentially bourgeois liberal (in the old-fashioned sense) and has now yielded, as Williamson correctly states, to "foreign adventurism, internationalist ambitions and global crusades." The fragile nature of conservative thinking has always been one of its characteristics, for a reason that sociologist Karl Mannheim explained in an essay on conservative "utopianism" in 1927. Conservative intellectuals, observed Mannheim, are invoking a past that is in the process of dissolving. They therefore practice "reflectiveness" by trying to reproduce, as a framework of values and sentiments, that which is no longer "a linear experience of historical time." Conservatism moves from the historically concrete to an exercise in imaginative and theoretical reconstruction. The Southern Agrarians, Russell Kirk, and the *Chronicles* circle all fall into Mannheim's category, which, in fact, encompasses all serious conservative thinking for the last hundred years. That such activity does not attract big-government think tanks should come as no surprise.

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# What's Right With the World

## Art and Artist Together

by James O. Tate

The *Conservative Bookshelf* has so much going for it that I am hard pressed to nominate its best quality, though I aim to do so. Let me indicate something about the salient qualities of Chilton Williamson, Jr.'s latest production, before I identify

what I see as his trump card.

In the first place, these 50 essays really are a conservative bookshelf, taking us from the Bible and the classics to today's most notable thinkers and writers. Mr. Williamson has surprised me with some of his choices (Phyllis Schlafly, for example), but he has justified every one of them. The sense of perspective—and what is conservatism if it is not perspective?—is

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