

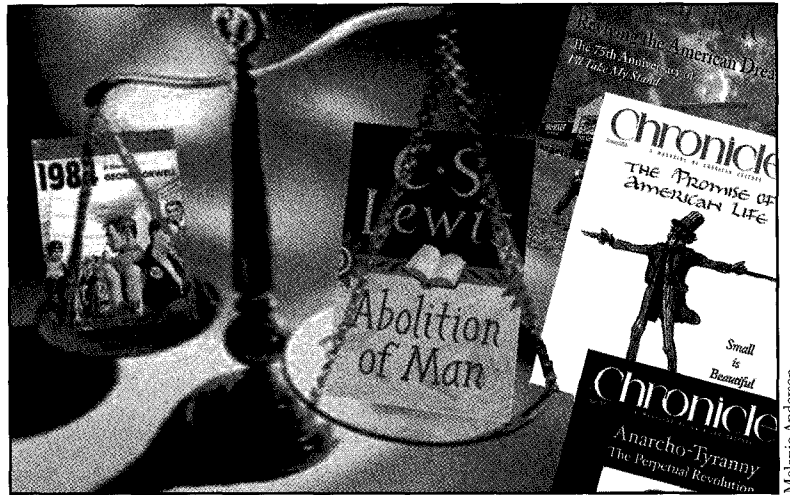
Culture War

Fighting On

by Clyde Wilson

*"Transcend yourself and join in the universal struggle
to bring about the self-transcendence of all men!"*

—Karl Marx



Culture, as the term is used in America in our times, covers a vast territory with ill-defined frontiers. There is primitive culture (flint spearheads, animal and human sacrifice). There is high culture (Shakespeare, Michelangelo). There is, or used to be, folk culture ("country music" before its commodification). There is a lowbrow culture (rap music, fraternity hazing, George W. Bush's oratory), and a middlebrow culture (Disney movies, the writings of William F. Buckley, Jr.). There is even a faux primitive culture surrounding the production and consumption of rock music. As always, it does us well to look at the origin of words. In this case, the origin is Latin, and, in early usage, the word was associated with *cult*, i.e., religion, and agriculture—religion and agriculture being the deeply intertwined and indispensable bases of civilization.

Nevertheless, in general public discourse, we know what we mean when we speak of "culture" without specificity. We mean the sum of material, social, instrumental, linguistic, and spiritual ideas, assumptions, customs, beliefs, values, tools, and behaviors that constitute a human community. A person without culture, in this sense, if such were possible, would scarcely be human. When we speak of the "culture war," we are postulating that we are in possession of a culture against which war is being made. We refer to a readily observable phenomenon—the relentless pounding that the American social fabric has endured for a half-century or more from many of its

members who wish to dissolve and transform it. If the defenders of American culture are to have any success, we have to be brutally frank with ourselves. The culture war is very much a civil war. The enemy is not at the gates; he is well ensconced in our temples and even makes himself free of our firesides.

We should always remember that the struggle is the "culture war" and not, as is sometimes said, the "culture wars." One reason the defenders of culture have had so little success is that we have been fighting a series of brushfire skirmishes instead of a war. The enemy is Legion, but he is also One. One of the enemy's most devastating and uncounterable weapons is the federal judiciary. False allies tell us we will win a victory by changing a few Supreme Court justices. This tactic is so plausible-sounding and so foolishly ineffective that it could only have been thought up by a politician. The real battle we need to arm ourselves for is the extinction of the usurpative, unconstitutional tyranny of judges over our life and culture—that is, we need to rid ourselves of craven obedience to evil and irresponsible power in high places.

The culture war is not of our choosing. We did not seek it or declare it. We really only wanted to be left alone to live by our patrimony in the normal human way. Many of us are even reluctant to admit that it is a concerted aggression and not just a series of accidental collisions. So we have been retreating steadily, and many of our troops have been routed or gone over to the enemy.

Perhaps we should remind ourselves of what we ought to be defending: a culture, which is the sum of the life of a com-

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munity and which contains all that is human. Its most important parts are the most intangible. What is threatened with destruction is the American form (however attenuated) of the substantive and positive side of what was once called Western civilization.

That culture reflects a vision of the nature of man and of his place in the universe without which we will cease to exist in any meaningful sense. C.S. Lewis laid out the whole question inimitably in *The Abolition of Man*. The vision is of man as an earthly creature, yet made in the image of something Higher,

each of us unique, with a divine spark and a free will. We are to be guided by reason (not rationalism), exercised in the light of transcendent values that we possess through Revelation, the wisdom of the ages, and an apprehension of our own true nature (of which Thomas Fleming has been at great pains to remind us). The alternative, ultimately, is a cultureless world in which the divine spark, the free will, and the wisdom of the ages have been repudiated and man has been reduced to a paltry creature of momentary appetites. If we lose, then the destructive and negative underside of Western civilization (so well displayed by Orwell in 1984) will have won a total victory.

Examples of the triumph of the underside are myriad in every aspect of our lives. To take just one: The biblical Ten Commandments are the fount of all our law, both in spirit and in historical fact. They embody wisdom, good faith, good will, and divine command. But the tyrants in black robes have dredged up from the alchemical underside of our culture a fiction that postulates the source of law as man-made theory. And they have ordered that their fiction must be kept free of the taint of “religion,” the true source of our law.

Chronicles has been fighting the enemy of culture with skill and persistence—and, yes, courage—for three decades now. No eyes have been more acute in spying out the enemy who pretends to be a friend. The fight has been against long odds. Will our outnumbered and out-supplied company suffer the fate of the Old Guard at Waterloo? Or will we finally win through against the odds, like Washington and his rebels? In any case, there is no better cause to which to pledge ourselves. I expect that *Chronicles* will keep up the fight for a long time to come, and that we will continue to relish the joy of battle, with good comrades in a good cause. 

Two books by Celtic historian
and *Chronicles* contributor J. Michael Hill

Celtic Warfare, 1595-1763

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Fire & Sword:

*Sorley Boy McDonnell and the Rise of
Clán Ian Mor, 1538-1590*

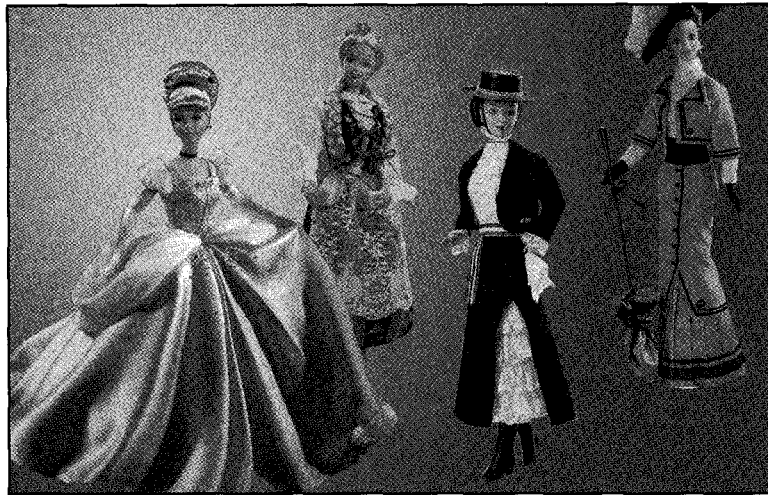
Scotland and Ireland produced the best fighting men in Europe from the 16th through the 18th centuries. These two books tell the story of a people who struggled against great odds to preserve a traditional civilization against the modern English state. *Celtic Warfare* (softcover, 203 pages, 1986 and 2005) details the continuity in Scottish and Irish strategy, tactics, logistics, and weaponry from the Irish wars of the 1590's to the end of the French & Indian War in 1763. *Fire & Sword* (hardcover, 321 pages, 1993) centers upon the tumultuous life and career of Sorley Boy McDonnell (1510-1590), whose sagacious leadership made Clan Ian Mor a major force in the development of the Celtic heartland in the 16th century.

Order both books for the special price of \$40.00 (postpaid).
Celtic Warfare alone: \$20.00 ppd.; *Fire & Sword* alone: \$25.00 ppd.
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Dressing for Progress

A Culture of Lovelessness

by Andrei Navrozov



Melanie Anderson

The direction taken by progress to the America of the future, as I saw it, was toward abstraction. If one looked to the natural world to supply the measure of what was concrete, then this world was long in the past, perhaps not actually with the dinosaurs, but certainly with the Model T and the *Saturday Evening Post*. It may be that an apple was first the apple of paradise, and then an ordinary apple, but the apple of today was the representation of an apple in three dimensions, that of tomorrow in only two, and finally in one, at which stage of progress the flesh would become word and the sweetly old-fashioned, fragrant name *apple* would be the only reality allowed it. Perhaps it could even become a number instead of the retrograde name, not unlike a supermarket bar code, and scanning it with a personal handheld wish-fulfilment device would be real enough for the average Joe.

The movement toward abstraction was unstoppable, because the less reality people had to their share, and the fewer the tastes, the colors, and the sounds they remembered, the more the system of symbols that had come to envelop them became the only one in which they knew how to live. Their plasticine food and electronic money, their leatherette careers and television democracy, their satellite wars and paper egalitarianism, their digital pleasure and interactive pain, their artificial air and reconditioned water, all rendered them as unable and unwilling to function in any other environment as fish asked to walk on land. To this futuristic metamorphosis, women were better suited than men because men had always been more real, a controversial point that I shall amplify presently.

When the Roman plebs wished to reduce human life to a single demand, this was, famously, bread and spectacle. Christ

paraphrased it as bread and wine, perhaps because he was not of the metropolis, and the people he was addressing were people of the soil. But anyway, by whatever reckoning, what life is understood to consist of are these two elements, one as real as a loaf in the belly, and the other a lot less real but a lot more fun, a thing of the spirit. Christ, who left the first element more or less unchanged when he asked his followers to pray for their daily bread, redefined the second as forgiving and being forgiven, and history records that, by and by, the swinging metropolis came to accept his revolutionary definition. Despite this, the architects of the Christian Church laid inordinate emphasis on spectacle, generally, and on that of the oblation of the Eucharist, in particular, suggesting that what had been poured into the new bottles was the same old wine.

Looked at in another way, the elements are the male and the female. One is the *panis* of man, as excruciatingly real as farm labor. The other is the *circus* of woman, transcendent and spectacular, where man forgives and forgets like Odysseus in the arms of Circe. Bread does not entertain; it stupefies. Theater attracts and is not meant to satisfy.

Originally created from man's rib as an antidote to solitude, like a robot or an electronic home-entertainment device, woman became alive and indispensable, yin to Adam's yang in the totality of life. The story of Original Sin is nothing if not an eternal reminder that satiety needs caprice as much as caprice requires satiety, and now that paradise has been lost, it remains to man to toil in the sweat of his brow with the sole aim of feeding, like a drug habit, his abiding hunger for entertainment. His insatiable appetite is for the transcendent, the spiritual, the playful, the impractical, the paradoxical and the generally unpredictable, and, though God chose to allow these qualities to develop and embody themselves in the form of woman, it is not uncommon for man to seek them elsewhere: elsewhere in man, or else in books, in monastic seclusion, in a London

Corresponding editor Andrei Navrozov writes from Palermo, Sicily. This article is an excerpt from his novel *Earthly Love*.