Recommended Reading

Before (or after) the Election

What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America BY THOMAS FRANK. HENRY HOLT, 2004. HARDCOVER, $24. ***Made in Texas: George W. bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*** BY MICHAEL LIND. BASIC BOOKS, 2003. PAPERBACK, $14. ***Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*** BY JAMES MANN. PENGUIN, 2004. PAPERBACK,$16.

Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas*? deals with the vexing issue of why the people who stand to lose the most from the current, arch-conservative administration can be its most ardent supporters. The administration focuses on cultural issues to create an artificial divide between "regular people" and a "liberal elite" by claiming that the wealthy Republicans in power are part of the common people. Meanwhile, they switch the tax burden from the rich to the middle class and further impoverish the poor.

Carefully maintained debates about moral and religious issues such as gay marriage, abortion and school prayer build on moral outrage among middle and working class people and mask economic policies, which damage the majority of the population.

Frank describes a new generation of "sturdy blue-collar patriots reciting the Pledge while they strangle their own life chances; of small farmers proudly voting themselves off the land; of devoted family men carefully seeing to it that their children will never be able to afford college or proper health care; of working-class guys in Midwestern cities cheering as they deliver up a landslide for a candidate whose policies will end their way of life."

The right could not have accomplished this feat without plenty of help from the media it mostly owns but denounces as "liberal," thus cleverly shifting the perceived political center further and further to the right, Frank notes. His analysis is sharp, and he does not stoop to caricature. He also faults the Democrats for having abandoned a class politics that resonated with people, thus allowing the Republican party to switch from an economical debate detrimental to them to a cultural debate they can manipulate.

In *Made in Texas*, Michael Lind resorts to history to explain the radical departures in Republican policy wrought by the current Bush administration that make it differ markedly from, say, that of the first Bush president. What Lind calls the "Texanization of the American right" is characterized by a bellicose foreign policy at odds with previous Republican administrations, colored by southern religious fundamentalism and informed by the archaic conception of a social order based on white hereditary power and wealth fueled by exploitation of both human and environmental resources.

Whereas Reagan and Bush senior had to rely on a broad Republican coalition, the new, "southernized" Republican party of Bush junior, according to Lind, is far more representative of the South's conservative oligarchy. Its pillars are big businesses and the religious right (as opposed to mainstream Protestantism). Its intellectuals and the authors of its foreign policies are the neo-conservatives who became allied with fundamentalist Christians over a shared concern about the welfare of Israel. Lind's last chapter, which outlines his own "solutions" can be skipped without much loss. His book is most useful when the author limits himself to history.

James Mann'a *Rise of the Vulcans* is an excellent, fascinating book that retraces and examines the political careers of Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Armitage, who themselves dubbed their team the Vulcans. I cannot recommend this book enough. Among other things, it brings to light how the war in Iraq was one of the team's goals long before 9/11, an event that provided the means to receive public endorsement for the war.

To better understand the most powerful man in America, Dick Cheney, read John Nichols' book, *Dick: The Man Who is President* (The New Press, 2004). The book contains an abundance of useful and clarifying information, though you may find its tone a little flippant.

No contemporary political education can be complete without acknowledging Machiavelli's foremost disciple of this election, Karl Rove. Two books are edifying: *Bush's Brain* by James Moore and Wayne Slater (Wiley, 2003) and *Boy Genius: Karl Rove, the Brains Behind the Remarkable Political Triumph of George W. Bush* by Lou Dubose, Jan Reid and Carl M. Cannon (2002).

These books remind us that many among the most powerful Republicans in the White House learned the tricks of their trade from Richard Nixon, including how to deal with the press, then further refined them. Nixon himself might have repudiated Bush's alienating foreign policy, however. ***EW***

BOOK NOTES (Oct. 28 – Nov. 24 '04): It's book award season again, with nominees announced for both the Oregon Book Awards (Nov. 18) and the National Book Awards (Nov. 17). Oregon Book Award (OBA) finalists: Poetry: **David Biespiel** (*Wild Civility*), **James Grabill** (*An Indigo Scent After the Rain*), **Henry Hughes** *(Men Holding Eggs*), **Christopher Johnston** (*Violent Homeland*), **Lisa M. Steinman** (*Carslaw's Sequences,*). Novel**: Tracy Daugherty** (Corvallis, *Axeman's Jazz*), **David Farris** (*Lie Still*), **Michael Curtis Ford** (Salem, *The Last King*), **Kris Nelscott** (*Stone Cribs*). Short Fiction**: Scott Nadelson** (*Saving Stanley*), **Marjorie Sandor** (*Portrait of My Mother, Who Posed Nude in Wartime*). Gen. Nonfiction: **Ellen Morris Bishop** (*In Search of Ancient Oregon*), **Lauren Kessler** (Eugene, *Clever Girl*), **Elinor Langer** (*A Hundred Little Hitlers*), **Jewel Lansing** (*Portland*), **Jeffrey St. Clair** (*Been Brown So Long It Looked Like Green to Me*). Creative Nonfiction: **Paul Collins** (*Sixpence House*), **Brian Doyle** (*Leaping*), **Ariel Gore** (*Atlas of the Human Heart*), **Bette Lynch Husted** (*Above the Clearwater*), **Karen** *Karbo (The Stuff of Life*). Drama: **Shelly Lipkin**, **Louanne Moldovan**, **Sherry Lamoreaux** (*Vitriol and Violets*), **Gay Monteverde** *(The Arabian Nights*), **Steve Patterson** (*Altered States of America*). Children's Literature: **Michelle McCann** (*Luba*), **Marie & Roland Smith** (*B is for Beaver*), **Andrea U'Ren**, **Mary Smith**, **Leah Wilcox** (*Falling for Rapunzel*). Young Adult Literature: **Nancy Osa** (*Cuba 15*), **Susanna Vance** (*Deep*). ...National Book Award finalists: Fiction: **Sarah Shunlien Bynum** (*Madeleine is Sleeping*), **Christine Schutt** (*Florida*), **Kate Walbert** (*Our Kind*), **Joan Silber** (*Ideas of Heaven*), **Lily Tuck** (*The News from Paraguay*). Nonfiction: *The 9/11 Report*, **Stephen** *Greenblatt (Will in the World*), **Kevin Boyle** (*Arc of Justice*), **David Hackett Fischer** (*Washington's Crossing*), **Jennifer Gonnerman** (*Life on the Outside*). Poetry: **Donald Justice** (*Collected Poems*), **William Heyen** (*Shoah Train*), **Carl Phillips** (*The Rest of Love*), **Jean Valentine** (*Door in the Mountain*). Young People's Literature: **Deb Caletti** (*Honey, Babe, Sweetheart*), **Pete Hautman** (*Godless*), **Laban Carrick** (*Harlem Stomp*), **Sheila P. Moses** (*The Legend of Buddy Bush*), **Julie Anne Peters** (*Luna: A Novel*). Readings, Lectures, Book Signing: Poet **Major Jackson** (*Leaving Saturn*) at 8 pm Oct. 28, Knight Library Browsing Room. ...Essayist **Phillip Lopate** (*Waterfront*) at 7:30 pm Oct. 29, Valley Library, OSU campus, Corvallis. ...**Shirley Tallman** (*Murder on Nob Hill*) and **Carola Dunn** (*Mistletoe and Murder*) at 5 pm Oct. 30, Tsunami Books. ...**Carol Ann Bassett** (*Organ Pipe: Life on the Edge*) at 7 pm Nov. 3, REI, 306 Lawrence. ...**Gary Moulton** (Editor, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*) at 8 pm Nov. 4, 182 Lillis Hall, UO. ...**Carola Dunn**, "Inextricably Entangled: Plot, Character, Setting" at 6:30 pm Nov. 4, Baker Downtown Center. ...**Richard Melo** (*Jokerman 8*) and OBA nominee **Ariel Gore** at 7 pm Nov. 5, Feinsteins' Museum of Unfine Art. ...**Bob Welch**, "The Making of *American Nightingale,*" at 7:30 pm, Nov. 5, Eugene Public Library. ...Fiction writing teacher **Jessica Morrell** (*Writing out the Storm*), workshop from 10 am-4:30 pm Nov. 6, 1210 SE Oak, Portland, $70. (503-287-2150). ...**Eric Hansen** (*The Bird Man and the Lap Dancer)* at 7 pm Nov. 10, Knight Library Browsing Rm. ...OBA finalists **Marjorie Sandor** and **Tracy Daugherty** at 8 pm Nov. 11, Knight Library Browsing Room. ...**Shirley Tallman**, **Carola Dunn** at 5 pm Nov. 11, Tsunami Books. ...**David Sedaris** at 7:30 pm Nov. 11, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland, $30. (503-227-2583). ...**Thomas P. Hoop** (*The Jihad Virus*) at 11 am Nov. 13, The Book Store, 1000 River Rd. ...Essayist, poet **Paisley Rekdal** (*The Night My Mother Met Bruce Lee*) at 7 pm Nov. 16, Eugene Public Library. ...**Roddy Doyle** (*Oh, Play That Thing*) at 7:30 pm Nov. 16, First Congregational Church, Portland, $13. (503-227-2583). ...**Diana Abu-Jaber** (*Crescent*) at 7 pm Nov. 17, Knight Library Browsing Room. ...**18th Annual Oregon Book Awards** at 7:30 pm Nov. 18, Scottish Rite Center, Portland, $25. (503-227-2583)**. ...Andy Friedman**, **Ty Connor** at 9 pm Nov. 19, Sam Bond's Garage, $5. ...Children's author, illustrator **Chris Van Allsburg** at 11 am Nov. 20, First Congregational Church, Portland, $13/$8 students, seniors, $5 children (503) 227-2583).

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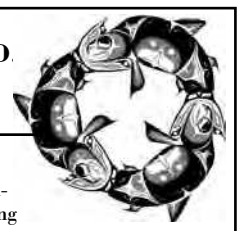

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