

counting for all the allusions to Lewis, his works, and his attacks on Joyce. Eliot called Lewis “the only writer among my contemporaries to create a new, an original prose style . . . the most fascinating personality of our time.” Pound communicated with Lewis during five decades and placed him in the *Cantos* more than once. W. B. Yeats admired *Time and Western Man*, *The Childermass*, and *The Apes of God*, and rightly compared Lewis to Jonathan Swift. Such was but some of the esteem accorded to the visionary who honored, and who erected, monuments of unaging intellect.

Wyndham Lewis expected “the herd”—that is to say, ourselves—to respond gratefully to his heroic demands and scathing representations. His view of humanity—icy, abstract, Hobbesian, and removed from the liberal tradition—has been seen as Fascist, inhuman, and cruel. To some degree, he acknowledged that himself. The trouble is, of course, that sentimentality and vanity keep us from acknowledging the truth of an impersonal contempt. Small-minded Lilliput, coarse Brobdingnag, and preposterous Laputa (complete with its academy) have been and remain valid models of our world. Dean Swift’s wisdom is so uncomfortable that it is relegated to children—and professors.

The *saeva indignatio* of Wyndham Lewis made him the historical counterfoil of Joyce, the opposite of D. H. Lawrence, and the male chauvinist nightmare of Virginia Woolf. As the self-styled “Enemy” of modern dissolution, he was the champion of objectivity, space, reason, and order. He was the poet of the *outside* of things, and stood against all mush and gush, rejecting mediocrity, romanticism, and regression. Modern British literature is inconceivable without him, but he has not any more than Swift receded into the purely historical mu-

seum world to become only a relic of his day.

Wyndham Lewis comes to mind often these days, and not only when we remember such characters as Tarr, Pulley and Satters, Horace Zagreus, Vincent Penhale, and René Harding. He comes to mind when we consider that until recently Pee-Wee Herman was thought to be just the person to instruct the nation’s youth. He comes to mind when we consider apes of God like Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, and Julian Schnabel. He comes to mind when we routinely slip-slide in the slop of smarm that passes for public discourse today. He comes to mind when we consider the brave new world of interactive television, “virtual reality,” and the multiculturalism promoted by the powers that be.

Above all, he comes to mind when we recall some of the illusions of Modernism itself—particularly the thought that a great work of art has the power to change the world. The reactionary modernist certainly had something to react against—not only the seizure of his charisma by phonies and bureaucracies, but also the departure of the “herd” for the exit marked “easy way out.” Just as Pound’s Imagism degenerated into “Amygism,” so did “modern art” and Vorticism turn into the smiley faces finger painted by the Gartside of this world. “Art” became “self-expression”; “poetry” can be “taught”; “the personal is the political.” In a “democracy,” the custodial engineer gets to write the curriculum.

Considering the drone of the media, the complacency of the established powers, and the cud-chewing indifference of the citizenry, we have today better reason than ever before to appreciate not only Wyndham Lewis’s prophetic exasperation but also why he considered his fellow creatures a herd. ◊

The Wife Beater’s Punishment (With Commentary)

by Richard Moore

When he knocked out her tooth
(a beautiful incisor)
he lost his wife—plain truth:
he didn’t recognize her.

Those verses sad and gory,
feminists brash and clubby,
began with a true story:
a wife thus bashed her hubby.

But *woman in a craze*
beats up her man in tales
lacks credence nowadays.
In fiction, thugs are males.

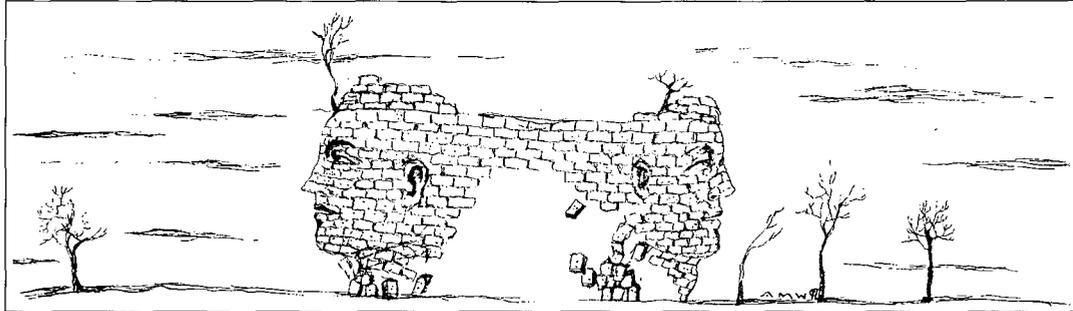
In life—I’ll make a sonnet
and add—*don’t depend on it.*

Stupid Conservatives

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"A Conservative is only a Tory who is ashamed of himself."

—J. Hookham Frere



The Conservative Crack-Up
by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.
New York: Simon & Schuster;
319 pp., \$23.00

On page 62 of this book, the author recalls with irritation having once been accused by Murray Kempton of dishonoring the “legacy” of His Master’s Voice, H. L. Mencken, by “conformism.” How, Tyrrell demanded incredulously, was it possible for *him* to be the conformist in a debate in which all the other participants and an audience of “upper-crust” Manhattanites were in “superlative dudgeon over my every expressed thought?” Perhaps the answer to his question is that Mencken deliberately avoided meeting most of the politicians of his own day in order that he might not like them, while Emmett Tyrrell has sedulously cultivated those of his time in order that they might like him.

Although Tyrrell deplores the creature Peter Brimelow has dubbed “The Stupid Conservative,” he himself is the epitome of The Career Conservative, a subspecies of the breed when it is not actually one and the same thing. “In the rough-and-tumble times of the movement’s early days,” he writes, “no Stupid Conservative could survive. But by the time of the Reagan-Bush ascendancy, rhetoric came easy. One could be a par-

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rot and pass for a conservative. Bright fellows were still around, but they were being overwhelmed by the Stupid Conservatives and it was usually the Stupid Conservative whom the *Kultursmog* would cite on those rare occasions when citing a conservative was useful.” (Is this the explanation for the blurb by Norman Mailer that appears on the dust jacket of *The Conservative Crack-Up*?)

In reality, the Stupid or Career Conservative is not usually as stupid as he sounds. Like the member of a street gang in Los Angeles, he tirelessly patrols his turf—that immense elongated slum stretching southward along the Eastern Seaboard from Boston to Washington, D. C.—making all the appropriate tribal sounds and mugging, beating, and robbing imprudent interlopers or simply people who have the temerity to establish eye contact with him. In common with the Crips or the Bloods, the Stupid Conservative has street smarts and a keen animal shrewdness sufficient to raise him to high positions at the foundations, the Department of Education, and even the White House. As with all gangsters and careerists, the Stupid Conservative values power, money, and prestige, to which he is happy to sacrifice truth, honor, and personal integrity. Like them, finally, he has inordinate vanity, and he will readily expend an arsenal of ICBMs in the defense not only of his political and bureaucratic turf, but of his tender ego.

As observers of the so-called conservative movement for the past quarter-

century know, Mr. Tyrrell’s vanity is as tremendous as his literary abilities are negligible. *The Conservative Crack-Up* adds hitherto unsuspected dimensions to the concept of the self-made man; for its gall, vulgarity, and sheer effrontery, it must be compared with Norman Podhoretz’s *Making It*—a comparison its author would no doubt find flattering. In his book, Tyrrell manages to patronize and exploit everyone from Ronald Reagan, William Buckley, Irving Kristol, and Malcolm Muggeridge to his own ex-wife. My first reaction to *The Conservative Crack-Up* was to wonder how such an inveterate ego-stroker and influence-peddler could have brought himself to squander the social and political capital so carefully accumulated over twenty-five years. But reading further, I understood. R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. is filled with a smoldering resentment at not finding himself the acknowledged conservative leader for the 1990’s that Buckley was for the 50’s and 60’s, a crushing disappointment for which the present volume is his sweet revenge. (For confirmation of this judgment see page 239, where the author upbraids an older generation of American conservatives for their unwillingness “to confer authority on a new generation of forty-year-old leaders. . . .”)

What Tyrrell solemnly refers to as “my art” is to the work of his model Henry Mencken what Florence Foster Jenkins’ “singing” was to the art of Maria Callas. *The Conservative Crack-Up* is not a book; it is an exercise in imitation