

against the South is not over, and the South's enemies—the liberal-conservative Establishment that owns and operates the United States as a private monopoly—will not rest until they have erased every vestige of the Southern identity.

One typical complaint against the Confederate flag is that it is the symbol of treason and rebellion. I say "typical," because no one who knew anything of our history would be so obtuse. The withdrawal of a commonwealth from a federation does not constitute rebellion, much less treason, either in political theory or in international law. There are those who will say that the states of the Union did not have a right to secede. They are wrong, but let us concede the point. The Virginians and Carolinians of the 1860's certainly had better right to secede than their fathers and grandfathers who liberated their states from British rule, and yet we are not ashamed of Washington and Adams, and we do not curse the memory of these traitors to the only lawfully constituted authority that had been conceivable from the time John Smith set foot in Virginia. The government of Andrew Johnson had wanted to try Jefferson Davis for treason, but the President thought better of it when he realized that world opinion would be solidly against him.

So far from being traitors to the American Republic, Southerners have been, at least since the Spanish-American War, the greatest chauvinists, sensitive to any blot on the national honor, eager for war, and proud of the Stars and Stripes. It is a pernicious piece of nonsense to claim that a man cannot be loyal to his state or region without being disloyal to his nation.

The Modern Boswell

by Thomas Fleming

For Mel and Marie

This is what you've waited for all your life,
storing up every stupid thing he said.
You spent these thirty years sharpening the knife
you stuck into his back once he was dead.

What was it you were thinking all those years
you played the colleague, confidant, and friend?
He blurbed your books, true, put up with your sneers
at his success. You got him in the end,

Why? Was it that he was just too damn good?
Others you might have hoped to emulate,
by doing even half the work you could.
Being himself he made you second-rate.

We hate whom we have harmed, says Tacitus,
so you elucidate his path to hell,
a friendless and unransomed Theseus
who stumbled on his love for you and fell.

That is like saying a man cannot be a good father or a good Baptist, unless he is just a little bit of a traitor to the state that demands perfect and total loyalty.

I often think of our late friend, M.E. Bradford. The only time I think we seriously disagreed was during the Gulf War. He understood and accepted all the criticisms I made against the injustice and imprudence of that crusade for democracy, and yet, at the end of a discussion, he would always come back to the same point: it would do Americans good to punish the strutting little despot who had insulted our country.

I do not think I ever met a more patriotic American: he had served his country in the Navy, had devoted much of his valuable time to political battles both in Texas and in Washington, and had spent much of his later years explaining the meaning of the Constitution to a nation that had turned its back on the rule of law. As a leader of the conservative coalition, he had been an excellent fighter on behalf of principle. His only weakness was that he was a very poor hater. He could get temporarily incensed against those who lied against him—Irving Kristol and George Will—but he could not bring himself to seek revenge and would not countenance it in his friends. As Paul Gottfried always used to say, Mel was too much of a Christian to make a good politician.

To his academic colleagues, even those who considered themselves his friends, Mel often seemed an anomaly. Here was a literary historian who could have carved out a very comfortable career, if only he had stuck to his trade and avoided controversy. When Clyde Wilson's volume of essays *Why the South Will Survive* was published in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of *I'll Take My Stand*, the reviewer in the *Virginia Quarterly* took all the contributors to task for politicizing the Agrarian inheritance. The shaft was aimed at Mel, of course, to make it appear that he had diverted a literary movement into politics.

But the contributors to *I'll Take My Stand* were nothing if not political, and several of them wanted to call the volume *Tracts Against Communism*. Indeed, it is hard to think of a man of letters more political than Donald Davidson. Even if he had tried, Mel Bradford could not have disentangled politics from literature, not in the trivial sense that he could not recognize literary merit in liberal writers, but because the career of the writer and scholar was bound up with the community that had given him life and cultural sustenance. His role was not to go off into the wilderness in order to discover some unheard of system of thought and expression to spark a revolution. On the contrary. Speaking of the resemblance of Southern writers to ancient Romans, he wrote: "[B]oth reflect the all-absorbing corporate spirit of the culture for which they speak. The Southern writer, like his ancient counterpart, has almost always felt the pressure to be a public man and to perform a service in relation to that powerful sense of cultural identity."

For me, Mel was a kind of touchstone of integrity. Whatever decency a man had was sure to be called forth and encouraged by the mere fact of knowing Mel, and if there were those who responded to his open nature with distrust and chicane, they revealed themselves for what they were. In offering this number of *Chronicles* to M.E. Bradford, we are paying tribute to a man who represented the last link in many chains: a man of letters who put his pen to his nation's use, a passionate Southerner and loyal American, a faithful friend, and a Christian husband and father who did his duty.

Synaptic Gap

by Daniel Franko Goldman

In no other species but Man
are disparities of intellect so glaring.
No doubt some apes are underachievers; some dogs and bears
learn circus tricks more readily than their duller brethren;
among birds of a particular species, some use sticks as levers
to pry their shellfish open, while others, more dimwitted, pound
the bivalves repeatedly on rocks, a plodding, less elegant process
than that of the tool-users. This skill (or its absence) is passed
by bird parents to offspring, and the inequity persists, down
avian generations. All of that said, it is nonetheless true
that the intramural gap between the brightest and the dullest
individual members of subhuman species is really quite narrow;
in Man, it is huge, and nothing can alter it. Moreover, in Man, the
gap makes more mischief. It is a matter of degree, but with a
salient, fateful difference: bears and birds obey their genes,
exempt from the need to engender organization. Man is mere
potential, helpless, frail, unprogrammed for achievement or even
for survival on his own, gravid with promise, but unequipped
to top it much, without a flawed and artificial overlay
of polity and politics, such fertile ground for the poisonous weeds
that sprout in our unique synaptic gap. These pettifogging perils
bedeviled bands of hunter-gatherers, and later, tribes
and cities and nation-states and bloated empires, in
exponential, malignant growth. Soon or late, they foundered,
all, in waters whipped to needless froth
by the struggles of the stupid, the frustrations of the wise.
The strong balk at supporting the weak. The feckless
scorn strength once their bellies are full, a state of affairs
that soon becomes the norm, for their demands are enforced
as their numbers mimic strength and the strong grow ever weaker
in reciprocal decline. Desperate for order and falsified fairness,
Authority prescribes Procrustean beds, devices seductively simple
but too often fatal to those who lie on their leveling frames.
The shaken survivors of these hideous experiments hold seminars
around smoky fires and tug their smelly, yellowing beards.
Soon another tack is tried, and it too feeds
many a happy hyena before the bones
of a new crop of victims are bleached by the sun.
How then shall we order our affairs,
when the least of us understand nothing,
and the best not nearly enough?