

to Zionism failed to draw Jewish voters to the ticket; Jews voted for Dole-Kemp by a mere 16 percent, a far cry from the third of the Jewish vote consistently won by Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush through 1988.

Two of the most typically Middle American categories are those for family income and the size of the place where the voter lives. The same pattern of Middle American erosion is evident in them too. As for middle-income groups, with incomes from "15,000 to above 50,000" dollars a year, the NFR average for 1976 (figures for 1972 are not available) through 1984 is 57 percent, while for Bush in 1988 it was still nearly 56 percent. But in 1992 Bush took only 39 percent of these middle-income categories, while in 1996 Dole and Kemp, despite all their chatter of tax-cuts and perhaps because of their chatter about the interests of the urban underclass, won only 41 percent, recapturing a mere two percent of the middle class. In the lower portions of the middle-income categories, Bush in 1992 and Dole in 1996 won percentages in the upper thirties, in contrast to the more than 50 percent consistently won by earlier Republican candidates.

And the same decline of Middle American support for Republicans is apparent in size of place. Nixon, Ford, and Reagan carried more than 60 percent of suburban and rural voters from 1972 through 1984, and Bush in 1988 carried them in the high fifties. Bush in 1992 took only 39 percent of the suburban and 42 percent of the rural voters, however, while in 1996 Dole and Kemp carried only 42 and 46 percent respectively.

Since Richard Nixon and his campaign technicians designed the Southern Strategy and similar appeals to the Wallace voters and other Middle American categories, the Republican Party appeared to be on the verge of inaugurating a genuine political revolution in the United States, not only in terms of electoral realignment but also in terms of the eventual content of public policy and legislation. Even when Republican Presidents betrayed their Middle American commitments (as they often did more than they lived up to them), the influence of a social force outside the liberal elites of Manhattan and the Beltway could never be ignored and at least had to be stroked and courted. If the Republicans did ignore or betray those forces, they could expect another Wallace-like movement that would eat into their votes and threaten to throw elections to the Democrats. While Nixon did not hesitate to steal Wallace's issues, he and his successors knew that the possibility of a Middle American revolt constituted a standing check on both their own party and that of their major rivals.

The Democrats have learned something since the 1970's; they no longer nominate candidates like George McGovern, and the Bill Clintons and Al Gores have figured out how to pursue their essentially McGovernite agenda in the guise of patriotism and family values. The Republicans can no longer count on the Democrats to commit suicide for them. What is worse, the Republican Party today is not the same as the GOP that nominated Nixon and his successors. The emergence of the Beltway conservative (really neoconservative) intelligentsia in the late 1970's and 80's created an elite group that now exerts immense influence on Republican policymaking, legislation, speechwriting, and electoral strategies, and that group has little connection to or sympathy for Middle Americans and their concerns. Groups like Empower America and its sisters in the think tanks and magazines of Washington now play major roles in determining what the party and its leaders think, read, hear,

say, and do, as well as on whom they appoint, elect, and nominate. By 1992, this apparatus had developed sufficient power within the party to prevent George Bush from connecting to the Middle Americans who are the real once and future base of the Republican Party if it is to have a future, and by 1996 the same apparatus shaped the nomination and presidential campaigns of two of its own Beltway brothers, Bob Dole and Jack Kemp. The alienation of their ticket from the party's Middle American base is the reason they lost the election, and deserved to lose the election, against an opponent who should have been more vulnerable than any other since George McGovern himself. If the Democrats keep learning and the Republicans keep failing to distance themselves from the Beltway right and to return to their core support in the Middle American heartland that gave them the White House for most of the 1970's and 80's, the party can expect to keep losing in the future.

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## Krummholz

by Alan Sullivan

Hunched like an anchorite behind its boulder,  
A treeline pine weathers the winter storms.  
Its knotty branches shrink as nights turn colder.  
Caught in its tufts, a fluted snowdrift forms.

When summer bares the mossy flanks of bosses  
And lakes of lupine bloom on alpine meads,  
The stunted pine regrows its winter losses,  
Cracking the rocks to meet its meager needs.

Under its boughs the mantled squirrels nibble  
On tender forage plucked from fields of sedge.  
Below its roots the braids of snowmelt dribble  
In purling pools from ledge to jointed ledge.

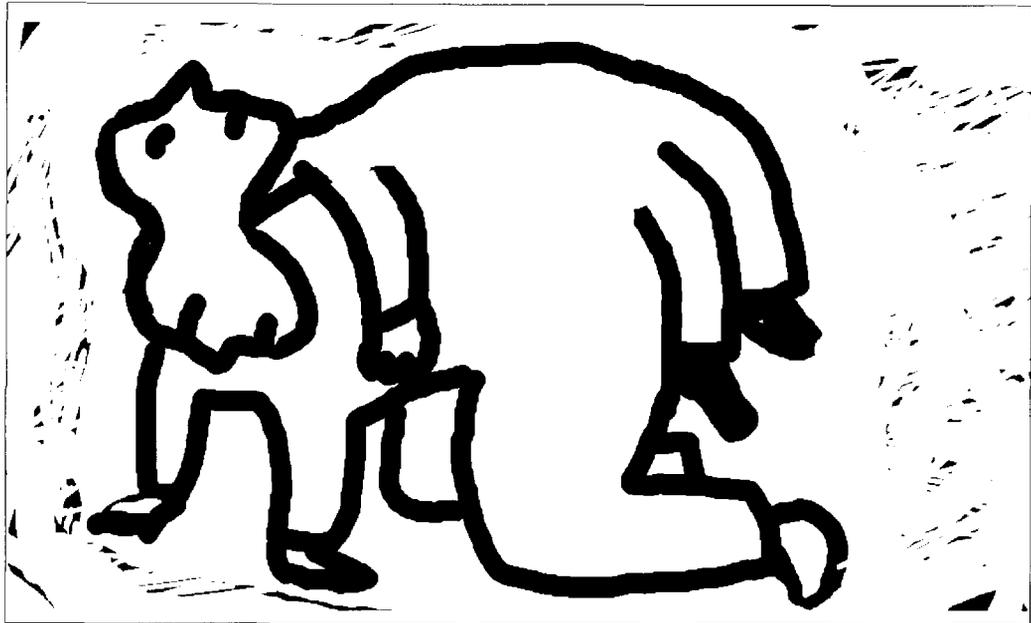
Off-trail two hikers hunker in its cranny  
For shelter from the wind-bedeveled sky.  
At dusk the twisted *krummholz* looks uncanny,  
Its limbs outstretched as though to prophesy.

Driving our tentstakes deep in prickly humus,  
We pitch our camp and gather sticks to burn.  
The resin-scented plumes of smoke perfume us  
While overhead the Bear and Draco turn.

As embers fade, our tangled limbs keep burning,  
A blaze no dozing squirrels smell or see  
Though tufted ears might hear us turning, turning.  
O! Crooked love beneath the crooked tree.

# The Paleoconservative Imagination

by Mark Royden Winchell



In January 1996, Norman Podhoretz delivered a self-congratulatory eulogy for neoconservatism in a lecture before the American Enterprise Institute. In addition to giving himself and his cohorts credit for the recent successes of the American right, Podhoretz boasted that “thanks to the influence of neoconservatism on the conservative movement in general, the philistine indifference to culture which once pervaded that movement is largely gone.” Mark C. Henrie of Toronto felt compelled to challenge this preposterous claim when Podhoretz’s lecture was printed in *Commentary* later that year. In a letter published in the June 1996 issue of *Commentary*, Henrie points out that Russell Kirk was stressing the importance of culture as far back as the 1950’s (a time when the founding fathers of neoconservatism were still on the anti-Stalinist left). Whatever else one might say about Kirk, he and the paleoconservatives associated with him could hardly be accused of “a philistine indifference to culture.”

In responding to this letter, Podhoretz concedes that Henrie has a point. He believes, however, that the paleoconservatives “committed a greater sin” than indifference in “being ranged on the wrong side of the culture wars that reached fever pitch in the 60’s and are still raging today.” He even sees “an ironic confluence” between the paleoconservatives and the counterculture of the radical left. “Like T.S. Eliot and the Southern Agrarians by whom they were heavily influenced, the paleoconservatives despised capitalism, industrialism, and bourgeois democracy no less fervently than did the radicals of the counterculture.” In making this linkage, Podhoretz is assuming that people with common enemies must necessarily be alike. (By the same logic, one might argue that there was no difference between Franklin Roosevelt’s America and Joseph Stalin’s Rus-

sia, simply because both nations fought Hitler’s Germany.) Nevertheless, Podhoretz is certainly correct in acknowledging that paleoconservative attitudes toward culture are fundamentally different from those that one might find in the pages of *Commentary* or the *New Criterion*. The conservative “movement” is as divided on matters of culture as it is on foreign policy, trade, and states’ rights.

As Podhoretz indicates, paleoconservative criticism has been influenced most significantly by the Christian humanism of T.S. Eliot and the anti-industrialism of the Nashville Agrarians. The implications of this inheritance become apparent when one contrasts the vision of Russell Kirk and such neo-Agrarian critics as Walter Sullivan and M.E. Bradford with the neoconservative criticism best exemplified by Podhoretz himself.

In an age when left-wing critics sought to make literature more political, Russell Kirk sought to make politics more literary. In the climactic section of his classic study *The Conservative Mind* (1953), he wrote: “Not to the statistician, then, but to the poet, do conservatives turn for insight. If there has been a principal conservative thinker in the twentieth century, it is T.S. Eliot, whose age this is in humane letters. Eliot’s whole endeavor was to point a way out of the Wasteland toward order in the soul and in society.” (Nearly two decades later, Kirk published *Eliot and His Age: T.S. Eliot’s Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century*, which is easily the best book ever written on Eliot as social thinker.) In placing less emphasis on transitory electoral victories than on the “permanent things,” Kirk often quoted the following passage from Eliot’s essay on F.H. Bradley: “If we take the widest and wisest view of a Cause, there is no such thing as a Lost Cause, because there is no such thing as a Gained Cause. We fight for lost causes because we know that our defeat and dismay may be the preface to our successors’ victory, though that victory itself will be temporary; we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation

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