

not passively. It is not enough simply to “recognize” Greek words: Vocabulary must be memorized from English to Greek, if it is to stick, and an hour spent on writing Greek sentences, however poorly, is probably worth several hours of passive study. In passing on to a second year of Greek, the reading of Xenophon’s *Anabasis* should, therefore, be supplemented with exercises in Greek composition, perhaps through North and Hillard’s *Greek Prose Composition*. (Supplemental Greek readers, designed to reinforce grammar and expand vocabulary, are also available from Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers.)

The study of Greek and Latin is not a theoretical discipline but a matter of patient study, of trial and error. Crosby and Schaeffer developed this text at the University of Pennsylvania, where Crosby was both teacher and dean and where Schaeffer (a classics teacher at Franklin and Marshall) taught summer courses in Greek. Like other solid textbooks and grammars published in the 19th and early 20th centuries, C&S reflected generations of practical teaching experience, and it is not entirely a wise idea to abandon the lessons of experience. In fact, for Crosby and Schaeffer, Greek was not an exotic subject. In their Introduction, they emphasize not only the continuity of the ancient world with our own (“An Olympic victor was welcomed home with all the enthusiasm and festivity that attends the winning of a World Series . . .”) but the vital importance of the Greeks to the best qualities of our own civilization: “The best Greek is marked by a sense of proportion, by a striving for just the right word to convey the thought, and by a simplicity and directness of expression.”

It is highly unfashionable to say such things, but, not so long ago, the study of the classics was supposed to train the mind and temper the character. Rudyard Kipling (in his story “Regulus”) stages a debate between a science teacher who believes that nothing sticks from the classics except “one score of totally unrelated Latin tags.” The Latin master retorts that with Latin comes “Balance, proportion, perspective—life,” and, when one of the boys displays such a character and his friend praises him with an allusion to the Roman hero Regulus, the classicist exults: “You see, it sticks. A little of it sticks among the barbarians.”

Parents and teachers are coming to realize that, in abandoning the classics, we have abandoned our children to barbarism. In large numbers, they are rediscovering

the value of the classical languages and the great literatures in which they are written. In the revival of classical education, which is the best news, by far, in American education, there is no more pressing need than for schools (including homeschools) to have ready access to the tried and true textbooks of Greek and Latin. The republication of Crosby and Schaeffer is a significant step.

Thomas Fleming is the author, most recently, of Montenegro: The Divided Land.

The Authority of Pain

by Jeffrey Meyers

The Gate

by François Bizot;
translated by Euan Cameron
New York: Knopf, 278 pp., \$24.00

In April 1970—between the fall of Prince Sihanouk’s government and the American and South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia—the young Sean Flynn, war photographer and son of Errol Flynn, deliberately drove into a Vietcong roadblock in Cambodia. He wanted to report

the war from the communist side but was captured and accused of spying for the CIA. Since the Vietcong army was not officially in Cambodia, they handed Sean over to the fanatical Khmer Rouge. Transferred through several prison camps to avoid American bombs, Sean lasted for 14 months before contracting a severe case of malaria. With no medical aid available in the jungle, he was given a fatal injection, became comatose, and was buried while still alive. His death was horrific. But he avoided the fate of most other prisoners who—forced to kneel and ordered to “Stay still! Heads forward! Do not tuck your neck in between your shoulders!”—had their heads hacked off with several blows of a hoe. No one ever survived the Khmer Rouge, who killed 30 Westerners and several million of their own people—except François Bizot, the only one who lived to tell the tale. He, too, was falsely accused of being a CIA agent, and his story has some eerie parallels with Sean’s.

In March 1969, Bizot had been living in Cambodia for four years and was fluent in Khmer. Lon Nol, who supported American intervention, seized power. The Khmer Rouge and the Vietcong, who also crossed into Cambodia, fought his army in a brutal civil war. Bizot (now a professor of Southeast Asian studies at the Sorbonne) was then restoring ceramics and bronzes at the magnificent medieval Khmer temples in Angkor Wat. In October 1971, while researching the Buddhist state of trance in a monastery 20

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miles north of Phnom Penh, he was arrested by the Khmer Rouge, who believed “no *barang* [foreigner] comes to Cambodia to study Buddhism and Khmer pottery.” In the detention camp, where he was shackled in leg irons and chained up for two months, 20 Cambodian prisoners were tightly held in a long wooden stock, motionless and side by side. The wasted sick were abandoned and left to die.

The only foreigner among them, Bizot had no books to read and could not speak to the other prisoners. Fed only two bowls of rice per day, he became starved and emaciated. He did not practice Buddhist meditation or achieve a transcendent resignation to his fate, but, during the extremely hot days and surprisingly cold nights, he found various ways to pass the agonizing time. He responded to the beauty of the natural surroundings: the brilliant dawns and sunsets, the colors of the flowers, the sounds of the birds. He bathed in the river, slept near the burning embers of a log, and befriended the local chickens, whose lives were as precarious as his own. He was required to exonerate himself by recording his personal history. He thought about his Cambodian wife and young daughter; devised stratagems to influence his jailers and slightly increase his freedom; and, though he would be instantly recognized in the rural villages, desperately planned his escape.

Bizot also formed a strange bond with a nine-year-old girl, the only child in the camp, who had been separated from her father when he was taken prisoner. At considerable sacrifice, for he was extremely undernourished, Bizot gave her a can of condensed milk with sugar. At first, she refused to eat or speak but finally accepted his gift and seemed to befriend him: “The sight of this child,” he writes, “who was under my protection, filled me with an immense courage.” One day, she slipped her delicate finger between his shackle and skin and skipped away. She returned with a bunch of keys, “unlocked the padlock and, with some difficulty, carefully retightened the chain.” After that, she seemed to hate him. It had taken only a short time for the Khmer Rouge to transform this child into a true revolutionary who betrayed her helpless protector.

Like many prisoners, Bizot also formed a bond, even a kind of friendship, with his captor Ta Douch, whose “light skin and crowded uneven teeth betrayed his Chinese origins.” Douch beat and tortured the Cambodian prisoners. He be-

lieved Bizot was innocent, however, and, though under intense pressure from his even more savage superiors, protected him and saved his life. Bizot—who yearned for a decisive verdict, even a death sentence—was finally freed. After his money was returned, he gave a Christmas banquet, and Douch entrusted him with Khmer Rouge documents to deliver to the French embassy in the capital.

In April 1975, three years after his release, the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh at the same time the Vietnamese communists captured Saigon. Bizot took shelter in the French embassy. As translator for, and one of the leaders of, the French community, he participated in the first meeting between the French diplomats and the victorious army officers; this part of his memoir is a vivid lesson in how to negotiate from a position of weakness. Able to take command and act decisively, Bizot was allowed to leave the embassy in order to find food and medical supplies for the 2,000 refugees in the compound. He even arranged for a French couple whose young daughter had just died to clean her grave and say farewell to her at the local cemetery. When he tried to recover his Buddhist texts and artistic treasures, however, he was recaptured by a little boy with a rifle. He was lucky to escape once again, but he had to abandon this quest.

During this time, the highly civilized Bizot experienced the destruction of his world, which disintegrated into arson, looting, and murder—“an immense theater of death.” The feral lust for survival in the embassy itself became a microcosmic “breeding ground for all the basest instincts,” just as the “revolutionary fervor, which authorizes all crimes, had suddenly filled [the Khmer Rouge leaders] with the very basest instincts.” The French were forced at gunpoint to hand over the Cambodian refugees for “fair trials”—that is, for certain death. Mass executions took place in the football stadium, which always serves a dual function during revolutionary unrest. “In the blood-drenched soil,” Bizot observes, “lay already victim upon victim, for centuries past, down to the deepest part of the earth.”

Despite these horrors, Bizot helped to organize two convoys of 40 trucks that carried the French and other foreigners with passports to the safety of Thailand. (I can well imagine this journey. In 1966, I took a wretched bus, constantly stopped by goons with machine guns, from Poipet on the Thai border to the jungly ruins of

Angkor Wat.) Bizot confronted ruthless Khmer Rouge officials, who looked on the suffering of the weak with total contempt. His last-minute pleas for mercy and courageous acts at the border determined the fate, even the very survival, of many stowaways without valid documents.

In 2000, Bizot returned to Cambodia. He visited Douch, then in prison for crimes against humanity, and finally learned that this loathsome executioner had been his liberator. He also saw the “Genocidal Museum” that displays the Khmer Rouge instruments of torture:

the bathtub specially adapted for immersion; the sloping wooden board used for suffocation; the cage of spiders, centipedes, snakes and scorpions; the hooks; the bludgeons; the whips; the stained knives.

In this brave and brilliant memoir, Bizot never fully explains the intractable conflict in Cambodia (also reflected in his ambivalent attitude toward Douch) between the traditional Buddhist gentleness and reverence for life and the inhuman torture and genocide of the Khmer Rouge. He says that “the Communist revolution was a disruption of their age-old way of life” but also (and more convincingly) that, in the revolution, he finds

religious themes from the past: taking on a new name, for example; enduring hardships, rather like ritual mortification; even the soothing, enticing words of Radio Peking announcing [amidst all the streams of blood] the advent of a regenerated people.

Sean Flynn was a man of action, though reckless; Bizot was a contemplative scholar, though capable. Sean got captured deliberately; Bizot was taken by chance. Sean lasted more than a year before he was killed; Bizot, luckier in his captor, was imprisoned for two months before he was freed. Both suffered terribly under a brutal regime. Bizot survived to tell his story—as well as Sean’s. As Auden wrote in his elegy on Yeats: “The words of a dead man / Are modified in the guts of the living.”

Jeffrey Meyers is the author of Inherited Risk: Errol and Sean Flynn in Hollywood and Vietnam and Privileged Moments: Encounters With Writers.

by Samuel Francis

The Real Cabal

After nearly two decades of paleoconservative criticism, complaints, and general grousing about the ideological hegemony of the neoconservatives, the establishment press finally began to notice the existence of the latter. Between the time of President Bush's factually flawed "Axis of Evil" State of the Union Address in 2002 and the "end" of the war with Iraq last spring, probably a dozen articles about the neocons popped up in such locations as the *New York Times*, the *Nation*, the *New York Review of Books*, and similar organs. What was curious (though not terribly surprising) is that, although each of the articles offered an "expose" of the neocon "cabal," its "extreme" views and beliefs, and its awesome power in the government, the academy, and the mass media, not a single article that I know of even mentioned the existence of something called *paleoconservatism* or cited or quoted any paleoconservative writer—even though the very term *neoconservative* logically implies a paleoconservative antithesis, and the hostile drift of the articles would seem to suggest that their authors would welcome such an alternative to the neocons as the "acceptable right."

This silence about the paleos was the result, in part, of the abysmal ignorance of the writers of most such articles but also of the hidden purpose that lurked beneath much of what they wrote. That purpose was not so much to "deconstruct" and "expose" the neocons as to define them as the real conservative opposition, the legitimate (though deplorable and vicious) "right" against which the polemics and political struggle of the left should be directed. The reason the left prefers the neocon "right" to a paleo alternative is, quite simply, that the neocons are essentially of the left themselves and, thus, provide a fake opposition against which the rest of the left can shadowbox and thereby perpetuate its own political and cultural hegemony unchallenged by any authentic right.

The strategy became fairly apparent in much of the liberal commentary about the disciples of the late Leo Strauss, the Straussians or, as the *New York Times Magazine* dubbed them, the "Leo-cons."

The "Straussians" soon began to displace such perennial demons of the left as Wall Street banks, oil companies, white supremacists, and fundamentalist Christians as the ultimate source of political evil, and one almost expected the witch hunters of the Southern Poverty Law Center to start profiling them.

The portrayal of the neocons in general and the Straussians in particular as the brains behind the American right became obvious in an article by William Pfaff in the *International Herald Tribune* (May 15), in which he wrote that "The radical neoconservatives, who appeared in the 1960s, are the first seriously intelligent movement of the American right since the 19th century" and "the main intellectual influence on the neoconservatives has been the philosopher Leo Strauss." Both statements are simply wrong.

In the first place, there is nothing especially "radical" about any of the neoconservatives, and, in the second place, even if we grudgingly grant that they are intelligent, they are clearly not the first to display this quality. Mr. Pfaff might have glanced at George Nash's *Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* to learn something about "intelligent" conservatism in this country or at any of the myriad books about the Southern Agrarians, the history and background of conservatism, etc. Obviously, however, he did not or had some other reason for wishing to present the neocons as the only adversaries worthy of the immense brainpower of the left.

In the third place, Strauss, while a major influence on several Old Right figures as well as on some neoconservatives (his picture appears on the dust jacket of Nash's 1976 book) and the founder of his own school of (sort of) conservative thought, is hardly "the main intellectual influence" on the neocons. Neoconservatism emerges from three originally separate movements, among which the Straussians are one. The other two are the liberal-to-left mainstream intellectuals of the 1950's, most of whom were at one time known as "consensus liberals," and the Social Democrats of the Sidney Hook stripe, who actually contributed



most of the anticommunism of the neocons. The former group "moved to the right"—if that is what they did—principally because the New Left slipped out of their control, started kicking them down the stairs (often quite literally), and snuffing up to the Palestinians against Israel. Unlike the anticommunist right that emerged a decade or more earlier (the right of Whittaker Chambers, James Burnham, and Frank Meyer), the neocon right experienced no dark night of the soul about the God That Failed and, in fact, never even missed a meal. So far from being Trotskyites (I know of only two or three major neoconservative figures who were), most were never committed to the revolutionary left at all and had little problem shuffling from one side of the spectrum to the other as the occasion required. I have never heard of any neocon who, like Chambers and Meyer, felt the need to stay up all night every night with a loaded shotgun in case some of his former comrades and employers in the NKVD came looking for him. The transition from whatever it was the neoconservatives formerly purported to believe to whatever it is they now purport to believe was no more wrenching a spiritual odyssey for them than a trip from Pinsk to Prague would be for an Eastern European peddler. Intellectual nomads by their very nature, they are as comfortable with one *ism* as with another.

As for Strauss, much of the accumulating literature about him and his disciples in the establishment popular press is also wrong. It is entirely untrue, for example, that the late Albert Wohlstetter of the University of Chicago, under whom neocons Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle studied, was a Straussian, nor is it true that Mr. Perle is a Straussian. (Both claims were made last spring.) Mr. Wolfowitz has had the reputation of being a Straussian