

Book Reviews

***The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812.* By G. A. Rawlyk. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994. Pp. 244. \$49.95. Paper, \$18.95.**

The eighteenth century had diverse aspects. One was "the age of reason" or "the enlightenment," which exalted the power of the intellect to understand nature as well as human society. At the opposite pole was the world of evangelical religion in which reason counted for nothing in the face of the ecstatic emotionalism of the "new birth." Enlightenment thinkers regarded emotion as a barrier to understanding; evangelists, to the contrary, saw it as a means of salvation, rejecting the deism and pallid Christianity that were the religions of the educated, who, like Charles Inglis, first bishop of Nova Scotia, deplored nothing more than "enthusiasm."

A generation before the views of the *philosophes* were challenged by Rousseau's arguments upholding sentiment as a bulwark against the artificiality of society, based as it was on calculation and inequality, John Wesley brought solace, and a means of ordering their lives, to countless thousands. Wesley understood the democracy of the emotions, which are possessed equally by rich and poor, and which move humans to action as reason cannot do, a truth that comes as a surprise to the clever of every generation.

A host of evangelical preachers in Britain and America brought emotion back into Christianity, with incalculable results for the converted, for contemporary social and political life, and for the future. Under the impact of Rousseau and his followers in the romantic movement, and the emergence of a revived evangelical Christianity, the tenor of the Victorian era was one of powerful emotionalism for all classes of society.

George Rawlyk, whose life was cut short by an automobile accident in 1995, wrote many books and articles about evangelical Christianity in eighteenth-century British North America, focussing particularly on the Maritime Provinces. He both examined the phenomenon itself and, following the trail of such pioneers as S. D. Clark, attempted to relate changing religious thinking and practice to the emergence of a distinct consciousness among Nova Scotians of their identity as separate from that of New England. His last book, *The Canada Fire*, provides a useful and readable summation of his years of reflection upon his subject. The first part presents a series of biographies. Rawlyk introduces the major evangelical movements in the Maritimes through studies of five central figures: Henry Alline, the New Light preacher who inspired the first "Great Awakening" in the region from 1775 to 1784; the Methodist William Black; David George, the black Nova Scotia Baptist whose ministry included both whites and blacks; Freeborn Garrettson, another Methodist; and lastly, Alline's disciple Harris Harding. Through these short biographies Rawlyk defines what these figures had in common, such as, for example, their belief in the centrality of the conversion experience, as well as how their theologies differed.

In a later chapter Rawlyk draws upon contemporary diaries and letters to provide insights into the consciousness of those who underwent conversion. Entitled "The Nova Scotia New Lights: From the Bottom Up, 1785-1793," it is mainly based on Rawlyk's own edition of *The New Light: letters and spiritual songs 1778-1793* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1983). He argues, quoting extensively from the correspondence of a number of female converts, the "many New Light Maritime young women, during the decade following the end of the American Revolution, regarded themselves, despite their youth and lack of formal education, as the spiritual equals of the male leaders of the evangelical movement" (95).

Rawlyk sees this tendency towards a self-conscious gender equality as part of a more general pattern distinguishing radical evangelicalism in the Maritimes and the Canadas from its American counterpart. He argues that, paradoxically, it was more extreme and democratic in British North America than in the new Republic where strong town government supported New England Congregationalism. The existence of strong communal institutions directed American individualism to political ends,

whereas "in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the emerging evangelical ethos, without the restraints imposed by an established Congregational Church, absorbed a powerful individualistic impulse and often stretched this well beyond the existing New England boundaries of even extreme religious behaviour" (136).

In Rawlyk's view, this radical tendency can be found as well in Upper Canada, as a result of such factors as the institutional weakness of the Church of England. His treatment of the situation there is more abbreviated than his analysis of the Maritimes, which indeed comprises the core of the book. Accordingly, the choice of *The Canada Fire* as a title seems rather contrived.

The final section introduces the reader, through case studies, to evangelical rituals such as a baptism by immersion, the camp meeting and the Presbyterian long communion. As in his other writings, Rawlyk has the great strength of taking religion seriously, not simply seeing it as a form of superstition, but operating on the premise that it is of fundamental human significance, whether or not one is actually a believer. His book gives an excellent sense of how evangelical religion transformed both individuals and communities, and how all classes and groups, black and white, male and female, were transfixed by the idea that the soul was a cosmic battleground. Every person, accordingly, had an eternal significance that transcended gender or race, let alone paltry considerations such as wealth or social status. Out of such a consciousness comes radical change, both personal and political; the Canadian commitment to social justice and to racial and gender equality are rooted in evangelical Christianity.

Rawlyk establishes the theme of *The Canada Fire* by quoting in his Introduction John Newton's great hymn, published in 1779:

Amazing Grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

Amazing, indeed, and he has given us an excellent and accessible approach to an enduring part of our history.

Leo Strauss and Nietzsche. By Laurence Lampert. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996. Pp. ix, 229. \$22.50.

This book is essentially an exposé of the thinking of Leo Strauss, an exposé of the hidden or esoteric Nietzschean centre of Strauss's thinking. Leo Strauss is noted for two distinct, but connected arguments: that the crisis of modernity evidenced by relativism, historicism and ultimately nihilism, demonstrates the need to return to classical philosophy and in particular to the classical doctrine of natural right; and that philosophers, ancient and modern, have engaged in esoteric, as well as exoteric, writing.

In *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*, Laurence Lampert applies Strauss's esoteric/exoteric distinction to Strauss himself. Strauss is an apparent advocate of natural or objective morality against those—most prominently Nietzsche—who uphold the relativity and groundlessness of values. But according to Lampert, this public disagreement between Strauss and Nietzsche hides a private agreement, that philosophy is an atheistical, value-creating activity, an activity beyond good and evil (132-33). What the public disagreement between Strauss and Nietzsche displays is not, as it appears to be, a difference concerning what philosophy is; it displays, rather, a difference concerning how philosophy should be represented to non-philosophers. Should the atheistical immoralism of philosophy be concealed by presenting philosophy as if it were a support for morality, piety and civic life (Strauss)? Or should the very groundlessness of philosophy become the basis for a transformation of Western civilization into a world-affirming, Dionysian culture (Nietzsche)?

The notion that Leo Strauss is a closet Nietzschean is not new. Not only have critics of Strauss—such as Shadia Drury and Peter Levine—made this charge; a number of Strauss's students (Stanley Rosen and Victor Gourevitch, for example) have also pointed in this direction. Indeed, Strauss himself, in the little he has written about Nietzsche, shows at a number of points connections between his views and Nietzsche's. So Lampert's thesis, in its broad outlines, is not news. In fact, it would have been helpful had Lampert considered more systematically earlier reports of Strauss's Nietzscheanism.

What is distinctive in Lampert's approach is that he himself is an explicit—and, at times, overly enthusiastic—exponent of Nietzsche. What

is wrong with Strauss, according to Lampert, is not that he is a Nietzschean, but that he is not Nietzschean enough. For Lampert, there is no history of philosophy as such: all philosophers have been closet Nietzscheans. The history of philosophy is, rather, the history of the relation of philosophy, so understood, to non-philosophers. In other words, the history of philosophy is a history of rhetoric. According to Lampert, Strauss has simply chosen an outworn "strategy" (168)—that of Platonic concealment—and inexplicably turned away from Nietzsche's new strategy. That Strauss's repeated association of Nietzsche with Nazism might explain his turn from Nietzsche seems to have escaped Lampert's notice.

The centrepiece of Lampert's book is a sustained analysis (25-116) of Strauss's posthumously published, dense, and difficult essay, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*" (conveniently included in Lampert's volume as an appendix). Lampert's analysis of this essay is fundamental to his whole thesis. On the basis of this analysis, he dismisses without argument Strauss's apparent support for morality and religion, as well as a whole coterie of Strauss's students who have failed to understand his hidden radicality (159). Unfortunately, Lampert's analysis presents to the uninitiated reader a maze of interlocking references, in which: 1) Strauss's text is a commentary on Nietzsche's text; 2) Lampert's text is a commentary on Strauss's commentary; 3) Lampert's understanding of Nietzsche is crucially informed by Strauss's understanding of Nietzsche; and 4) both Strauss and Nietzsche are said to have esoteric and exoteric views. (Lampert denies any hidden teaching for himself [15].) The result of all this is that it is impossible to determine the validity of Lampert's reading of Strauss, for his interpretation endlessly disappears into the play of (esoteric and exoteric) interpretations.

Lampert correctly points us to the critique of modernity shared by Strauss and Nietzsche—as have others, Strauss himself included. Both Strauss and Nietzsche seek to escape from the nihilism they understand to be inherent in modernity, above all in modernity's historicist form, by rising to a post- or pre-historical standpoint. Nietzsche calls this the "will to power" or "eternal recurrence of the same;" Strauss calls it "nature." Lampert argues that these two are one and the same, and that Strauss in his "Note . . ." indicates this to those who know how to read. Because

Lampert sees Strauss as indicating that his view of "nature" is one with Nietzsche's doctrines, he simply ascribes to Strauss these doctrines, instead of analyzing Strauss's own arguments. Certainly, given Strauss's beginning in a Nietzschean flight from modernity and historical life, his intention to discover in philosophy the aspiration for a relation to nature as permanent, true, intelligible and restraining ultimately may be incoherent and unsustainable. Certainly Strauss may not always have made explicit the implications of his non-metaphysical naturalism. But Lampert needs not simply to assume on the basis of esoteric indications, but to demonstrate philosophically, that the position Strauss argued for, both publicly and privately, must have the sort of incoherence by which it points beyond itself to an inner and inescapable Nietzschean core—a core that is Nietzschean without remainder.

This book is not an introduction to the thought of either Strauss or Nietzsche, nor is it the final word on either of them. It is, however, a thought-provoking account of Strauss's relation to Nietzsche that may prompt Straussians to a clearer articulation of their teacher's teaching.

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***Liberalism Without Illusions: Essays on Liberal Theory and the Political Vision of Judith N. Shklar.* Edited by Bernard Yack. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1996. Pp. xii, 292. \$42.00. Paper, \$16.95.**

Liberalism without Illusions is a fine collection of 16 essays honoring the late Judith Shklar. Divided into three parts, these essays, along with the autobiographical sketch "A Life of Learning," included as an appendix, will be of interest both to students of Shklar's thought and to the wider philosophical audience.

Part One, along with a general introduction to Shklar's political thought by Bernard Yack, is six essays elucidating various aspects of Shklar's "liberalism of fear." In contrast to the dominant version of liberalism, Shklar argued that the primary motivation for liberals is a fear of cruelty. Hence, according to Shklar, the goal of liberalism is not the promotion of individual flourishing, but the avoidance of individual

suffering. While the essays in Part One do not answer all the questions one might have about Shklar's political theory, they do provide a solid introduction to this intriguing version of liberalism.

Part Two is five essays on various historical figures that were of interest to Shklar. In addition to essays on members of the traditional liberal cannon (Quentin Skinner on Hobbes and Tracy Strong and Patrick Riley, in separate essays, on Rousseau), this section also contains discussions by Stephen Holmes on Descartes and Racine, and Isaac Kramnick on Harold Laski. In keeping with Shklar's interest in the role of motivation in political theory, especially the fear of cruelty, the common thread to all of these essays is a focus on some aspect of each thinker's moral psychology and its relationship to Shklar's conception of freedom.

Part Three is five essays on practical and philosophical issues facing contemporary liberalism. These essays focus on such timely and difficult issues as a defense of hate and "worthless" speech by George Kateb, a justification of judicial review by Bruce Ackerman and an analysis of the importance of the "virtue" of hypocrisy in a democracy by Dennis Thompson. Bernard Yack, also, provides an explanation of the role that Shklar's conception of active and passive justice plays in our more general understanding of justice in a liberal society. This section concludes with Rogers Smith's essay "The Unfinished Tasks of Liberalism" which outlines the numerous issues, such as gender equality and racial/ethnic divisions, still confronting contemporary liberalism.

The greatest weakness of this collection is also its greatest strength. Readers who are expecting, in Parts Two and Three, a narrow explication of Shklar's thought on various historical figures and debates in contemporary liberalism will be disappointed. Instead, these sections contain discussions of historical figures and issues that interested Shklar, yet are not couched solely in Shklarian terms. While motivated out of Shklar's "liberalism of fear," these essays would be at home in any general anthology on contemporary liberalism. Consequently, the discussions are accessible and interesting to the philosophically sophisticated reader who may not be familiar with Judith Shklar's form of liberalism.

Recasting Conservatism: Oakeshott, Strauss, and the Response to Postmodernism. By Robert Devigne. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994. Pp. xiii, 268. \$16.00.

In this survey and comparison of contemporary British and American conservatism, Robert Devigne seeks to make the case that neither British nor American conservatism should be identified with an uncritical reverence for tradition or with adherence to libertarianism. Perhaps the most interesting part of his discussion is the exposition of differences between British and American conservative thought.

He successfully captures the tenor of debates within British conservatism between those who stress the importance of a strong central sovereign authority and who distrust individualism's potential for license and those who fear that unfettered democratic and bureaucratic government will invariably produce a continually expanding role for government that will inevitably threaten both individual and collective welfare and freedom. British conservatives tend to see local government as potentially, given certain circumstances, undermining the sovereign authority of Crown, Cabinet and Parliament. Conservatives may value the European Community as guaranteeing access to markets while distrusting any moves in the direction of European government as inconsistent with undivided sovereignty. All this reflects the importance for most British conservatives—but not for Hayekians—of the tradition of parliamentary sovereignty.

American conservatism as depicted by Devigne stresses undivided sovereignty only, although emphatically, in regard to foreign policy, while supporting a shift of other responsibilities from the national to the local level. While British conservatives distrust strong mediating institutions, American conservatives, reflecting Tocquevillean inspiration, see local mediating institutions as fostering public virtue. Debate is perhaps inevitable over whether or not the ultimate consequences will be different as a result but the motives behind conservative social policy, as outlined by Devigne, reflect not so much a lack of sympathy for the disadvantaged as the view that some responsibilities can be more effectively undertaken by institutions, like local and state governments or the volunteer sector, other than the national government, and that some restructuring of incentives may be necessary to influence behavior and socialization.

Contemporary American conservatism, according to Devigne, has its roots in Straussianism, the approach to politics and philosophy associated with the late Leo Strauss and his disciples, and neoconservatism, associated with writers like James Q. Wilson, Irving Kristol, Michael Novak and Peter Berger among others.

It is often tempting to be sceptical about the impact of ideas on politics but the success of conservatism in recent years in the political arena in both Britain and the United States has been undeniable. Devigne's work demonstrates that this success has been associated with certain ideas, ideas by which one may or may not be persuaded but whose influence has been undeniable. Postmodern thought frequently is characterized by relativism and a focus on the subjective. Conservatives tend to be sceptical about tendencies in modern thought towards utopianism. Conservatives tend, on the one hand, to be sceptical about the capacity of human nature for comprehending the social world sufficiently to make deliberate societal planning feasible, and, on the other, to be wary of a world in which standards come to be viewed in a relativistic manner. The latter concerns may be motivated by the notion of society as a rule-ordered construct by which the Hobbesian state of nature is avoided, or by the notion that there exist eternal truths, only dimly perceived by those still in Plato's cave, to the discovery and elucidation of which the true philosopher is necessarily committed. Like the modern liberal and like the postmodernist, the conservative is committed to the pursuit and enhancement of freedom. The conservative, however, identifies the issue with freedom not simply as one of being left to do as one likes but as one of being free to do as one wants and to seek in conscience to want that which is good not simply by virtue of being wanted but simply because it is good in itself and commensurate with the common good.

Whether or not one finds the conservative case persuasive, Devigne's *Recasting Conservatism* is well worth reading for an understanding of the conservative position, and can be recommended not only to students of democratic politics, political theory and public policy but to anyone wanting to understand contemporary debates.

Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration: Literature, Drama, History. Edited by Gerald MacLean. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Pp. xvi, 292. \$59.95. Paper, \$19.95.

Traditionally, most of the historiographical action in the seventeenth century has been located in the early and mid Stuart periods, from the accession of James I in 1603 up to and including the civil wars and the Commonwealth. The Restoration has, until recently, received considerably less attention, in contrast to the enormous importance it occupies for literary scholars—who, nevertheless, still tend to make it a sort of storm porch into the eighteenth century. In the past decade or so, the balance of both literary and historical enquiry has undergone a remarkable shift, with important major works on the period by scholars such as Tim Harris, Jonathan Scott, John Spurr, Ronald Hutton (whose biography of *Charles II* is likely to remain the authoritative word on that king for some time to come), Lois Schwoerer and others. As elsewhere in historical and literary studies, there is occurring a simultaneous push towards interdisciplinarity. Historians have woken up to the fact that they ignore printed literature and its interpretation at their peril, and literary scholars have sought to ground their interpretations in up-to-date research and factual evidence, rather than musing on a Restoration poem as merely a well-wrought urn that refers to no world outside itself.

The high level of scholarship now being produced is well represented in Gerald MacLean's new collection of essays. The principal themes of the book are threefold: first, that the Restoration is far more complex than has previously been allowed; secondly, that it was a period of both deep structural and ideological conflict, but also of prolonged efforts at mediation and reconciliation between clashing forces; and, thirdly, that literary texts of the time both reflect and contributed to political and social instability. The contributors come from both History and English Literature departments in Britain and the U.S. They include a few very senior scholars such as: Blair Worden, who offers a beautifully crafted reading of *Samson Agonistes* in the context of early Restoration republican writings by Edmund Ludlow and others; James Grantham Turner, providing a brief but illuminating exploration of the reflections of Restoration uncertainties in the domestic and sexual lives of Samuel and Elizabeth Pepys; Steven Zwicker, interpreting Dryden's rivalry with Milton, and the "anxiety of influence" therein; and Bridget Hill, who

offers an addendum to her recent book on Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay, a mid-eighteenth-century historian of the late Stuart period. There are also essays by a wide range of younger contributors such as Steven Pincus, here writing on the relations between absolutism, republicanism and "universal monarchy" as expressed in popular sentiment during the Third Dutch War of 1672-74, and John Patrick Montazo, on the politics of the Lord Mayors' shows, the urban public spectacle *par excellence*, during the post-Clarendon era of the 1670s. Useful chapters are also contributed by: Nancy Klein Maguire, reading Crowne's restaging of *Henry VI* in terms of factional politics; Andrew R. Walkling, on *Dido and Aeneas* and the politics of the Restoration masque; Robert Iliffe, examining the way Newton fashioned not only his *Principia* for publication but also his own public persona; and MacLean himself, whose introduction is a complicated but suggestive set of prolegomena to both the essays and to broader issues of Restoration culture.

It is always difficult, and often of dubious use in a brief review, to attempt to summarize each chapter of an anthology, and the very wide range of this book, which should be viewed as a strength, makes that especially problematic in this instance. But a few of the chapters stand out in their willingness to meld literary and historical studies, and to integrate current historical preoccupations with issues of class, national identity, and gender into their readings of literature and drama. Particularly helpful in connection with the issue of gender are essays by Moira Ferguson, on Quaker women and the Restoration discussion of colonialism and slavery; Elaine Hobby, who offers compelling evidence that the bestselling *Gentlewoman's Companion*, long ascribed to Hannah Wolley, who did in fact write several other books in this genre, is in fact a miscellany assembled by an anonymous male author trading on Wolley's name-recognition; and N. H. Keeble, on the question of loyalty and obedience, both public and private, as contained in the two most notable late Stuart memoir writers, Anne Halkett and Ann Fanshawe. The book as a whole is well-presented, if sparsely illustrated; art and architecture do not feature prominently in its discussions of culture. The press has helpfully issued a paperback edition simultaneously with the hardcover, which should help to make it affordable to smaller libraries, graduate students, and the interested general reader.

***The Contemporary Novel in France.* Edited by William Thompson. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996. Pp. 420. \$49.95.**

This substantial volume in which William Thompson ably gathers together some 20 critical studies centred upon the very genuinely contemporary, living novel—good weight is always given to recent production even in the case of more established *oeuvres* and it is good to see space devoted to Groult and Roubaud, Wittig and Toussaint, Echenoz and Queffélec—is well served by the solid and probing introduction its editor provides. Of course, the volume taken as a whole meant to reflect contemporary novelistic urgencies reveals, inevitably—another 20 chapters would have been required—certain lacunae: nothing on Claude Ollier, Le Clézio or Claude Simon, perhaps not enough attention given to women authors (five chapters, but nothing on Chantal Chawaf, Marie Redonnet, Sylvie Germain, Danièle Sallenave, Assia Djébar, Marie Ndiaye, Catherine Lépront). But what is offered remains, globally and almost always individually, pertinent, articulate and informed, even if, at times, given to a rather too mimetically narrative mode. There is no space here to argue the specific merits of individual pieces. Suffice it to say that all avoid jargon, methodological flagrance and theoretical top-heaviness, and thus provide readers at all levels with honest insight and largely transparent cogency. It is, in consequence, a book that will prove to be most useful and practical in its revelations and analyses, without aspiring to the sophistications only full-length assessments can provide. Its authors and its editors may be warmly thanked for their valuable enterprise.

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