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PAUL TOEWS
Literature Review:
Recent Titles in Russian History

DAVID REMNICK

Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire.
New York: Random House, 1993. 588 PAGES.

ANNE APPLEBAUM

Gulag: A History.
New York: Doubleday, 2003. 677 pages

ORLANDO FIGES

Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia.
New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002. 728 pages.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a remarkably rich collection of books has resulted from the opening of archival holdings that were previously inaccessible to Western scholars. A number might be of interest to readers not particularly steeped in Russian history: David Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (Random House, 1994); Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (Doubleday, 2004); and Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (Henry Holt and Company, 2002) are all good reads. Remnick and Applebaum received the prestigious Pulitzer Prize. Figes, while not winning a Pulitzer, has received other notable awards.

From 1988-1992 Remnick, as the Moscow correspondent for the *Washington Post*, had a front-row seat for observing the collapse of the Soviet Empire. He arrived in Moscow shortly after Mikhail Gorbachev had announced his policy of "glasnost" or openness. That policy, perhaps Gorbachev's greatest achievement, also opened up Soviet history in a way which had not occurred since its beginnings in 1917. One of Remnick's theses is an important reminder about the power of historical investigation. He argues that no people could face the past that was opened up in the 1980s. Unmasking the past undercut the lingering legitimacy of the Soviet system. The self-righteousness of the Lenin idealism and sense of the invincibility of the totalitarian state were destroyed. The state, it turned out, had survived only through a war against its own people. The "new history" also gave legitimacy to the nationalist claims that subsequently made it easier for republics of the Union

of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to move toward independence.

Remnick analyzed the end Soviet period and the years of change through engaging interviews with hundreds of people. We get a glimpse of the texture of the lives of important and nameless people, party functionaries and dissidents under the Soviet system. These interviews reveal many things—the determination and capacity for people to carve out personal spheres amidst a very totalitarian society, the way in which commitments are shaped by personal and familial values, and the endless and subtle ways in which they either ignored the dictates of the state or consciously undermined its expectations. The composite is a lively accounting of the events that contributed to the sudden unraveling of what had been perceived by many as a powerful and enduring state system.

Anne Applebaum's *Gulag: A History* is not about the collapse of the Soviet Union, yet it does describe one of the features that surely led to its collapse. The history of the gulag is best known through work of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (published both in Russia and the West in 1962) and the *Gulag Archipelago* (a three-volume work) initially published in the West in 1973 and in the Soviet Union only in 1989. Solzhenitsyn's work could be published only following Khrushchev's attack on the system in 1956. Applebaum followed Gorbachev's 1987 more extensive attack on the repressive system. While Solzhenitsyn traced the gulag's origins back to Lenin (earlier it had generally been assumed that Stalin was the initiator), Applebaum finds antecedents in Czarist Russia and similarities with prisoner camps established earlier by Western nations. Solzhenitsyn's work effectively ended in 1956. Applebaum carries the story to the closure of the system under Gorbachev. Running throughout are comparisons with the Nazi death factories. While at times they acted in similar ways, Applebaum repeatedly notes that the Soviet camp system was different in that it was designed to build a state through terror and to help industrialize the empire. Of prime importance was that the gulag population fit into a camp production plan and fulfill a work norm. And so prisoners of the gulag cleared forests and built roads, railways, dams, and new cities and made everything from missiles to children's toys. Many suffered along the way, but that was a by-product rather than the intent of the system.

Solzhenitsyn's work could not see the end of the equation. Applebaum does and is intrigued with the contrast to the end of the Nazi camps. For the crimes and injustices of the gulag there have been no trials of those responsible and no official investigations. There is no national museum of repression, no national monuments, and little public memory, as there is in

Germany. She observes many reasons for the difference. Most importantly is the continuing dominance of leaders with roots in the Soviet past who have interest in concealing some of its worst features.

Natasha's Dance is a very different kind of work. This is a grand cultural overview. If you want a quick and enchanting entry into the history of Russian culture from Peter the Great's opening to the West in the early eighteenth century into the mid-twentieth Soviet story, then this is the book. Natasha is a blue blood out of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* who, when visiting an eccentric relative, finds some of the Russian peasantry in her own soul. In the encounter Figes, a professor of history at the University of London, finds a metaphor for the complexity of Russian identity. It leads us to the polarities of the ensuing cultural story: the Asian soul and the European mind, Moscow and St. Petersburg as competing intellectual centers, Westernized nobility and traditional peasantry, and artist and politician in the fashioning of Russian identity.

Figes argues that for the past two hundred years the absence of a free press and inclusive and representative political institutions meant that the debate about national identity was carried on in the arts. The literati, alienated from the state functionaries by their political aspirations and from the peasants by their education, poured their energy into the quest for understanding the nationality ideal. As a consequence writers, artists, and musicians were endowed with unusual moral authority. In the introduction Figes writes, "Nowhere has the artist been more burdened with the task of moral leadership and national prophecy nor more feared and prosecuted by the state." From Peter the Great (1700) through the Napoleonic wars (1815) the quest for identity among the intelligentsia, both national and personal, largely took its cue from the West.

Following the Napoleonic invasion and the willing sacrifice of the peasants to defend their land the cultural elites began a search for identity within Russian traditions. It is this tension between the foreign and the indigenous that has nurtured some of the greatest writers, poets, artists, and composers of modern history. Writers like Leo Tolstoy, Fedor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov, and Alexander Pushkin; artists Marc Chagall and Ilia Repin; musicians Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Sergei Rachmaninov, Pytor Tchaikovsky, Sergei Prokofiev, and many others drew on fashionable European forms and themes and the sentiments or rhythms of oriental Russia and its peasant culture.

By the mid-nineteenth century a widespread conviction assumed that Russian art and music needed to liberate itself from imitation of European

forms. Only by incorporating the native traditions could Russian cultural life emerge from the shadows of Europe. As Vladimir Stasov, a towering figure in nineteenth-century Russian cultural life, described it the time had come for the “hoopskirts and tailcoats” of St. Petersburg to give way to the “long Russian coats” of the country. (p. 178). The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 encouraged an embrace of peasant virtues as the embodiment of a distinctive nationality. Figes traces many nineteenth century examples of the artistic reach from the recent Westernized past to the more ancient Slavophile elements of the Russian psyche. Iliia Repin’s famous painting, *The Volga Barge Haulers* (1873), idealizes the human dignity of the peasant. Musorgsky’s operas incorporate folk music of the steppe and the people not yet disturbed by the appearance of the railway. Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* (1913) recreates ancient rituals of harmony. Fedor Dostoevsky’s four great novels—*Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *The Devils*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*—Figes contends, were all variations on the theme of the Western educated man finding fulfillment by becoming a Slavophile.

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 creates a deep chasm in this cultural story. Some artists became the keepers of the memory of the European civilization which was largely swept away, others became engaged in the construction of the new Soviet person and still others emigrated. The final chapter—“Russia Abroad”—chronicles the yearnings of the diaspora who fled initially to Berlin and Paris and often on to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. A cluster came to Paris, including Prokofiev and Stravinsky, where they sought to continue the cultural life of St. Petersburg. Here, Figes suggests, they sought to accentuate the European elements of their cultural inheritance while minimizing the peasant and Asiatic strains. For some who found Paris the “outlet to the West” in the immediate years following the revolution, the United States became a more permanent home. The poignant longings of the émigrés for the homeland fill the last chapter with pathos. The style of *Natasha’s Dance* is anecdotal and biographical. There are revealing glimpses into the lives of the artists and their patrons. We meet them in their cultural contexts and as part of the Russian quest for self-understanding. The book is enhanced by the presence of twenty seven color reproductions of some of Russia’s most celebrated and distinctive art.

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DOMINIQUE JANICAUND
On the Human Condition,
translated by Eileen Brennan.

NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2005 (FRENCH EDITION, 2002). 71 PAGES.

A translation of *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?* (*Will Man Overcome the Human?*), Dominique Janicaud's *On the Human Condition* is a cautionary meditation and "critical reflection." Fluidly translated by Eileen Brennan, this short work is enhanced by an extended introduction from Simon Critchley.

Concern for the, "unprecedented uncertainty about human identity" (1) generated this posthumously published legacy of the relatively ill-known French philosopher. Janicaud sums up his concern under the banner of humanism, but the reader should not comprehend the humanism of a former time that identified itself in part as antireligious, antitheist, or anti-Christian. This is expressly repudiated in Janicaud's dismissal of any kind of humanism that would evoke Comte and positivism. Quoting Sartre to champion his perspective, our author writes, "The cult of humanity ends in Comtian humanism, shut-in upon itself, and—this must be said—in Fascism. We do not want humanism like that" (8).

Devoting his first chapter to a consideration of humanism as a last defense of human integrity before the twin dangers of inhumanity and the hubris of a superhumanity that would betray the foundational humus of homo sapiens, Janicaud, energized by the insight of Martin Heidegger, is forced to confront the accusation that the Structuralism of Levi-Straus and Foucault conspires with the enemies of humanity.

Ensuing chapters patiently face an assortment of challenges to the human species as it has been known throughout our cultural epochs. The great specter is "mankind," itself, and precisely because one has the potential of being human, "man is, of all creatures, the only one who, through his violence, his barbarism and his sadism, can really show himself to be inhuman to the point of heinousness..." (19). Most sobering is the realization that the very attempt to "perfect" and thus overcome the burdens or limitations of our condition has so often issued in the monstrous, frequently responsible for one radical evil or another. If Janicaud appeals, in this first instance, to a fiction that has obtained, he tells us, the status of a myth—Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus—it is to highlight the, “powerful, near irrepressible, impulse that [is] virtually imposed upon [us] by the scientific spirit itself” (22). If this scientific and fantastic power to manipulate life once produced classical forewarnings in the dreams of fiction, it has matured into the nightmares of contemporary possibilities. Science and technology, the author alerts us, are capable of an imaginary enterprise beyond all fictional powers that risks, “an inhumanity aggravated to the point of monstrosity” (22).

In his litany of cautions, Janicaud speaks of electronic, transgenic, or “bi-ionic” attempts of technology to improve or transform humanity. He pays special attention to the theoretical suspicions of Jean-Michel Truong that creative experimentation will produce a Successor to the race, founded upon an artificial “inhuman” intelligence that in due course will surpass human sapience and pass into a new form of life, impervious to the entropy that is the “death instinct” of our species.

From science fiction, the author borrows an optic that suggests the myth of today is so often the reality of tomorrow. Here, he confronts the cyborg, a mixed being that is both man and robot all at once. “Man”: *homo* but not *humanus*, as Heidegger might say, completely lacking in *humanitas*. While the cyborg might simply remain a “big toy,” it could very well be, “that bio-engineering and nanotechnologies, combined with new advances in miniaturized computing, allow for the perfection ... of extremely robust, almost immortal, ‘human specimens’” (32). Such a wish-fulfillment would only evidence that we remain unstable and fragile beings, unwilling to accept our margin of liberty. Thus, Janicaud concludes, “That which endangers humanity, then, really derives from itself: a freedom that turns against itself” (34).

The gap between fiction or fantasy and reality has been bridged by relatively recent clonings. The prospect of a mass production of, for example, military clones is overwhelmed by the greater conundrum that “cloning could strain the very principle of the individual singularity of human beings” (36). Nevertheless, nothing guarantees, our author observes, “that reproductive cloning would lead to the depths of inhumanity; nothing guarantees the contrary either” (39).

A more repugnant consideration is that some future catastrophic necessity will provoke the species into a bioselection of the best of our “human herd” for stockbreeding in human parks or zoos. This “anthropotechnology” evokes the terrors of a still too recent war and the horrors of self-imputed masters who revealed themselves as wretchedly inhuman. So many attempts

to overcome humanity's imperfect wherewithal have issued in grossly crude inhuman permutations.

If so much of our inhumanity is predicated upon a lust for power, especially the power to be invincibly beyond restraint, then, our author warns (employing the insight of Ernst Junger), our situation is extremely grave since "man is in the process of liberating cosmic energies of which he is less and less the master"(43).

Janicaud opens his ultimate chapter wondering if it is not the divine but the superhuman that now summons us from *potentia* to potency. The issue may be, the reviewer might interject, not the question of power or indigence but of the quality or kind of power we seek. If Heidegger speaks of, "a powerless superior power" the reader, at least a religious reader, cannot help but call to mind that power that is made perfect in weakness. Janicaud simply queries, "Can man find the dimension of Transcendence in himself?" (44) Suspending this conjecture to remain in a modest "critical reflection" prior to stratospheric ontology or faith, the author acknowledges Malraux's assertion that we live, "in the first 'atheistic civilization', understood as a technician civilization" (44), which, in lieu of the sacred, values only efficiency. It is in this context that the call of the superhuman arises and seemingly drowns out that still quiet voice interfacing our contingency with the divinely transcendent.

If our world has, "no god other than the future" and the unforeseeable to which the techno-scientific powers are leading us, the question begs to be asked, asserts our author, whether or not this life beyond our creaturely limitations is really a superior one or merely a liberation for the mediocre and banal. "A humanity that has no horizon other than the amassing of quantitative results or the purely technical increase in its physical and mental capacities collapses, loses all energy," no longer equal to the task of human existence (49).

The great terror, as centuries attest, is that the superhuman is always a call for the privileged elite who inevitably abdicate consideration and kindness, if not all morality or ethics. If "the most probable penalty for these 'overcomings' is the regression into new forms of the inhuman" (50), asks the author, are we not urged to modesty—not to say humility—and restraint?

Janicaud's conclusion makes clear what "overcoming" signifies. It is simply an escape, or attempted escape, from humanity itself. Whether we identify our condition as one of (biblical) creatureliness, contingency, finitude, or limitation, our mortality weighs too grievously upon fragile bones. It is our tenuousness that haunts, tempting us toward overweening omnipotence. The paradox of the human enigma is that its only solution is not theoretical

or scientific or technological but experiential. If G. K. Chesterton is obnoxiously cute in asserting that Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; rather, Christianity has not been tried, he has nevertheless uttered an appropriated truth about our humanity. If Kierkegaard is correct that it is only in *becoming* human that we are human, or may be human, a never ending task, then it is clear that humanity has not been tried and found wanting.

To make explicit Janicaud's leitmotif, we—humanity—must always transcend but can never overcome. This transcendence, Christians scandalously believe, is solely via the divine *dunamis* or power or Spirit and—paradoxically—energized by this divine (we may even say Trinitarian) wherewithal to *relate*, we discover we can even relate to ourselves, contingent, finite, and imperfect as we are. This is an extraordinary transcendence that, rather than overcome ourselves, permits us to embrace ourselves and what one author has termed, “the earth of our humanity.”

Janicaud's work concludes modestly. Instead of prescriptions or solutions, he has found it sufficiently rewarding to highlight the assorted issues we ourselves are. In other words, knowing what is at stake, we have the opportunity of being the—or an—answer to the issues and questions of our own human enigma.

Janicaud is content to espouse a two-fold strategy throughout his work. On the one hand, to caution against inhumanity, providing defenses against the inhuman, while at the same time remaining open to that which “passes man” (4). In other words, to the ambiguous call of the “superhuman,” or that which calls us to be “more,” to remain open to the authentic summons while sagely interpreting the dangers and misdirections of its mysterious allure. We have translated this as an open and humble—incarnating—transcendence, as opposed to an overcoming escape. Janicaud summons the insight of Pascal, rearticulated in our day by Eric Voegelin, to alert us that our path and province lie *between* the twin perils and poles of beast and angel. We are neither, or to put it so beautifully in the words of Martha Nussbaum in *The Fragility of Goodness*, “There are certain risks . . . suspended as we are between beast and god, with a kind of beauty available to neither.”

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LISA HANEBERG***Focus Like a Laser Beam.*****SAN FRANCISCO: JOSSEY BASS, 2006. 153 PAGES.**

In our fast-paced, immediate culture, multitasking has become the norm. We seek to do more tasks in a 24-hour period than is possible. We are a fragmented, stressed out, frenetic culture. Thus, Lisa Haneberg's insights in *Focus Like a Laser Beam* remain intriguing as she discusses the importance of improving one's ability to focus in order to achieve greater productivity and efficiency. Since customers from all sectors of business want services and products quickly, fresh ideas to address these needs are required. She has concentrated her book on ten strategies to help people sharpen their ability to improve clarity, thinking, and results. Her end result is an increased productivity in whatever environment one happens to find oneself. Haneberg divides the book into three parts: 1) Excite and Energize, 2) Tune Your Dialogue, and 3) Zoom In.

Part One emphasizes the importance of building and understanding the relational aspect of focusing. In the forward of the book, Haneberg observes, "Leadership is a social act. It occurs in conversations. It makes sense, then, that leaders need to be master conversationalists, because this is the currency by which they produce results" (v). She includes in this section some important concepts, such as maintaining a universally shared vision of what is important, practicing methods that reinforce focusing, working together on tasks that are relevant, and aligning tasks and the organization for relevant work. Haneberg also includes the importance for an organization to be self-correcting—to discuss issues, assessing what has worked and what has not. As part of this, she emphasizes the significance of knowing one's employees and having fun at work. Haneberg states, "To build intimacy, people need to get to know one another on a deep level. Employees want to connect with their managers and feel they are trustworthy. Leadership should show interest in their employees, too. Building and maintaining relationships is necessary for a focused and high-performing team" (25). Haneberg concludes this section by acknowledging the stress many individuals experience. To be focused, she asserts, one needs to relax. Stress thus remains an impediment to new ideas and focusing.

Part Two suggests the need to narrow the conversation at work to what is relevant. Haneberg defines relevance as that which leads one to success. This

definition requires individuals to assess organizational meeting times: Are meetings focused and dynamic with a purpose? Do they encourage thought and participants to remain connected? Are attendees ready to participate? As part of this process of assessment, she emphasizes the need to engage in dialog that tests the everyday. She notes, “Challenges bring out the best in people and enable them to focus. The best leaders thrive on challenge and remain open to learning from people at all levels within the organization” (79). As one possible response to this challenge, she encourages the concept of collaboration or “huddling to improve conversation and clarity of purpose and to keep a team ‘calibrated’” (93).

Haneberg’s final part discusses the “how tos” of focusing. She gives difficult, but important ideas: stop multitasking, say no with greater frequency to projects and tasks, focus on doing one great thing a day, and let go of those projects and tasks that are no longer central to the purpose of the organization’s success. Haneberg therefore declares, “Focus suffers when leaders don’t say no to good but nonessential tasks” (123). Her strategy to focus is to perform well on fewer tasks as opposed to doing poorly on many — a strategy that requires personal discipline to carry out.

Focus Like a Laser Beam presents information from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The book is easy to read as it weaves the quantitative research into the story narrative. It may appeal to multiple audiences, including those seeking to improve their executive ability, leadership and management skills, and organizational effectiveness. The book presents critical information to improve our current organizational life.

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B. M. LAVELLE
Fame, Money and Power:
The Rise of Peisistratos and
“Democratic” Tyranny at Athens.

ANN ARBOR: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS, 2004. 370 PAGES.

The subtitle of this new work by Lavelle (henceforth “L.”) immediately captures the interest of the prospective reader. The classic definition of a tyrant (Greek *tyrannos*) as “one who seizes power unconstitutionally” seems to preclude the adjective democratic, “pertaining to rule by the people.” Those who take up L’s work looking for a sustained discussion of this oxymoronic entity are bound to be disappointed, however, as the notion of a “democratic” tyranny is treated only briefly and (to my mind) inconclusively. However, anyone interested in a close reading, and carefully documented synthesis, of the source material concerning Peisistratos’ rise to power will find much within that is valuable. With five chapters and eight appendices, and almost one hundred pages of notes, it is a dauntingly detailed and intricate work, but most Greek is translated and/or transliterated for the Greekless reader.

Peisistratos’ place in the overall span of Athenian history is usually bracketed on one side by the unsuccessful attempt at tyranny by the Olympic victor Cylon (c. 632 BC) and the reforms of the lawgivers Draco (c. 621) and Solon (probably 594/3), and on the other side by the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in 507. After two failed attempts (probably to be dated to 561/0 and 556), Peisistratos was in his third try (546) successful at establishing a tyranny that would be continued by his two sons Hippias and Hipparchos until the death of the latter in 514/13 BC and the expulsion of the former in 511/10 BC. The ancient historians Herodotus and Thucydides both speak favorably of the Peisistratid tyranny; Herodotus (writing in the mid-fifth century BC) noting that during his rule Peisistratos “did not alter the existing offices or change the laws, but governed the city according to established principles, arranging matters well and fairly” (1.59.6). Thucydides notes that under the Peisistratids Athens “enjoyed the same laws that had been laid down previously with the exception in that they took pains that one of their own was always in the offices” (6.54.6). This evidence will be important for L.’s contention that Peisistratos was a “democratic” tyrant (90-92).

Chapter one (Introduction) grounds the study, takes a brief look at the

(admittedly) scanty sources available for the Peisistratid period, and lays out L.'s methodology. L. is right to acknowledge both the usefulness and the limitations of Herodotus as his main source of information, although he makes perhaps too much of the idea that Herodotus' narrative is an apologia for Athenian acquiescence to the tyranny: "The aim of the [Peisistratid] *logos* was surely to revise the history of Peisistratos' rise apparently in order to absolve the Athenians to some degree for allowing it" (10). This is understandable given L.'s previous work (*The Sorrow and the Pity: A Prolegomenon to a History of Athens under the Peisistratids, c. 560-510 B.C.*), which sought to show that the historical record concerning the Peisistratids was tainted by revisionism, resulting in a fifth-century "myth of resistance" to the tyranny.

The second chapter deals with Peisistratos' early life and rise to prominence through his role in Athens' war against Megara in the 570s-560s. L. meticulously develops the argument that the Peisistratids used to great advantage their family's connection to the mythical royal house of Pylos (18-29). It is in this chapter also that one can most easily see the care with which L. develops his narrative, painstakingly fleshing out the meager sources with excruciatingly detailed arguments. One example is illuminating: in a single sentence of Herodotus (1.59.4), we are told that Peisistratos while general of the Athenians "took Nisaia [from the Megarians] and performed other great deeds." The writer of the *Constitution of the Athenians* (14) noted simply that Peisistratos "had distinguished himself in the war against Megara." L. is able to expand this into a section on the "Peisistratan Phase" of the Megarian War covering nearly twenty pages (46-65), arguing persuasively for the idea that it was Peisistratos, not Solon, who was responsible for securing the important island of Salamis for Athens (64).

Chapter three, on Peisistratos' first attempt at tyranny, is the heart of L.'s thesis. Here he claims that Herodotus (1.59.3-60.1) is incorrect in his representation of three, essentially geographic, parties in conflict at the time of Peisistratos' rise to power: the "men of the plain" led by Lycurgus, the "men of the coast" led by Megacles of the Alcmaeonid family, and the "men from beyond the hills," who chose as their leader Peisistratos. Instead, based on Solon's identification of conflict between two groups in Athens (Solon fr. 5), the "commons" (*demos*) and "the wealthy and powerful," L. argues that the mid-sixth century struggle from which Peisistratos eventually emerged as victor is better understood along those lines. Are we to see in this dichotomy, as L. would have us (78ff), a full-blown two-party Solonic system, which can then be extrapolated into the politics of the mid-sixth century?

This seems especially problematic considering how little of Solon's poetry is actually preserved. Yet, in this revised view, the struggle is re-cast as that of the wealthy elite (led by Lycurgus) against the people (led by Megacles). Peisistratos is successful because of, not in spite of, Megacles, who as "bank-roller" (86) supports the outsider in his bid for power.

One point upon which L. is insistent is that the people "elected" Peisistratos as tyrant by giving him a bodyguard (15, 68, 71, 86, 106). What L. terms the "deception strand" (86) of Herodotus' account—that Peisistratos tricked the Athenian people into granting him a bodyguard, oblivious to the consequences—cannot be trusted. Instead, he argues, the voting of the bodyguard should be seen as a *de facto* vote for the tyranny, one which the demos later regretted and attempted to whitewash, as L. claims can be deduced from Herodotus' account. Likewise, the event leading to the second attempt at tyranny, in which "Athena" herself (played by a very tall Paianian girl named Phye) rides into Athens in her chariot and convinces the populace to return Peisistratos to power (a ruse which Herodotus, 1.60.2-61.2, finds incredible), is actually a bit of pageantry, a *coup de theatre* enjoyed (but certainly not believed) by all (105).

The subject of chapter four is Peisistratos' exile to Eretria and Thrace, his money raising-activities while there, and the battle of Pallene (near Marathon) in 546, which restored him to power for the third, and final, time, until his death in 528/7. L. expands the tightly compressed narrative of Herodotus and the author of the *Ath. Pol.* by the same type of careful exegesis as in chapter two, and is especially successful in his reconstruction of the topography of the battle of Pallene (143-150). Once again, L. attributes contradictions in Herodotus' account of the battle to the Athenians' desire to suppress unpleasant memories of the defeat: "Herodotus' (source's) remedy for the memory of Pallene is brevity and vagueness—no glory for either side" (149).

Chapter five is a final summary of the key points of the work, treating in turn the three themes of the main title: fame, money, and power. L.'s (over)insistence on the importance of the fame earned by Peisistratos' exploits in the battle of Nisaia for his political career is certainly weakened by the fact that fame alone was not enough to secure his power in the first two attempts. L. asserts, "Nisaia was the pivotal moment in Peisistratos' early career"; "Peisistratos' success indicates in fact that by the end of the war he had become Athens' most outstanding war leader" (155). Money (*chremata*) is supplied by Megacles, hence making possible Peisistratos' first and second tyrannies (158); while Peisistratos' own wealth acquired in Thrace allows him to "root" the third tyranny (159). L. describes the third element,

power, not as “the naked power of oppressive force” (although it is not until oppressive force is used at Pallene that Peisistratos manages to hold onto the tyranny), but rather as “the power of further success and gain” (161) whatever that is supposed to entail. Similarly opaque is the statement that Peisistratos, “failed in his first two attempts to sustain his place in politics because he lacked the means of its enrichment” (167).

Perhaps most disappointing for those who turn to this book for a discussion of the intriguing concept of the “democratic tyrant,” it is not until the end of the work that we get an explicit explanation for L.’s terminology: “For that sharing [i.e. of success and gain], because he continued the offices and elections and so did not disrupt traditional government, and most of all because he would continue to react to the demos and its wishes, he was in essence a democratic tyrant” (162). However one may argue to the contrary, pandering to the people makes one not a democrat, but a demagogue.

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BRYAN WARD-PERKINS

The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization.

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Bryan Ward-Perkins' *Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* is an iconoclastic treatment challenging the last forty years of scholarship on the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. The historiographical traditions, which view the Empire's western decline as less than cataclysmic, provoke the author into spasms of virtual apoplexy. Ward-Perkins (hereafter W.P.) views Rome's demise neither as a peaceful transition to Germanic rule nor as a transformation of the ancient world into the early medieval world (as recent scholars suggest), but rather as a horrible era when marauding bands of Germans "invaded" the Roman Empire and inaugurated the Dark Ages. His thesis is therefore simple and lacking nuance: the people experiencing Rome's decline, "would be very surprised, and not a little shocked, to learn that it is now fashionable to play down the violence and unpleasantness of the invasions that brought down the empire in the West" (13). He takes it as a duty to emphasize the horrors.

Challenging antiquated orthodoxies and interpretations remains the duty of scholars, and W.P. does an admirable job of establishing the orthodoxy he intends to slay. His first chapter (1-10) and concluding comments (167ff.) provide a cursory but good summary of the interpretive paradigms to which he objects. The problem with these pages is that they give far too simplistic a summation, as if an international group of historians has conspired in unison to whitewash Rome's fall in 476. In fact, the scholars in the last forty years who have questioned the traditional view of post-Roman Europe as "dark" have done so for a variety of reasons, with a number of contrasting interpretations, and using different types of evidence and interpretive paradigms.

Contextualization of literary evidence remains one of W.P.'s biggest weaknesses. Chapter 2, which could have been written to great effect, bounces from battle to battle, barbarian group to barbarian group, and forward and backward in time with little explanation and to dizzying effect. It reads as if it were a laundry list of barbarian crimes against humanity. He makes no effort to engage the sources, explain them, or even tease out the nuances of the authors reporting the era's vicissitudes. For example, many of the authors were Romans writing under barbarian kings. They maintained a vested interest in making their barbarians sound as civilized as possible while si-

multaneously portraying other Germanic tribes as the most violent and rustic hicks, a fact that W.P. finally recognizes with the Ostrogoths. Although he mentions the work of Walter Goffart, he omits Goffart's *Narrators of Barbarian History*, which would have helped with the interpretive intentions of sixth and seventh century Roman historians.

W.P. remains on firmer ground when analyzing the archaeological record. He seems most cognizant of the evidentiary weaknesses, too. For example, pottery in the centuries preceding Rome's collapse continued to be of outstanding quality. However, the decline of certain kinds of pottery following Rome's fall does not necessarily prove conclusively that life had taken a turn for the catastrophic worse. He similarly observes, "We cannot take the apparent lack of post-Roman sites at face value, as unequivocal evidence for a cataclysmic collapse of population in post Roman times" (142). Notwithstanding this and similar protests to the contrary, he cannot resist discerning the decline of civilization based on a few friable Anglo-Saxon pots. Even when the evidence is solid—as for example with Visigothic coinage—he remains too ready to dismiss it without probing what it can reveal.

Another problem with W.P.'s book is that it fails to prove its point. Despite his assertions, he admits a number of facts detrimental to his argument: foreign troops within the Roman Empire were almost always loyal (38); the Goths of the fifth century sought to share the wealth and safety of life inside of the empire, not destroy it (52); and the imperial authorities in the West often settled barbarians in the interests of solving imperial problems, while at the same time creating troubles for the locals (54-55). In other words, the interests of the center and the peripheral failed to coincide. W.P. needed to spend more time addressing this last point, especially since very little changed for most land-owning Romans in the post imperial world (66). Some fifth-century Romans in the provinces had scarcely seen imperial authorities, and when they did the authorities were often greedy and rapacious. W.P. needs to demonstrate why provincial Romans should have preferred Roman authority to that of barbarian kings, and he neglects to do this. He recognizes that many Romans served barbarian kings, but he does not provide enough evidence to persuade this reader that, all else being equal, these Romans would have really found life better under an imperial administration that ruled in abstentia. He argues persuasively that Late Antiquity witnessed a decline in material culture, but he cannot demonstrably conclude that barbarians were responsible.

A fatal weakness of W.P.'s book is its sweeping generalizations, both an-

cient and modern. His claim that the Visigoths maintained the Gothic language well into later centuries—and that this is evidence they had never fully assimilated—flies in the face of what amounts to a scholarly consensus. The Visigoths by the end of the sixth century had for all intents and purposes ceased speaking Gothic as the language of preference. Although it is true that Gothic words survive in the legal codes, it is also true that the proceedings of the Third Ecumenical Council of Toledo (589 C.E.) were written in Latin, not Gothic. King Sisebut (612-621) composed a saint's life in Latin, not Gothic, and St. Isidore of Seville (Roman father and Gothic mother, 560-636) wrote his treatises in Latin. W.P.'s further assertion that the Visigoths did not abandon Arianism until 587 demonstrates his ignorance about the role of Gothic bishops within the Catholic Church prior to 587.

Finally, his Eurocentric critique of North American scholarship cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged. He asseverates that "One has to look to Europe to find a community of historians like me, with an active interest in secular aspects of the end of the Roman worlds, such as its political, economic, and military history" (180). This statement overlooks the books of North American scholars such as Thomas Burns (*Barbarians Within the Gates of Rome* and *Rome and the Barbarians*), Ralph Mathisen (*Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul and Law, Society and Authority in Late Antiquity*), and Michael Kulikowski (editor, *Hispania in Late Antiquity* and author, *Late Roman Spain and its Cities*), who rely on the archaeological record and have focused on military and political organization. W.P. further assumes that Europe has not produced its share of scholars focusing on religious or intellectual transformation. The last I checked, Peter Brown was educated and raised in the United Kingdom. Once again, the picture is far more complex than W.P. portrays it.

The contribution of W.P.'s thesis deserves an honest assessment, and W.P. is to be congratulated for questioning recent assumptions about Rome's demise in the West. The book is highly readable, capable of being used in advanced undergraduate as well as graduate level courses, and it contains helpful notes, chronology, and bibliography. Although the book's 187 pages of text remain far too slender to tackle the issues to which it points, it nevertheless suggests that this will not be the final treatment of the topic.

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