

BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Squire Willie

ROBERT SHERRILL

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives. By John B. Judis. Simon & Schuster. 528 pp. \$22.95.

If it is true that the evil men do lives after them, William Francis Buckley can be assured a certain kind of immortality. Or perhaps it is going too far to say that he did evil. That is probably too active a word. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he lived off evil, as mold lives off garbage.

The garbage he is particularly associated with is that which began accumulating in the right-wing alley about forty years ago: McCarthyism, which Buckley took part in by writing speeches for Senator Joe and by praising with majestic clichés ("McCarthyism is a movement around which men of good will and stern morality can close ranks"); and the long-forgotten manifestoes of the Young Americans for Freedom, a frenzied campus movement which he helped found in 1960; and his pious defense of the kooks of the John Birch Society as "some of the most morally energetic self-sacrificing and dedicated anti-Communists in America." In those days Buckley lent his name—as adviser or supporter or officer—to virtually every major crackpot right-wing movement in America, and his ideological soulmates were a group that long ago were banished to history's padded cell: people like Maj. Gen. Edwin Walker, the Rev. Carl McIntire, Dan Smoot, Dr. Fred Schwarz, Revilo P. Oliver, the Rev. Billy James Hargis, James L. Wick and similar names, which, if you are a genteel person under the age of 45, have probably never passed your lips.

Today Buckley does not live off right-wing garbage or anything else because he is quite dead, and has been for at least fifteen years. At least that's my theory. But because the right wing is so sentimentally attached to its old skills, Buckley has been put away in hypothermic storage in the hopes that medical science someday will be able to defrost him and reactivate his brain. Meanwhile, the pretense that Buckley lives is

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carried on from time to time through stories about him, or ghosted under his byline, in such mortuary trade journals as *New York* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

As for the two-bit actor who plays Buckley on *Firing Line*, Lord knows he is a poor imitation, thinking he fills the part merely by uttering unintelligible gibberish through pursed lips while fiddling with pencil and clipboard.

Many members of the general public, less gullible than the literati, are beginning to suspect that Buckley is a hoax. For instance, in *New York* a subscriber writes, "More than anything else, Buckley seems a media creation. . . . Buckley is like the man in the aspirin ad who says, 'I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV.'"

I'm not sure that John B. Judis agrees with my theory about Buckley's death, but I think he does, for his tone, as Buckley would have urged upon his biographer, is *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Of course Judis, being a good reporter, covers all the key periods of Buckley's life in *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives*: prep schools, Yale University, the Army, the Central Intelligence Agency, his work in books, his role as apologist for Joe McCarthy, the founding and operation of the *National Review*, his race for mayor of New York, his flunking for Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, his propagandizing for most of the right-wing governments of the world, and so forth.

Going that route, a good reporter simply can't *nil nisi bonum* all the time. But for my money Judis steps much too gingerly through the deepest putrescence and does not seem sufficiently to notice the odor of, nor seem sufficiently repelled by, the dishonesties and sleaziness and bullying and ideological rubbish behind Buckley's dandified pose. In that sense, his book has too much of the spirit of a sanitized obituary.

Perhaps the trouble is that it shouldn't be a book. The true highlights of character (especially those of a minor actor) tend to get buried amid book-length blather. In 1968 Garry Wills turned down a contract to do a book about Buckley, explaining that he didn't think Squire Willie was important

enough to be the subject of a book. He was right. Buckley simply isn't that interesting as a topic. In this Age of Boesky, for example, one finds it difficult to get very excited over even the shadier side of Buckley's career, as when the Securities and Exchange Commission accused him of fraud in a business deal. Naturally, Judis, having made the mistake of writing a book about Buckley, would have us think otherwise about his choice of subject. He claims "it is impossible to understand American conservatism without understanding Bill Buckley's extraordinary life," but I don't believe that, and I come no closer to being persuaded by endorsements Judis offers from such great judges of character as Ronald Reagan, who called Buckley (at a banquet in his honor) "the most influential journalist and intellectual in our era."

Occasionally Judis, apparently sensing that the air is going out of his tire, tries to pump it up with superlatives. "Empowered by an inexhaustible energy and driven by an insatiable curiosity," writes Judis, "Bill succeeded at everything he tried." And of course, "more often than not, his decisions were brilliant." Even Buckley's dopey physical mannerisms are presented as probable winners in the Special Olympics' category for facial contortions: "His left eye twinkled, while his right gauged reactions and plotted future sentences." But Bill of the dexterous eyeballs isn't the only wonderful person here. Oh no. Sister Priscilla is "enormously competent," wife Pat is "a brilliant hostess" and *National Review* editor James Burnham "had an encyclopedic knowledge of world events." Why, even Buckley's old buddy Whittaker Chambers, whose public personality was as somber as the ghost of Hamlet's father, turns out to be, underneath the gloom, a real sweetheart—"a jolly and very friendly man," as Judis describes him, or, in the words of a *National Review* editor, a "great corpulent ho-ho sort of guy." I tell you, that right-wing flock around Buckley really sparkles.

But, alas, all the pumping fails. Judis's labors—and they are admirable in many ways—cannot overcome the fact that Buckley was never very important and for quite a few years has been as irrelevant to the political contest of this country as his Cavalier King Charles spaniels are to the Westminster Dog Show or his two Bösendorfer pianos are

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Let us, using material from Judis's effort and elsewhere, give this unpleasant fellow an obituary rendered down to the proper length.

William F. Buckley Jr. was in every way the son and the ideological creation of his father, Will Sr., an oil man whose holdings at the time of his death in 1958 were estimated at \$110 million. Father Will — a third-generation Irish-American whose own father had been a prosperous merchant politician in Duval County, Texas, a county of notoriously corrupt politics — held all politicians and the democratic process in contempt. He believed Nazi Germany much less harmful than Communist Russia. One of Will Sr.'s favorite authors, Albert Jay Nock, became a personal friend and was often in the Buckley household when Bill was growing up. Along with being antidemocratic, Nock was, at least in his later years, "virulently anti-Semitic." Young Buckley fell under Nock's spell and never quit quoting him. Another of Will Sr.'s friends, Merwin K. Hart, was one of America's most notorious anti-Semites for three decades.

Will Sr. raised Bill and his other nine children not merely as Roman Catholics but as divinely touched Catholics — "a small select group of individuals who are carrying aloft the flame of civilization in the face of an encroaching Dark Age."

From these paternal influences, Bill Buckley emerged spoiled for life. From a very early age he believed he had a straight line to God ("I can rely on God in almost any matter"), and it was just as well that he had made friends with the Almighty because he had no friends among his classmates, who, we are told, considered him "obnoxious." Even others in Buckley's own family, according to Will Sr., considered him a brat of "unbearably arrogant and dictatorial" manner.

The demands Buckley made of others, he never made of himself. That was particularly true when the flag went belligerently abroad. Anyone familiar with Buckley's teachings knows he was heartily in favor of sending America's youths to fight silly wars. But as for himself, he was anything but enthusiastic about getting shot at. When World War II came along, his brothers joined up. Not Billy. In November 1943 he received his draft notice. He waited. He

was not inducted until July 1944 because of a sinus problem. And when he was called up, he asked to be placed in the infantry rather than in the Navy because, as he told his father, "there will be more chance for me to land a desk job of some sort." It was a dull but safe little war for our hero. After a totally undistinguished career in officers' training school (the justice of his being allowed to graduate was a matter of some controversy among his superiors), he spent the rest of World War II training recruits, teaching sex hygiene and fiddling with counterintelligence.

Thoroughly coached by his father in racial matters, Buckley stood foursquare against school integration and black voting rights. He never used the term "master race," but he looked upon the white race as "the advanced race" and he argued that the civilization it dominated would be undercut if blacks were permitted political equality. Judis says Buckley moved away from that position late in life, but we are given no dramatic evidence of a change of heart.

As for Jews, another group father Will despised and taught his son to despise, Judis insists that by the time Buckley got to Yale he had freed himself from anti-Semitism. As evidence of this purification, Judis says Buckley became a close friend of one Tom Guinzburg and forced a Yale club to accept Guinzburg although its members were cool to the idea. Sure, Buckley tolerated Jews, but he didn't want his sister to marry one. Literally. When Guinzburg and Buckley's sister Jane wanted to marry, old man Buckley said no way would a daughter of his ever marry a Jew, and young Bill took their father's side. Later in life Buckley did have many Jewish friends. But he never seemed terribly unhappy with the propagandists who perpetuated some of the nastiest anti-Semitism. Judis tells us that when *American Mercury* "published an editorial endorsing the theory of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world promulgated by the fraudulent *Protocols of Zion*," some friends of Buckley urged him to dissociate the *National Review* from the *Mercury*. Others on the *Review* board argued that it wasn't Buckley's job to attack anti-Semitic right-wing publications. Buckley sided with the latter group and kept quiet, although he did tell his staff they couldn't write for the *Review* and the *Mercury* at the same time.

In that instance, as in several others,

one may reasonably assume that when editor Buckley was confronted with a forced choice between following his principles or maintaining a cash flow, he opted for the latter. I cite in evidence another episode well told by Judis.

It seems that at first, and for several years, Buckley had one hell of a hard time keeping his distance from the John Birch Society, which he feared — with its theory that Communists were literally in charge of the government — would bring ridicule to everyone on the right wing. Buckley wanted to break with the J.B.S., but then he discovered, to his “alarm” (Judis’s word), that its national council included fellows like Adolphe Menjou and Clarence Manion who were extremely close to the *National Review*, plus a couple of the magazine’s top advisers and writers were on the Society’s editorial board, and worst of all, the *National Review*’s chief financial supporter, Roger Milliken, was a J.B.S. member.

Uh oh, he better go slow. When money was involved, br’er Buckley could crawl with the best of them, and he did in this case. True, he feared that the J.B.S. might lead the right wing toward fascism; true, he thought the J.B.S. was replete with the kookiest of kooks. But Buckley was too cowardly to try straight off to purge the right of these guys. He “tempered” his criticism of Robert Welch, head of the J.B.S., we are told, and aimed “the brunt of his criticism at Welch’s philosophy rather than at the Birch Society itself.” Mustn’t irritate Mr. Milliken. Indeed, his criticism was so veddy, veddy temperate that Welch wrote Buckley to thank him for being so “honorable.”

Buckley’s attitude toward homosexuals threw a garish light across some of the most publicized portions of his career. Why did he feel the way he did about them? How exactly *did* he view them? Was he in any way compensating, and, if so, for what? Judis says that “in the early portraits that his parents commissioned, Bill could be mistaken for a pretty little girl.” And he quotes one of Buckley’s childhood friends as recalling, “A lot of us thought he was a little bit effeminate.” Yet other recollections picture him as not so much a sissy as just bitchy. Grown up, he apparently displayed (according to some friends) none of the phony macho stuff that might hint at a cover-up. Murray Kempton, a longstanding friend of Buckley, once noted that the private Buckley

regularly showed the benign “qualities we like to admire as womanly.” When Buckley was in officers’ candidate school, he stopped his platoon in the midst of maneuvers to pick a flower (costing them demerits) — a gesture, it’s true, that might be associated with a Wildean character, but with Buckley it probably just represented his proper contempt for military authority.

Buckley’s most celebrated marathon quarrel was with Gore Vidal. Their original falling out came as a result of an evening on *The Jack Paar Show* in 1962. On that occasion Buckley called Vidal a “philosophical degenerate.” (Sometimes, of course, you can’t tell Buckley’s enemies from his friends without a program. Norman Mailer, whom Buckley counted as a friend, had been favored with the designation “moral pervert.”) That feud simmered along until 1968, when Buckley and Vidal were hired by ABC, allegedly as commentators for the Democratic National Convention but in fact as spiteful clowns who were expected to spit on each other. And did. The spitting reached a climax in a famous exchange, Vidal calling Buckley a “crypto-Nazi” and Buckley calling Vidal a “queer.” Then, losing his cool entirely and threatening to sock Vidal “in the goddam face and you’ll stay plastered,” Buckley demanded that Vidal “stop making allusions of Naziism to somebody who was in the last war and fought the Nazis,” a comical upgrading of his role in the Army.

After the Buckley-Vidal encounter, Buckley’s wife, Pat, howled in pain, “Two hundred million Americans think William F. Buckley is a screaming homosexual and I’ve got to do something about it.” Why did she think so? And what exactly did she have in mind to correct the impression — a heterosexual demonstration on the tube?

Then Buckley and Vidal really started rolling in the gutter, or, to be more precise, in *Esquire*, where charges and implications from both sides whirled around the genie of homosexuality, and wound up with Buckley suing Vidal and *Esquire*. But, in Judis’s words, “fearful of a jury trial” (why “fearful”? did he think he would lose? we aren’t told), Buckley settled with *Esquire* and dropped his suit against Vidal. *Esquire* paid a piddling \$15,000 in cash and agreed to buy \$100,000 in *National Review* ads, which in itself was a kind of corporate act of perversion.

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That Buckley hated "queers"? Earlier he had described Vidal as a "pink queer." Perhaps it was the pinkness that Buckley hated. He certainly didn't hate all "queers." He was, as their mountainous correspondence shows, extremely fond of the gray "queer" Whittaker Chambers. He was an admirer of the purple "queer" Roy Cohn, and of the yellow "queer" Bob Bauman, whom he had considered a comrade in arms since the days when they worked together setting up Y.A.F. And special mention should be made of Buckley's strange support of the beige "queer," Al Lowenstein. In 1976 he endorsed Lowenstein, a liberal Democrat, against incumbent Republican John Wydler, despite the fact that the endorsement gravely hurt Buckley's brother in his tough fight for re-election to the Senate against Daniel Moynihan. Buckley endorsed Lowenstein again in 1978.

Indeed, as Judis notes, there was the notable "presence of several homosexuals among his closest associates." Simply because Buckley proposed that homosexuals with AIDS be tattooed on upper forearm and ass, does not mean he didn't like them. He treated all his friends that way. It's really surprising that he didn't propose having John Kenneth Galbraith and his other liberal friends tattooed on the forehead, to stop the spread of their plague.

Buckley's overblown legal battles had a tendency to end on an almost comical note. In 1980 the weirdos at Liberty Lobby sued *National Review* for linking it to Lyndon LaRouche. *NR* countersued, charging that the Lobby had libeled it by suggesting that the magazine advocated child molestation and was a close ally of the American Nazis. Liberty Lobby's lawsuit was thrown out of court, but *National Review's* countersuit went to trial.

Mark Lane, Liberty Lobby's lawyer, told the jury that "*National Review* since its inception has been a racist, pro-Nazi, pro-Fascist publication. It has no good name. That is what this case is all about. . . . You must determine what the good name of *National Review* is worth. The figure '2 cents' keeps coming into my mind."

Considering the heavy judgments that are usually made to the winner in such cases, it can be assumed that the jury sort of agreed with Lane about *NR's* "good name." The magazine had demanded \$16 million in damages; the jury gave it \$1,001. What really made Buckley furi-

ous over the outcome, though, was the fact that outfits like *The New York Times* and *Newsweek* discussed the case as a fight between equals, just a couple of yowling alley cats on the right.

When Buckley went to Yale, it was probably the most conservative of Ivy League schools. But father Will looked upon it as the centerpiece of the liberal establishment, so naturally son Bill entered Yale thinking so too. Here was his first real training as an exhibitionist: His stunt was to challenge all things Yale just for the sake of challenge. Buckley was a lousy student, but Judis has a ready excuse for that. It wasn't that Buckley's intellect was limited, oh, no. He was just made for livelier things. "Buckley might have excelled as a student at Yale, but he was not interested in scholarship or even in the play of ideas. He liked debating with his professors in class, where the response was immediate, but even during his first two and a half years at Yale, before he was consumed by the *Yale Daily News*, he never read beyond what was assigned in class."

In fact, from earliest manhood Buckley had the mind of a huckster. And the only thing he wanted to peddle was himself. When he finished at Yale, he asked Archibald MacLeish if he thought it would be a good idea to go on to graduate school to study political science. MacLeish said yes, because it would help Buckley discover what he thought. Buckley replied, "No, I know what I think. The question is whether this will be helpful to me as a salesman. Will this credential help in getting heard?"

Time and again Judis tries, without success, to rescue Buckley's mind from the obvious measure of its shallowness. All evidence shows Buckley running about an inch deep as student, as journalist, as writer and as lecturer. It is a trail strewn with gimmickry, little else.

His shallowness as a writer was something he settled for gladly, and from the very start. When he graduated from Yale he briefly thought about doing a broad, general study of American college education, but that would have meant real labor, so he opted instead for a quibbling book focused on the one school he knew something about. The result was *God and Man at Yale*, which was essentially a vanity press operation. Regnery, which brought it out, was barely solvent; the Buckleys paid most publication and publicity costs. To read *God*

and *Man at Yale* today is to enter a mind-set as outdated and outlandish as Sax Rohmer's. The basic idea of the book is that the alumni of Yale should force the school to toe the Christian/capitalist line and fire any professor who doesn't toe it, too. Buckley seemed particularly incensed by a professor who said religious sanctions against premarital sex were antiquated and unrealistic.

If *God and Man at Yale* was lightweight, *McCarthy and His Enemies*, which Buckley wrote with his equally intense and slightly wackier brother-in-law L. Brent Bozell, scarcely tipped the scales at all. Having as its goal the rationalization of McCarthy's irrational actions, the book fell upon the marketplace, in the words of Dwight MacDonal, as "a laborious piece of special pleading which gives the effect of a brief by Cadwallader, Wickersham & Taft on behalf of a pickpocket caught in the men's room of the subway."

Judis says Buckley's political writings (except for *The Unmaking of a Mayor*, which he rates as "stylistically brilliant") are "pedestrian." That is much too much praise. In fact, anyone with the courage to read back through Buckley's work will find no bright insights, no generosity of spirit; its best passages are what one critic called "verbal tinsel," and its worst what another called "verbiage swabbed in clotted fat."

Example: "The conservative has two functions, the paradigmatic and the expedient. It is with reference to the latter function that I tend to prefer the Moynihan plan to the congeries of alternatives."

And: "His dalliance with and insecure instrumentation of interventionist fiscal economics reflects nothing more than the regnant confusion among economic theorists, and the acquiescence even by free market economists in the proposition that it is a political necessity to talk imperiously in the economic seas, even though we all know that the President sits on the throne of King Canute."

By the early 1970s Buckley's circle was devoid (except for Burnham) of the independent minds that had challenged him, honed him and, within the strange context of his earlier rebelliousness, had kept him somewhat honest. Now he was surrounded by such mushroom egotists as John Kenneth Galbraith, Richard Clurman of *Time*, *New York Times* editors A.M. Rosenthal and Arthur Gelb, *Newsweek* editor Osborn Elliott, Irving Kristol, John Chancellor, Theodore White, Dan-

iel Moynihan and, shudder, Norman Podhoretz. Buckley actually helped organize a luncheon group made up of some of these dandies. They called themselves — are you ready for this? — The Boys Club. At about the same time, Buckley joined the ultimate boys' club, the Bohemian Grove. He was sliding faster down the slippery slope.

In politics, Buckley became a skilled practitioner of *flagornerie*. To show his admiration for Henry Kissinger, Buckley would swallow toads by the bucketful. Judis excellently details how Nixon and Kissinger did some classic co-opting of Buckley, cuddling up to him and asking his advice and taking notes on all his wise remarks — and then promptly dumping them in the wastebasket. Buckley admitted that he was being manipulated, and apparently loved it.

When Buckley complained about some of the Administration's policies, Kissinger would get him aside and say, in effect, "Hey, I'm going to prove we're right by letting you in on some R-E-A-L secrets, but you must promise not to reveal them." It was Kissinger's favorite way to sucker big-name journalists. Others knew what was going on and Buckley became a joke around the Administration. David Keene, Vice President Spiro Agnew's top aide, put it this way: "Bill was very con-able, partly because he did want to be in, and Kissinger gave everybody that he talked to in those days the sense that they were indeed 'in.'"

That desire was Buckley's death. The irritating brat who once had made a career of being out now wanted with all his frozen heart to be in.

He passed without a belch into the bowels of the conservative establishment, and, along the way, Buckley's morality as a journalist, never high, disappeared altogether. When I say "never" high, I mean you can go back to his days as head of the Yale newspaper and find that even then he was using the journal under his command as a propaganda device; in that instance, he was a stooge for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which was trying to intimidate left-wing professors. At the *National Review* he continued to stooge for the F.B.I., and broadened his usefulness to stooge for the C.I.A. and every tramp actor on the right-wing circuit. Friends with integrity began to fall away. In 1971 Garry Wills, probably the brightest talent ever to work at the *National Review* and a vigorous advocate of Catholic morality,

"I most especially liked the works of Gary Soto and Roberta Swann in Issue 22. They both managed to capture the Silk feel which is, what can I say? a tenderness, openness, willingness — an aura of restrained passion that's almost virginal. Such things are daring in this country at this time. I don't know how you find your writers, but I love them, and you, and what you are doing."

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became so disgusted with the magazine's ideological vulgarities that he wrote Buckley, "I think the magazine's standards of veracity and honor are scandalously low." The Buckley-Wills friendship, once close, completely fell apart when Wills suggested in a column that with four ex-C.I.A. agents on its staff, there was reason to wonder if the *National Review* wasn't an agency operation.

Among the several reasons for thinking so was the *National Review's* precarious finances. When the magazine was launched in 1955, with \$290,000 allegedly raised from 125 investors, Buckley said it would probably lose \$210,000 in its first year, \$100,000 in its second, would hope to break even in its third year and be earning \$100,000 in its fourth. Actually, the trend was exactly opposite: a loss of \$252,000 in 1956, of \$292,000 in 1957, and a staggering \$388,000 in 1958. As of June 30, 1958, the *National Review's* assets were about \$270,000 and its debts almost \$1 million.

In *Danger on the Right*, Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein note these numbers and add, "Exactly how these tremendous losses were met is not known." It is a point that Judis does not clear up.

Buckley says he joined the C.I.A. in 1951, not long after graduating from Yale, and, under the cover of an export-import business, served in Mexico City briefly before getting bored and quitting. He remained friends for life with

his case officer, Howard Hunt, of Watergate fame. Because of that friendship, Buckley at one time knew more about the Watergate scandal than any other journalist in America, but he revealed nothing.

Whether or not Buckley was a life-long operator for the C.I.A., as some think, is a matter of little importance; he may have, as he claims, quit soon after joining. If he had stayed on the payroll he could have given no more support to the agency, and given it in no more distasteful a fashion than he did as a "journalist." When Gen. Augusto Pinochet ousted Chile's President, Salvador Allende, in 1973 and proceeded to kill, jail or exile one out of every hundred Chileans, the *National Review* played this up as a wonderful development; moreover, maintaining his magazine's usual standard of objectivity, Buckley hired a member of the Pinochet government as his correspondent in Chile.

Quite a few *National Review* editors and writers had their way paid on junkets to Chile by the illegally operated Chilean lobby Buckley helped found and which he served as an adviser. (Judis tells us that Buckley himself had already set the standard by going on expenses-paid trips to Chiang Kai-shek's Taiwan, Franco's Spain, and South Africa and Rhodesia.) Final proof of Buckley's quality as a journalist came when he guided the *National Review* in

an all-out campaign to discredit Orlando Letelier (a former official of the Allende government assassinated by Chilean secret police in Washington in 1976) by suggesting again and again that Letelier was a Cuban or Soviet agent, although he must have known that the Chilean lobby's own investigator had reported there was no evidence that Letelier was any such thing.

When I think of the many years that Buckley was a fan, if not an agent, of the C.I.A., and when I think of the many influential liberals and moderates who permitted him to lure them into "friendly" relationships, I imagine the many file drawers at the agency that may be crammed to the brim with his snitching. Blair Clark, once head of CBS News and also once editor of this magazine, says Flora Lewis told him the following story of "friendship."

Right after World War II, she and her husband Sydney Gruson were newspaper correspondents stationed in Mexico City. "She said there was a charming young man living with his new wife in an apartment near them. He was fresh out of Yale, studying there or doing something connected with the family oil business (I forget which). She said he often used to drop by to talk — about everything under the sun from gossip to philosophy and why the world was the way it was. Many long evenings of conviviality and chat.

"The Grusons traveled around Central America on their beats and they would routinely check in at the local U.S. Embassies to get the scoop. They began to notice that the security people in certain embassies were taking an unusual interest in them, and once or twice things they had said about political matters (but not in public) were quoted back to them — on Marxism, chances of democratic development here and there, the cold war, etc. They thought it odd that their thinking was so well known to C.I.A. types, and they finally figured out (and, I think, once were shown proof) that the source of the paper trail in the Latino world was entirely none other than their charming young buddy from Yale, W.F. Buckley Jr.

"Now, the Grusons, since divorced, were always extremely upwardly mobile and I have never heard it said that they ever contemplated throwing bombs. [Gruson retired not long ago as vice chair of the New York Times Corporation.] Which did not prevent the young C.I.A. agent Buckley from sending along his

FRAGMENT OF A WOMAN FROM KOS

At first all you see are the folds
of drapery, high grass close together, swaying
beads you parted as a child, field behind
the house, then river. Sky.
You were told finches lived there, red-
winged, tipsy, upside down their hold
on the reeds, even so
they sang, trilling over and over
your outstretched hands song
poured like seeds from a basket or from
a bowl, water.

There was a woman,
young, beautiful—you used to hug her
from behind, closing your hands
over the cry of surprise
she gave out
like perfume. Now here
she is, rising
from the dead
landscape of memory, just this
fragment of her, still
kneeling.

Susan Mitchell

'intelligence' reports on them, through government channels."

The greatest tribute to Judis's honesty is that nearly half of this book is devoted to tracing Buckley's visible decay as a right-wing spokesman. There is nothing heroic about his decline, nothing dramatic. It doesn't involve a twist of fate. It is simply the result of two things: shallowness (once again) and too many soft spots in his character.

Judis admits that by 1964 Buckley had said everything he had to say and would forever after be nothing but an ideological sideshow, that he had reached "the end of his development as a political thinker" and "he accepted that his intellectual role would be that of a popularizer and controversialist." By the mid-1970s, he was growing tired even of that role and, says Judis, seemed to be losing interest in politics entirely.

So much for Buckley's shallowness. As for his lack of character, that was amply demonstrated in his unwillingness to continue living the hard life of the outsider.

Snob though he was, Buckley gained his notoriety by riding the ugly crest of a right-wing anti-intellectualism that passed for populism in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was the strength of the McCarthy movement. "At McCarthy rallies," as William Manchester has pointed out, "they sang 'Nobody Loves Joe but the People,' and politicians were convinced that dark masses of troubled voters stood behind them." After Roy Cohn was dismissed from McCarthy's committee, a rally in his support was held in New York's Hotel Astor at which Rabbi Benjamin Schultz (the kind of Jew Buckley liked for sure) declared, "The plain people know that the loss of Cohn is like the loss of a dozen battleships." Buckley was there to applaud heartily, for although he detested "plain people" he knew that McCarthy's strength lay in their fears. The rabble was his army of the night, armed with piety. Likewise, it was the populist sweep behind Barry Goldwater's movement that doubled the number of *National Review* subscribers and for the first time made Buckley a voice to be noticed. Buckley had contempt for Goldwater and agreed with *National Review* editor Burnham that Goldwater was a "second-rate" candidate "surrounded by third- or fourth-rate persons." Privately Buckley ridiculed Goldwater as "Our Hero" and acknowledged to *National Review* editors

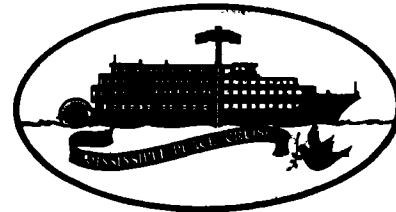
that the very sight of the Senator on TV gave him "a sinking feeling." But with his usual cynicism, Buckley gave no inkling of his doubts in public and was only too happy to accept the misbegotten populist surge that inflated his journal's income.

But the snarling populism of the right wing that lifted Buckley up eventually brought him down. By the early 1970s, the new right was well on its way to deballing him. It had the gutter rebelliousness that Buckley no longer possessed; now he was soft. When the new right accused him of being an intellectual pansy, he made the mistake of fighting back by accusing its spokesman, Kevin Phillips, of being so gauche as to try to lure George Wallace into the conservative movement. He should never have challenged Phillips to a literary battle, for Phillips crushed the elitist piffle out of him with columnar broadsides such as this:

"Hell, Wallace isn't going to hook up with Squire Willy and his Companions of the Oxford Unabridged Dictionary. Nor can we expect Alabama truck drivers or Ohio steelworkers to sign on with a politics captivated by Ivy League five-syllable word polishers. . . . Most of the 'New Conservatives' I know believe that any new politics or coalition has to surge up from Middle America . . . not dribble down from Bill Buckley's wine rack and favorite philosopher's shelf. . . . There was, of course, a time when Bill Buckley was anti-establishment — back in the long-ago days when he was an Irish nouveau-riche cheer leader for Joe McCarthy. But since then, he's primed his magazine with cast-off Hapsburg royalty, Englishmen who part their names in the middle, and others calculated to put real lace on Buckley's Celtic curtains."

Realizing that he was much too out of shape to fight with this young ideological ruffian, Buckley quickly retreated to his study, explaining to one of his editors that he would not again respond to Phillips because "I have simply nothing to say to someone who is proud of his ignorance of [Eric] Voegelin [one of *National Review's* philosophical saints]."

Since at least the mid-1970s, mere ownership of the *National Review* was not enough to give Buckley clout (after Burnham's death, it became an unintended garden of weeds, and Buckley himself seemed to lose interest in it, if for no other reason than that, as Hugh Kenner, a close friend and briefly one of his editors, once said, "*National Review*



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has some of the dumbest readers in the world"). He became less enraptured of right-wing idiocies and more tolerant of liberal mushiness.

And why not? Faddish liberals supplied the oxygen for his lowering flame. As Dan Wakefield once noted, Buckley "is becoming 'incorporated' into the public rituals of the society he attacks . . . and increasingly the rebel becomes a favorite performer before audiences who wholly disagree with what he says, but would defend to the death his right to entertain them by saying it — and the louder he says it, the louder they applaud."

Buckley became like Primo Carnera, who, having won the world's heavyweight boxing championship by fluke and having lost it through clownish lack of talent, turned to the wrestling circuit. No longer a journalist of any repute, Buckley's wrestling circuit comprised mainly campus lectures and *Firing Line*. As in wrestling, much depended on hokum, contrived animosity and opponents willing to take a fall. He delighted in luring liberals and left-wingers onto *Firing Line* and, having them physically cornered, pelting them with ad hominem accusations and nasty innuendo, "likening their views to those of suspected or admitted Communists. It little mattered whether his guests were also his friends." But such is the perversity of many establishment liberals that they actually thought it cute of Buckley to sidle up in a friendly way and piss on their legs.

As for his campus audiences, he practiced "what he called 'rhetorical brinkmanship' in order to gain their attention. At Rutgers, he called a Democratic think tank a 'zoo,' described Communists as 'barbarians.'" Hey, wow! It all became rather pitiful. "Bill," a friend once said of him, "has been impersonating himself for thirty years."

I wonder who it is that's impersonating Buckley now that he's gone? □

The Graduate Faculty

M Arien Mack
Serge Moscovici

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MUSIC.

GENE SANTORO

Living Colour

Using the mongrelized sounds of rock and roll, the key questions Living Colour poses on their debut album, *Vivid* (Epic), deal with racism in this country. Take the pointed, frantic, punk bash "Which Way to America?," which describes the chasm still dividing America into two unequal parts a generation after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. "I look at the T.V./Your America's doing well/I look out the window/My America's catching hell/I just want to know which way do I go to get to your America?" Then, over a stomping drums-only backdrop: "Where is my picket fence?/My long, tall glass of lemonade?/Where is my VCR, my stereo, my T.V. show?"

In fact, *Vivid* poses two levels of questions, one simply by its existence. That's because Living Colour is led by guitarist/songwriter Vernon Reid, who's also co-founder of the Black Rock Coalition. The B.R.C. began a couple of years ago as a cooperative for black musicians (and also artists, actors and others) dedicated to breaking the color-bar stereotypes and marketing categories imposed by the recording industry. This industry-wide segregation works by organizing and describing sound by race. Every major record company has separate a&r, marketing and publicity departments to handle r&b (read black) artists. Radio stations, especially in lucrative urban markets, are categorized by the supposed color of their audiences, and the music they play is programmed by their consultants accordingly. Retail outlets organize their bins and departments to follow suit. Publications that survive largely on industry support, from fanzines to trade journals, follow the industry's lead: Even jazz magazines, covering a field clearly dominated by black players, tilt heavily toward whites, especially in big features. So the lock-up is about complete.

From the industry's standpoint, this kind of segregation has the obvious advantage of neatening the crazy quilt of sounds it sells. Black musicians are expected to follow one of three or four permissible prototypes for the music they're told "their" audience wants to hear. But

however obvious the advantages of this policy may be to a large, established and ever more consolidated industry, the equally obvious problem is that the music spills ungraciously over even such apparently fixed borders as race.

Given the relative weakness of the musicians' share in this marketing game it's no surprise that the struggle is usually not resolved in their favor. If blacks are "supposed" to play a certain constellation of styles for their preassigned black audiences, and if to get a hearing for their music they have to make it fit the pre-existing slots, most times they will oblige. Nor should it come as a surprise to learn that these racially segregated arrangements aren't reciprocal: White musicians can still appropriate black styles like funk as easily as Pat Boone covered the hermaphroditic, gospel-driven raunch of Little Richard thirty years ago.

The B.R.C. has tried to reformulate the debate about these topics by insistently pointing to the racism and economic inequalities that structure it and seeking ways to escape its contradictions. It uses two basic approaches. One is a regular program of meetings of musicians, writers and anyone else interested in music to address the racism in the industry: how and whether to set up alternative methods of recording and promoting black musicians who don't keep within the accepted formats, or how to combat white dominance of high-priced, high-powered, high-profile synthesizer technology.

The other part of the B.R.C.'s attack aims at infiltrating the clubs. In a kind of floating guerrilla road show, they've staged performances at a variety of venues all over New York City: artsy sites like the Kitchen, punk havens like CBGB, Third World centers like S.O.B.'s, downtown hip-rock pockets like Siberia where their last show was a fund-raiser for Jesse Jackson. The purposes have been several: to raise money, to publicly re-evaluate accepted myths about black and white roles in American pop music history, to introduce a variety of musicians to different audiences and — driving all the others — to educate those audiences to the racism and politics underlying the musical categories through which all the music they hear is funneled. (To find out more about the B.R.C., write to P.O. Box 1054, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276.)

While the B.R.C.'s lineup of bands boasts a tremendous diversity, the blaz-

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