

## Current Books

his state of Washington no doubt helped ensure his election to the U.S. Senate for six terms.

In this solid if sometimes pedestrian biography, Kaufman, a political scientist at the University of Vermont, reestablishes Jackson as an outstanding domestic legislator and an environmental pioneer. He took a leading part in the battle against McCarthyism, fought for civil rights legislation, helped enact laws that vastly expanded the national parks, and campaigned for a national health system, sponsoring what became the Medicare legislation. These liberal credentials notwithstanding, large sections of the Democratic Party couldn't forgive his support of the Vietnam War or his attempt to preserve the bipartisan tradition on foreign policy in general.

Jackson was wooed by Republicans—Richard Nixon tried hard to persuade him to become secretary of defense, and the Reagan campaign in 1980 made rather more oblique promises of cabinet office—but he stayed in the Senate. There, he was a pivotal figure in the critique of Henry Kissinger's détente policies during the 1970s, in the parallel emergence of the neoconservative movement, and in what eventually became the Reagan strategy of forcing the Soviet Union into an arms race it could not sustain. As early as 1957, Jackson had defined "the essence of the Soviet dilemma: The Kremlin must grant some freedom in order to maintain technological growth but allowing freedom undermines communist ideology and discipline."

Kaufman illuminates the personal background to this extraordinarily influential career. A young Republican who was converted to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal Democrats by the Great Depression, Jackson was an instinctive isolationist. As a freshman House member in 1941 (he moved to the Senate in 1953), he even voted against the Lend-Lease legislation to help equip Britain against Hitler. The war converted him to an almost messianic faith in America's global role and to a firm belief in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization alliance.

Jackson sought the presidency in 1972 and 1976, but few Democrats rallied to so militant a cold warrior. For that, the Democratic Party paid a price: Its perceived weakness on national security helped limit the

party to a single White House term in the 24 years between 1968 and 1992. By then, of course, the Cold War had ended. Jackson may have lost many battles, but he can lay claim to a significant share of the deeper victories in the Cold War and in the long campaign for the soul of his party.

—MARTIN WALKER

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### *THE DARK VALLEY: A Panorama of the 1930s.*

By Piers Brendon. Knopf. 795 pp.  
\$35.00

The sudden, baffling economic depression of the 1930s brought worldwide unemployment, poverty, and despair—the 20th-century equivalent of the Black Death. Those in brief authority remained perplexed. Nobody could get the unemployed back to work or deliver what the farmers were producing to the people who were starving. Democratic capitalism no longer seemed to function. The solution, when it came, turned out to be World War II.

Brendon, Keeper of the Churchill Archives and a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge, gives the 1930s a wonderful summing up in this chronicle of how the Great Depression affected the great powers (the United States, Germany, Italy, France, Britain, Japan, and the Soviet Union). He could have called his book an unauthorized biography of the decade, for, along with reviewing the specialized and revisionist studies, he has mined all the gossip from diaries and memoirs. In a style that combines the authoritative speculations of A. J. P. Taylor with the amusing ironies of Malcolm Muggeridge, Brendon tells us what people wore, what they ate, what they read.

He is particularly interested in the manipulation of public opinion, which the new media of radio and motion pictures took to unprecedented levels. "Propaganda became part of the air people breathed during the 1930s," he writes. Public spectacles and entertainments around the globe were crafted with a propagandist intent: "King George V's Silver Jubilee celebrations and his son's coronation were a democratic riposte to Hitler's barbaric pageants at Nuremberg. Stalin's purge trials dramatised a new kind of

tyranny. Mussolini's aerial circuses advertised the virility of Fascism. . . . Hollywood created celluloid myths to banish the Depression and affirm the New Deal."

Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill get the high marks from Brendon, who nonetheless provides a snapshot that both credits and discredits Churchill. As First Lord of the Admiralty before becoming prime minister, Churchill habitually enjoyed long dinners featuring champagne and liqueurs, returned to the office after 10 p.m., and worked until long after midnight. "He has got into the habit of calling conferences of subordinates after 1 a.m.," a *Times* journalist wrote in his diary, "which naturally upsets some of the Admirals, who are men of sound habits. So there is a general atmosphere of strain at the Admiralty, which is all wrong. Yet Winston is such a popular hero & so much *the* war-leader that he cannot be dropped."

Brendon reminds us that instability, not equilibrium, is the global norm, and that faith in the invincibility of democratic capitalism can prove misplaced. We may assure ourselves that the current prosperity will extend to the hereafter, but so did people in 1929. As Brendon cautions, "Today almost invariably misreads tomorrow, sometimes grossly."

Comprehensive as it is, the book has a few unforgivable omissions. Where is Rudy Vallee crooning, in his upper-class accent, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" And why no dancing Fred and Ginger surrounded by luxury, unaffected by the blind man on the corner selling apples and singing "Beall Street Blues"?

—JACOB A. STEIN

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### *THE MARTIAL ARTS OF RENAISSANCE EUROPE.*

By Sydney Anglo. Yale Univ. Press. 384 pp. \$45

Inspired by the writings of Michel Foucault, a generation of scholars have written volumes about the history of the human body as a social construct. For all their labors, though, we still know surprisingly little about how our ancestors

actually used their bodies—the skills that the anthropologist Marcel Mauss called "*techniques du corps*," which range from everyday routines such as styles of walking and sitting to the most challenging surgical procedures. Like ideas, practices have histories. Yet because practices are more often learned through example and apprenticeship than from books, their histories are far more elusive.

Anglo, a historian at the University of Wales who specializes in the ceremonial life of the Renaissance, reconstructs the exacting skills of Europe's martial arts masters. These men were not just the counterparts of today's fencing masters and boxing and wrestling coaches; they were also the progenitors of Green Beret



*The geometric principles of swordfighting were laid out in a treatise by Girard Thibault of Antwerp in 1628.*

and Navy SEALs instructors. From the end of the Middle Ages well into the 17th century, the city streets and country roads of Europe abounded with hotheaded, knife-wielding ruffians and armed brigands. Even among intimates, disagreements over points of honor could escalate into mortal combat.

The insecurity of the world, and the social and cultural aspirations of teachers and pupils alike, had paradoxical consequences. The numerous surviving manuals of European martial arts evoke a gorgeous, stylized world. One wrestling manuscript was illustrated by Albrecht Dürer. Yet masters had to remind their readers that fighting was not merely an aesthetic exercise. Many discouraged the instructional use of rebated (dulled) weapons as an impediment to lifesaving realism.