
to a family of lesser Burgundian nobility. By his mid-thirties, this workaholic bachelor was a captain of the elite corps of Dragoons and had received from Louis XV the coveted Cross of Saint-Louis for distinguished diplomatic service in Russia and England. But while pursuing the French crown's official policies abroad, d'Eon also worked as a spy furthering a clandestine agenda to put a Frenchman on the Polish throne and to undermine English domestic politics. When financial tensions escalated between the chevalier and his "handlers" in the 1760s, this model civil servant's career began to come apart. D'Eon threatened to blackmail the French government, and to show he was serious, he published a collection of highly confidential documents. Ordered to return to France, he refused.

But none of this accounts for d'Eon's lasting notoriety. In 1770 a rumor circulated in London that d'Eon was actually a woman; soon the wild speculation led to heavy betting. In 1772 d'Eon and a French official confirmed the startling "truth" that the chevalier was really a chevalière. Mademoiselle d'Eon lived for another four decades in England and France, only to stun the world once more upon her death in 1810: examination of the corpse indisputably proved that she was a man after all.

D'Eon was one of the most talked-about characters in 18th-century Europe, and his story has been told before. But at a time when gender-bending tales such as *M. Butterfly* and *The Crying Game* have enjoyed great success, this reopening of the d'Eon dossier was inevitable. Kates, a history professor at Trinity University in Texas, tackles the central question head-on: why would an 18th-century man choose to jeopardize his status by passing for half his life as a member of the "lesser" sex?

Kates's answer is likely to be controversial: d'Eon, he insists, was neither a transvestite nor a transsexual. None of his abundant autobiographical writings suggest that d'Eon made a fetish of women's clothes or was ill at ease with his male body. Kates uses these works and d'Eon's library (he owned at least 60 books relating to the nature and status of women) to argue that d'Eon's decision to live as a woman was an intellectual one, an early form of feminism later bolstered by his revived religious faith.

Women, d'Eon believed, were spiritually superior to men.

Kates will not convince every reader that Chevalier d'Eon was the man of (feminist) principle he depicts. Intent on removing d'Eon's story from the realm of pathology, Kates makes his transformation seem implausibly rational. But this does not detract from his lively, novelistic account of an extraordinary life—or from a wonderful tour of the politics and culture of 18th-century Europe.

THE END OF REFORM: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War. By *Alan Brinkley*. Knopf. 371 pp. \$27.50

Between its beginnings in the early 1930s and the end of World War II, New Deal liberalism underwent a fundamental change. Its principal architects, including Franklin D. Roosevelt himself, gradually backed away from trying to deal with difficult issues of wealth, class, and economic power, with consequences for American liberalism that persist to the present day.

Brinkley, a historian at Columbia University, tells how powerful external forces—the recession of 1937–38, the growth of organized labor, World War II—deflected the New Dealers from their original plans to restructure American society and its troubled economy. By the end of World War II, he writes, "New Dealers so transformed their vision of political economy that it no longer bore any direct relation to the progressive traditions that had originally informed their efforts."

Although few New Dealers were ever actually hostile to capitalism, they all believed that something was wrong with it and that government should find a way to set it right. But the consensus of the early Depression yielded, says Brinkley, to "a set of liberal ideas essentially reconciled to the existing structure of the economy and committed to using the state to compensate for capitalism's inevitable flaws." New Dealers replaced their zeal for a fundamental overhaul of the economy with a much less forceful "regulatory impulse." The Justice Department's Antitrust Division under Thurman Arnold did not attempt to eradicate busi-

ness monopoly but sought merely to contain it.

Just as World War I had put an end to the Progressive Era, so World War II dealt a blow to the New Deal's early ambitions. The rise of fascism made Americans wary of granting more power and control to the central government. And though the war did spur increased government involvement in the economy, it also promoted greater *cooperation* between Washington and the American business community. The experience of the war forced New Deal reformers to acknowledge their own limitations. "By the end of the war they had disabused themselves of the notion that all problems could be helped by fundamental cures," Brinkley concludes. "Instead, they had more modest goals: protecting consumers and encouraging mass consumption, and using fiscal policies and social welfare innovations to find the road to prosperity."

Brinkley admits that a certain measure of present-mindedness spurred his investigation: he wanted to understand why contemporary American liberalism, with its focus on individual rights and group entitlements rather than on the national well-being, has strayed so far from its New Deal roots. Historians frown upon drawing contemporary lessons from their work, but Brinkley's book does provide a cautionary tale when powerful forces in Washington speak blithely once again about fundamentally reordering government and society.

THE OTHER GREEKS: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization. By Victor Davis Hanson. Free Press. 541 pp. \$28

What other Greeks? Who among these ingenious folk have escaped the confines of an old popular tradition? The ancient Greeks were urban and urbane, curious and cantankerous, wrote poems and plays and philosophy, excelled at mathematics and sculpture and architecture, and invented democracy. Hanson, a classicist at California State University, Fresno, does not entirely dismiss this traditional view but sees it as myopic and partial. To understand Greece in its days of glory, he argues, we must look beyond the cities to the countryside, where, from the eighth to the

fourth century B.C., the most important members of the Greek population lived. These essential "other Greeks" were family farmers.

Hanson contends that a new form of agrarianism took hold in Greece sometime around 700 B.C., spurred by the growing population's need for a larger food supply. Central to this change was the emergence of the small farm, rarely larger than 20 acres in size but worked to the limits of productivity by its independent owner. Over time, such owners coalesced as a class and became powerful enough to dictate Greek military and political development through the sixth century B.C.

Many of the fundamentals of Western civilization, Hanson argues, originated in the agricultural practices of the polis: private ownership of land, free choice in economic activity, an economic mentality to improve productivity, constitutional government based on local representation, the subservience of military organization to civilian political control, notions of egalitarianism and equality of property holding, and private ownership of arms. "Agrarian pragmatism," he writes, "not intellectual contemplation, farmers, not philosophers, 'other' Greeks, not the small cadre of refined minds who have always comprised the stuff of Classics, were responsible for the creation of Western civilization."

The startling modernity of Hanson's list signals his larger purpose. He would have us see America through his elaborate Greek prism: the traditional—agrarian—values on which *this* country was founded are disappearing along with the American family farm, and we are slipping into our own Hellenistic age of desultory, untethered pandemonium. Six generations of Hanson's family have worked a ranch in California. When he complains of the farmer's increasing marginalization or describes the hardship of making a life on the land, whether in ancient Greece or 20th-century America, he writes from experience.

