

North, known as the Great Migration, and the exodus of agricultural workers from the Dust Bowl to California are well known in scholarship and literature, but this larger transappalachian movement has been mostly ignored. In an engaging, richly detailed volume that stretches from patterns of land use to shifting class politics to the evolution of country music, Fraser traces the migration and its economic, social, cultural, and political consequences. He does not use the word “hillbilly” in a derogatory sense but to illustrate the great variety of meanings neighbors and contemporaries attached to it. He sees the marginalization of hillbilly culture and politics as a symptom, rather than a cause, of the conservative turn in post-1960s politics.

How to Interpret the Constitution

BY CASS R. SUNSTEIN. Princeton University Press, 2023, 208 pp.

Sunstein has produced an extraordinary work that manages to be challenging but accessible to both specialists and nonlawyers. Its core idea is that because the U.S. Constitution offers no instructions for its own interpretation, citizens and judges must choose among many possible theories of interpretation (for instance, traditionalism, originalism, and common-good constitutionalism) to discover its meaning beyond the bare bones of the text. The only way to choose, he argues, is to depart from the text to define certain “provisional fixed points,” that is, moral and political judgments that are “both clear and firm” and then ask whether the application of a particular theory

would preserve the most important of these fixed points. For instance, at this stage in the country’s evolution, a theory that allowed the government to discriminate on the basis of race or sex would not be acceptable and could be dropped from consideration. A theory must also be jettisoned if it flies in the face of the realities of life in the United States measured from the highest level of generality down to specific cases. Further, because the United States is a deliberative democracy, popular preference is not sufficient grounds for choosing one theory over another: it must be justified by reasons. Sunstein carries the novice reader across this difficult terrain without simplifying the subject and manages to let his own passionate views shine through without shortchanging others. The book is an education.

Western Europe

ANDREW MORAVCSIK

How Not to Be a Politician: A Memoir

BY RORY STEWART. Penguin Press, 2023, 464 pp.

If you read only one contemporary political memoir, let this be it. Stewart is a certain type of eccentric figure once commonplace in British Conservative circles. An accomplished soldier and diplomat from a distinguished family, he traveled for years on foot through Central Asia and served high up in the Coalition Provisional Authority, the U.S. military government in post-invasion

Iraq, before being elected to the British Parliament and serving four times as cabinet minister. In 2019, after Boris Johnson crushed Stewart's quixotic run for the leadership of the Conservatives and then expelled him from the party, he found refuge back in the American academic and nonprofit worlds. With little to lose, he indulges in the rarest of virtues in a political memoir: honesty. Yet this book is much more than a remarkably candid eye-witness account of an embarrassing era in British politics, flush with juicy anecdotes. It is also the poignant tale of a genuinely decent human being with an uncompromising desire to achieve concrete policy results—and his arrival at the revelation that the political hypocrisy and ignorance surrounding him will thwart his efforts. It is a sobering admonition for anyone tempted to choose politics as a vocation or who expects much from those who do.

Europe's Leadership Famine: Portraits of Defiance and Decay, 1950–2022

BY TOM GALLAGHER. Scotview Publications, 2023, 403 pp.

This iconoclastic book asks why European citizens so dislike their elected representatives. Politicians, the author contends, used to be chosen for their ability to expound nationalist ideals that stirred the masses. Today, the challenges of wrestling with globalization, European integration, climate change, and migration favor mediocre and mendacious managers who inspire no one. Yet this romantic notion that the primary job of modern political leaders is to spout nationalist rhetoric not

only seems archaic but also leads the author to some odd judgments. Were postwar luminaries, such as the Belgian socialist leader Paul-Henri Spaak and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, really towering figures compared with whom former German Chancellor Angela Merkel is but a self-righteous naive who underestimated Russian President Vladimir Putin? Are overtly populist leaders such as former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the late Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi well-intentioned people who fell just short of the standard set by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, whom the author hails as the “most successful” European politician of the post-Cold War period? Such conclusions are not just unpersuasive but troubling for those who believe politicians should support impartial democratic institutions and sustainable gains in public welfare. In this way, the book captures and embodies the type of unreasonable expectations that fuel cynicism about political leadership and spur the corresponding desire for authoritarian alternatives.

An Unsettled Nation: Moldova in the Geopolitics of Russia, Romania, and Ukraine

BY EDUARD BAIDAU. Ibidem, 2023, 650 pp.

Often ignored in discussions of frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the recently unfrozen conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the ongoing war in Ukraine is the small country of Moldova. Lying between Romania and Ukraine, it contains the

breakaway province of Transnistria, which today is semiautonomous, albeit not recognized internationally. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Transnistria has been under Russian military occupation. This book traces the province's history, attributing its separatist tendencies to the divergent policies of nation building followed by Romania and the Soviet Union, as well as the ambiguous outcome of the civil war in Moldova that immediately followed the collapse of communism. Ham-fisted negotiations to reunify the nation, the ambition of various Moldovan political figures, and the cross-cutting cultural influence of foreign countries have further separated Moldova and Transnistria. Although this book offers a useful introduction to the subject, its largely cultural focus leaves one wishing for more information on the economic prospects, political leadership, and institutional construction of Transnistria today.

The Populist Moment: The Left After the Great Recession

BY ARTHUR BORRIELLO AND ANTON JÄGER. Verso, 2023, 224 pp.

In an era of mounting inequality, a beleaguered working class, high youth unemployment, and visceral opposition to extreme right-wing movements, the decline of the left in most European countries seems odd. In this book, two political scientists reiterate explanations for the left's weakness that many left-wing parties themselves offer. Most of them stress factors beyond their control, including a shrinking yet more diverse and diffuse working

class, middle-class ambivalence toward economic redistribution, the power of globalized capital, and, most controversially, the "hollowing out" of democratic institutions. As a result, left-wing parties and political movements have struggled to gain traction or stay in power. They must either moderate or disappear: Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Socialists and their successors in France, and the movement led by Bernie Sanders, the independent senator from Vermont, in the United States have all failed to enact distinctive policies and have lost much of their momentum. Although this rather impressionistic analysis aspires to conclude by presenting an alternative strategy to reinvigorate the left, the analysis suggests that its decline is inevitable.

The Once Upon a Time World: The Dark and Sparkling Story of the French Riviera

BY JONATHAN MILES. Pegasus Books, 2023, 464 pp.

Today, the French Riviera is well known, easily reached, and overcrowded. Yet it was not always so. Before the mid-nineteenth century, few viewed warm seaside locales as attractive resort destinations. Moreover, the Riviera remained nearly inaccessible by land. Only those seeking to treat severe tuberculosis viewed it as a worthwhile destination. With the coming of the railroad, however, the rich and famous poured in—not just from France but also from Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries with wealthy elites. They reveled in

the natural beauty, built grand villas, indulged laxer sexual mores, and frequented the world's most expensive gambling tables. They were followed by swarms of crooks, swindlers, and thieves—a lifestyle to which, in the mid-twentieth century, the actors Cary Grant and Grace Kelly lent one final burst of cinematic glamor. Only a few posh towns, along with the perpetual tax haven of Monaco, now recall the region's luxurious heyday. Across the globe, however, the lifestyle ideal of the Riviera has triumphed: everyone seeks spots where they can soak up sun and surf by day and party through the night.

Western Hemisphere

RICHARD FEINBERG

In the Shadow of Quetzalcoatl: Zelia Nuttall and the Search for Mexico's Ancient Civilizations

BY MERILEE GRINDLE. Harvard University Press, 2023, 400 pp.

Gods of Thunder: How Climate Change, Travel, and Spirituality Reshaped Precolonial America

BY TIMOTHY R. PAUKETAT. Oxford University Press, 2023, 352 pp.

Two recent books shed light on evolving interpretations of pre-Columbian civilizations. Zelia Nuttall, who died in 1933 at the age of 75, was a pioneering anthropologist whose many contributions ranged from decoding a giant Aztec calendar to burnishing the reputation of the

sixteenth-century English navigator Sir Francis Drake. In this beautifully crafted biography, Grindle situates Nuttall's work in Mexico in the lead-up to the 1910 revolution. Her research helped Mexicans understand their pre-Columbian national heritage, in its sophisticated engineering, gardening, artistry, and cosmology, as being as glorious as that of Mediterranean societies in the classical era. Nuttall came from a background of privilege and wealth in San Francisco, but she was also a divorced single mother who succeeded in a male-dominated professional world through assertiveness, dogged research, incessant travel, and prolific publication. She built vast networks among senior museum administrators and scholars, philanthropists, and politicians, including U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and Mexican President Porfirio Díaz. In her stately villa in Mexico City, she formidably presided over a European-style salon of elite gatherings. A product of her times, Nuttall preferred to uncover commonalities across ancient civilizations, whereas twenty-first-century cultural anthropology often celebrates diversity and difference.

Pauketat argues that climate change explains the rise and fall of many pre-Columbian civilizations. A medieval warm period, from about AD 800 to 1300, allowed complex civilizations to emerge in Central America, Mexico, and what is now the southwest and central United States, just as a subsequent cooling period contributed to their decline. These somewhat interconnected societies acknowledged the decisive forces of nature by worshipping the wind-and-rain-feathered serpent