

religion's role in bringing down totalitarianism.

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MORE BOOKS

Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market, by Janine R. Wedel. New York: Basic Books, 2009. xv + 281 pages. Index. ISBN 978-0-465-09106-5. Hardcover. \$27.50.

Janine Wedel is a brilliant social scientist who has articulated a problem that is often sideswiped by the powerful information industry: the fact that “upending rules and authority” (ix) has become the norm in virtually all countries, and the goal is to increase one’s own status and influence. “The new breed of international players” has fashioned new rules of the game to benefit themselves (x). Today power and influence are held not by their ostensible holders but rather by “flexians” (xi), who are the real agenda-wielding players. It is this “network of [anonymous] interlocking players” (xii) that matters and not the ossified institutions, titles, and offices. Those who participate in the networks are called flexians and perform overlapping roles in large foundations, the government, and industry. They “reorganize relations between bureaucracy and business to their advantage” (7) and are “accountable only to their patrons” (9). They are people of diverse ideological persuasions, which they change depending on which way they feel the wind blows. Their goal is not always money; more often it is influence and promotion of their ideological views. Flexians are particularly numerous in Eastern European countries; the former communist apparatchiks transformed themselves into go-betweens and mediators in the new system. This shadow elite undermines democracy and capitalism.

Wedel posits that “neoliberal policies facilitate the blurring of state and private relationships, and thus make local environments friendlier to flex activity” (33). She then offers examples of flexians that range from ostensibly ordinary folk to government figures. The Rywin affair in Poland that involved Agora, Adam Michnik, and many other persons of power is described in

detail. It should be stressed that many flexians are persons whose names are not household words, yet they behave as if they wielded some mysterious power—in the Polish case, they seemed to wield power over those who questioned them in the Polish Senate hearings.

Subsequent chapters show “flexing” in the U.S. government and argue that government today includes a “shadow government” consisting of “consulting firms, nonprofits, think tanks, and other nongovernmental entities” (76). Wedel states that at some point three-fourths of federal government employees were contractors (78). These figures make the perennial discussion about paring down the government mere campaign talk. In particular, the Department of National Security (called a “megabureaucracy” by Wedel) recorded “colossal increases in contract spending with Defense accounting for nearly three-quarters of the total federal procurement budget in 2008” (79). The general public has no idea about this shadow government that leaches out resources and in practice rules over the country. There are companies employing tens of thousands of workers who mainly work for the U.S. government. Supervision of these companies is scant, statistics are nonexistent, and the functioning of this system is shrouded in mystery.

Wedel also discusses Moscow and the privatization process in the former Soviet Union. Finally, we return to the United States to look at the “commandeers” of this new way of governing (147). Wedel submits that the “neocon core” (147) deserves that name more than anyone else. She mentions Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Douglas Feith, three government officials who distinguished themselves by skirting bureaucracy, breaching regulations, and being skillful in bailing each other out of trouble (147).

Can one speak of accountability then? Not before another term is introduced, “truthiness.” It differs from truth in that truthiness means presenting events and ideas in the way we would like them to be, and not necessarily in a way congruent with facts. In literary studies this is called postmodernism. Truth has lost its

previous position in public discourse. What appears in the media and in the mouths of celebrities is “truthiness.” Celebrities play themselves on television, as do government officials. “The rise of the shadow elite warrants revising age-old thinking on corruption. . . . “flexians and flex nets pursue the ends of their own ideological masters who often contradict the other masters they supposedly serve,” remarks Wedel (205). This book is well worth buying, especially for the reduced price available at Amazon.com. (SB)

***Teoria – literatura – dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny*, by Dariusz Skórczewski.** Lublin: Catholic University of Lublin Press, 2013. 508 pages. ISBN 978-83-7702-615-1. Paper. In Polish.

A major work of interpretation that combines theoretical sophistication with genuine concern for factual detail as reflected in Polish literature starting with the Romantic poets and ending with contemporary novelists. In this book Polish literature is seen in a postcolonial mirror, as well it should given the forcible partition of the Polish state during the period of Romanticism and its status as a province of alien empires throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. The author is familiar with the most recent postcolonial studies, and many of his insights are highly original and seminal to the study of postcolonialism in the former Soviet empire. This habilitation book makes the author a leading authority on postcolonialism in Poland and one of the leading voices in postcolonial studies worldwide. A longer review to follow.

***Exiled: Stories from Conservative and Moderate Professors Who Have Been Ridiculed, Ostracized, Marginalized, Demonized, and Frozen Out*, edited by Mary Grabar.** Scottsdale, GA: Dissident Prof Press (P.O. Box 156, Scottsdale, GA 30079), 2013. ISBN 978-0-9860183-2-9. Paper.

A collection of essays by American academics (with an introductory essay and an afterword penned by the editor), detailing the ways in which “politically incorrect” aspirants to academic positions are elbowed out of academia. What makes potential professors fail to obtain academic rank? What reduces them

to perpetual adjuncts paid by the course like housemaids paid by the hour? The authors list two reasons. The first is a refusal to consent to use, praise, and teach the Marxist or neo-Marxist methodologies such as those practiced by the Frankfurt School or, in generations past, by the old-fashioned communist fellow travelers so well represented at American universities and colleges. The second is a refusal to engage in the study and teaching of narratives about several select minorities such as sexual minorities. Not all minorities have been certified for academic approval: try to establish an Institute for the Study of non-Germanic Central European Minorities and you will encounter empty coffers and the blank gaze of your administrative superiors. It takes courage and pluck to dare to speak about such issues in public since complaints about discrimination based on the above two reasons for academic rejection are frowned upon in American academia. We salute Dr. Mary Grabar for daring to come forth with this book. *Gutta cavat lapidem*. Hopefully, books like this one will eventually lead to a great academic awakening in America.

***Poland: A History*, by Adam Zamoyski [2009].** New York: Hippocrene Books (www.hippocrenebooks.com), 2012. xxii + 426 pages. Photographs, index, maps. ISBN 13-978-0-7818-1301-3. Paper. \$19.95 from publisher.

A compact and well-written history of Poland, updated to the time of the Third Republic (1989–present). It replaces Norman Davies’s *The Heart of Europe* [1984]. Zamoyski, a Britisher of Polish background, is the author of *The Polish Way* [1993] and other books on Polish history.

***The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* [1986], by Richard C. Lukas. Foreword by Norman Davies.** 3rd ed. New York: Hippocrene Books (www.hippocrenebooks.com), 2012. War photographs and documents, index, bibliography. xviii + 358 pages. ISBN 13-978-0-7818-1302-0. Paper. \$19.95 from publisher.

This is the first and so far only English-language study of the German Nazis’ dramatically different treatment of the Polish population, as opposed, say, to the French