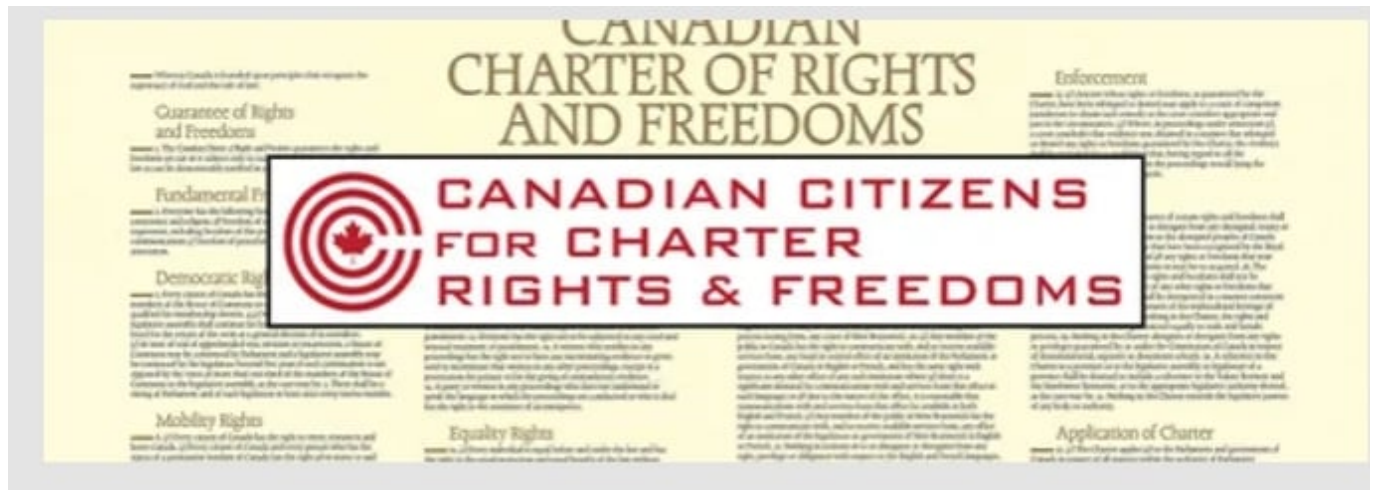


Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms

By Geoffrey Clarfield



I would like to draw the attention of our Canadian readers to [this petition](#) regarding Bill C-63

Thanks to all who participated in our House of Commons petition calling for the cancelling or repeal of Bill C-63 (Online Harms Act). It would seem that we have had an impact on the legislation as the Liberal-NDP junta has recently decided [to split the bill in two](#) with the onerous “hate speech” provisions being kicked down the road for later consideration. We may have won a battle but the war still rages on as these same provisions can snap back to crush our free speech rights at any time. This being the case and if you have yet to sign the petition, we request that you take the time to do so to keep the pressure on. After all, we know this government is desperate to shut down any criticism of its woke policies and C-63-type anti-hate legislation is the way they will do so. Don't let them have their way in this!

The petition is open for signatures until the end of January 2025.

This is the [link to the petition](#).

Out, Damned Despot!

By Theodore Dalrymple

When I saw video clips of the joyful toppling of statues of Bashar al-Assad, as well as the tearing from walls of his ubiquitous portrait, I wondered what it must be like to be a dictator and see images of yourself everywhere (not that I have any ambitions myself in that direction).



Do you come to imagine, for example, that they are a manifestation of genuine popular affection for yourself, or are you like the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, of the poem by Ernesto Cardenal "Somoza Unveils a Statue of Somoza in

the Somoza Stadium" (the fact that Cardenal, a Nicaraguan priest, was a commie doesn't mean that he wasn't a good poet).

The Somoza of the poem is perfectly clear-sighted. He knows that people didn't erect the statue spontaneously, out of love for him, because he knows that he himself ordered it to be erected. Nor does he think that it will be a perpetual monument to himself because he knows also that the people will tear it down as soon as they can. No, he had it erected because he knew that the people would hate it, in other words that it would humiliate them, and a humiliated people is easy to cow into submission, at least until—to use a word of slightly different zoological connotation—the worm turns. (A note to pedants before they write in: I do not think that the verb *to cow* has any etymological link with the female herbivore known as the *cow*.)

It seems to me, however, that Cardenal may have simplified a little. Such is the complexity and potential dishonesty of the human mind that a dictator would be perfectly capable of imagining that a statue of himself is a manifestation of people's affection for him *and* that there are people plotting to bring down both the statue and him because they hate him. This is not totally irrational or impossible. After all, as Americans know, even in a free democracy some people love the leader and some people hate him (usually more of the latter after he has been in power for some time).

Assad *junior*, it seems to me, is a living refutation of Solzhenitsyn's famous remark that Macbeth was capable of killing only a handful of people because he was motivated by no ideology, and it requires an ideology to bring about hecatombs of the Nazis or Communists. Assad *junior* had a self-justification for his rule, no doubt, as every ruler and dictator has and must have, but he did not really possess a full-blown ideology in Solzhenitsyn's sense. His trajectory is worth recalling.

The son of a monstrous dictator, he seems at first to have had no inclinations in that direction himself. Among other things, he didn't seem to have the physical attributes of a dictator, but rather of someone pliant and weak, more herbivore than carnivore, more giraffe rather lion (though giraffes can kick a lion to death). And it spoke rather well of him that he should qualify as a doctor, apparently quite genuinely so, and wish to become an ophthalmologist, to which end he studied in London, where his conduct was not that of a spoilt brat but by all accounts rather modest—laudably so, in the circumstances.

If it had not been for the stupid fatal road accident that killed his older brother, an accident emblematic of the follies of gilded youth everywhere, Assad *junior* might have spent his life anonymously and usefully as an ophthalmic surgeon—though, like all hypotheticals, this cannot be proved. He was like Macbeth, a man who would have been content to remain a loyal servant of the king before he met the witches who first unleashed ambition in his mind (where there must have been the potential for it). But of course, an honorable and decent future was not to be, neither for Macbeth nor for Assad *junior*.

Replacing his brother as legatee of a terrible father, Assad *junior* was at first of mildly reformist disposition, certainly not a born and bred bloodthirsty kleptocrat. He had been called back to “serve” his country and now found himself at the head of a criminal organization whether he liked it or not, though probably, given the considerable perks of the job, he came soon enough to like it. And then came the challenge to his power, in a country in which defeated politicians do not retire to tend their roses and write their memoirs. Honorable and honored retirement was not really a possibility for him; he could not hope to spend the rest of his life in Estoril as the overthrown monarch of a Ruritanian kingdom might have been able to do. There would have been, in effect, no rest of his life, for he would have been safe nowhere.

Thus, he became a butcher, one of the worst; and as Macbeth found, once you start down the path of butchery, it is difficult, not to say impossible, to stop. You cannot, in mid-course, suddenly say that you now realize that it has all been a terrible mistake, that you are sorry and would like to start again, and that all you want is a second chance. You must kill all your enemies before they kill you.

Again, the human mind being what it is, a manufactory of rationalization, Assad *junior* could no doubt justify his actions to himself, especially as he was protected, and protected himself, from direct contact with their consequences for millions of people. Besides, he lived in a part of the world in which there were no simon-pure competitors for power, and he could easily have convinced himself that the alternatives to his rule were even worse—which is a first step to the conclusion in his own mind that he was really rather a good chap. Not *après moi, le déluge*, but *après moi, le massacre*, he probably thought, disregarding the fact that massacres had long been taking place and were continuing under his rule.

No doubt he felt his departure as a personal humiliation, but as to the scenes of joy at his overthrow, he probably thought that they would soon enough change to those of anguish. As Britain's first prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, said on the outbreak of the War of Jenkins' Ear (which was to cost a fortune and be of no benefit to Britain), "Those who are ringing the bells will soon be wringing their hands." Assad *junior* will not be wishing the Syrian people well, but rather all the misery in the world for having shown themselves so disgracefully ungrateful to him. It will serve them right!

Shakespeare would have understood.

First published in [Taki's Magazine](#)

Uyghur fighters in Syria vow to come for China next

From the [Telegraph](#)

A Uyghur militant group that helped to topple Bashar-al Assad has vowed to take the fight to China.

The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) threatened Beijing in a video released on Dec 8, the day the Syrian regime collapsed, showing its fighters holding machine guns and wearing military fatigues.



The Turkistan Islamic Party have been training in Syria

“Now here in Syria, in all the cities here, we fight for Allah, and we will continue to do this in our Urumchi, Aqsu and Kashgar in the future,” said one masked man, listing cities in China’s Xinjiang region, from where the Uyghurs

hail. "We will chase the Chinese infidels away. We have fought in Homs, in Idlib and we will continue the fight in East Turkistan. Allah has given us a victory here. May he also grant us a victory in our own land."

The TIP has been based in Syria for more than a decade, with its members fleeing to the Middle East to escape China's severe oppression of the Uyghurs, a largely Muslim minority group. Its fighters joined Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Islamist group that led the rebel offensive, in a thrust out of the north-west of Syria.

In recent days TIP has engaged in an unusual publicity blitz, showcasing its leader Abu Muhammed alongside his battalions.

"So many groups allied against us. Russia came, Iran came, Hezbollah came – with strong weapons and all kinds of soldiers," said one man in the Dec 8 video. "But each time, Allah as our witness, we did not retreat. With the help of Allah, we have fought our way here. We did not once show weakness or fear; we were never afraid."

TIP has stayed in Syria during 13 years of civil war and appears to have retained an independent identity despite ties to other factions.

The group, established some time in the 1990s with a previous presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has continually highlighted its priority as Uyghur independence, describing a goal to "liberate the Muslims of East Turkistan from the Chinese occupation".

On Dec 6, as the Syrian rebel offensive pushed onward, TIP's emir, Abd Haq al-Turkistani, released a statement stressing the group's plans to attack China in the future.

"While the Muslims are celebrating these victories in every place, the Muslims of oppressed East Turkistan remain far removed from the news of them as they live under a filthy

oppressive, disbelieving occupation that suppresses them by every means possible," he said. "Through God's support, the Chinese disbelievers will soon taste the same torment that the disbelievers in al-Sham have tasted, if God wills."

The group has posted pictures on social media of blood splattering the face of Xi Jinping, the Chinese president.

There is a chance that a more hardline faction could splinter off, but for now, TIP propaganda indicates the group is grateful for their gracious host in Syria.

In one video from Dec 10, a masked fighter addressed a congregation at what the group says was a mosque in Latakia. "The Chinese government drove us out of our country, oppressed us, killed us and imprisoned us," he said. "We left our country and came here ... we have seen from you all the goodness for the past 10 years. We are the mujahideen of East Turkistan."

Vatican removes nativity display featuring baby Jesus lying on keffiyeh

From the [Jewish Chronicle](#) and the [Catholic Herald](#)

Following a flurry of controversy, the Vatican has removed a nativity decoration that included a baby Jesus atop a black-and-white keffiyeh, a symbol linked to Palestinian nationalism.



Pope Francis [opened the annual nativity scene at the Vatican on Saturday . . .](#) Speaking at the event, a wheelchair-bound Francis called on believers to “remember the brothers and sisters, who, right there [in Bethlehem] and in other parts of the world, are suffering from the tragedy of war,”

Artists Johny Andonia and Faten Nastas Mitwasi, Palestinians from Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem, designed the display in Rome.

On Sunday, the Palestinian Mission to the United Nations wrote on X that “the Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in Palestine on behalf of the State of Palestine gifted the nativity scene made in Bethlehem to the Vatican and in the presence of the pope who prayed for peace.”

The backlash came almost immediately from religious entities and individuals worldwide.

On Monday, B’nai B’rith International described feeling “disturbed by the Vatican display of a Palestinian-made nativity scene featuring Jesus on a keffiyeh and the pope’s appearance with it.” The group said the display “isn’t just

politicisation, but revisionism. It presents (only) Palestinians as innocent victims—and Jesus as a Palestinian, not a Jew.”

In response to the display’s removal, David Parsons, senior vice president and spokesman for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, noted that

“we are relieved at reports that the Vatican has decided to remove the provocative nativity display with an infant Jesus resting on a black-and-white keffiyeh, which is an unmistakable symbol of Palestinian nationalism...This crèche not only denigrated Jewish heritage, it also undermined core tenets of the Christian faith. Indeed, millions of Christians worldwide were instantly incensed by this exhibit ahead of the Christmas season. The Vatican did the right thing in taking it down”

...Objections to the scene included the historical contradictions in how this particular Nativity was depicted. Referring to Jesus’s own historical Jewish roots – having been born to Jewish parents in what was then the Roman province of Judea – one online commentator wrote, “Does the pope think Jesus wasn’t a Jew either? Did he even read the Bible?”

Another discontented observer said on social media platform X that, “The Pope is exploiting Christmas to advance the ridiculous effort to rebrand Jesus as Palestinian rather than what He was – a Jew who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of a Messiah.”

Carving statues and religious scenes from olive wood has been a pillar of the Holy Land’s economic and cultural identity for centuries. The Star of Bethlehem that hung above the scene was made from mother of pearl and encircled by an inscription in both Latin and Arabic reading: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to all people.” Sheep in the scene are handmade with felted wool by children from Ma’n

Lilhayt, a Catholic charity providing employment opportunities for disabled individuals.

A Vatican spokesman did not respond to a *Crux* request for comment on the presence of the Nativity scene in the Paul VI Hall, and whether it represented a political statement on the part of the Holy See.

Axel Rudakubana's next court appearance over Southport stabbings postponed

Axel Rudakubana the [Muslim convert](#) who is charged with the murder of 3 small girls, attempted murder of 8 more small girls and terrorism offences including production of [ricin](#) poison was due in court yesterday. As predicted by those of us following the case this (plea) hearing did not take place. From the biggest local newspapers the [Liverpool Echo](#) and the [Manchester Evening News](#)

Axel Rudakubana's next court appearance in relation to the Southport stabbings, set for today, has been postponed. The 18-year-old, of Banks in West Lancashire, had been set to face a plea hearing at Liverpool Crown Court this morning, Thursday, December 12.

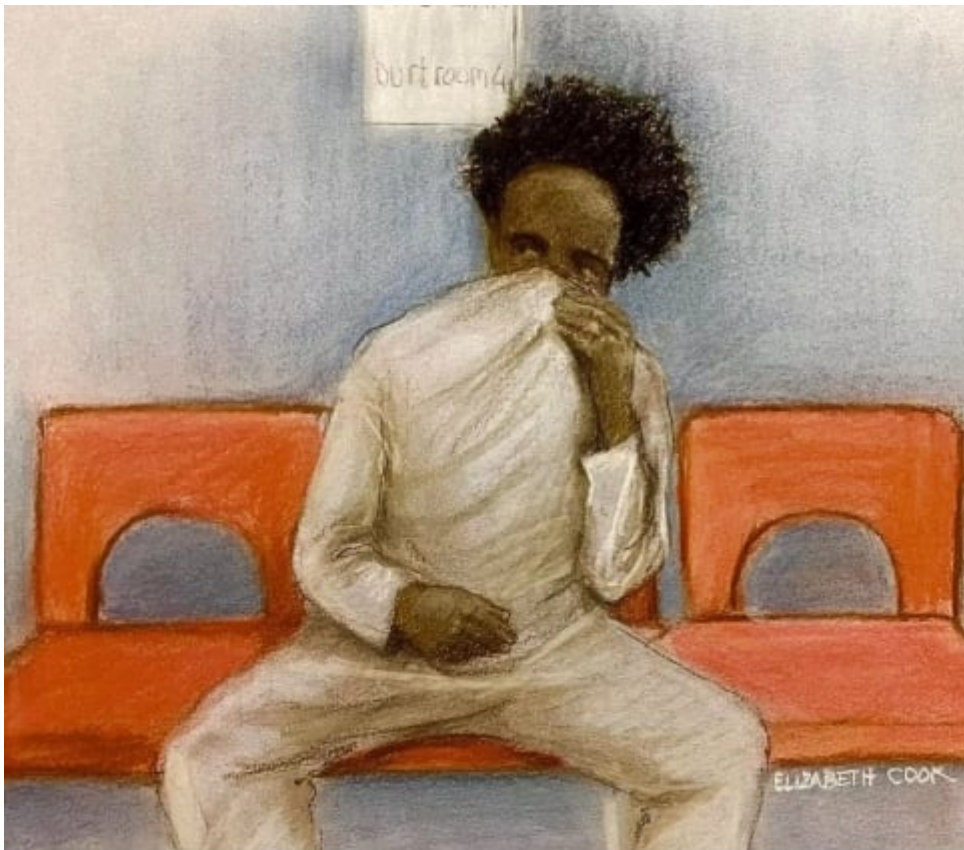
It was expected the 18-year-old, from Banks in West Lancashire, would enter a plea at the hearing.

Rudakubana is further charged with attempting to murder eight other children, who cannot be named for legal reasons, and two

adults, Leanne Lucas and John Hayes, who were also stabbed during the incident.

The teenager also faces a count of possession of a bladed article in a public place, namely a kitchen knife with a curved blade, with a trial date having previously been scheduled for January 25 next year. He was charged with additional offences of production of a biological toxin, namely ricin, and possession of information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism, namely a PDF file entitled "Military Studies in the Jihad Against the Tyrants: The Al-Qaeda Training Manual", in October. . . Counter Terrorism Policing have not declared the mass stabbing a terrorist incident.

Rudakubana has so far made four court appearances before Liverpool Magistrates' Court, Liverpool Crown Court and Westminster Magistrates' Court. He has not spoken to confirm his identity during any of these hearings.



■ A court sketch of Axel Rudakubana (Image: PA)

His case was initially listed to take place before Mr Justice Goose from 10am today, with the defendant due to appear via video link from Belmarsh prison. However, the ECHO understands that the hearing will now instead

take place on a date next week.

We wait with bated breath. We KNOW there is so much more to this. Why no photographs of Rudakudana as an adult? Every other defendant has his custody 'mugshot' plastered across this newspapers. Why is he allowed to cover his face in court when that would have been dealt with as a 'contempt in the face of the court' when I was a Crown Court clerk? What is his father's status re the Rwandan genocide and Keir Starmur's involvement with obtaining sanctuary for perpetrators of the genocide in the UK.

Update – next date believed to be Wednesday 18th December

Maria Callas: The Opera

By Phyllis Chesler

Angelina Jolie's "Maria," and the real deal

Last night I watched Jolie play Maria. The film was as much a

pathography. Her McNally play "Master Class" was. I am not interested in a great artist's drug addiction, depression, alcoholism, and madness, or in her alleged failings at both love and motherhood. Such sorrows may describe millions of women who do not command the stage and the hearts of millions. I am mainly interested in an artist's work, their almost divine accomplishments.



Callas's life was an opera, one in which the hero, (heroine?), sacrifice her divinity for love. And for worldly glamor. And this choice is a tragic one—La Callas became Aristotle Onassis's caged bird, a woman whom he demeaned as much as her mother once did. And yes, she lost her power, she fell like the mythic Icarus, or like Wagner's Brunnhilde; whether this was due to her having taken on too many different kinds of musically demanding roles—or whether it was due to heartbreak, makes no difference. The once and future demi-Goddess could not live as a mere mortal.

Montserrat Caballe, Leontyne Price, Joan Sutherland, Renate Tebaldi, (all of Callas's time), had rich, powerful, and flawless vocal instruments. Callas's voice was imperfect, occasionally nasal, or shrill, sometimes "wobbly" as McNally

wrote many years ago for "The Guardian," and yet, she is the one opera singer whom I'd call upon to pray to God for all humanity. Callas wasn't merely singing Norma or Tosca or Violetta or Medea, or Lucia, or Cio-Cio San, or Anna Bolena, she became each and every one. The characters lived, they became real. Callas's EMI recording of Carmen captured the seductive, heartless, and arrogant gypsy in a rather superb way.

Director Pablo Larrain's and actress Angelina Jolie's film featured beautiful Parisian locations, brilliant clothing, (magnificent furs, brocaded wraps), a superb apartment on the Avenue Georges Mandel, and imaginative conversations, but the film was slow going. However, Jolie pitched her chin at just the right angle, conveyed very well Callas's presumed arrogance, even cruelty, as well as her descent into drugs and madness—and yet, the recordings, sung by the real Callas in the film, to which Jolie lip-synched very well, turned me dreamy, in search of lost times, and sent me immediately afterwards to my Met Opera streaming platform where I hunted, desperately, for even one of Callas's performances. I could find none. I so I listened to some of her arias wherever I could find them.

Below, is a piece that I published twenty five years ago at the feminist magazine "On The Issues," published by my dear friend, Merle Hoffman. All you opera lovers out there, please enjoy it!

Do I contradict myself by loving opera? Once, I sang. In the 1950s, opera was an "approved" female activity that seemed to me far nobler than housewifery. Years later, when I underwent long, post-accident surgery, I brought a recording of Mozart's **Marriage of Figaro** to the hospital, to be played, in its entirety, during surgery, and so keep my anesthetized self ever-mindful of joy on earth, lest it decide to stray. For a few absolutely wonderful years, I also appeared regularly at

NPR's "At The Opera" program, hosted by the very excellent Lou Santacroce.

I have always loved opera, despite the fact that, until recently, the great opera composers were all men; the settings aristocratic, misogynist. Most divas suffer awful endings. They go mad (Lucia, Marguerite, Lady Macbeth), die of consumption (Violetta, Mimi), are buried alive (Aida), suffocated (Desdemona), burned (Norma, Azucena), or simply expire inexplicably (Isolde, Abigail). Others are stabbed (Carmen), knife themselves to death (La Gioconda, Butterfly), take poison (Leonora, Juliet), or leap to their death (Tosca, suspended forever in our imagination—an earlier, solo version of **Thelma and Louise**). ('Tis true: their male counterparts often suffer similarly tragic fates.)

Am I romanticizing an art form that re-enacts patriarchal triumph and the "undoing of woman," as Catharine Clement suggests in her book **Opera, or the Undoing of Women**? Is opera dangerous because it both glorifies and de-sensitizes us to women's daily destruction? Are opera's women "only" severed, singing heads, witnesses to historical oppression, unable to escape it onstage—at least, not until we have done so in real life?

But where else, except on the operatic stage, can I see the dusky, the colonized, the outlawed, the pagan priestess (Aida, Carmen, Violetta, Norma), in Clement's words, "sing their resistance"? Where else but at the opera can I see powerful, emotionally alive, sexual-spiritual women commanding such respect, or members of the ruling classes, in full evening dress, weeping for a sexually independent gypsy (Carmen), or for a wife who kills her bridegroom to protest an arranged marriage (Lucia)? Perhaps the tragic endings are precisely what allow the divas to play untamed female heroes.

Where else but in the world of opera do we "allow" women, if they remain in good voice, to live: to visibly age, right

along with the tenors and baritones; to sing large, dominant roles—and, despite an increasing number of exceptions, to be physically large?

At the beginning of her career, the legendary Maria Callas weighed over 200 pounds. For years, some critics scorned her as “the prima donna with an elephant’s legs.” In early photos, she is lusciously fleshy, moist, large. Her weight is what renders her most human, ordinary; unlike her utterly disciplined voice and acting technique, this is an excess which she cannot contain. Then, in one year, Callas loses at least 60 pounds, then more until, at 117 pounds, she becomes literally half her original size. Now she resembles the Duchess of Windsor, Audrey Hepburn, Jackie Kennedy Onassis: severely elegant women who move, not as priestesses on the operatic stage, but as status symbols or screen idols, clinging to the arms of monied, celebrated men.

Contrary to the popular pathographies (biographies that diminish their subjects by psychiatrically demonizing them), Callas did not diet for mortal love, but for immortal Art. Opera critic John Ardoin quotes Callas as saying: “I was getting so heavy that my vocalizing was heavy.... I was tired of playing the part of a beautiful young woman and I was too heavy to move around.... I studied all my life to put things right musically. Why don’t I diet and make myself presentable?”

But Callas remained “too large” in other ways. Her “light” soprano voice dared all vocal registers and roles: the spinto, lyric, dramatic, coloratura and mezzo-soprano. Ardoin is right: It’s as if Callas has “not three but three hundred voices in one.” Callas sang Verdi and Wagner, Puccini and Donizetti and Bellini, Mozart and Bizet—and nearly everyone else.

Callas does not have a “good” voice. Unlike the great Rosa Ponselle, Montserrat Caballe, or Joan Sutherland, Callas’

voice is not serene, or beautifully tame. Musicologist Attila Csampai writes that Callas' art "is an incessant declaration of war against the aesthetics of the perfectly balanced register, against the impersonal, flawless, soullessly beautiful tone that can be examined like an immaculate female figure." If you have ever listened to her, you know that Callas' voice is, alternately, breathlessly young, ravaged, tender, nasal, shrill—but perfection itself when it comes to beseeching the sky gods to take pity on earth's children. Callas' voice is Michaelangelo's Pieta or his Sistine Chapel paintings made song: celestial, serene or passionately mid-earthly. The timbre is a lamenting lullaby or, as conductor Nicola Rescigno puts it, "like Casals playing the cello."

Callas subjugated voice to character. She threw herself into each role, developed it as if she were a Method Actor. "It is not enough to have a beautiful voice," she said. "When you interpret a role, you have to have a thousand colors to portray happiness, joy, sorrow, fear... Even if you sing harshly sometimes, as I have frequently done, it is a necessity of expression."

In the beginning, Callas took every part she was offered; indeed, she sang roles (Turandot, Isolde, Norma) that many sopranos refuse because they demand enormous preparation, stamina, and vocal range. "They damage and devastate the voice," says opera critic Ethan Mordden. Some critics believe that her theatrical perfectionism, coupled with so many different, but equally taxing, kinds of roles, may have led to Callas' early, tragic loss of voice. Contrary to myth, Callas was physically frail; performing—on her terms—literally made her sick. Fame only upped the ante. Of her debut at Covent Garden, Callas said: "I had been preceded in London by sensational publicity, and I was terrified by the idea of being unable to live up to expectations. It's always like that, for us artists: We labor for years to make ourselves known, and when fame finally follows our steps everywhere, we

are condemned always to be worthy of it, to outdo ourselves so as not to disappoint the public, which expects wonders of its idols.”

I have never idolized anyone, including Callas. I am not haunted by Callas the woman, but by Callas the artist, who, at her best, is merged in our collective memory with many of the roles she sang. Callas is Norma, the Druid priestess (a role she revived, and sang on stage 89 times); Tosca—vain, “violent,” devoted to a life of art; the murderous Medea, Lucia, Tosca; the dying Mimi and Violetta. The “real” Callas is all of these—who aren’t real at all. Or are they?

They are real: Opera fans never forget them, and return to them, season after season, from one century to the next. This is the power that art has over both life and death.

For a year, I wanted to write “The Autobiography of Maria Callas.” Her soul, art, life, times, all called to me. I listened to her recordings and interviews, watched her on film, read her own brief **Memoir**, read the critics, the pathographies, her family’s memoirs. I came to realize that Callas’ artistic life can only be understood as an opera. Nothing less will do. Are any interested composers out there? I’m longing to write the libretto.

Act One: Maria is the younger of two sisters. She believes she is unlovable; she is also a child prodigy. Maria begins studying opera at the age of seven. She drops out of school after the eighth grade and, driven both by her talent and by an ambitious, devouring mother, devotes herself to studying music, full-time. Callas: “I [had] unlimited faith in the divine protection that would not fail me.” Maria sings in Athens when she is 15. In 1947, at 24, she sings in Verona where, both friendless and impoverished, she meets her husband-to-be, Giovanni Battista Meneghini, who sees her as the vulnerable genius that she is. Battista is 28 years her senior—but he is a man who has money, and who wishes nothing

more than to nurture his wife's career. Battista puts himself second, his wife's career first. It takes Maria about 15 years to "suddenly" conquer the opera world. In her words: It is a "tiger" she rides, one she can "never dismount."

Act Two: The world treats Callas with a jinxing and fatal combination of voyeurism, adoration, terror, hatred, envy, and devotion. She is constantly photographed, but also hooted at, drowned out, demonstrated against, sued. Like Turandot (the chaste Chinese opera-princess), Callas has never loved or lusted after anything but artistic perfection. Like Brunnhilde, daughter of Wotan, in Wagner's **Die Walkure**, the divine Callas is fated to experience mortality: She leaves her nurturing, powerful father (Battista), her own swarthy, fleshy self, her Art-for mortal love, in this case, love for a patriarchal hero, Aristotle Onassis. Like Norma, Callas gives herself to Pollione/the Conquering Culture. Like Brunnhilde, she is now a fallen daughter, destined for ordinary life.

Act Three: Once Callas decides to become mortal, she is no longer in her familiar, divinely protected element. She begins to lose her voice—her power. She stops performing. Her genius can no longer protect her from the indignities of ordinary life, or from the "shame" of being demoted from the status of demi-goddess. The fact that her lover demeans her singing, won't marry her; in fact, publicly humiliates her when he marries another, less talented woman, Jackie Kennedy, may be important, but is also besides the point. The diva cannot "succeed" as an ordinary woman. At 50, Callas refuses to become the Artistic Director of the Metropolitan, stars in Pasolini's film of **Medea**, sings concerts for a while, but then retreats from the world. She dies in Paris, alone, a drug addict, amidst her mementos. She is 54 years old.

Curtain.

First they came for the...

By Nikos Akritas

Turkey's rebel-backed intervention in Syria is not surprising. Not only has Erdogan been [laying the groundwork for some time](#), Turkey's long-term interests when it comes to the Kurds are a predictable staple of its foreign policy. Kurdish independence movements must not only be suppressed within Turkey but crushed everywhere else. When it comes to the Kurds and Armenians, two groups denied independence when the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist, Turkey's foreign policy has always been proactive.

Although Turkey's own forces have not (yet) extended their direct reach further, its proxies, operating under the umbrella terms Free Syrian Army and Syrian National Army, have. This advances Turkey's influence deeper into Syria and strengthens its number one priority, of crushing Kurdish independence movements inside it. Just as the Armenians on Turkey's eastern border were sent a clear message through Turkey's support for Azerbaijan during the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh, so too must the Kurds be subdued. Despite their dispute being with Azerbaijan, not Turkey, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh faced Turkey's intervention. Similarly, the Kurds in Syria cannot be allowed to control their own affairs.

Turkey's domestic and foreign policy agenda is to deny any ethnic minority the potential to claim an ancestral link or right to lands the Ottoman Empire never relinquished. Allowing a Kurdish quasi state to exist on its borders poses a direct

threat to Turkish power in the region. With approximately 15 million Kurds within its borders, whose demands for independence have fuelled a long, drawn-out and bloody conflict, Turkey fears such a state would further escalate these ambitions and set a dangerous precedent, establishing an ethnic and political link to an independent Kurdish state next door. Hence, Erdogan's insistence that Turkey will never allow Syria to be divided.

This situation highlights how Turkey continues to embrace a narrative of empire the West eschewed long ago. France, Britain and Germany are very different countries to those of 1914 but Turkey still views the ethnic groups it once ruled – within and on its borders – as subject peoples who must know their place. The largest non-Muslim minorities were largely eliminated during World War I and the decades that followed through genocide, massacres, population transfers and state sponsored intimidation. While these atrocities were recognised by the international community, Turkey has spent the last century denying them. Initially, this denial sought to legitimize its borders, a goal it has largely achieved. However, the narrative of a nation under siege by weaker neighbours and vulnerable ethnic groups has persisted throughout this period.

One thing that unites Turks across all political persuasions is their foreign policy toward indigenous minorities in and around the country. These minorities have no right to a state that could potentially challenge Turkey's borders. Turkey seeks hegemony in the Balkans and Middle Eastern affairs, and any attempts to highlight this are met with a narrative of victimhood, as though European empires were the victims of those who sought independence and control over their own affairs.

Those who argue Russia will be unhappy as it sees its influence waning in Syria miss an important point. Turkey will pursue its own interests, independent of both Russia and the

USA, when it comes to the Kurds, Armenians, and Cyprus-peoples and territories historically rooted in former imperial lands in which Turkey continues to demand a vested interest. Putin understands this very well. Both Russia and Turkey, like much of the world, follow a realpolitik approach. Aggressive power is not seen as a dirty concept; it is simply how the world works. The West, on the other hand, as the victor of the Second World War and the Cold War, has attempted to forge a new world of peace and cooperation—a vision that now blinds many of its citizens to how the rest of the world operates

Turkey will play along with the West whilst it is in its interests to do so but morality is not a concern when it does not. That argument is only used in dealings with the West. Putin's Russia operates along similar imperial lines, with both countries understanding they exist in a brutal, Hobbesian world—a state system marked by anarchy, where all are vying for power against each other and shaping their own strategies accordingly.

The traditional imperial state system viewed power alliances as transactional, requiring flexibility as circumstances evolved. And those circumstances are changing. Russia cannot afford to fight on multiple fronts, while Turkey must respond to a changing world to maintain (and potentially extend) its power and influence. The difference is Turkey is on the rise, while Russia is in decline

Negotiations and understandings between the two countries leave little doubt that deals are being struck behind closed doors, such as Putin's call for Erdogan to serve as a Middle East peace broker regarding Israel ([despite his anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric](#)), and his abandonment of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to their fate. The latter is significant because it shows how Putin is willing to compromise on historically Russian interests to maintain focus on his current priority: the war in Ukraine. While Westerners may understand this political chess game, many fail to

appreciate Turkey's own agenda

Since its Christian minorities were brought to heel over the last century—essentially exterminated and ethnically cleansed—t

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Kurdish youth commemorated the 1977 May Day massacre

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independence to those groups), the last remaining sizeable minority has been the Kurds. The Kurds presented a slightly different challenge because, unlike other 'othered' groups, they were Muslim, and thus there could be no call for jihad to unite a frenzied war of extermination against them. However, Atatürk addressed this issue differently, and Turkey has followed his example for the past ninety years—denying Kurdish language and ethnicity (they were labelled 'mountain Turks') until fairly recently and maintaining an extremely brutal occupation of their lands.

Many Turks lament the number of innocent Turkish soldiers killed by Kurdish rebels without considering why the rebels are fighting or the atrocities committed against them. When Kurdish terrorist groups emerged in the 1970s, Turkey adopted a classic stance of obfuscation, deflecting from the real issues. These groups were portrayed as Armenian terrorists

trying to undermine the Turkish state, as Armenians hold a similar position in Turkey to that of Jews in anti-Semitic rhetoric. [Anti-Armenian sentiment in Turkey functions much like anti-Semitism](#), with the ethnic group continuing to be reviled and demonized in Turkish society, fuelled by a hostile press and politicians who use scapegoating to avoid confronting their own chauvinism and racism. It is a mini version of the “Jewish world conspiracy” narrative, in this case an alleged Armenian conspiracy to destroy Turkey.

What is the situation now? Without understanding Turkey’s agenda, it cannot be fully grasped. Firstly, Turkey’s primary goal is to crush the Kurds in Syria. Secondly, to extend its influence further beyond its borders (it already has troops in five countries: Syria, Iraq, Libya, Cyprus, and Qatar), using political and economic leverage to expand its power. As more Muslim countries descend into chaos, Turkey, as a fellow Muslim nation and thus seen as less of an ‘other,’ seeks to step in and fill the void—opening markets, especially in Central Asia, and gaining allies. While Turkey faces economic troubles due to Erdogan’s reckless megalomania, his legacy—already largely in place—will be the establishment of a new Ottomanism and pan-Turkic influence, stretching from North Africa to the borders of China. The personal outcome for Erdogan’s corruption (whether imprisoned, dealt with by the Turks themselves, or fleeing to Qatar) will not alter this larger vision.

The West may be pleased to see the Assad regime collapse and Russia’s influence weakened in the Middle East, but the emerging picture is one of Turkey—just as chauvinistic and aggressive in its aims—taking their place. Short-term support for Turkey’s ousting of at least two entities the West wants removed from the region comes at the cost of further suffering for the Kurds, who have been abandoned more than once—not only in Turkey but also in Syria and Iraq—to their fate.

The ousting of Islamist groups is a false narrative.

Regardless of which Muslim regimes control the region, anti-Semitism will continue to thrive—it remains a staple of Muslim belief. Christians in the Middle East have already been marginalized (Syria, Lebanon, and Armenia). Israel is viewed as an affront for surviving, refusing to accept defeat or victimhood, and thriving in the face of adversity—an abomination to notions of Islamic superiority. The ‘woke’ in the West claim to see prejudice everywhere, except when it comes to the prejudices held by those they consider victims. By viewing all Muslims as victims, they overlook the oppression faced by Christians, Jews, Yazidis, and other religious minorities who continue to suffer at the hands of their Muslim neighbours.

Power politics, in Western eyes, is driven purely by economic interests, but Westerners fail to recognize that non-Western regimes are often guided by ideologies the West no longer embraces, such as religious and racial discrimination. Turkey’s agenda in Syria is not about making the Middle East a safer place for liberal and democratic values to thrive but about asserting its dominance, particularly by suppressing ethnic groups like the Kurds, ensuring they remain subjugated and do not gain independence.

The Evaporation of the Obama Mystique

By Victor Davis Hanson

Barack Obama had long been rumored as the catalyst for the 2020 Biden nomination—and thereafter played the whispering puppeteer behind the subsequent lost Biden administration

years.



As such he and his coterie proved the virtual architects of the Biden administration, one of the most unpopular and failed presidencies in American history.

Recall earlier that after a flailing candidate Joe Biden lost the first three 2020 primaries and caucuses, his inert campaign was headed nowhere.

Barack Obama and fellow Democratic insiders abruptly engineered the withdrawal of his rival 2020 presidential candidates: hard left but likely sure-loser candidates, including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and Pete Buttigieg.

The Obamas ignored or withheld from the public their own firsthand knowledge that Biden was suffering from signs of dementia.

Instead, they found Biden's cognitive decline and his former concocted reputation as workingman's Joe useful as a veneer for a veritable Obama third-term, "phone it in" administration. Or as wistful Obama once conditioned his dream of a third term—"If I could make an arrangement where I had a stand-in, a front man or front woman, and they had an earpiece in."

The Obamaites then got their wish for four years of enacted hard-left directives that they could only have dreamed of while in actual power.

But their radical menu since 2021 had divided and nearly wrecked the nation—hyperinflation, 12 million illegal aliens, a ruined border, spiraling crime, a shattered foreign policy of appeasement, the popular backlash against DEI/Woke/trans chauvinism, partisan lawfare, and weaponization of the government.

And the ruling radicalism beneath the Biden facade eventually cost the Democrats nearly everything—the presidency, the House, and the Senate.

An inert Biden is departing office with a 36 percent favorability rating in a recent Emerson poll. His Democratic nominee replacement, losing presidential candidate Vice President Harris, also has virtually vacated her office with 40 days left of her tenure.

Failed candidate Harris has been roundly faulted by staffers and donors for blowing through some \$2 billion in assorted 2024 campaign money.

She ended up doing worse against Trump than Biden himself had in 2020.

Many Democrats believe that they might have done just as well had Biden stayed on the ticket even in his vastly diminished state.

The Obamas were further blasted for nullifying the wishes of 14 million primary voters by forcing Biden off the ticket—ironically in the same backroom, anti-democratic manner they had cleared the way for him in 2020.

Obama emerged from his comfortable retirement to hit the 2024 campaign trail, schooling the country that President-emeritus

Donald Trump was a dictator, a fascist, a tyrant, and, of course, a “racist.”

The more Trump polled even with, or ahead of, Kamala Harris, the more an exasperated and ignored Obama talked down to supposedly low-information voters.

But by the time Harris lost the election, voters had tuned out a nagging and patronizing Obama—and his stale, now-dated hope-and-change-y boilerplate speeches.

What Obama did not mention, but what the voters knew, was that the border was more secure under Trump than during either the Obama or Biden tenure.

Vladimir Putin invaded countries during the Obama and Biden administrations but stayed put on Trump’s watch.

Barack Obama’s bizarre vision of a new Middle East had sought to empower Iran as a supposed counterweight against moderate Arab nations and our ally Israel.

Years ago, Obama invited the Russians into Syria, empowered dictatorial Syria, berated Israel nonstop, and all but ignored the terrorist violence of Iran’s surrogate terrorists of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis.

But after October 7, Israel retaliated to the mass slaughter of Jewish civilians with all-out war against Hamas and Hezbollah—rendering these once feared terrorists nearly impotent.

In an exchange of air attacks with Iran, Israel showed the world that Iran was as militarily weak as its chanting and threats were tiresome and shrill.

Iran is now tottering on the brink, as its terrorist appendages—including most recently the Assad dynasty—are melting away.

Israel and the moderate Arab regimes are in ascendance, as the entire crazy Obama-envisioned Middle East agenda melts away.

The 2024 anemic Democratic campaign and the Trump electoral college and popular vote victories—combined with record defections of Hispanic and African-American voters from the Democratic Party to Trump—proved a resounding rejection of the Obama legacy and his surrogates' left-wing visions.

Yet after the people spoke in the election, the more Obama whined that democracy itself had failed him. Voters, he remonstrated, who disagreed with him were written off as racist and sexist.

Obama again harped that constituents did not know what was good for them.

And then, the disappointed former community organizer suddenly disappeared—pondering to which of his own four mansions his private jet would fly him home to commiserate.

First published in [American Greatness](#)

Dorothy Parker in Hollywood: The Politics of Privilege

By Bruce Bawer

At least among those increasingly rare souls who actually recognize the names of dead writers, Dorothy Parker (1893-1967) is probably most famous these days for having sat at the fabled Algonquin Round Table in the 1920s, swapping

quips over lunch with legendary figures like the playwright George S. Kaufman and the humorist Robert Benchley (her lifelong

best friend).

When she wasn't having lunch, she was banging out snappy, snotty pieces



for the *New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair* (both of which magazines, in those days, were fun) and penning morbid, morose, and mordant light verse, her collections of which were, improbably, bestsellers. (Her poem "News Item" reads, in its entirety: "Men seldom make passes / At girls who wear glasses.")

But Parker, as we learn from Gail Crowther in her new book *Dorothy Parker in Hollywood*, also had a long and profitable career as a screenwriter. I consider myself to be relatively knowledgeable about the Golden Age of American Movies, but somehow I was unaware that Parker had been nominated for no fewer than three Academy Awards – for the original version of *A Star Is Born* (1937), for Hitchcock's *Saboteur* (1942), and for *Smash-Up: The Story of a Woman* (1947), which made Susan Hayward a star. Similarly, I like to think of myself as knowing quite a bit about the Golden Age of American Song, but I had no idea that it was Parker who, as part of her work as a writer under contract to Paramount, wrote the lyrics to two terrific songs: "How Am I to Know?," for a 1929 Cecil B. DeMille film called *Dynamite*, and "I Wished on the Moon," sung by Bing

Crosby in *The Big Broadcast of 1936*. Both tunes were later covered by Billie Holiday and became standards.

Parker is already the subject of a comprehensive 1989 biography by Marion Meade entitled *Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This?* As Crowther explains at length in her introduction, she hasn't really come by any new information, and her frequent references to Meade's book in the main text make it clear that she relied on it heavily while composing the present volume – whose big selling point is that it foregrounds Parker's Hollywood years. Now, repackaging biographical material by putting a sexy, sales-friendly spin on it is a popular ploy in contemporary publishing. (Another recent instance was Lawrence Leamer's 2021 book *Capote's Women: A True Story of Love, Betrayal, and a Swan Song for an Era*, which was the basis for this year's limited – but not limited enough – FX series *Capote vs. the Swans*.) Crowther deployed a related gimmick in her previous book, *Three-Martini Afternoons at the Ritz: The Rebellion of Sylvia Plath & Anne Sexton* (2021). It's a "dual biography" – a concept that most of the time, as illustrated by Thomas Ricks's *Churchill and Orwell: The Fight for Freedom* (2017), just doesn't work.

Who was Dorothy Parker? Born Dorothy Rothschild ("Not *those* Rothschilds, Dorothy was keen to stress") to a prosperous New York family in 1893, she began at around age twenty to "perfect the persona" – witty, acerbic – "that would make her name." Her drama reviews for *Vanity Fair* (1918-20) and book reviews for *The New Yorker* (1927-33) stood out for their irreverence and amusing personal references. (On a staging of Tolstoy's *Redemption*: "I went to the Plymouth Theater a comparatively young woman, and I staggered out of it, three hours later, twenty years older, haggard and broken with suffering.") Along with poems, articles, and short stories – including her frequently anthologized "Big Blonde" (1929) – these reviews are included in *The Collected Dorothy Parker* (1989) and are still good for a laugh a century or so

after they were written.

Yet as delightful as Parker could be on the page, she could be absolutely miserable company in real life, verbally abusing the people around her and physically abusing herself. From early on she was an extremely heavy drinker who insisted (but was it just schtick?) that she hated her life, hated her writing, and hated the stuff she wrote, and who, over the years, underwent at least one abortion, two miscarriages, and four suicide attempts (first by slashing her wrists, then by taking an overdose of sleeping pills, after that by drinking shoe polish, and finally by ODing on barbiturates).

But our focus here is on Parker in Hollywood, a place that she (like many New Yorkers) claimed to loathe but that made her rich. From the time she first went “out there,” as she put it, in 1929, her paychecks were staggering. Nonetheless, if she hated writing, she especially hated film writing – partly, at least, because it involved deadlines and bosses and that dreaded thing, collaboration. At the studios, scripts routinely went through several writers before being handed off to a director, with only one or two of the scribes generally receiving screen credit. (Crowther makes much of this lack of “accreditation,” as she not quite correctly puts it.) Among the scripts that passed through Parker’s hands were those for such reasonably popular but now-forgotten titles as *Here Is My Heart*, *One Hour Late*, *Paris in Spring*, *The Moon’s Our Home*, *Suzy*, *Sweethearts*, and *Trade Winds*. For a long time she and Alan Campbell – who was her second (1934-47) and third (1950-63) husband (her first, back in her New York days, was a stockbroker, Edwin Pond Parker II, whom she divorced in 1928) – were a rather celebrated screenwriting team, like Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin, or Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne.

What I didn’t know about Parker, and what Crowther dwells on throughout, is that she was a major lefty. As early as 1927, Parker wrote in the *New Yorker* that her “heart and soul” were

“with the cause of Socialism”; in the same year, she traveled to Boston to protest the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. But as Crowther puts it, after Parker went to Europe for a taste of the Spanish Civil War and, both there and in Hollywood, fell under the influence of lefties like Ernest Hemingway and the unabashed Stalinist Lillian Hellman, a “new, serious Parker emerged” – a development that Crowther refers to as Parker’s “socialist awakening.” In other words, her politics got even more extreme. Here, for example, is the “new, serious” Parker talking: “When the day comes that you can accept injustice anywhere, you’ve got to kill yourself.” Is this political seriousness? No, it’s narcissistic hyperbole. At one point Parker declared her determination “to overthrow prejudice and injustice.” Paging Jordan Peterson! Make your bed before you try to change the world.

From one perspective, Parker was, like Cher, Bette Midler, and Rob Reiner in our own time, a typical Hollywood lefty, oozing fake empathy and posturing as a champion of the oppressed even as she took uncongeniality, self-absorption, and brutal behind-the-back putdowns to new heights. (How remarkable that the type has hardly changed for a century!) From another perspective, she’s a type of American woman that isn’t found only in Hollywood, and that’s even more familiar now than it was during her lifetime – namely, a privileged, bibulous neurotic who embraces leftist ideology as an apparent distraction from her personal unhappiness. As is invariably the case with such people, Parker’s professed ideological commitment involved significant self-contradictions: while claiming to be a fierce believer in the cause of human dignity and brotherhood, she was capable of chilling cruelty toward even her most devoted friends; and although Crowther wants us to take Parker seriously as a critic of Western consumerism, she habitually spent colossal sums on designer hats, lingerie, perfumes, and other luxury items.

In the 1930s, Parker helped establish a Communist Party front

group called the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League (HANL). (One of her fellow founders, Otto Katz, was a Soviet agent who had been directed by the Kremlin to start it.) When, in 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the HANL changed its name – “quietly,” notes Crowther – to the Hollywood League for Democratic Action. What she omits to mention is that this name change was ordered by the Comintern, which, after the signing of the pact, forbade Communist front groups to oppose Nazism. But how did Parker react to the pact? She “did not publicly speak out” about it, reports Crowther, even though it certainly created a “difficult situation” for her. A “difficult situation”? A tame way to describe the presumed impact on Parker of a treaty in which the USSR, purportedly her guiding star, allied itself with the Nazis, whom she viewed as the ultimate embodiment of evil. One might have expected Parker to do at least a bit of soul-searching – or just plain thinking! – at that sobering juncture; that she didn’t feel compelled to address the pact publicly would appear to mark her as, shall we say, a less than serious political actor. But Crowther doesn’t think so: she plainly approves of Parker’s abiding leftism, although she tiptoes around the fact that Parker was, as a leader of the HANL, effectively a tool of Stalin.

So much for Parker’s politics, of which Crowther serves us a generous helping. But as it happens, Crowther gives us, in addition, a double dose of her own politics. As one might expect from the author of a book about Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, Crowther is an ardent feminist, depicting Parker consistently as a victim of the patriarchy. “Parker,” she professes, “fought her way in a world that was much kinder to confident men.” On the contrary, Parker’s professional advancement was a thing of wonder: in New York and then in Los Angeles, she rose like a rocket. Complaining that the questions asked by journalists who interviewed Parker in the 1930s focused more on her screenwriting and personal life than on her politics, Crowther suggests that “it was almost as if

the serious, thinking, political side of a woman was best quietly ignored." Nonsense: we're talking about a time when American readers turned eagerly to female war correspondents like Martha Gellhorn and Dorothy Thompson for gripping reports from the front as well as for their informed commentary. But why should anyone profiling Parker – a First Nighter who was famous not for her geopolitical know-how but for her sardonic takes on love, loss, and the Seven Lively Arts – ask her about politics?

Crowther can't stop finding misogyny where there was almost certainly next to none. "Perhaps if she had been a man it would have been different," she writes apropos of some slight, adding that "eighty years later...little has changed for women today." There's "something depressing," she opines, "about the amount of attention given then – and now – to a woman's appearance." For her, Parker is "a classic case of the misunderstood woman," an example of "women who refuse to conform." There's plenty more where all this silliness came from. Crowther even quotes with approval some cockamamie scholar's theory that "an alcoholic woman" like Parker "is subversive because she disrupts the paradigm in alcohol culture of the man as alcoholic and the woman as his accomplice." (Got that? Female alcoholism is a form of rebellion against the patriarchy. You heard it here first.) Crowther is such a fierce feminist that she even criticizes Parker, whose snotty digs at Zelda Fitzgerald and Anita Loos (author of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*) she regards as a failure to exhibit "female solidarity."

Even harder to take than Crowther's tiresome politics, however, is her writing. First of all, she's a Brit, and this book about a distinctively American writer is packed with disconcerting Britishisms ("advert," "moved house") that its editors should have purged. She frequently uses familiar words in unfamiliar ways: the book, she promises in her introduction, will offer "a closer revision of" – by which she

means “a closer look at” – Parker’s work in Hollywood. She also proffers easily avoidable ambiguities: when Crowther says Parker was well-known “for the superficial put-downs of the century,” does she mean that Parker was putting down the twentieth century, or that her put-downs were among the century’s best? And there’s more, much more. This book is awash in basic grammatical errors, from agreement problems to faulty word order (“Some writers were able to better deal with this than others”) to dangling modifiers. (Here’s Crowther explaining that one reason why the movie studios moved to California was to escape possible lawsuits by Thomas Edison, who owned most of the motion-picture patents: “By moving West under the jurisdiction of California law, Edison could not take action against them.”) But forget grammar: on every page, Crowther’s prose is just plain awkward – often excruciatingly so. Here’s Crowther on Parker’s birth: “Dorothy Parker appears for the first time as Dorothy Rothschild in a seaside town during a hurricane to her well-to-do parents, Eliza (née Marston) and Henry J.”

What to say, in the end, about Dorothy Parker the writer? Well, the best of her poems and reviews are still a blast. As for her Hollywood work, forget the three Oscar nods: *A Star Is Born* alone is enough to show that, unlike many of her colleagues who made the pilgrimage from the East Coast to the West (F. Scott Fitzgerald being the most tragic example), she was able to adapt her talent quickly and easily to the special demands of the screenplay. And it’s nothing less than extraordinary that this woman who’d apparently never written a song lyric rolled up her sleeves when asked to do so and managed to produce two of them that are still considered part of the Great American Songbook.

So much for Parker the writer. But Parker the woman? On the plus side, she loved dogs. On the minus side – well, when it comes to interpersonal relations, there are, generally speaking, two kinds of people: the kind who, like Jonathan

Swift, hate “all nations, professions, and communities” but love individual human beings, and the kind who nod in agreement at Father Zosima’s statement in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “The more I love humanity in general the less I love man in particular.” Dorothy Parker, like so many leftist ideologues, was Father Zosima on steroids – a curmudgeon who oozed fishy concern about the welfare of the masses. But boy, did she write some funny stuff.

First published in [Front Page Magazine](#)

Are Kurds under threat amid civil war resurgence in Syria?

Posted by Geoffrey Clarfield, from [Defence of Democracies](#)

Over the past several days, a group called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has carried out a lightning-fast offensive, pushing the [Syrian regime](#) out of Aleppo in northern Syria.



This surprise attack is a major setback for the Syrian regime. In many ways, it reflects the weakness of the regime, which doesn’t have enough soldiers to replace its losses over the

last 13 years of civil war in [Syria](#).

Syria is divided between the regime in western Syria, the Turkish-controlled parts of northern Syria, HTS in the Idlib area of northwest Syria, and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in eastern Syria.

The SDF has many Kurdish members, and [Kurds are often threatened by developments in Syria](#) because their communities are near the front lines in Aleppo, Tal Rifaat, and areas in eastern Syria.

In a divided Syria, minorities have often faced potential persecution. The Kurds are a minority group that historically suffered under Bashar Assad's regime . . .

Kurds have been forced into this crucible. They went from being a relatively small minority in Syria that was suppressed by the regime to taking control of their own areas as the regime melted away in 2012 and 2013. By 2014 they were on the front line against a rising ISIS.

Isolated in eastern Syria, the Kurdish towns and villages fought ISIS and helped save the Yazidis in Iraq when ISIS committed genocide. The YPG was the key faction that played this vital role.

The US military, seeking partners to work by, with and through to defeat ISIS, worked with the YPG. It partnered with an umbrella group called the SDF, which included the YPG.

This worked well throughout 2016 as the SDF defeated ISIS. But it brought the SDF into conflict with Turkish-backed rebel groups near Manbij.

Turkey was busy turning Syrian rebels into proxies after the fall of Aleppo in 2016. By 2018, Turkey had invaded the Kurdish area of Afrin and used the newly branded SNA, an umbrella of rebel groups, to ethnically cleanse Kurds from

Afrin.

Kurds ended up in IDP (internally displaced person) camps near Tal Rifaat in the Aleppo area. In Aleppo, the Kurds also controlled their own areas, centered around the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood.

In eastern Syria, the SDF controls a huge area east of the Euphrates River, and a few hundred US soldiers support them against the remnants of ISIS. The Syrian regime ostensibly controls areas where Kurds live, such as Kobani, near the border with Turkey.

With the HTS offensive, the Kurds are now again in the spotlight. This is because pro-Turkey propagandists are trying to create tensions in Syria by portraying the SDF or YPG as pro-Assad.

In addition, Turkey is pushing the SNA to attack the Kurds. HTS has turned south from Aleppo to fight the regime in and around Hama, taking the pressure of Kurds in Aleppo and Tal Rifaat.

Many wheels are in motion in Syria. It could leave Kurds and other minorities exposed. These groups have often been pushed to support the regime with claims that if they don't, then the opposition will persecute them. This creates a vicious cycle in which minorities are pressed to support the regime and then portrayed as pro-regime supporters and attacked because of it. This leads them to back the regime, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Kurds, who have a long history of oppression at the hands of the regime, are powerful enough to have a third way – an autonomy that leaves them outside the regime camp and outside the Syrian rebel camp.

This can also potentially make them seem to be opponents of both. That doesn't always work out well, but it's the "least

bad" option so far for the Kurds in Syria.

Read it [all here.](#)