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CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship

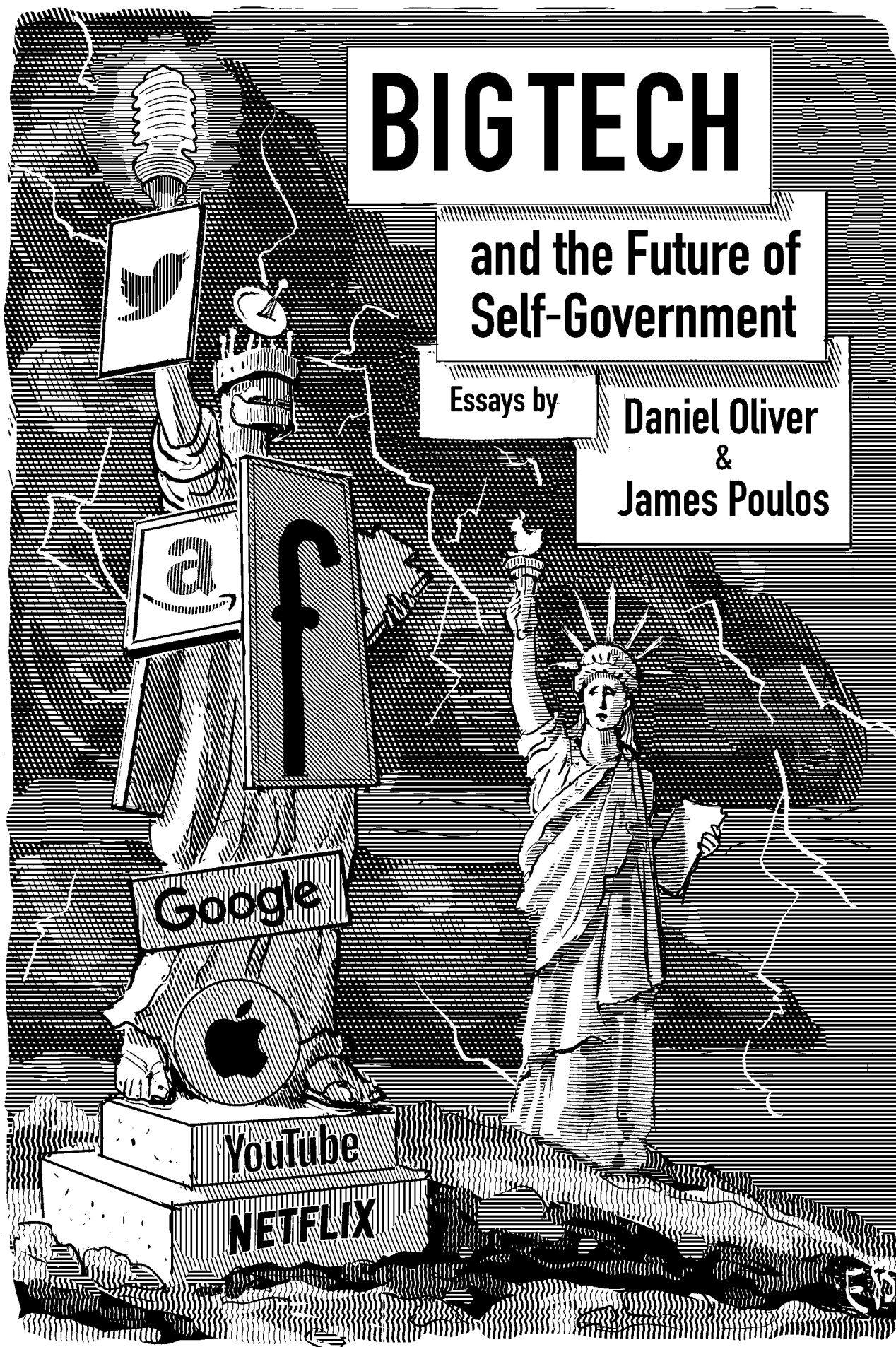
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Book Review by Andrew Roberts

WINSTON IS BACK!

Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting, by Edwina Sandys.
Donning, 128 pages, \$49.95

Winston Churchill: Painting on the French Riviera, by Paul Rafferty.
Unicorn Publishing, 208 pages, \$50

Churchill's Britain: From the Antrim Coast to the Isle of Wight, by Peter Clark.
Haus Publishing, 240 pages, \$29.95

Winston Churchill's Illnesses 1886–1965, by Allister Vale and John Scadding.
Frontline Books, 528 pages, \$52.95

The Churchill Girls: The Story of Winston's Daughters, by Rachel Trethewey.
St. Martin's Press, 320 pages, \$29.99

The Churchill Complex: The Curse of Being Special, from Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit, by Ian Buruma.
Penguin Press, 320 pages, \$27

The Churchill Myths, by Steven Fielding, Bill Schwarz, and Richard Toye.
Oxford University Press, 224 pages, \$25.95

THE CAMPAIGN TO “CANCEL” WINSTON Churchill has accelerated swiftly since the Black Lives Matter eruption in the summer of 2020. Churchill College in Cambridge—of all places—organized a panel discussion in which he was accused of genocide and the British Empire was compared unfavorably to the Third Reich (with no one on the hyper-woke panel dissenting). The National Trust included Churchill's home, Chartwell Manor in Kent, on a list of its properties connected to “colonialism and slavery,” despite Churchill having shed blood in a campaign to abolish slavery in the Sudan. Statues of him have been vandalized. Yet the publishing industry doesn't seem to have been affected, as these eight books demonstrate.

One reason for Churchill's enduring popularity might be found in Boris Johnson's foreword to Edwina Sandys's charming and enlightening book about her grandfather's favorite hobby, *Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting*. “Other hands dithered,” Boris writes, “Churchill took the plunge. And that, amigos, is the final rejoinder to all his earnest doubters and critics.” (It might also serve as a rejoinder to Johnson's similarly earnest and no less vociferous doubters and critics.) Churchill's willingness to commit himself fully in any activity he undertook was in such contrast to the insipidity of so many of his contemporaries that it still invites attention over half a century after his death.

In her perceptive essay that accompanies almost 100 full-page reproductions of many of Churchill's best paintings, Sandys emphasizes four qualities she believes applied to her grandfather's life as well as to his painting. “He was bold,” she writes. “He was irrepressible. He was filled to the brim with a love of life. And finally he was inspiring, that quality of his which, more than any other, shaped world history.” Sandys's observations on Churchill's painting are all the more insightful because she herself is a successful artist.

“Most men keep their work in their office,” she recalls of life at Chartwell, “wherever possible, Grandpapa brought his home. No time or place was exempt. Wherever he went—the drawing room, the bedroom, the bathroom—was *where it was at*.” She writes of Christmas at Chartwell that “there were little children running around, Rufus the poodle, and the green budgerigar Toby hopping from head to head. On occasion a discussion with a grandchild about the nesting habits of the black swans was as important as an argument with Monty [Bernard Montgomery] about the Battle of El Alamein.”

NOT TO BE OUTDONE BY SANDYS, PAUL Rafferty got the Prince of Wales to write the foreword of his book, *Winston Churchill: Painting on the French Riviera*, a sumptuous work about the more than 150 canvases Churchill painted in the South of

France from 1920 onwards, which represent a quarter of his total output. Churchill loved using bright colors and the sunlight there gave him endless opportunities for what he called “paintatious” scenes, every one of which is reproduced in this truly ravishingly beautiful and appropriately large volume.

Rafferty, himself an artist, has visited every one of the places that Churchill painted throughout the Riviera and includes a photograph from the precise place that Churchill was sitting when he created the picture. It is remarkable how few of the scenes have changed. He also includes helpful maps for visitors. His painstaking precision makes this book, as Prince Charles points out, “like a well-curated exhibition.”

The result of Rafferty's meticulousness and passion is 200 pages of captivating paintings, gorgeous photographs of the south of France, fascinating history, and, for anyone who loves the region, powerful images that impart a sense of nostalgia that hits one like a punch to the solar plexus. Rafferty is interesting about the extent to which Churchill allowed his imagination to take over: compare the imposing distant mountains in “A Distant View of Eze,” for example, with the actual, much smaller hills.

YET EVEN CHURCHILL'S WIDE, PAINTATIOUS travels in the south of France were as nothing compared to travels he undertook in the United Kingdom, which



Sir Winston Churchill, *Cap Martin landscape*, 1937

have been excellently chronicled by Peter Clark in his well-researched and well-written *Churchill's Britain*. Like Rafferty, Clark adopts a geographical approach, taking the reader through all the connections Churchill had with places throughout the British Isles. For anyone wanting to visit any Churchill sites, as well as for the general reader interested in Churchill's domestic travels, this book is an essential guide.

When Churchill was trying to make a name for himself in Edwardian politics he regularly traveled four or five thousand miles a year by train to deliver speeches in all parts of the country, and more when he later sat for Dundee in Scotland. By the outbreak of World War II, Churchill had given over 1,700 speeches. Clark also includes the places Churchill was educated, went on holiday, stayed with friends, watched the Battle

of Britain, represented in Parliament, was whipped by a suffragette (Temple Meads railway station in Bristol on November 14, 1909), served as university chancellor, and visited naval flotillas as First Lord of the Admiralty in both world wars, as well as literally scores of other reasons for traveling.

Several of the places Clark mentions, such as Blenheim Palace, Bletchley Park, and the Churchill War Rooms, will be well known to those familiar with the Churchillian epic, but the delight of this book lies in the little-known out-of-the-way places that Clark, who has previously written on Istanbul and translated several books from Arabic, has unearthed in his accessible yet scholarly way. If you want to know where in Lexham Gardens Churchill crammed for the entrance exam into the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, then this is the book that will tell

you. (It was No. 5—currently the Bosnian embassy.)

DURING WORLD WAR II, CHURCHILL travelled 110,000 miles outside the United Kingdom, very often in noisy and freezing unpressurized airplane cabins, sometimes within the radius of Luftwaffe fighters, as late as the age of 70. All that was brave enough, but as Allister Vale and John Scadding's superb and revelatory book *Winston Churchill's Illnesses* proves, he also took his life into his hands on a very regular basis in the medical sphere, too. Dr. Vale is consultant clinical pharmacologist at City Hospital, Birmingham, and a former senior office-holder of the Royal College of Physicians, while Dr. Scadding is a former medical director of the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, and aca-

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Nonplussed by World Events?

SACRED, MUNDANE, PROFANE:

A CONSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

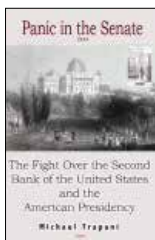
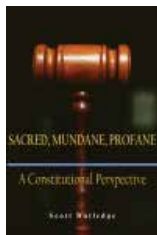
Scott Rutledge

138 pages

\$19.95

The ideal of religious liberty enshrined in the Constitution stands in vivid contrast to the tendencies inherent in today's "living constitution." This book discusses religious liberty in the largest sense. The centerpiece of the discussion is an analysis of the Constitution as a secular scripture, built around certain religious decisions and certain religious policies that America's Founders set for the new nation in 1787 and 1791, within the four corners of that instrument.

Further, the role of the Supreme Court is examined. It has been busily reversing — sometimes incrementally, sometimes wholesale — the religious policies, express or implied, of the Constitution. How should we understand the role in government which the Justices now claim as their own?



PANIC IN THE SENATE

THE FIGHT OVER THE SECOND BANK OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

Michael Trapani

216 pages

\$21.95

President Andrew Jackson waged many wars, but he also fought fiercely for a smaller government and less financial bureaucracy.

In the 1830s he campaigned passionately to destroy the Second Bank of the United States, arguing that the Bank gave privilege and unfair advantage to the elite few at the expense of the public.

In 1834, just like today, questions about how much power the president ought to have and how much authority the BUS could exercise in controlling the economy riled the nation. The Senate debates analyzed here — part what of is known as the Bank War — are crucial to understanding the formation of the second party system, the growth of presidential power under Jackson, and the economic direction the country took as it spiraled uncontrollably towards the Civil War.

SILENT WINTER:

OUR CHEMICAL WORLD AND CHRONIC ILLNESS

Joanna Malaczynski

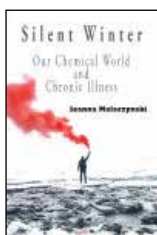
172 pages

\$19.95

Some 45% of US adults now have at least one chronic illness. Yet we rarely hear of the causal link with the toxic chemicals flooding consumer products and our environment.

The swift, silent spread of toxins in our homes and surroundings adds to the growing prevalence of cancer, chronic fatigue, diabetes, asthma, digestive issues, depression, dementia, and other afflictions.

Of course, industry does not want to change, so it is forcing humans to change. When we cannot keep up with the onslaught and become ill, they sell us chemical solutions to make us feel better. But individuals and families need to know more and do more, taking matters into their own hands to prevent and to recover from these debilitating and fatal disorders.



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demic dean of the Royal Society of Medicine. These two gentlemen know of what they write.

They break their absorbing and deeply researched book up into 33 chapters, most of them dedicated to the major incidents of illness that Churchill suffered between his first bout of pneumonia aged twelve in 1886 and his terminal illness in January 1965. He suffered concussion, a serious shoulder injury, appendicitis, a near-fatal car crash, enteric fever, chest pains, four more serious bouts of pneumonia, a hernia, two strokes, and cerebrovascular disease—and that was all before he retired as prime minister in April 1955. It is astounding that he lived to see his 90th birthday.

In two concluding chapters of this tremendously important contribution to Churchillian studies, the authors minutely examine the evidence that Churchill suffered from what he called his "black dog" of depression or from alcoholism. They put forward all the supposed symptoms and theories that have been adduced over the years and conclude that it was a myth that Churchill was a manic depressive. And although he drank a lot, "there is no evidence that Churchill ever met the necessary criteria for the diagnosis of Alcohol Use Disorder.... [H]e was not an alcoholic."

THAT WAS SADLY NOT TRUE OF ALL of Churchill's children, and Rachel Trethewey's *The Churchill Girls* chronicles the story of Churchill's four daughters, of whom Diana suffered from depression that led to her suicide and Sarah was an alcoholic. In recent years a large number of hitherto-restricted Churchill family papers have become available at Churchill College, Cambridge, with the result that Trethewey, a journalist and independent historian, has been able to shed invaluable new light on the tangled and occasionally fraught relationships that Churchill's three adult daughters, Diana, Sarah, and Mary—Marigold died of septicaemia aged two in 1921—each had with Winston, their mother Clementine, their brother Randolph, and one another.

Rather than over-concentrate on the dark side of Diana and Sarah's stories, Trethewey has rightly produced a fine, uplifting work that also investigates the different ways that the three daughters embraced life and carved out their own personalities in a strong-willed family, while ever-conscious of carrying one of the most famous names in Britain. Mary (later Lady Soames) led a happy and fulfilled life, and this book persuades us that neither Diana nor Sarah should be judged

on the tragic way that their stories ended. Their wartime services alone were patriotic, brave, and honorable. Mary in particular, as Trethewey puts it, "combined both her parents' best qualities in her personality. She inherited Winston's optimism and Clementine's charm."

A book that sadly lacks both optimism and charm is *The Curse of Being Special, from Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit*, in which the U.S.-based Dutch writer Ian Buruma indulges in yet another of his ill-tempered rants about how terrible the "special relationship" between Britain and America is, assuming that it even exists. Apparently, Britons are suffering under a "Churchill complex" by which they desperately attempt to pretend that Britain matters to Americans when she doesn't, and hasn't much since Churchill was prime minister.

Buruma is needless to say much exercised by Brexit, which he calls "hugely destructive" and puts down in part to "Britain's nostalgia for the Special Relationship," rather than Britain's actual nostalgia for being independent of Brussels. "Britain and the U.S., despite all their flaws," he writes, "were once regarded as models of openness, liberalism and generosity." Now, because of Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Brexit they apparently are no longer. Buruma (psephologically absurdly) puts Brexit down to "angry white working-class people" and snipes that "Johnson also appealed to the soccer hooligan spirit."

This kind of sneering, *de haut en bas* stereotyping, from someone based at an east coast liberal arts college (Bard) over 3,000 miles away from England, goes on for 300 pages. On occasion it reads more like therapy than political commentary, and one slightly suspects that Churchill was shoehorned into the book's title not because of any complex the British people suffer from, but because his name sells copies, and otherwise few would be interested in something as monotonously predictable as a European liberal academic taking snide pot-shots at Britain, her prime minister, and her success in 2020 to regain her sovereignty.

A SIMILAR SNARL OF IMPOTENT RAGE emanates from *The Churchill Myths*, by three British academics, in this case that anyone should try to extrapolate any political messages from the life and career of Winston Churchill other than the immaculately Left-liberal ones of which they approve. As with Buruma, the default tone is one of moral superiority, blaming Brexiteers for "old-school chauvinism," white nationalism, and so

on. Of course Boris Johnson is attacked, not least for writing “prose composed from the dated argot of public school life of a generation or two ago.”

Let us contrast Johnson’s prose with that of the trio themselves—Steven Fielding, Bill Schwarz, and Richard Toye—whose authorship-by-committee produces paragraphs such as this:

Recognizing this diversity, we place in a single analytical frame both the many, contrary manifestations of the various Churchill legends *and* the common, invariant properties which make the range of individual stories recognizably instalments in a common process of codification, resulting in Churchill *as* myth. We endeavour to attend to both the structure of the mythic dimension on the one hand, and on the other, to the contingency and plurality of the swirl of competing manifestations in their particular historical moments.

For me at least, the prime minister’s dated argot of a generation or two ago beats this book’s stilted, convoluted, and quite possibly meaningless academese.

ONE NEVER LIKES TO DESCRIBE A book that people have put work into as worthless, but that really is the only description for *The Churchill Myths*. It is intended to attack the way that Churchill has been used by politicians and writers to further their own political views, yet it does precisely that itself, so perhaps hypocrisy can be added to the charge sheet, for there is no indication why their left-wing views should have any more validity than the conservative ones they deride.

The authors’ relentless sarcasm toward Tory thinking, as well as a latent anti-Americanism, are unmissable. Note the use of capital letters as they scornfully write:

The myth of the Great Man who saved Britain as the country stood Alone during its Finest Hour retains its hold over the popular imagination, but time has allowed it to be finessed, challenged, and even mocked. In Britain they do not disinter their leaders or pull down their statues, but Churchill’s body is something to which they—with more than a little help from some American friends—return again and again upon which to write stories about who they were and who they are and who they might become.

In fact no serious historian has ever claimed that Britain stood alone (much less Alone) in 1940-41, as they all acknowledge that the British Empire and Greece stood by them. The only people who have “mocked” Churchill’s ability to keep morale high and not to make peace with Hitler in 1940 are fools, or worse. In Britain today, scores of statues are indeed being pulled down, like those of Edward Colston and Cecil Rhodes; vandalized—including Churchill’s, twice—or are in serious danger of being removed from their pedestals to the dustier areas of museums. What Britons and their “American friends” are writing about Churchill are not “stories,” but facts about a genuinely Great Man.

I MIGHT BE ACCUSED OF BEING SOMEWHAT *parti pris* over all this, as *The Churchill Myths* attacks me or my biography, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* (2018), on no fewer than 16 of its 162 pages. “A moment’s never missed to take the reader out for a stroll with providence,” it notes sarcastically, “and to bask in its glow.” Yet it was not I who coined the phrase “walking with destiny” but Churchill himself, so references to providence in a book about his destiny hardly seem inappropriate. I also believe that his example is one that modern-day politicians ought to try to emulate, whereas the authors of *The Churchill Myths* seem to dismiss that as a hopeless cause.

We are all familiar with the concept of intellectuals who are so clever that they say stupid things, and also of pseudo-intellectuals who want to be thought of as clever: *The Churchill Myths* is an offering from that school of authorship. I’m sure its attacks would have left me depressed, had the book not landed on my desk on the very same morning that I learnt from my publishers that my book had sold its half-millionth copy. “The worst difficulties from which we suffer do not come from without,” Winston Churchill said in his St. George’s Day speech of 1933.

They come from within.... They come from a peculiar type of brainy people always found in our country, who, if they add something to its culture, take much from its strength. But what have they to offer but a vague internationalism, a squalid materialism, and the promise of impossible utopias?

Andrew Roberts is the author of several books, including, most recently, *Leadership in War: Essential Lessons from Those Who Made History* (Viking).

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