

examination of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, one of the era's bestselling tomes. Here is George Gregory, son of an illiterate miner, recalling its profound influence on him. The book "has lived within me for more than sixty years," he recollected in old age. "Such information stirred in me dormant powers. I began to see myself an individual, and how I may be able to make a break from the general situation of which I had regarded myself as inseparable part. I realized that my lack of education was not decisive of what I might become, so I commenced to reach out into the future."

*Self-Help* has been derided as a crude symbol of grasping, hopelessly bourgeois individualism. But this is merely a caricature; under the influence of the message of self-improvement, Gregory did not become an acquisitive Tory, or a fleshpot of capitalism, but a socialist, trade-union organizer, anti-war activist and a co-operative society manager. "That is what *Self-Help* set in motion," Rose tersely notes.

Indeed, fire-breathing Victorian men of letters like Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin (a self-described "violent Tory of the old school") are the heroes of the book, not Karl Marx. The British Labour Party owes its formation to Ruskin's social and economic criticism, not historical materialism or vanguard Marxist revolutionaries. Marx didn't mean much to the first Labour MPs—many of them self-taught industrial workers—who cited Ruskin as the most formative influences on their thought. If one can venture to make a generalization, it's that a kind of hard-headed, cultural intransigence and political radicalism existed side-by-side in the working classes.

In his forays into the world of Ruskin College and the WEA, the most illustrious of the continuing-education institutions in the early 20th century, Rose explores the tensions between ideology and literary passion with skill and insight. Marxist critics of the WEA have charged that the schools helped steer British workers away from Marxism. But Rose makes a convincing case that the students were put off by the hectoring tones of the militants and their strident contempt for litera-

ture, not to mention their obsessive use of Marxist jargon, which hardly made for inviting reading. "Put bluntly, the trouble with Marx was Marxists, whom British workers generally found to be dogmatic, selfish and anti-literary," Rose writes.

Even those who were Communists were frustrated with the opacities of Marxist theory and the philistine world of radical activism. Consider compositor, self-taught philosopher and Communist Party member T.A. Jackson, "the beau ideal of the proletarian philosopher," who often found his love of literature and his commitment to Communism at loggerheads. He found a great deal to value in Marx, but his bibliophilia was simply too much to sacrifice before the altar of Communism. Writing of his love for literature as young man, he says, "I was seeing [the world] not merely with eyes of flesh but with the eyes of heightened imagination;—seeing it not only through spectacles manufactured by an optician, but through glasses supplied by magicians named Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, William Makepeace Thackeray, Joseph Addison, Daniel Defoe, Harry

Fielding, Toby Smollett, Sam Johnson and Will Shakespeare himself—and that was the trouble. ... How could anyone expect me to even begin to contemplate the overturn of a world as wonderful as this?"

If there are any shortcomings to Rose's study, it's that he doesn't sketch the fate of this autodidact tradition in British culture. Has it vanished before the onslaught of electronic media? Where is the next generation of T.A. Jacksons? His book doesn't so much end as trail off, with a critique of intellectual snobbery and the views of working-class intellectuals on literary bohemia. And I for one would have liked to have seen more on cultural-studies pioneer Raymond Williams, who was deeply involved with adult education movements during his life. (I must also note the irony that a book about working-class reading habits is priced at a staggering \$50. This is a pity.)

Still, one hopes this otherwise masterful book will be inspiration for some enterprising scholar to pen a much needed sequel: *The Intellectual Life of the American Working Classes*. ■

Matthew Price is a book critic in New York.

## Head for the Hills

By Joshua Rothkopf

In dreams, as the song goes, David Lynch walks and talks with you. He's by now our premiere hypnotist—a Hitchcock off the narrative hinges—and *Mulholland Drive* is his *Vertigo* (if you can imagine a *Vertigo*

**Mulholland Drive**  
Written and directed by David Lynch

that's all vertigo). Once again the subject is play-acting, with Hollywood's hanging gardens subbing in naturally for those Golden Gate psycho-vistas. And the anxiety comes not from uncertain freefall but a fear of landing hard on one's fantasies: the death of pretending. With this new one, Lynch goes darker and deeper; it's a big, terrifying epic about being swallowed whole by the fun factory, perhaps consentingly.

In retrospect, Lynch seems to have been working up to it: *Blue Velvet* presented imaginative curiosity as treacherous but, subversively, essential to rough sex and pure love alike. Even *Dune*, ever harder to dismiss these days, is suffused with dream prophecy made real; Lynch correctly identified the core of Frank Herbert's waddy epic in a mantra shifted to his script's heart: "The sleeper must awaken."

*Mulholland Drive* has its own variation, spoken by a mysterious pardner known only as The Cowboy: "Hey, pretty girl—time to wake up." But here, and it's thrilling to behold, Lynch is finally beyond such distinctions of consciousness; he's freed himself up like never before by placing his action at the Great Fakeness proper, where the process of becoming is, itself, a slip

of the skin. From the first scene on, a violent limo wreck out of which emerges a dazed brunette (Laura Elena Harring) who starts down the ravine in heels toward L.A.'s twinkling sprawl, Lynch seems willing and able to go further into the void than even that granddaddy of Hollywood oblivion, *Sunset Boulevard*.

**B**ut this being Lynch's Hollywood, we know we're not being primed for high-spirited sleuthing but something closer to nasty urban legend. Already, a perfectly healthy neurotic has elsewhere collapsed at the sight of a grinning monster lurking behind the local diner; these Nancy Drews in search of Rita's identity are wandering unwittingly into a horror

the natural extension of her own hunger for self-revision. Rita's mental haze, her full-figured aloofness, is just about the sexiest thing she can handle.

Lynch has long been a card-carrying romantic. He has technical lusciousness down to a science, but the swoon always makes more sense when linked to the wild at heart or even out-of-body yearnings of elephant men. And sure enough, something does shift here: Betty and Rita's kiss is so pure, it sends the picture reeling. Suddenly, one of Rita's few possessions—an ominous blue key found at the bottom of her purse—fits into in a bizarre box they take home from a nightclub and, with a twist, all bets are off: Betty is gone, or perhaps reborn as a strung-out failure named Diane. (Watts' range in the double-role is breathtaking.) Rita is now a glamorous star named Camilla Rhodes, long over Betty or Diane or whoever she's become. Even by lesbian standards, it feels like the shortest affair on record: Diane, forlorn, brews coffee in her dingy, mold-green kitchen and mourns a career that never materialized;



Through a glass darkly.

After those first nocturnal impressions—floating red tail-lights and smoke carried off by midnight breezes—the menace never lifts, even at warped high noon. Enter Betty (Naomi Watts), a quaking young hopeful fresh off the plane and ready for her three-picture deal. (Hers is a perkiness heightened to dementia: Watts manages to outbeam even her pink sweater.) She can't believe her posh new digs vacated by a traveling aunt, or her showbizzy landlord Coco, or the nice cabbie at the airport who loaded her bags in the trunk. She doesn't even seem to mind that nude stranger in her shower, our mystery B-girl from the car crash. Rita, she calls herself, after eyeing a poster for *Gilda*, and it soon becomes clear that she didn't quite make it out of the accident whole. Rita's amnesia works like catnip on Betty; Lynch lingers on her sympathetic reaction long enough for it to ripen into something slightly impure, à la "Look what I got!" Betty has come all the way from Deep River, Ontario for the movies and—wouldn't you know it—they've found her.

film. Gothic courtyards and shadowy hallways become close to unbearable, and a rotting corpse sends the women shrieking. It's here, about halfway in, that *Mulholland Drive* would have ended, had it not been dumped by ABC as the television pilot it was originally intended to be. But I ask: Has there been a more promising first act since Laura Palmer cracked the spine of her diary in *Twin Peaks*?

Still, given the radical expansion that follows, you have to wonder if the gods weren't smiling as network-safe elements—notably a confident detective on the case—are terrifyingly aborted and the movie teeters into apocalypse. There are plenty of sad stories of visionary genius dulled by trim-happy producers (*Greed* comes to mind); less known are the careful refinements that come out of liberation. Lynch, up to now, builds slowly, episodically, deepening Betty and Rita with conspiratorial glances and the subtle casualness of roommates. So the bloom of their attraction is the most tender surprise yet: "I'm in love with you," Betty whispers in the blue glow of their embrace, and it's

Camilla basks in the attentions of some jerk director with a goatee.

Is it much later? Or earlier? The answer may lie somewhere in between; a large part of Lynch's daring is in his confidence that you'll want to figure this one out—and to his credit, I think he's got us squirming on the hook. (I have my own theories, but don't drop me a line unless you want to be wrecked.) As far as altered states go, the last 45 minutes can't be beat. Camilla invites the frustrated Diane to a party; as she leads her through a dark glade, a "shortcut" to her mansion and success, you feel the power dynamic in full reversal, confidence and humiliation swapped. Lynch is pulling off nothing less than a Buñuelean tour de force by turning his surrealism into psychology; he knows our expectations and uses that command to secretly establish a yawning madness. With *Mulholland Drive*, the trance that comes so easily to him is finally charged with the doom of a classic. ☞

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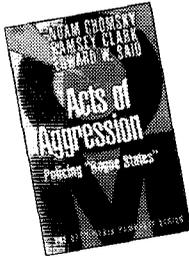
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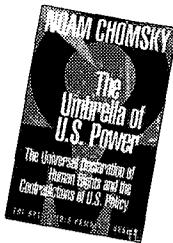
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# GIVE WAR A CHANCE

Continued from back page

Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, Orrin Hatch Will All Be Fighting This War for Us! These are all honorable men, men of their word, men who would not expect someone else to fight their battles for them. They have all called for war, revenge, blood—and, by God, it is blood I want them to have! Now that we are at war, let us insist that those who have cried the loudest for the killing be the first to go and do just that!

I would like to see, by the end of the day, Rush and Bill, Orrin and the rest of their colleagues down at the recruiting station signing up to join the Army. Sure, I know they are no longer young, but there are many jobs they will be able to do once they get through the Khyber Pass. Surely these men would not expect our sons and daughters to die for something that they themselves would not be willing to die for.

Get your butts over there to Afghanistan and defend a way of life that allows companies like Boeing to get rid of 30,000 people while using the tragedy in New York as their shameful excuse.

**Really Cool War Footage.** It has been way too long since we've been able to watch those cruise missiles and smart bombs with their little cameras on them sail in and blow the crap out of a bunch of human beings. This time, let's hope the video is in color and that it's attached with a miniature set of Dolby speaker microphones so we can hear the screams and wails of those Afghans as our shrapnel guts them into strips of bacon. Oh, and let's pray the video can be loaded into my Sony Playstation!

**Better a Quickie War than the Permanent War.** Orwell warned us about this one. Big Brother, in order to control the population, knew that it was necessary for the people to always believe they were in a state of siege, that the enemy was getting closer and closer, and that the war would take a very long

time. That is *exactly* what Bush said in his speech to Congress, and the reason he said it is because he and his buddies want us all in such a state of fear and panic that we would gladly give up the cherished freedoms that our fathers and those before them fought and died for. Who wouldn't submit to searches, restrictions of movement, and the rounding up of anyone who looks suspicious if it would prevent another September 11?

To get these laws passed that will strip us of our rights, they have been telling us that we are in a *long* and *protracted* war that has no end in sight. Don't buy it! We are bombing Afghanistan, and *that* is the only war in progress. It should be over anywhere from a few days from now or in about nine years (Soviet-style). Either way, it will end. The good guys will win. And, if George II is anything like George I, then the bad guy will win, too, getting to live and go on doing what he enjoys doing (what were we, like 40 miles from Baghdad?) while we continue to bomb the innocents (some 500,000 Iraqi children killed by the United States in past 10 years from bombs and sanctions).

As I'm sure you must agree, there are many upsides to this war. Sure, the Emmys got canceled again, and, as a nominee this year, I already found out that I wasn't getting one of those little gold people, so who cares if I can't walk down the red carpet in my Bob Mackie gown? I don't even wear a gown—I wear pants, ill-fitting pants at that! Yesiree, I say, BOMBS AWAY! Rockets red glare! We are all WHITE WITH FOAM!

And please, let's look at the bright side for once: The last time a Bush took us to war and got a 90 percent approval rating, he was toast and a ghost the following year. You can't get better than that. ■

Michael Moore pens satires and other rants for his Web site, [www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com).

# GIVE WAR A CHANCE

By Michael Moore

**I**t's about time! I was beginning to worry that George II didn't have it in him, that he might wander off to vacation in Omaha again. But finally, the bombs are raining down on Afghanistan and, as Martha Stewart says, that's a good thing.

Oh, don't get me wrong—I deplore war and killing and violence. But, hey, I'm a pragmatist, I know where I live, this is America and dammit, somebody's ass had to get kicked!

Our Leader, a former baseball club owner, could have at least had the decency to wait one more day until the baseball season was over. Poor Barry Bonds—will anyone even remember what he did a month from now? At least Fox had the good grace to get the football game back on the tube within an hour of the war's start! They *knew* none of us could stomach looking at Stepford Drones from Fox News for the rest of the day.

Fellow liberals, lefties, Greens, workers and even you lovable Gore voters and recovering Democrats—let me tell you why I think this war on Afghanistan is good for all of us:

## Network Unanimity in Naming the War.

It has been so confusing the past four weeks, what with all the networks calling this thing we are in by so many names: "America's New War," "America Under Attack," "America Fights Back," "War on Terrorism," etc. Now nearly every network has settled on "America Strikes Back."

I like this because, first of all, it honors George Lucas. We're a humble people, we Americans, so we can't quite bring ourselves to call it "The Empire Strikes Back." "Empire" sounds a little scary, and there's no use reminding the rest of the world that we call all the shots. So "America Strikes Back" is appropriate (and "strikes" has the necessary sports metaphor we like to use when bombing other countries).

**The Citizenry Can Now Go Back to What They Were Doing.** I don't know about you, but nearly four weeks of anxious and tense anticipation of what would happen next was starting to wear me down. I thought nothing could top what spending the whole summer agonizing over whose baby it was on *Friends* did to me.

But the last four weeks was worse than a bad classic-rock extended drum solo. Now we have resolution. Now we know the ending—the bombing to smithereens of a country so advanced it has, to date, laid a total of 18 miles of railroad tracks throughout the entire country. How very 19th century of them! I hope our missiles were able to take them out. I don't want this thing going on forever. Best that we obliterate them before they come up with some smart idea like the telegraph.

**Dick Cheney Has Been Moved into Hiding Again.** This can only help. The farther this mastermind can be kept from young Bush, the better. Anytime I hear they have transported Cheney out of town and into a bunker in the woods, I feel safe. And don't worry about him having any workable form of communications with Bush—remember, this is a government which discovers that a known terrorist is taking flying lessons in Florida and does nothing.

Continued on page 29

