books, arts & manners

"needed all the help it could get as soon as it could get it;" as a result, although the foundation's assets never rose above $117 million, it disbursed funds at an annual rate stunted only by foundations five times as large.

Almost as important a figure in the foundation's success was former Treasury secretary William E. Simon, who was its president from 1987 until his death in 2000. Simon had three exemplary executive directors—Patrick J. O'Connell, Michael Joyce, and James Piereson, who presided over the closing of the foundation in 2005. These men and their small but efficient staff turned the foundation into what Miller calls "a venture capital fund for the conservative movement," reinvesting constantly in recipients who were successful. Olin was patient, understanding that it can take a long time for even the best ideas to have consequences. It worked closely with about a dozen other conservative foundations, leveraging grants to counter effectively the liberal foundations that often outspend conservatives by 10 to 1.

I can personally attest that writing an institutional history like The Gift of Freedom is not easy. There are questions of access to confidential documents, editorial independence, judgments about those still living. There is the temptation to offer only the ethnicity of names and simply provide long lists of laudable accomplishments and worthy individuals. Miller has resisted the temptation, crafting a highly readable and honest portrayal of the foundation and its people. He does not gloss over Bill Simon's "ferocious temper" or the Foundation's favoring of neoconservatives over paleos. (It was not, however, a captive of the neocons, as some paleos have charged; it gave generous help to such traditional conservatives as William F. Buckley Jr. and Robert P. George, and organizations including the Heritage Foundation and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute.)

John J. Miller's admirable and concise study demonstrates that the assessment of Nathan Tarcoc, of the Olin Center at the University of Chicago, was correct: "Future generations will look back at the history of our time with profound gratitude that the John M. Olin Foundation was here so long and knew so well how to get it right."

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House of War

The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims, edited by Andrew G. Bostom (Prometheus, 759 pp., $28)

J. PETER PHAM

Historian Robert Conquest recently pondered why so many of his fellow scholars had been for so long incapable of grasping the true nature of the Soviet regime. He concluded by blaming "a clarity that has hardly heard of opinions other than those appearing to be...the acceptable expression of concern for humanity" and that has demonstrated "a strong tendency to silence those who disagree with one or another of the accepted beliefs."

As the fourth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks came and went, it was difficult not to experience a sense of déjà vu. The failure of Western elites to acknowledge the totalitarian terror of the 20th century is eerily similar to their current failure to confront the Islamic totalitarian movements of the 21st. The same moral forces—and, in some cases, the very same individuals—are at work, not only trivializing accounts of the existential threat, but also legitimizing the enemy as political actors with rational grievances with whom one can trust on the basis of some ever-elusive common ground while condemning skeptics to political and academic obloquy.

Against this depressing backdrop, two welcome developments have recently taken place. The first was the acknowledgement by President Bush, in an October speech to the National Endowment for Democracy, that America is engaged in a struggle not only against terrorism but also against the specific ideology that has inspired some of the most virulent manifestations of terrorism.

"Some call this evil Islamic fundamentalism; others, militant jihadism; still others Islamophobia," Bush said—and noted that this ideology is "very different from" Islam and, in fact, "exploits it."

The second development is the publication of the new book The Legacy of Jihad, an impressive compendium that meticulously documents the terror that is jihad—using historical and contemporary Muslim theological and juridical texts, as well as the accounts of some of the most eminent Muslim and non-Muslim scholars of Islam in the days before political correctness squelched academic freedom.

The 750-page tome is by no means an easy read. It is a maze of primary texts and secondary studies, barely held together by the editor's lengthy but useful introduction. Perseverance, however, is rewarded: The wide-ranging anthology—including commentaries by representatives of Shi'ite as well as all four schools of Sunni jurisprudence, historical accounts of regional jihad campaigns, and analyses of current conflicts—takes the reader from the religious roots of the jihad ideology to the havoc that it has wrought across the continents of Asia, Africa, Europe, and, now, America.

Scholars of Islam will undoubtedly have criticisms, some of which may be justified. After all, the book's editor, Andrew G. Bostom, is not an academic specialist in Islam. He is a clinical epidemiologist on the faculty of Brown Medical School. But not being a card-carrying member of the contemporary...
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Wild
About Earl

JAY NORDLINGER

LAST MONTH, EARL WILD CELEBRATED his 90th birthday, with a recital at Carnegie Hall. Who’s Earl Wild? He is one of the outstanding pianists of the 20th century. A lively Pittsburgher, with huge hands, Wild has a monster technique, capable of anything. He has always played the hardest music, the showiest music—but he is more than a technician. Wild has an interesting musical head. He is a throwback to an earlier time of unabashed Romanticism, and barnstorming pianism.

Born two years before America entered the First World War, Wild studied with one of the great piano pedagogues of the age, Eugen d’Albert, who in turn had been a student of Busoni. To review Wild’s biography is to touch history. He played with Mischa Elman, a violinist who now seems almost as distant as Paganini. He played in the NBC Orchestra under Toscanini. He pioneered Gershwin, that whippersnapper from Tin Pan Alley. He worked on television with Sid Caesar. Some people, with a wrong idea of sophistication, have sniffed at Wild, for all he has done and what he has brought to the piano.

That career has included composing, because, when Wild was young, there was no great division between composer and performer. They were often the same person. He has specialized in transcriptions—in arrangements for the piano—for so many other virtuosos of his kind. Among those transcriptions is an album of Gershwin songs. A friend of mine recently remarked to Wild, “I’m going to learn your ‘Liza.’” He responded, “It’s hard, you know.” Indeed.

Five years ago, I attended, and reviewed, Wild’s 85th-birthday recital, also at Carnegie Hall. One had to make few allowances, if any. I reviewed him essentially straight, as I would a pianist of 45, say. A reader—a woman from Ohio, I think—wrote me an angry letter, saying, “How can you say those critical things about this great and venerable musician?” I replied that I was paying him the compliment of regarding him as I always had: He was himself.

And he has continued to be himself. Forget the recordings—there have been several recent ones—because they can be deceptive. (Recording engineers have more tricks than fashion photographers.) What about live performances? Two years ago, Wild traveled to Carnegie Hall to play in the memorial service for Harold C. Schonberg, the longtime critic of the New York Times. Schonberg loved pianists—particularly Romantic virtuosos like Wild—and, in fact, wrote a classic book called The Great Pianists. At the memorial service, Wild played a Liszt ballade, and played it well, as always.

Music history is replete with masterly older pianists. Artur Rubinstein played inspiring in his 80s and 90s, enjoying what someone dubbed his “Indian summer.” Shura Cherkassky had a kind of innocence in his 80s, or at least a new fame. Mieczyslaw Horszowski was concertizing—and well—at almost 100. And among non-pianists, we could cite the cellist Pablo Casals, a force in his 90s, and the impresario, Alexander Ginastera (ibid.). Leopold Stokowski, the conductor, is a special case: He conducted compellingly right up to his death at 95.

And Earl Wild is not the only musician to have celebrated his 90th birthday at Carnegie Hall recently. A week after Wild appeared, the hall staged a 80th-birthday concert for the composer George Perle. And he is practically a pup compared to Elliot Carter, born in 1908, who has been seen in Carnegie Hall and elsewhere a lot.