

the label *idiotes*—the derisive epithet ancient Athenians applied to those who took little part in the political life of the city. He was also a loud-mouth who preferred the closed society of enemy Sparta, even though that stern city-state would never have tolerated his gadfly behavior.

Behind the official charges leveled against Socrates—impiety and corrupting the young—were what Stone calls the “three earthquakes”: the revolts of 411, 404, and 401, all of which briefly installed aristocratic dictatorships. These three reigns of terror made Athenians fearful of forever losing their democracy; yet Socrates did not abandon “his antidemocratic and antipolitical teachings.” The Athenians, moreover, did not forget that the most dangerous of the former dictators were Alcibiades and Critias, the philosopher’s prize pupils. “As a teacher of virtue,” Stone contends, “Socrates was a failure.”

As harsh as Stone’s verdict is, his most controversial claim is that Socrates could have avoided death: “Had Socrates invoked freedom of speech as a basic right of all Athenians—not just the privilege of a superior and self-selected few like himself—he would have struck a . . . responsive chord.” But to plea for acquittal on those grounds would have meant acknowledging the virtue of the *polis*; for that, Socrates was too proud.

**THOSE TERRIBLE  
CARPETBAGGERS:  
A Reinterpretation**  
by Richard Nelson Current  
Oxford, 1988  
475 pp. \$24.95

Even as late as the publication of John F. Kennedy’s *Profiles in Courage* (1956), carpetbaggers were depicted as the rascals of the post-Civil War Reconstruction. If Kennedy (and ghostwriter Theodore C. Sorensen) had looked more closely at the facts, they would have found that carpetbaggers were not all corrupt opportunists or profiteers; some, indeed, were eager to improve conditions in the stricken South; many others were simply engaged in the legitimate pursuit of gain.

Current, an emeritus professor at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, is not the first to reconsider these much maligned men, but his readable, artfully constructed group portrait helps make the revisionist case more persuasive. Of his 10 subjects, one, Adelbert Ames, was a Maine-born career Army officer who became provisional governor of Mississippi shortly after the Reconstruction Act of 1867. Working hard to protect

the rights (and lives) of the newly enfranchised blacks, with little support from President Grant, he drew the wrath of reactionary white Mississippians. At the end of his corruption-free term in 1870, he was elected to the U.S. Senate. Equally admirable was Albion W. Tourgee, a Northern lawyer who settled in North Carolina and crusaded for full equality for blacks. His most notable achievement was the court brief he wrote for Louisiana octoroon Homer E. Plessey in *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896); although his arguments on the unconstitutionality of segregationist practices lost, they were later vindicated by the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision.

Some carpetbaggers, such as Daniel H. Chamberlain, the South Carolina governor who became an antiblack pamphleteer, began as Radical Republicans but ended up disillusioned conservatives. Even so, few were rank scoundrels. Yet before Reconstruction ended in 1877, complained Arkansas carpetbag governor Powell Clayton, the "most fallacious stories" began to circulate—soon to be embedded in the works of such scholars as James Ford Rhodes and Woodrow Wilson.

### THE MASK OF COMMAND

by John Keegan  
 Viking, 1987  
 368 pp. \$18.95



What are the qualities that define leadership in war? Keegan, defense correspondent for the *London Daily Telegraph*, explores the nature of military genius through the careers of four leading commanders: Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.); the Duke of Wellington (1769–1852); Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885); and, by way of contrast, Adolf Hitler (1889–1945).

Generals, Keegan argues, establish their authority by a process of "mystification"—distancing themselves from their armies to ensure that their troops follow the commander's will. Alexander the Great earned the respect of his forces through his fearless courage, manifested by the eight wounds he acquired during pitched battles. Like Alexander, Wellington displayed the best qualities of his era by embodying the "gentlemanly ideal"—sober in dress and manner, reticent, and completely self-assured.

Technological advances and the growing size of the battlefield forced generals to distance themselves from the field. During the American Civil War, the improved range of sharpshooters' rifles