

Hughes touch on politics only in passing—and wisely so, because their book’s real strength lies in the competence and lack of sensationalism of its economically focused approach. But to their credit, the authors acknowledge that the emergence of “Greater China”—like that of industrial Europe in the 19th century—may as plausibly be accompanied by conflict as by peace and prosperity.

—Arthur Waldron

TRUE STORIES OF THE KOREAN COMFORT WOMEN.

Edited by Keith Howard. Cassell. 192 pp. \$60 cloth, \$16.95 paper

“The shame of a woman [is] the shame of her whole family.” Hence the long silence of the more than 200,000 Korean women forced into prostitution by the Japanese military between 1933 and 1945. Only recently has the passage of time softened the stigma and allowed a number of these former “comfort women” to step forward. This compilation of 19 of their stories was first published in 1993 by the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. It appeared against the backdrop of increased international scrutiny of Japan’s war crimes, and the Japanese government’s blan-

ket apology to the women involved. The present volume, edited and introduced by Keith Howard (a Korean studies lecturer at the University of London), coincides with a recent UN recommendation of a full formal apology, reparations, and criminal prosecutions.

This can be a painful book to read. The stories follow a similar pattern, and soon their impact fades through sheer repetition. But a few details stand out. For example, Okpun Yi recalls looking out from the Taiwan school building where she was confined and seeing lines of Japanese soldiers that were so long, “the ends of the queues were sometimes invisible.” Perhaps most compelling are the current lives of these 19 women. In a society that insists on marriage, all but five attempted some sort of union. Most ended in failure. Fifteen of the women now live alone under harsh conditions, and many suffer from recurring diseases. Some are involved in the campaign for reparation; others seem content with the emotional catharsis of finally sharing their terrible secret. Most would agree with the 65-year-old Turi Yun, who said simply, “They ruined my life. . . . I will not be able to forget what happened even after I die.”

—Debbie Lim

Religion & Philosophy

MACHIAVELLI’S VIRTUE.

By Harvey C. Mansfield. Univ. of Chicago Press. 387 pp. \$29.95

“Machiavelli as the principal character in his own thought,” the author begins boldly, “that is the theme of this collection of articles and essays.” But this is no “postmodernist gloss or deconstruction.” Far from it. To Mansfield, professor of government at Harvard University, there is only one true reading of the text. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) himself wishes to be the prince: “He will be the mastermind behind the operation, mastering future generations through his mind.” So much for the urbane, skeptical,

humanistic but realistic, republican Machiavelli read by most scholars. The true Machiavelli was—how shall one paraphrase?—a kind of superknowledgeable proto-political scientist, contemptuous of the ineptitude of princes, jealous of their power, and certain that he could do better.

So a close reading of Machiavelli leaves no doubt of his ambition, or that he was (as many of his first readers thought) an unashamed teacher of evil, of no-holds-barred ruthlessness in the pursuit of any power, not just in the defense of a republic (as a superficial reading of the *Discourses* has suggested to others). But Mansfield goes



further. He does Machiavelli the high scholarly honor of treating him as a wholly consistent political philosopher (rather than a speculative writer and provocative essayist) who was consciously at odds with Aristotle at all times, and whose texts are as tight and logical as those of Thomas Hobbes.

Even in Machiavelli's contradictions—for example, his rejection of Christian virtue as inimical to the Roman *virtu* of state formation and preservation, versus his refusal to deny the Christian conception of evil—Mansfield finds a covert consistency. This is because (as we know already, if we have read the works of Mansfield's intellectual exemplar, Leo Strauss) all political philosophers writing in troubled times hid their real meaning. Indeed, they hid it so successfully, the esoteric message behind the exoteric facade is only unlocked in our own time. Mansfield acknowledges the master: "Every time I have been thrown upon an uninhabited island I thought might be unexplored, I have come across a small sign saying 'please deposit coin.' After I comply, a large sign flashes in neon lights that would have been visible from afar, with this message: Leo Strauss was here." Ah, to have been in Chicago in the old days!

Mansfield gives short shrift to the dominant school of contextualist intellectual history—what one might call "the Cambridge school" because so many of the books are published by Cambridge University Press. This school blends empirical history with analytic philosophy. Its practitioners establish the meaning of a political text from the political and intellectual contexts, and from a knowledge of how key concepts were used in the discourse of the day. As it were: "the text, the context, then back to the text." From that text, some draw only meaning, others occasional truths for our time.

But not *the* truth, according to the Straussians. For them, the contextualist school misses the real truth, always beneath the surface, and reduces the great debate about the ends of politics and life to carping relativities—in the case of other studies of Machiavelli, "a reluctance to face the problem of evil." Thus, Mansfield declares: "In this book I do not adopt the historicist view that Machiavelli's thought was useful only in its time or for what it

prepared (much as it did prepare). Those who take this view do not have a sufficient motive to study Machiavelli's political science, since they believe it to be inadequate before they begin."

Let us not make a meal of it. This counterattack is a good example of medieval logic's fallacy, "the excluded middle." Suppose that *all* accounts are, to some degree, inadequate, and suppose that *some* of Machiavelli's maxims have universal relevance, others relevance only for his time, and still others not much use or sense then or now. And suppose that Machiavelli was a great political *writer*, with a flair for drama and melodrama. To make him a philosopher, diligently to dig for a logically consistent subtext veiled in apparent mistakes, contradictions, and (even) numerology, is not to interrogate the text; it is to torture it.

Mansfield's method yields a hundred different subtle readings, many of them impressive and provoking even to the reader who is intimate with the texts. But these are forced into a pattern, indeed a sermon on how realism violates natural law, and how politics is not the conciliation of differing views of conscience but should be the implementation of true conscience, derived from natural-rights philosophy and unclouded by historicist relativism, expediency, and contingency.

But if Machiavelli was an essayist, an intellectual adventurer, even at times an ironist with a sense of play and humor who may not always have known what he was going to say next, except that it would be something arresting, penetrating, intuitive, or speculative, then his contradictions need only be noted, not explained away. Moreover, we may share the most profound of them: that some things done in politics are morally detestable, but may have to be done if the polity is to survive its enemies. Friedrich Meinecke famously spoke of Machiavelli as "a sword which was plunged into the flank of the body politic of Western humanity, causing it to cry out and struggle with itself."

Searching for lost arks is learned fun, but better to hold to a dull old rule of textual interpretation against both Straussians and postmodernists: even after Marx and Freud, a text should be presumed to mean what it appears to mean, unless there is some clear external evidence to the contrary.

—Bernard Crick