Athenians were persuaded by their ambitious leaders to overreach. Athens did not disappear after the fifth century: Plato was not yet 30 years old at century's end, and Aristotle had not been born. But henceforth, and to this day, the city would matter for the might of its mind.

—*James Morris*

THURGOOD MARSHALL: American Revolutionary.

By Juan Williams. Times Books. 459 pp. $27.50

In the latest addition to the substantial literature on the first black Supreme Court justice, Williams charts Marshall's transformation from a child of rather humble but middle-class origins (his mother was a schoolteacher, his father a steward at an all-white yacht club) into an "American Revolutionary" honored by blacks as "Mr. Civil Rights." Spurred on by his mother's unwavering support and reoriented (temporarily) from parties to studies in college, Marshall found his life's focus under a hard-driving Howard Law School mentor, Charles Houston. Houston drew Marshall into NAACP work in the deep South, immersing him in the fight against the white primary, lynching, segregated transportation, restrictive covenants, and school segregation. It all culminated in Marshall's triumph in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (1954), in which the Supreme Court unanimously declared that segregated public education violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Marshall was rewarded for his accomplishments, first with a federal judgeship in 1961 and then with a place on the Supreme Court in 1967.

As the years passed, though, Marshall became increasingly bitter. He lamented the civil rights movement's shift from law to other tools of reform. He bridled not only at Black Power militants but, privately, at the nonviolent protests of Martin Luther King, Jr., as well. Later, the growing conservatism of the Court and the White House seemed to seal Marshall's view that the country had breached the promise of the civil rights revolution.

Williams provides a lively and readable introduction to the justice's personal and professional life, drawing on Marshall's correspondence, other primary documents, and extensive interviews (but, surprisingly, neglecting the existing literature on Marshall and the civil rights movement). A *Washington Post* journalist and the author of the book companion to the PBS documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, Williams proceeds case by case through Marshall's extensive legal career, offering helpful summaries but little sustained analysis of the justice's brand of civil rights activism.

In the final chapter, the author suggests that Marshall's approach rested on a belief that individual rights are paramount. How did this philosophy affect other aspects of Marshall's life, such as his personal indulgence or his distaste for King? Williams never says. His thin rendering of Marshall's beliefs also fails to account for the justice's descent into bitter isolation, given his legendary successes. While Williams depicts Marshall as a straightforward believer in individual rights, the evidence points toward some more strained individualistic ethos that emphasized the personal dimension of offense and grievance, individual rights and redress, law as the only solution to social wrongs, and the autonomous nature of human achievement—not all of which are easily reconciled with the collectivist underpinnings of civil rights and social life more generally. The author provides the details of Justice Marshall's life without fully reflecting on its ultimate meaning and trajectory.

—*Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn*

THE BRITISH MONARCHY AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

By Marilyn Morris. Yale Univ. Press. 229 pp. $28.50

As French revolutionaries toppled the Bourbon monarchy, many Britons, including Edmund Burke and Edward Gibbon, worried that their throne might be next. For the British crown, the 18th century had not been the best of times. Jacobites, supporters of the Stuart pretenders, incited rebellions in 1714 and 1745. During their collective reigns (1714–60), George I and George II proved altogether inept at public relations, and they were frequently subjected to satirical attacks. George III lost the American colonies, a defeat that left him so despon-

dent that he considered abdicating. In his influential *Rights of Man* (1791–92), Thomas Paine lauded the French Revolution and dismissed the British monarchy as useless. The head of the Manchester Constitutional Society declared that Paine "has wounded [the British aristocracy] mortally . . . and monarchy will not, I think, continue long in fashion."

But the British crown did not fall. Morris, a history professor at the University of North Texas, contends that most of Paine's admirers favored only parliamentary reform, not abolition of the monarchy. By the end of the 1790s, moreover, "the invasion scare and dread of Bonaparte drew people together in defense of the nation." Britons realized that their monarchical constitutional order protected against both the horrors of the Reign of Terror and the despotism of Napoleon.

While persuasively arguing that most Britons of the 1790s opposed revolutionary change, Morris points out that we should not be too quick to dismiss those who feared that "the French disease" (as Gibbon termed it) might infect Great Britain. Toward the end of the decade, a group of British and Irish republican extremists formed a revolutionary underground in hopes of coordinating a French invasion, an Irish rebellion, and an insurrection in London. Though their plot failed, small bands of revolutionaries sometimes do succeed, as the world has learned in the two centuries since.

Morris gives considerable credit to George III for shoring up the monarchy. He had survived the shame of the American defeat to become "a cultural icon" widely admired for his patriotism, his dedication to the duties of kingship, and his "paternal disposition." A devoted husband and regular churchgoer, George was accessible, often appearing in public with his children and chatting with commoners. Press coverage of the royal family's activities increased during the decade, and, for the most part, familiarity bred affection. George's position as "moral exemplar," Morris observes, "eclipsed his political role." Yet charisma and affability are only part of the explanation. Britons, regardless of their feelings for the monarch and the royal family, have always associated the crown with political stability—as much in the 1790s as in the 1990s.

—*Stephen Miller*

Religion & Philosophy

KADDISH.
By Leon Wieseltier. Knopf. 588 pp. $27.50

The death of a parent is supposed to bring you face to face, as nothing else can, with the realities of time. When Leon Wieseltier's father died, the event, though not unexpected, plunged him backward in time and into the mysteries of his own tradition. Determined to honor his father with a proper Kaddish, the ritual Jewish observance of a year of daily mourning, Wieseltier found himself in synagogue two or three times a day, immersed in customs and laws from which he had long kept his distance. Why was he doing it? What could be the legal or theological basis for this enigmatic custom, in which the name of God is obsessively "magnified and sanctified," and death, mourning, and sorrow are never mentioned?

Torn between these questions and the certainty that he was doing the right, the only, thing, Wieseltier turned to the tradition itself for help. The result is a reader's diary of his journey down the byways of Jewish law, of Talmudic and rabbinic commentary and arcana, the "sea" of Jewish tradition about which the rabbis say, "Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it." This is no mere narrative of the sort that has become familiar: the secular Jew returning to the fold, or the untrained Jew becoming entranced late in life with the richness of Torah, Talmud, and ritual observance. Wieseltier was trained rigorously in all those things as a youth and gave them up only later to become a journalist and public intellectual (he is literary editor of the *New Republic*). Unlike the many who "return," the author starts with the tools to read and navigate the sources.

Perhaps more striking, he has a feel for the meandering, spiraling form of these voluminous sources, in which rabbis jump from century to century and from topic to topic, multiplying distinctions and piling cases upon cases. This cadence Wieseltier man-