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# Cowboys or Vampire Killers? The Bush Gang Rides Again, or American Figures in Foreign Affairs

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## **Cowboys or Vampire Killers?**

### **The Bush Gang Rides Again, or American Figures in Foreign Affairs**

**John S. Nelson**

*Poroi*, 2, 2, November, 2003



Bring them on!<sup>1</sup>

- 1 So said a pugnacious president, forty-third in the lengthening history of the United States. Literally this was George W. Bush talking just the other day about retrograde Iraqis, who are not acquiescing in American rule but assassinating American soldiers instead. Mythically this might sound like Dirty Harry from Clint Eastwood movies, growling at a punk to “Make my day!” But because the President comes from Texas, self-consciously mimics horse operas more than other movies, and sometimes appears to treat foreign affairs as a streamlined imperialism of cowboys over Indians, the press and the populace tend to view his administration as a resurrection of the western matinee. This is not exactly wrong, but we can do better.
- 2 Prominent politicians invite us to view them as mythic figures, and American presidents make the exercise hard to resist.<sup>2</sup> My argument is not that we must refrain from interpreting the mythic dimensions of politics in general or presidents in particular. Susan Sontag may think that possible and moral, but what are the joys of a stringent and impossible literalism?<sup>3</sup> When myths are political arguments, symbolic stories of the whole, and musical words that rhythm our lives, we do not know which ones are true, which false, and which otherwise until we investigate them in detail.<sup>4</sup> We do know, though, that myths are inseparable from meanings. Consequently we do well to acknowledge that there is no way to ignore myths in politics, let alone remove them from politics, and there is no reason to try.<sup>5</sup>
- 3 What I mean by saying we can do better is that figures in the Bush administration mostly fit a different mythos. The alternative makes more sense of recent American foreign policy with respect to Iraq. To analyze mythic aspects of George Bush, Saddam Hussein, and others is not to debunk them. Myths inform, define, even pervade politics from the exalted and respectable to the wretched and ludicrous. Myth analysis can be light of heart and foot without becoming inaccurate or disrespectful. The ethos and enterprise here amount to a playful formalism. The project is to try out mythic forms for the insights of pattern and the pleasures of recognition they can yield. Put the other way around, the purposes are fun and

learning. As I explain the mythic alternative, please keep in mind that – no more than the cowboy mythos – does it trivialize the reasons for war in Iraq, the sacrifices in its conduct, or the consequences from its outcome. The same holds for the challenges in international relations at a time when the USA is the only global superpower. When Roland Barthes can show how soap is sold through mythic associations with superhero powers, and Anne Norton can echo just about everybody in complaining that America sells its presidents like soap in political ads on television, spotting mythic figures in presidential administrations must be fair game.<sup>6</sup> Let us play this as a scholarly sport.

- 4 It is true that the second Bush administration partly reprises the first, as well as the earlier Ford administration. Donald Rumsfeld serves again as Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney shifts from powerful Chief of Staff to influential Vice President, George W. Bush moves from political point-man and son-in-waiting to President. The list of Bush family associates and retainers with major roles in Republican presidencies from Ford to 43, as Bush the father calls W, is longer; but Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld are the figures ripe for analysis here. (I leave the likes of Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Paul Wolfowitz for readers to ponder at their leisure. The game can be too gruesome for dinner conversation, given the mythos of the moment, but it turns out to fit perfectly into talk in the early evening, when the sun is about to set.<sup>7</sup> Atmosphere matters.)
- 5 Hence it is appropriate to borrow from the western to declare mythically that “The Bush Gang Rides Again,” as the subtitle suggests. Yet the question becomes: what kind of gang is it? Does it harken to the American Wild West of the late nineteenth century – with cowboys and Indians, gamblers, gunslingers, miners, sheriffs, cattle or railroad barons, ranchers, rustlers, and all the rest? Or does it appeal to the same period but draw instead from the European mythos of Dracula and other vampires? There are gangs of cowboys and others Out West, of course, but gangs also track vampires to mysterious locales like Transylvania. Many a movie has vampire hunters form gangs or teams to identify, find, and slay their villains. Dick Cheney might be a foreign-affairs cowboy, but the production and conduct of the war in Iraq show Donald Rumsfeld and George W. Bush to be more in the mode of vampire hunters.
- 6 Rumsfeld reminds me of Professor Abraham Van Helsing from Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, and Bush recalls the comic-book character Blade. These are the two vampire hunters best known from American cinema in the 1990s. The locus classicus for Dracula and his hunters is the novel by Bram Stoker.<sup>8</sup> But most people probably know Van Helsing from the quirky, charismatic portrayal by Anthony Hopkins in *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Played enigmatically but

charismatically by Wesley Snipes, Blade is familiar from the strong film of that name directed by Stephen Norrington (1998) and *Blade II* (2002), the weaker sequel from Guillermo del Toro. With apologies to viewers of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Vampire Hunter D, let me leave their analysis to people who know the television series and Japanese Anime better than I.

- 7 To explain how Bush and Rumsfeld have acted in foreign affairs as vampire hunters more than cowboys, I need to detail both types. To start with cowboys means out to start with Cheney. Evan Thomas notes for *Newsweek* that “Bush and Cheney are caricatured by Europeans, and not a few Americans, as ‘cowboys.’ The president, with his John Wayne ‘dead or alive’ metaphors, and the vice president, with his Gary Cooper terse-but-tough pronouncements, do sound like a couple of sheriffs, telling the bad guys they have ten minutes to come out of the bar or ‘we’re coming in to get you.’”<sup>9</sup> This is the cowboy as the plainspoken.<sup>10</sup> When Cheney endorses “the notion that the president is a cowboy,” this is what he has in mind: “I don’t think that’s necessarily a bad idea. I think the fact of the matter is, he cuts to the chase, he is very direct.”<sup>11</sup> Like many people, Cheney praises the parts of his own character that he meets in his colleague, Bush, who began as his mentee and became his boss. In comparison to the taciturn and laconic Cheney, Bush can seem downright excitable and loquacious. Cheney is known as brief, abrupt, sometimes painfully direct. Bush prizes a reputation as plainspoken; but he can be smoother, eloquent (with the help of speechwriters) on formal occasions, and often charming. By this first measure, it is Cheney – more than Bush – who is the cowboy.
- 8 People who talk about “cowboys” in politics typically mean gunfighters more than cow punchers, so consider Cheney specifically as the Lone Ranger. Cheney’s idea of foreign affairs has been to ride into town, impose his version of justice because nobody there has the strength or virtue for it, then move on. No nation-building for him. Just as Cheney stays somewhat behind the scenes, especially since 9/11, the Lone Ranger hides his personal identity behind the famous mask. As a gunslinger, the Lone Ranger has a faithful companion in Tonto (Bush), who is a “natural” in ways the gunslinger will never be and has established common cause with him.
- 9 As a group, gunslingers gravitate toward sensibilities of destiny, tragedy, even fatalism. The classicist Victor Hansen Davis professes admiration for “Cheney’s ‘tragic view of mankind,’ akin to the ancient Greeks.”<sup>12</sup> As “a man of few words,” however, “Cheney may have more in common with the Lone Ranger than Pericles. ‘It’s more Wyoming, the code of the West,’ said a top aide to the vice president. ‘It’s “You’re welcome around here, neighbor. But don’t run your cattle on my land. I’m not going to sit back for that.” Whether ancient Greece or Old West,” Thomas adds, “the vice president has a world view, and it is not the one shared by members of the East Coast

foreign-policy establishment, men and women of moderation who believe in reason and dialogue, who think that problems can be talked out. Cheney believes that the world is a dangerous place, that diplomacy can be a trap, that force is sometimes the only choice.”<sup>13</sup> The gunslinger shows in response the kind of courage we call backbone and the sort of physical energy we term zip. He is manly, a man’s man, even a mensch: each a term applied to Cheney. The gunslinger’s goal is to put a bullet between the eyes of the enemy. In the case of the Lone Ranger, it is a silver bullet, so maybe – mythically – he has just been waiting to join Blade in killing vampires: Blade’s vampires are hyper-allergic to silver, so he uses silver bullets too.

- 10 Gunslingers embrace the Hobbesian war of all against all in a State of Nature that lacks sovereign governance.<sup>14</sup> This condition is shared by the Wild West and the international realm.<sup>15</sup> Cheney thinks that “war is the natural state of mankind.”<sup>16</sup> Cheney, not Bush, is the Hobbesian. “With his strong religious faith,” says Thomas, “President Bush has a more upbeat, soul-saving Christian take on life than his somewhat Hobbesian vice president.”<sup>17</sup> The gunslinger senses sins and calculates interests, and this is the mode of realism apparent in Cheney’s politics. Inflected by Hobbes, it is an authoritarian mode of command at home more in business and military settings than electoral or legislative politics.
- 11 Bush declared in the 2000 campaign that his favorite political theorist is Jesus then called on Billy Graham in the wake of 9/11. Bush is a moralist, confronting Evil with the force of his personal convictions. The sensibility is romantic, not tragic; religious rather than militaristic, let alone business-like; medieval (especially feudal) more than classical. “Bush had something like a conversion experience after 9-11; he went from a politician who was glad, and perhaps a little surprised, to be president, to a war leader with a providential sense of duty and destiny.”<sup>18</sup> That week, before speechwriters could put words in his mouth, Bush vowed a “crusade” against terrorism. In that missionary spirit, his administration regards the Americans abroad from Afghanistan to Africa as “paladins of democracy.”<sup>19</sup> To people outside the United States, his international politics seem even more imperial than authoritarian.
- 12 Personally as well as politically, Bush has been depicted as the alpha male: at times, macho to the point of being a bully. His courage summons guts and balls, but his energy stems more from spiritual zeal. (On figural kinds of political energy, see **Figure 1**.) Beware if silver bullets are not enough to undo his enemies, because the blazing sunlight of his True Belief will burn them all to ash.
- 13 Who is this mythically? Not the Lone Ranger but Blade, who blends the gunslinger with the vampire hunter and the superhero to produce a vampire

killer of superhuman powers. He is the “day walker,” who knows the fallen enemy in his blood, but keeps himself from descending to that despicable level by force of will and dedication to his cause. Bush talks about his dissolute past that way, trumpeting his salvation by faith and the love of his strong-willed woman. Blade was born in vengeance. His crusade becomes to rid the world of the vampires, who prey on people and took his mother even as she was about to deliver him.

- 14 Infected from birth with the vampire craving for blood, Blade represses it chemically, but mainly he sublimates it to the cause of killing vampires. He does this with the technology and tutelage of Abraham Whistler, his mentor and eventual sidekick. Together Laura Bush and Dick Cheney can make a composite Whistler for Dubya. Nonetheless Blade is a loner in combat and clean-up operations, scorning most collaborators as feeble and deficient in moral fervor. In the first film, Blade finds himself cornered into working with Dr. Karen Jensen. More sophisticated by far than Blade, she is nonetheless all too human. Still she contributes crucial pieces of semi-reliable information to the cause, and her help in the ensuing battles is small but symbolic, making it hard to miss the parallels to Tony Blair and Britain.
- 15 Whistler wants to purge the world of vampires, but he works equally hard to make Blade safe for the world. This is the conventional challenge in taming superheroes to take advantage of their superpowers. Thus Ma and Pa Kent must raise Superman in Smallville for him to learn the commitment to “Truth, Justice, and the American Way.” Otherwise *Übermenschen* are not safe for humans, let alone democracies.<sup>20</sup> Blade, like Bush, can come across as an ordinary guy; but critics complain that he does not care enough about ordinary people.<sup>21</sup> Blade’s passion is to kill vampires; if he protects humans along the way, so be it. To make Blade constructive, Whistler must somehow keep him connected to humanity. With George Bush presiding over the world’s one superpower, and the Chief of State standing for the government and the country, the political challenge clear to Europeans – of keeping America safe for the world – comes readily to mind. Bush is Blade, the super-powered vampire killer, rather than a merely human slayer of vampires, because he is the President of the United States of America. Mythically Bush embodies the military, economic, and cultural super powers of the United States of America. For the earlier time that faced the self-proclaimed *Übermenschen* from Nazi Germany, he might have been Captain America; but now the enemies are more overtly vampirical, and Bush becomes Blade.
- 16 In the first *Blade*, Deacon Frost (Stephen Dorff) is the vampire who strikes at Blade’s mother just before she gives birth. Subsequent superpowers make Frost into the “Blood God,” a super-vampire to rule the world.



Undoing the Blood God becomes Blade's consuming passion and crowning feat. In our world, Saddam Hussein tried to assassinate the elder Bush in retaliation for the Gulf War. That along with Saddam's penchants for waging war and terror with weapons of mass destruction seem to have made undoing him into an overriding priority for the younger Bush. "Together, Bush and Cheney have presented an unwavering determination to rid the world of Saddam Hussein. Almost messianic in their conviction, Bush and most of his top advisers have frightened or perplexed their European allies and many opinion makers in the United States."<sup>22</sup> Bush and his administration cast Saddam as Dracula, *the* vampire. Earlier Saddam had been despicable but human. After 9/11, in a move mystifying to many outside the administration, Saddam became for Bush the demonic embodiment of Evil: preying cynically and outrageously on the people within his sinister reach.<sup>23</sup>

- 17 In words and deeds, the Bush administration in general and the President in particular came to treat Saddam far less as the ruthless authoritarian found in westerns than as the super-villain, the monster, straight from scenes of horror.<sup>24</sup> For Bush, Saddam's was not the outlaw regime of an oil baron, exploiting his people and invading others. Instead it was a totalitarian reign of terror that sucked his people dry and threatened the apocalyptic destruction of others. For Blade, vampires and the Blood God are outrages – as are terrorists and Saddam for Bush. Saddam often reinforced this myth-making by portraying himself in corresponding terms. He did not defend himself as an international vigilante, taking corrupted law into his own hands to protect Iraq against the lawless violence of others. He offered himself rather as a perfectionist prince, rising above mere law to show others the way. (**Figure 2** schematizes these contrasts for readers who enjoy a more formal analysis.)
- 18 For the Bush folks, the Saddam shell games with weapons of mass destruction mimicked the shape-shifting of Dracula: under frontal assault, that formidable figure disperses into a cloud of bats or a scurry of rats. Then it coalesces anew into a concerted threat on the other side of the room, the wall, the country. This feat shocks victims, rocks unprepared adversaries, and mocks unsophisticated heroes who foolishly take such a foe to be susceptible to diplomacy or defeat as usual. Dracula and the Blood God are no ordinary vampires, let alone ordinary villains. Merely to stymie such an enemy requires extraordinary determination, coordination, intelligence, virtue, strength, guile, and more. Actually to terminate such a perfectionist foe necessitates a coalition of heroes willing to heed a master of vampire lore and war: a Whistler or a Van Helsing. But it might also demand a superhero: enter Bush as Blade, with casting by Karl Rove.
- 19 (Terrorists, who stay permanently dispersed, can be a worse challenge still.

Striking from many angles at once, they bewilder as well as wound. Always already beheaded, they cannot be killed by a single stroke, no matter how swift or symbolic. Anyone who wants to be a superhero does better to face the Blood God or track Dracula to his lair than confront the myriad cells of al Qaeda or contest the caves of Tora Bora.)

- 20 For the second Bush administration, Saddam became not just any old demonized foe, but the Super-Vampire who coddled al Qaeda and who threatened the United States (and the world) with mass destruction. Down-home demonizing, such as likening Saddam to Hitler, as the regime of the senior George had done, could be good enough for liberating Kuwait. Apparently a more powerful motive would be needed for eradicating Saddam's rule in Iraq, especially with Usama bin Laden and his scattered minions drawing attention to many other parts of the globe. Nonetheless the administration of the junior George was equal to the task, even when it ran into unexpected opposition from Gulf War allies of the elder Bush.
- 21 These former allies, especially from what Rumsfeld calls "the Old Europe," participate in the vampire mythos. Had this episode occurred during the Cold War, Rumsfeld and colleagues would have excoriated France and Germany in particular as "fellow travelers" who give aid and comfort to enemies of America and the world. Not even Rumsfeld has wanted to condemn these continuing collaborators of America as full members of the company of vampires. (Think of the degenerate Vampire Theater – in France – as evoked by 1994's *Interview with the Vampire*.) It makes more sense, for the Bush administration, to view them as vamps: vampire sympathizers, tolerators, or wannabes. These effete easterners play with vampire familiars, if not the vampires themselves, becoming their minions. Many vamps revel in vampire chic. Others have become too sophisticated or world-weary for their own good: no longer able to see where evils start and Evil ensues. No wonder they want endlessly ineffective diplomacy rather than a final reckoning.
- 22 Even before there is a Blood God, Blade accosts the corrupt city as a conspiracy among vampires, vamps, familiars, and politicians. They make preying on humans into a cynical game. If vampires are the predators of the night, vamps are their twilight enablers. Vamp raves, salons, nightclubs, and other cultivated diversions lure unsuspecting people and set them up for the kill. As Blade sees vamps, and the Bush administration portrays Europeans, they are machiavellian manipulators who sell ideals for profit. They are craven practitioners of Realpolitick, who put narrow and momentary interests of trade or state ahead of defending humanity against terrible troubles. Only proximate outcomes matter to them; they show no compunctions about means.



- 23 As vamps, by the reckoning of Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld, the French and Germans literally de-moralize. They diminish goods and evils into mere contrasts to be savored: *vive la différence*. Stylish European vamps leech the mental energy of others and convert it into wiles of seduction. Their cunning is sharp and circuitous, their action dilatory and deceptive, their honor so refined and gentled that they might as well be dandies. In fact, many are. (If “vamps” are vaguely female by gender, then “dandies” are pretty much their male counterparts.)
- 24 The one notorious for denouncing Europeans this way is Donald Rumsfeld. Even in his seventies, the Secretary of Defense has made himself the television equivalent of a matinee idol through dashing midday briefings on American military operations around the world. To cross storylines but stay within roles, Rumsfeld is the generally suave, occasionally crass, but always virile man of modern science, technology, and intellect: Van Helsing, the vampire slayer. I say “slayer,” and not simply vampire “killer” as with Blade, because vampire slayers seem to relish the contest with their opponents as a test of invention, discipline, and audacity. Blade is more a no-nonsense executioner when it comes to vampires.
- 25 Van Helsing seems to relish almost everything. He is the sort of nineteenth-century enthusiast of science poised on the edge between genius and crank. His implicit politics seem republican, likewise poised on the edge between virtuosity and imperialism. Brimming vitality makes Van Helsing charismatic; and his zest for the hunt is elemental, biological. Yet he has a clinical, analytical eye for the evils and operations of the super-vermin he has vowed to purge. In striking contrast to the laconic gunslinger and the plainspoken vampire killer, Van Helsing is voluble, even glib. All this reads like a review of a Rumsfeld press conference. On television, Rummy notoriously comes across as a Type-A personality and then some. As Gary Trudeau jokes in *Doonesbury*, Rumsfeld doesn't just finish other people's sentences for them; he poses the questions for them, pre-emptively, before he answers them forcefully and often dismissively.
- 26 Van Helsing organizes, goads, and outshines the three suitors to Lucy Westenra, turning them into a team that rides to the rescue of heroine Mina Harker. The resemblance is uncanny to relations between Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff as titular heads of the three branches of America's military forces. Like Van Helsing, Rumsfeld appears congenitally pragmatic and optimistic, confident of overcoming troubles that intervene before a happy, comedic outcome. Their mission is to protect civilization against the outré, the offensively improper. To make good on that mission, they go so far as to stalk the night, Van Helsing literally and Rumsfeld figuratively with night-time raids to strike at Saddam and his sons. To slay vampires, Van Helsing pounds wooden stakes through their hearts and cuts off their

heads. To slay terrorist regimes, Rumsfeld pounds the soldiers with bombs to shock, awe, and dishearten them, even as he conducts decapitation campaigns against their political and military leaders. In myth, Rumsfeld is Van Helsing: the first of the fully modern, laboratory-tested, politically disciplined, technologically enhanced vampire slayers. He is exactly the comrade in arms suited to Blade as he dispatches the Blood God then returns to ridding the world of vampires, if not vamps. (The full argument appears in formal terms in **Figure 3**.)

- 27 A critic of Bush might complain that comparing George W. to a cowboy in foreign affairs is enough to give cowboys a bad name. A defender of Bush might be pleased at the comparison. An apostate Texan of my acquaintance says that the cowboy connection is figural shorthand for the political culture of Texas. Before we mess with Texas, though, maybe we should let cowboys *and* Texans off the mythic hook. Where the Bush administration operates in foreign affairs, let the sign say instead:

Vampire Killers at Work.

**Figure 1: Kinds of Political Energy**

<b>players</b>	<b>Cheney</b>	<b>Rumsfeld</b>	<b>Bush</b>	<b>The French</b>
<b>characters</b>	cowboy	vampire slayer	vampire killer	easterners
<b>exemplars</b>	Lone Ranger	Van Helsing	Blade	Vamps
<b>energy principles</b>	<b>zip</b>	<b>zest</b>	<b>zeal</b>	<b>Zen</b>
<b>logical levels</b>	mechanical	biological	spiritual	mental
<b>personal modes</b>	physical	visceral	moral	intellectual
<b>cultural manifestations</b>	force	vitality	enthusiasm	(self-) possession
<b>political powers</b>	coercion	charisma	grace	seduction

**Figure 2: Saddam's Villainy**

<b>identities</b>	Saddam the Dictator	Saddam the Demon
<b>rulers</b>	oil baron	Dracula
<b>realms</b>	outlaw regime	totalitarian reign of terror
<b>activities</b>	oppressing his own people and invading others	terrorizing his own people and sucking them dry
<b>politics</b>	authoritarianism	perfectionism
<b>motives</b>	vengeance	reckoning
<b>roles</b>	vigilante	quasi-aristocratic prince
<b>acts</b>	taking the law into his own hands	putting himself above the law
<b>crimes</b>	extralegal	superlegal
<b>modes</b>	violation	predation
<b>statuses</b>	outlaw	monster
<b>resources</b>	violence	superpowers

**Figure 3: Cowboys, Vampire Hunters, and Vamps**

<b>players</b>	<b>Dick Cheney</b>	<b>Donald Rumsfeld</b>	<b>George W. Bush</b>	<b>The French</b>
<b>characters</b>	cowboy	vampire slayer	vampire killer	easterners
<b>exemplars</b>	Lone Ranger	Van Helsing	Blade	vamps
<b>figures</b>	gun slinger	night stalker	day walker	fellow travellers
<b>sidekicks</b>	Tonto	Three Suitors	Whistler	familiars
<b>relations</b>	companion	aides	mentor	minions
<b>allegories</b>	Bush	Joint Chiefs	Blair	Old Europeans

<b>weapons</b>	silver bullets	stakes (in the heart) and decapitation	silver bullets and sunlight	dark blood (oil?)
<b>sites</b>	trail in the wild	laboratory	factory	salon
<b>settings</b>	sunset	night	day	twilight
<b>genres</b>	western	horror	western horror	western horror
<b>motives</b>	interests and sins	evils	Evil	perspectives
<b>words</b>	laconic unto taciturn	voluble, even glib	plain-spoken	sophisticated
<b>actions</b>	determined	disciplined	dedicated	dilatory
<b>periods</b>	classical	modern	medieval	postmodern
<b>sources</b>	business	science	religion	politics
<b>practices</b>	military	technology	crusade	diplomacy
<b>energies</b>	zip	zest	zeal	Zen
<b>trajectories</b>	fate	vocation	destiny	fortune
<b>rationalities</b>	calculation	intellection	conviction	cunning
<b>masculinities</b>	manly: a man's man, even a mensch	virile: a woman's man, even a heartthrob	macho: an alpha male, even a bully	gentlemanly: a gentled man, even a dandy
<b>plots</b>	tragedy	comedy	romance	satire
<b>politics</b>	authoritarianism	republicanism	imperialism	cynicism
<b>theorists</b>	Hobbes	Arendt	Graham	Machiavelli
<b>principles</b>	realism	pragmatism	moralism	Realpolitick
<b>ambitions</b>	backbone	audacity	balls or guts	craven profit
<b>ambiences</b>	war	totalitarianism	terrorism	difference

<b>projects</b>	justice	protection	reckoning	leeching
<b>targets</b>	outlaws	outrés	outrages	outcomes

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## Notes

- 1** George W. Bush, Quoted in “Perspectives,” *Newsweek*, 142, 2, July 14, 2003, p. 23.
- 2** See H. Mark Roelofs, *Ideology and Myth in American Politics*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1976; James Oliver Robertson, *American Myth, American Reality*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1980; Bruce Miroff, *Icons of Democracy*, New York, Basic Books, 1993.
- 3** See Susan Sontag: *Against Interpretation*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966; *Illness as Metaphor*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978; *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989.
- 4** See Henry Tudor, *Political Myth*, New York, Praeger, 1972. Also see John S. Nelson: “Orwell’s Political Myths and Ours,” *The Orwellian Moment*, Robert L. Savage, James E. Combs, and Dan D. Nimmo, eds., Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 1989, pp. 11-44; *Tropes of Politics*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, pp. 99-204.
- 5** See John S. Nelson: “Political Mythmaking for Postmoderns,” *Spheres of Argument*, Bruce E. Gronbeck, ed., Annandale, VA, Speech Communication Association, 1989, pp. 175-183; “Reading Films Through Political Classics,” *Politiikka*, 4, 1998, pp. 286-296. Also see John S. Nelson and G. R. Boynton, *Video Rhetorics*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1997, pp. 195-232.
- 6** See Roland Barthes, “Soap-powers and Detergents,” *Mythologies*, Annette Lavers, trans., New York, Hill and Wang, (1957), 1972, pp. 36-38. Also see Anne Norton, “The President as Sign,” *Republic of Signs*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 87-121, on pp. 113-119.
- 7** On the contrasting significance of sunsets for western and vampire politics, see John S. Nelson: *Cowboy Politics: Post-Modern Crafts and Cultures of Myth-Making in Popular Westerns*, unpublished manuscript; *Deliver Us from Evils: The Politics of Popular Horror*, unpublished manuscript.

- 8 See Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, New York, Penguin Books, (1897), 1992.
- 9 Evan Thomas, "The Twelve-Year Itch," *Newsweek*, 141, 13, March 31, 2003, pp. 54-65, on p. 56.
- 10 The plain speech of cowboys comes from Indians: see Robert M. Pirsig, *Lila*, New York, Bantam Books, 1991, pp. 30-48. With Cheney as the Lone Ranger, Tonto becomes Bush, as the next paragraph acknowledges.
- 11 Thomas, "The Twelve-Year Itch," p. 56.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 14 See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Michael Oakeshott, ed., New York, Collier Books, 1962. Also see John S. Nelson: "The Surprising Politics of Popular Westerns" and "The Western Culture of Honor, Interest, and Character," papers for the annual meeting of the Foundations of Political Theory Workshop on Political Myth, Rhetoric, and Symbolism, 1993.
- 15 See John S. Nelson, "John le Carré and the Postmodern Myth of the State," *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, 3, 1999, pp. 100-131.
- 16 See Thomas, "The Twelve-Year Itch," p. 55.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 19 See Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, New York, Wiley, 2003.
- 20 See John S. Nelson, "Noir and Forever: Politics As If Hollywood Were Everywhere," paper for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, 2001. Also see John S. Nelson and Anna Lorien Nelson, "Greening Nietzsche: Perfectionist Politics from *Fight Club* to *Magnolia*," paper for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, 2002.
- 21 See Jonathan Alter, "'Let Them Eat Cake' Economics," *Newsweek*, 142, 4, July 28, 2003, p. 36: "Bush is a regular guy who doesn't care a whole lot about regular people."
- 22 Thomas, "The Twelve-Year Itch," p. 56.
- 23 See Paul Oppenheimer, *Evil and the Demonic*, New York, New York



University Press, 1996.

<sup>24</sup> See John S. Nelson, "Horror Films Face Political Evils in Everyday Life," *Political Communication*, 21, forthcoming.