

Haig's Oration

By William Safire

Haig: Friends, liberals, civilians, lend me your ears;
 I come to bury Nixon, not to praise him.
 The good that Presidents do lives after them;
 The evil can be interred with their tapes;
 So let it be with Nixon. The noble Elliot
 Hath told you Nixon was ambitious;
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
 And grievously hath Nixon answer'd it.
 He hath brought prosperity without war,
 Whose revenues did the general coffers fill;
 Did this in Nixon seem ambitious?
 When the aggressed-against have cried, Nixon hath wept:
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
 Yet critics say he was ambitious;
 And critics are all honorable men.
 I speak not to disprove what Elliot spoke
 But here I am to speak what I do know.
 Sixty-eight per cent did love him once, not without cause:
 What cause withholds you then to stick with him?
 O judgment! Thou art fled to editorial writers
 And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
 My heart is in the West wing there with Nixon
 And I must pause ere it come back to me.

First Citizen: Poor soul! His eyes are red as fire with weeping.

Second Citizen: There's not a nobler man in Washington than Al Haig.
 Mark him, he begins again—

Haig: But yesterday the word of Nixon might
 Have stood against the world: Now lies he there,
 And none so poor to do him reverence.
 If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
 You all do know this overcoat: I remember
 the first time ever Nixon put it on;
 'Twas on the trip to Peking, visiting the Great Wall,
 Ten days that changed the world:
 See what a rent the envious Muskie made:
 Through this well-beloved Elliot Stabb'd;
 For Elliot, as you know, was Nixon's angel:
 Judge, o you gods, how often Nixon appointed him!
 That was the most unkindest cut of all;
 For when the noble Nixon saw Elliot's stab
 On television, watched his friend refuse to say impeachment nay,
 That vanquished him; then burst his mighty resolve,
 And, gathering up his innocent tapes,
 He made poor Wright accept Sirica's wrong,
 And our Commander in Chief, Great Nixon, folded.
 O, what a folding was there, my countrymen!
 Whilst the glee of elitist media flourished o'er us.

First Citizen: O piteous spectacle!

Second Citizen: Peace there, hear the noble Haig.

Haig: Moreover, he plans to leave you all his walks,
 His private arbors and new-planted orchards
 At San Clemente and Biscayne; he will leave them to you
 And to your heirs for ever, common pleasures,
 To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.
 Here was a Nixon! When comes such another?
 O, the Cox-men who have done this deed are honorable:
 What private griefs they have, alas, I know not.
 I am no orator, as Elliot is,
 But all my life a plain military man
 That follows my leader; but were I Elliot,
 And Elliot Haig, there were a Haig
 Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
 In every wound of Nixon that should move
 The silent majority to split the heavens with a roar!

First Citizen: O Noble Nixon! We'll revenge his abasement!

Second Citizen: Impeach the would-be impeachers
 Exeunt.

Haig: How let it work. Resentment, thou art afoot.
 Take thou what course thou wilt!