

>> Welcome to Uncommon Knowledge, I'm Peter Robinson. Andrew Klavan, my guest today, was born in New York City, grew up on Long Island, and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. Andrew is the author of many novels including True Crime, which was made into a movie starring Clint Eastwood, extremely cool, and Don't Say a Word, which was made into a movie with Michael Douglas; also very cool. Andrew Klavan's most recent novel, Empire of Lies; Andrew Klavan, thank you very much for joining me.

>> A pleasure.

>> Empire of Lies from the dust jacket copy, which is a pretty good copy but who wrote that? Did you write it? You did? Okay, you always wanted to rewrite ... sustained by a deep religious faith, Jason Harrow your hero, has built a stable family and become a pillar of principle and patriotism in the Midwest. Then the phone rings, this is gorgeous - then the phone rings and his past is on the other end of the line. Returning to New York City, Jason finds himself entangled in a murderous conspiracy only he can see and only he can stop. Now, Empire of Lies has been getting a lot of attention because you take what in some ways is a straightforward, gritty, crime novel and make your hero explicitly Christian, a believing Christian, a Christian who talks about it, first person novel, and he talks about his faith. If your hero had been completely secular, the plot would have had as many twists, the climactic scene would have been just as gripping. Why did you make him religious?

>> It was the questions that the novel put forward and the story, the whole thing about building a story like this is, what character do you put in the story to make it come to life? If you put a fellow in Hamlet, the play is over in 2 minutes. If you put Hamlet in the play never ends, you have to find the right character for the story. This story raises certain questions about faith, the nature of faith, and the nature of faith as it underlies civilization, and those are the questions that Jason Harrow has to come to terms with as he deals with questions of reality. This is a man who had a very difficult past, a very degraded past, and who feels that he was changed and made new by God. And one of the questions that the novel asks, is how legitimate is that salvation, how durable is that salvation, and how will it stand up against the questions of reality? What is reality? Who am I, as far as reality? And so it seemed important to me that that would bring out the depths of the story.

>> Okay, if one thinks of Christian novels, one thinks of The Chronicles of Narnia or the Left Behind books; these are books that could be made into movies by Walden Media.

>> Right.

>> Family entertainment. Empire of Lies has pretty rough language, frank discussion of sex, and from the moment Jason Harrow the hero leaves the Midwest, which is a kind of Eden for him, and is drawn back into his former haunts in New York City, the atmosphere is pervasively dark and threatening and I guess from the audience's point of

view or from the point of view ... you're really mixing genres. Are you doing that to have fun or is the way you work, you start with a character and see what happens?

>> I don't consider it mixing genres. I do simply with the genre that I've never seen anybody else do. It's my own specific trademark and my own specific brand of thriller. But I don't consider the genre to be limited in the usual way; it is limited by its necessity to thrill. It should thrill, it should carry you along, it should move like a bullet. But the thriller genre is really perfectly set up to deal with certain important ideas that are at the center of the Western idea of the individual; what is reality and who am I and how do I know? Those are questions that can be asked in a thriller with a great deal of suspense and entertainment. And so I don't consider that mixing genres. The thing that does come across to people as a little shocking and throws them back on their heels, is that combination that you mentioned before of a Christian man; having the kinds of thoughts that he has and having the kind of past that he has. And that grows up out of my own experience of Atheism, and as a much younger man and reading Atheist books and coming upon the works of The Marquis Descant, and as I was reading The Works of the Marquis Descant, he was a philosopher, pornographic philosopher, but a philosopher nonetheless; and I was struck I remember, by the fact that that was the only honest Atheist philosophy I'd ever read. It was the only philosophy that hung completely together and that was for me, the world. It was at that moment when I saw where I thought Atheism naturally led and started to recoil from it. And so in Jason Harrow's trip from Atheism to faith, I take him through that rather degraded and frightening territory, and it would have been dishonest to leave it out and it would have been dishonest to think that upon finding faith, it was all washed away and his mind became squeaky clean.

>> I want to get to your political view ... I want to get to a lot of topics but one more specific to the novel, which is that as I said, the Eden, the idealic first opening is set in a suburbia in the Midwest, he's drawn back into New York City which is gritty and dark and oppressive and threatening, and drawn up in a ... discovers a conspiracy which involves Islamic radicalism and it turns out that the ... well since we're talking about genres I suppose I can use the term 'the mastermind' of the conspiracy, is in a major university.

>> Yes.

>> And so this strikes me as a little odd, you're a Berkeley man, you're a father in law, Thomas Flannigan, a very fine and famous and accomplished novelist, was it, that taught in the English department at Cal Berkeley for a number of ... there's every reason for you to feel perfectly at home in the setting of an elite university and that when an elite university shows up in this novel, it is a well, wicked ... there's lots of bad stuff, it's a nexus of bad stuff. Now does that strike you as unrealistic?

>> I have to say that it is really observation and especially the kinds of universities that I'm dealing with. What Harrow sees in the university is he sees the core of a kind of soft terrorism, a terrorism of ideas, a way of dismantling the things that we have built in our tradition from the bottom, in a soft way, in a kind of reasonable way, in a way of

misusing reason to destroy reason, and he has this kind of nightmarish experience where the kind of violent terrorism and this soft, quiet terrorism can clash in together in his mind and he has a vision almost, of what this is doing to this society, this country that he loves.

>> I want to get to the political, Andrew Klavan. You wrote last year in City Journal, in an article entitled The Big White Lie I think it was, White Lies. "Leftism has outlives its own failure by hiding itself within the most laboring construct of social delicacy since Victoria was queen." Explain that.

>> It seems to me that in the period that we will loosely say, the summer of love, the fall of the Berlin wall, an argument was brought forward that western civilization was in error. Western civ had to go, that we were wrong on every count, on our Judeo-Christian tradition, on our tradition of personal liberty, capitalism certainly was ... it seems to me that argument has failed spectacularly in every way, every aspect. And so now when you're dealing with an argument, when you're holding onto a philosophy that has failed, what have you got left? All you have left is insult and ridicule and a sort of putting borders around what can be said. They call it political correctness but that doesn't quite cover it does it? Whenever ...

>> It's intimidation.

>> Its intimidation, it is, it is, it's bullying and intimidation and it works through politeness. It doesn't work really through people burning books or shouting or throwing bricks through our window, it works by making you a pariah, by expressing when you express your beliefs. So people say you're a racist, you're a sexist, that's disgusting, that's ... how could you say, it's unacceptable. And they have built this up and what really frightens me and kind of annoys me is that the right has to some degree taken this onboard and has started to speak in these kind of 'I don't mean to sound like a racist but', and I think that that needs to be rejected. I think we need to speak out and in the plain understanding that we are not racists or sexists or ...

>> Were you a conservative when you were at Berkeley - what was it, the early 70's?

>> No, I was ... it's hard to explain to people who are not in the arts, how completely leftism during this period of time was the atmosphere you breathed, was the water you swam. I was always a disgruntled liberal. I always knew something was wrong and I could pick out thing along the way that just drove me crazy. I mean, I remember affirmative action, just thinking this is a dead end in terms of fault in terms of the ability to think. But it never occurred to me that the air I was breathing was wrong.

>> It was so comprehensively wrong.

>> Yes, it was a thing in the matrix. Remember the movie The Matrix? It was like a complete imitation of reality but you really had to start to poke your finger through and

start to see outside that there was another reality that you could have. So I was really, would have called myself a liberal, almost to the fall of the Berlin wall.

>> The fall of the Berlin wall, so right through 1989 ... so you have been now out, conservative, for a decade or so.

>> Yes.

>> Okay, alright. Now you're on Andrew Klavan dot com which is why I'm gonna hold this book up at least once a segment, which is a good place to go to read reviews of Empire of Lies, your latest book. You have posted a review of this book that was carried by the Associated Press and which is too wonderful not to quote out loud, so listen to this. "Through his hero, Klavan tells us among other things that the entire media is a left wing conspiracy, that taxes steal from the rich to give to the poor, that America is in a holy war with Islam, that the truth about darned near everything in the United States is obscured by a blizzard of politically correct lies, and that anyone who disagrees with him, is diluted." To which you, Andrew Klavan, have posted this reply: "Uh Yeah, and?" Okay, do you really mean that? You really mean uh yeah or do you subscribe to everything they charge you, accuse you, of subscribing to?

>> Well first of all as you know from reading the book, the hero is not an entirely reliable narrator. He's a man who himself is wondering whether he's going mad. He questions himself every step of the way and to me the questioning is part of our great western tradition, but I think we're in danger of losing that self critical question. So the idea that anybody who disagrees with the hero is somehow diluted or corrupt, no of course I don't believe that at all. But I do think he puts forward, the hero puts forward, a fairly legitimate and comprehensive view of the situation we're in, and especially the situation which I think is very much under covered and under thought about - that we are in an argument about spirituality. You're in an argument, a violent argument. This war on terror is a violent argument about God and I think that that is the thing that he puts forward, the hero puts forward, that makes him a pariah.

>> A pariah to the viewers of the Associated Press?

>> Yes and to the people in the book ...

>> Now, I'm gonna move to spiritual questions in a moment but this book is called Empire of Lies. Your article in the City Journal of last year was entitled The Big White Lie. You say this reviewer accuses you of claiming that darn near everything obscured by a blizzard of politically correct lies; lies, lies, lies. The question is, how do you explain this preference, at least in a elite culture, in universities, in the arts, in the world where you've spend a lot of your time living, the preference for lies, for unreality, are the reality.

>> I think to begin with you have to go back to the idea that so many of the things that they put forward failed, so many of the ideas that they put forward failed. What we saw,

a generation, a single generation in which materialists, communists, atheist governments destroyed more lives than all religions put together ever, in a single generation. Now when you're left with that, you either have to look in the mirror and say 'uh-oh I've missed the target rather badly here' or you have to start paddling really hard, and you have to create an illusionary world; a world of illusion in which what you're saying makes some kind of sense, and that's what I think political correctness is and that's why I think the political correctness is so offensive. If there's one thing that is urgently important in a world where individuals are respected, it's a respect also for authenticity that a man should be what he seems to be. Political correctness is almost, it comes very close to legislating in authentic behavior. It tells you what you must think and what you must say in order to be good, and that is essentially telling people to lie because if we can't explore our thoughts, if we can't speak our feelings without being completely ostracized, how can we ever reach that place of authenticity? So I do believe, I do believe that we have attached or at least the left and the media especially, has attached a sort of virtue to being inauthentic through political correctness. I just think it's deeply, deeply offensive and destructive.

>> Segment 3: faith. Some guys including you, you said this in a recent interview, some guys are born where they want to be; Catholic, Jewish, Baptist, whatever. " My life has been more like one of those outward bound programs where they drop you far from home and you have to make your way back with a piece of string and a matchbook." Explain.

>> Well I was born a Jew in a household of ... we were raised in the Jewish faith, but without faith. We were essentially told this is nonsense but you must learn it, it's part of the tradition. When I was Bar mitzvent, I felt a terrible sense of shame, a deep sense of shame that I was speaking words and speaking myself into a tradition that I knew I didn't accept; that I knew I didn't believe in. At the time where I grew up, you were given a lot of jewelry at your Bar mitzvah and I received what must have been thousands of dollars worth of gold bracelets and pins and money clips and I put them all in a jewelry box, I'd never worn much jewelry and I'd just take it out occasionally and admire it. And about 6 months went by and the crushing sense of dishonesty and shame finally reached me and I waited one night until everyone went to sleep and I took this jewelry box downstairs and stuffed it into the outward bound garbage, I can remember till this day the feel of the washed up eggs and coffee grounds and my hands were buried so nobody would see I threw this jewelry away, and that was for me to be the end of my relationship with God because I didn't want to be in love with anything that made me feel that inauthentic, that dishonest. And so that's a long journey to make to Christianity. That's a place where your Christianity isn't the light at the end of the tunnel.

>> So you were raised effectively, it wasn't Judaism per se that you were rejecting, it was the entire notion of God, it was ...

>> I made the mistake which I see many, many people make including Atheists as famous as Richard Dawkins. I call it the Santa Claus mistake, they discover there's no Santa Claus so they think there's no Christmas, and I had discovered that this rather rotten foundation, for me, of a belief system that you were supposed to subscribe to without

believing in it. And in my family, obviously this is not about Judaism in general; I'm talking about the way it was taught to me. And so I kind of thought I'm through with all of this, maybe there's a God, maybe there's not but certainly not in any kind of religious, certainly not in any as I said, organized religion.

>> You wrote in the Wall Street Journal a couple of years ago "the presumption of Atheism precedes without respect for the human experience of God". Tell me what you mean by both terms: the human experience of God and the presumption of Atheism.

>> Well this is for me, central to the entire conversation. Let me tell you a dirty story. You look like you're over 18.

>> Apparently.

>> When I first moved with the woman who's now my wife, into a brownstone in Manhattan, I was on a narrow street on the left side and you could see through all the windows of the apartment across the way, and a young couple moved in, put their bed next to the window, and proceeded to make love with the curtains open throughout the day. And I of course being the ...

>> It was hard to do any writing?

>> It was hard to do anything, and I remember looking at this and thinking 'this looks with vigor, quite an attractive couple, they look kind of ridiculous', and it looked obscene would be the only thing, and I one day said to my then girlfriend 'look at the things that they do' and she said 'but we do all those things'. And of course I realized that sex and everything are given meaning of the internal experience, which has no material nature. It may arise out of our material and may arise out of our flesh, but that internal experience of life, that individual human experience of life which is immaterial ultimately, is what sanctifies our lives, all of our most important actions. Without it, everything turns into a kind of pornography, not just sex almost everything.

>> Just moving meat.

>> Yes exactly, meat puppets. And I feel that the presumption of Atheism, which has become a presumption of our intellectual conversations.

>> That is to say presuming that Atheism is the accepted position.

>> It is the default position of our intelligence.

>> Alright, it is the burden of proof or the burden of conversation, rests on the believer. That's what you mean by the presumption?

>> Yes, and I think that in fact the exact opposite is true. I think that the burden of proof that this experience means nothing rest entirely with the Atheists. And that that

experience is difficult to know, difficult to define, difficult to put borders on, all of that's true. But that it's nonexistent, that it's unimportant, that it is not part of what we're doing here, the urgent part I would say of what we're doing here, that's gotta be a mistake. It has to be a mistake.

>> We'll gallop now through a couple thousand years of theology in a minute and a half. I just want to see what you do with Christopher Hitchens, he was a highly accomplished writer, very clever, and frankly to me an irresistible man, a lovely man, mistaken on a few large points. You sort of have to contend with Christopher. Hitchens writes "of the exorbitant" this is a criticism of Christianity specifically, not belief but Christian belief, "the exorbitant fantasy of forgiveness whereby one's own responsibilities can be thrown onto a scapegoat and thereby taken away. In my book", Hitchen's book, "I argue that I can pay your debt or even take your place in prison but I cannot absolve you of what you actually did". The fantasy of forgiveness.

>> No, I think he's got it wrong. First of all he's starting from the wrong place, he's thinking of evil deeds for which we can be forgiven, but I think if you read Genesis carefully it really puts forward the notion that there is a sense of shame inherent in being a human being, and that is what part of what the 60's were about, is we're no longer going to feel guilt, we're just going to be free and we're going to love freely. And of course it didn't work. Why doesn't it work? Well because inherent and the knowledge of good and evil, inherent in consciousness and self consciousness, is a weird sense of shame that we are also meat puppets, that we are also these objects being moved about by nature. It's not necessarily our evil deeds that we are asking to be forgiven for, it's our humanity.

>> Okay, and forgiveness is not a fantasy. You can take everything you just said and the answer might be, and therefore we invent the notion of forgiveness so that we can live with ourselves.

>> Of course, you could always make that argument. That was one of these stations ... on my road to faith it was that you can always make that argument that you can never know, you can never know that you're not going down that road. That's why it's called faith instead of knowledge, you actually in the atmosphere of unknowing, in the knowledge of unknowing, you make the decision to believe. You don't make the decision to believe because you saw a big finger come out of the sky and write, maybe you did, I never did. You make the decision to believe and then you see how you made that decision whether your concept of reality becomes untenable, and my experience is exactly the opposite. Having made the decision to believe, I feel that I understand reality far better. I feel that my insides are closer to the bone and heart.

>> Segment 4: from the sublime to the ridiculous - Hollywood. Two of your novels, two crime, and don't say a word, have been turned into movies and you wrote a screen play for a third movie, a shock to the system which starred Michael Caine, which is the coolest of all. He's just unbelievable, and yet you wrote of the motion picture industry this past summer than you are "ashamed of the industry". Go ahead and explain that.

>> Well it really has to do ... first of all I believe that people should believe what they believe and express what they have to express. However, we are in a specific situation which is that we're at war, and we're at war with people who seriously want to destroy us and our soldiers, our mother's sons, are out in a field fighting a specific kind of war which is a war of counterinsurgency. In that war, and I actually went to Afghanistan, was embedded for 2 weeks because of ...

>> Have you written about that yet?

>> I just finished the article, City Journal, hasn't come out yet. In a war of counterinsurgency where the most important things they have to develop is good will with the natives, the people who are not the terrorists. You have to establish good will between our guys and through our guys, the central government that we hope will come in and replace the outlaw government that we chased out, right? To make films which are beautifully done propaganda instruments for the enemy, is an act of wickedness. I don't think the people who do it are wicked, I don't think they're evil, I don't think they're saying 'oh boy we're gonna get our soldiers killed, we're gonna make it harder for ...', I think that they're living in a narcissistic fantasy of where they are doing something heroic, where our soldiers are fools being abused by the open circuit of madmen. I think that that is ... I don't want to say it's unacceptable because I'm not a sensor, I don't want people to stop, I think morally they're making the wrong choice and I think they should make another choice.

>> I want you to explain what they're doing a little bit further. You, in an article you wrote for the City Journal, quite a long piece in which you reviewed a bunch of films that have come out in the last 18 months or so, and you drew the comparison, which all of us feel, between Frank Capra as a Sicilian immigrant who became a profound American patriot and produced films which were critical of aspects of American society. It's a Wonderful Life, there's a sharp edge towards capitalism, but it's fundamentally embracing of American values. You talk about Jimmy Stewart who signed up and flew missions during the second World War.

>> These people are patriots.

>> And then you talk about Oliver Stone who served in Vietnam and had a horrifying experience and then produces Platoon. And the notion here is that Frank Capra and Jimmy Stewart believed in America and along came the next generation, the Vietnam experience, it was disillusioning. I can understand all that because in those days there were reasons, you could have a good long argument about whether we ought to have gotten into Vietnam, you could still have a good long argument about capital ... A - now the arguments are over as you pointed out, but B - nobody in Los Angeles, you know the town better than I do, but nobody in Los Angeles feels sympathy toward the views of radical Islam. So what do they think they're doing? I mean I can understand the anti ... I can understand the 60's and 70's, early 80's even, but I can't understand the motivation now.

>> Well one of the things that happened on 9 - 11, I mean with the upsurge in radicalism with it's forcing itself upon our consciousness, is multiculturalism, the logic behind multiculturalism, was destroyed, was obliterated. This idea that all cultures are the same - if we can only understand that all cultures are equally worthy, we would stop fighting. This song, this jangling ditty that I despise, that John Lennon's Imagine, of this idea that if we could just get rid of all the things that make us human we wouldn't have to fight. Well that's true but it's a philosophy of a cow. I mean, you sit and you have nothing to love, nothing to bring out yourself or the best in yourself.

>> Now you've gone too far Klavan, now you've attacked John Lennon.

>> So even though you say they don't agree with radical Islam, they refuse to see radical Islam. What they see is the usual blame America, it's our fault, it's our nemesis, it's the pay back for our western sins. And to be honest with you, to be honest with you, the generation of the 60's, the guys like Oliver Stone, came by that idea on their own.

>> He was being authentic.

>> He was being authentic. I disagreed with him then, I disagree with him now but it was an authentic idea even though it was kind of stolen from a European notion. These guys are frauds, to me. They are making movies that are about Vietnam, the reason I went to Afghanistan is I thought I have to be able to say this authentically, I have to be able ... I have to be able to say that all armed forces are no longer that force of draftees flown into a war they didn't completely understand. Every single one of our soldiers signed up or re-signed up after 9 - 11. The term, the longest one was 6 years, so every single one signed up after 9 - 11, every single one knew where he was going, what was going to happen to him, and has an idea of why it's the right thing to do. Those guys cannot appear in the movies. And you know, it wouldn't bother me so much, the movies that Hollywood makes never bother me so much as the movies they don't make. If there were 8 films attacking our troops, I would still despise them for making them during war time. But if there were 8 films supporting our troops, I know that those films would win out with the audience and I know their arguments would be better and I know the depiction of life would be more realistic.

>> Last question in this segment: do you get the feeling that Hollywood today, this notion that the arts are always on the avant-garde or the cutting edge?

>> My feeling is that's nonsense, at the present hour they are a lagging indicator. You could parachute into Kansas, anywhere in Kansas, walk into the nearest diner and find people who have a much more acute grip of reality than you could by strolling up and down Welcher boulevard.

>> No question about it.

>> And so is it purely a question of time? All these studio heads that are in their 60's, they're gonna retire soon, but my view would be let's buy them places in Switzerland and let them go.

>> In other words, is there going to be just kind of a healthy turnover or is there more a kind of enduring ideological fight that has to be fought?

>> I'm very optimistic. I think there is an enduring ideological fight that has to be fought. I think the reason they're a lagging indicator, perfect phrase for them because they are straight jacketed by their ideology, they're the most conformist group of people, backward group of people you can imagine. But we conservatives have let them get away with this. I've said this again and again, if you win the White House, if you win the Congress, if you win the Supreme Court and lose the culture, you'll lose the country. It is the culture that, Shelby was right, the poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. It will take a longer time, but if you lose the culture, if you let them drip this poison into the consciousness of America, forever they will win. And I think it really is going to require, I'm very optimistic about it, is going to require an effort to take the culture back from these people who are, as you say, conformists, backward, being in the ideology a generation ago.

>> Final segment: politics and the culture. I'm going to read to you something that you put in the Wallstreet Journal earlier this summer and give you a chance to recant. "There seems to be no question", wrote Andrew Klavan, "that the Batman film, the Dark Knight, is at some level a paying of praise to the fortitude and moral courage shown by George W. Bush in this time of terror and war." Oh come on. Are you gonna stick with that one?

>> What I love about what you just said, is it was a perfect imitation of the argument that is used to shut conservatives up repeatedly, aw come on. Because the arguments of the left have failed, they have found that on ridicule and exclusion, so that they don't say to you 'well George W. Bush was wrong, this way, this way, and this way'. What they say is 'George W. Bush, aw come on'. Dick Chaney's become a curse word on the left. And it delivered that piece, which I thought was obvious by the way, I think you can't watch the Batman film without seeing what I saw. It touched on such an incredible firestorm that I knew I was right, because what I had said was I don't accept it, I don't accept that I'm excluded from the elite, from the intelligent, because I think George W. Bush has done some things very, very much that are right. The point that the piece makes, the most poignant connection between Batman the movie and Bush, is that they both sacrifice their popularity to do the right thing. And what the left has is this kind of oh look at his popularity polls, look at how low they are, look how silly he is when he talks, look at the mistakes he makes with his language. It's that kind of ridicule that's supposed to ...

>> It's not argument, it's ridicule.

>> It's not argument and it's meant to keep you from even opening your mouth. The way they talk about Rush Limbaugh is a perfect example. They say oh Rush is wrong about this, this, and this. They say, oh Rush Limbaugh how could you, aw come on, aw come on.

Now let me push, I'm trying what I think may be a more sophisticated argument than aw come on. It's the role of the artist, sanctified by several centuries at least of western experience, to stand at one removed from society, to criticize, to challenge.

>> You could even argue, I'm not sure that I have the historical knowledge to take a whack at this one, but you could even argue that the choices all the way back to the Hebrew scriptures where you have the prophetic voice challenging the king, challenging the society, challenging the priestly cast. And you don't want artists to do that, you want them right smack dab in the middle of society, celebrating conventional values. You're attempting to undermine the most important role the artist can play.

>> Not in the least. First of all, I hear ...

>> That was pretty good.

>> It sounded sincere. When I hear artists today talk about speaking truth to power, I always ask myself who's the power in this artist's life? Is it really George W. Bush who has no concern with him whatsoever, no power over them, no power to stop them? Or is it the cultural facade, the cultural infrastructure, that gives them praise, that gives them access to work, that gives them awards, that gives them respect and artists die for respect, they live and die for respect. It really is these people who have confined onto their straight jacket of ideology, that they never challenge, they never challenge that structure. They challenge a structure that really is not affecting them because in America artists are free. If we were living in a Soviet style society where they were stomping ... exactly, that's speaking truth to power. But these guys are not really doing that and I am all in favor of the artist being critical of our society, of questioning our society, even being revolutionary, but that's not what these guys are.

>> Let me put the same question in a slightly different way and ground it in Empire of Lies, your new novel. Here's a quotation from Empire of Lies: "the day it began was an autumn day, a Saturday afternoon in October, I was sitting in a cushioned chair on the brick patio at the edge of my backyard, looking down half an acre of grassy slope to where my two boys were organizing some kind of Frisbee game around the swing set. I loved our neighborhood, Horizon Hill, the hill for short; big yards, craftsmen houses, lake views, friendly, most alike minded people, hard working dads, housewife moms, not too many divorces, lots of kids." Andrew Klavan, I charge you with having become irretrievably bushwa. You are attempting to do something that cannot be done. You are a novelist, you seek to inhabit the world of the entertaining, the hip, the cool, and yet here you are as a Christian and a conservative, holding up for praise the square, the unhip, the conventional, you'll never be cool again.

>> I may never be cool again, I'll certainly never be called cool again, and yet, and yet I cannot help but think, I cannot help but think, that at the center of the arts, because at the center of human life, is the experience of love. And that love is not excluded from the suburbs; it's not excluded from the bushwa life. It never was, it never has been. It frequently finds its best ground to grow in there. My life is deeply affected by my marriage, which is an anomalous marriage and it's romance, it's been a 30 year romance and I know that's anomalous and I know it's not something that everybody gets and yet, it does give you an insight that this is a possibility; that love in marriage is a possibility. It seems to me that that possibility has been excluded by the so-called avant-garde who really the behind guard. It seems to me that that possibility has been excluded and that putting it forward is in fact, a revolutionary act. Putting it down is in fact saying, you know what, this is here, you can't close your eyes to it, you can't constantly tell us that all marriages are who's afraid of Virginia Wolfe without us coming back and saying, you know I live in this neighborhood and I see marriages that aren't like that at all.

>> Andrew Klavan, I pronounce you cool. Thank you for joining us. Andrew Klavan, the author of Empire of Lies. At the Hoover Institution, I'm Peter Robinson for Uncommon Knowledge thanks for joining us.