

**Wars on Christians**  
ANDREW DORAN

**Not Hitler's Pope**  
JOHN RODDEN & JOHN ROSSI

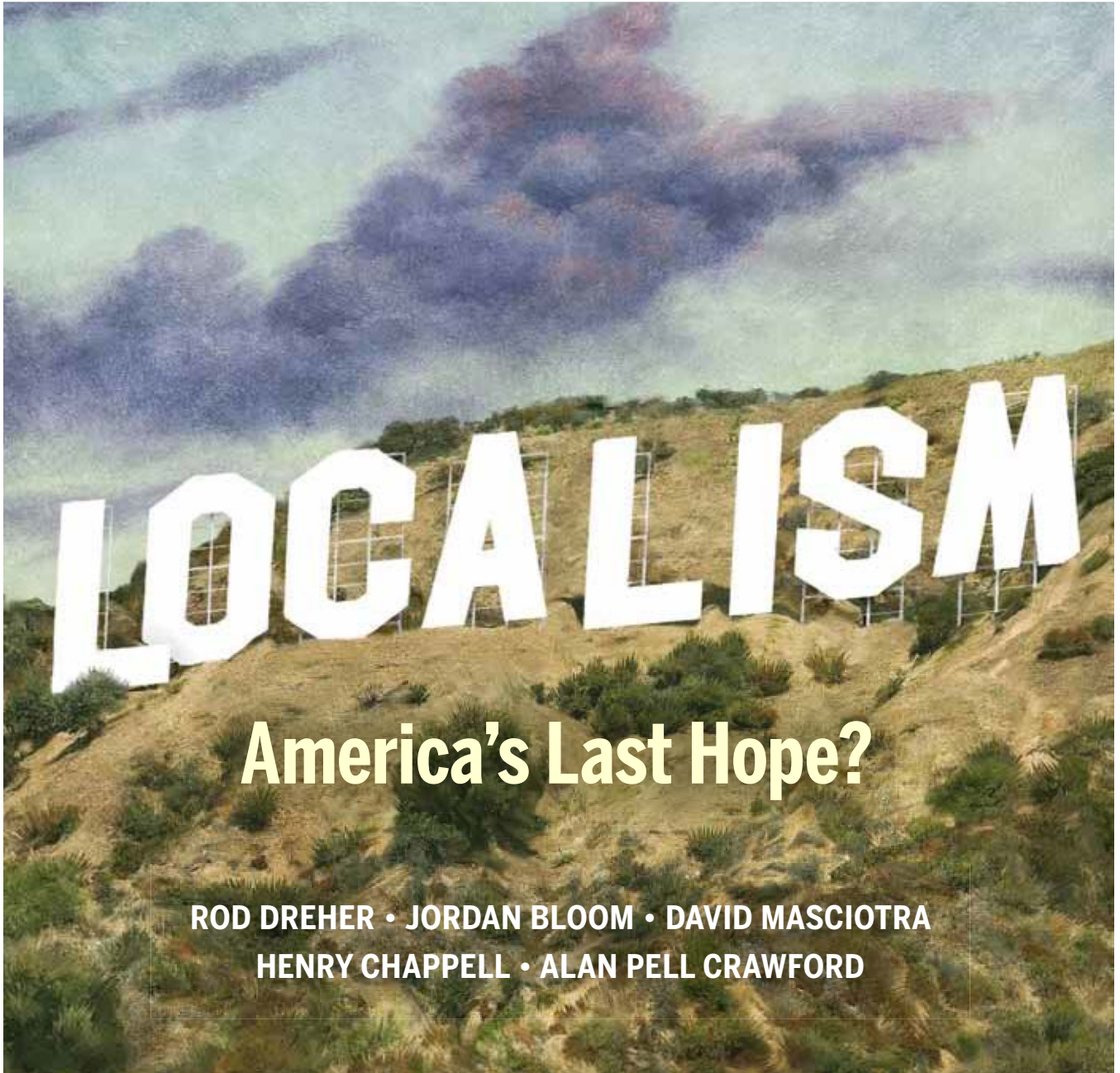
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ANDREW J. BACEVICH

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JULY/AUGUST 2013

# *The American* **Conservative**

IDEAS OVER IDEOLOGY • PRINCIPLES OVER PARTY



## America's Last Hope?

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We read that researchers have used new technology to find proof behind biblical stories such as the Parting of the Red Sea and the Burning Bush. Our writing uses a biblical story with a deadly result that is still happening today.

This biblical event is the creator's command to Adam: "*Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat or you will surely die.*" Adam and Eve did eat the fruit of that tree, and for disobeying the creator, they suffered much trouble and finally died.

Experience tells us that people worldwide are still acting on their judgments of good and evil. Now, consider what happens to millions of them every day? They die! It would follow that those whose behavior is based on *their* definitions of good and evil become subject to the creator's warning, "*or you will surely die.*"

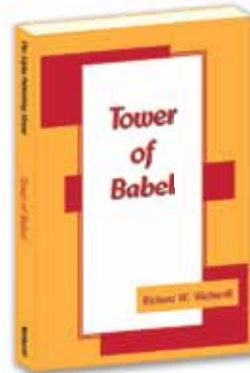
We know that when people conform to creation's laws of physics, right action always results. Children learn to walk and run by conforming to all applicable natural laws. When they don't, they fall.

*It is the creator's laws that dictate what action is called for and what action is not.* In the past century Richard W. Wetherill identified a natural law, calling for *rational, honest behavior*, and he named it the *law of absolute right*.

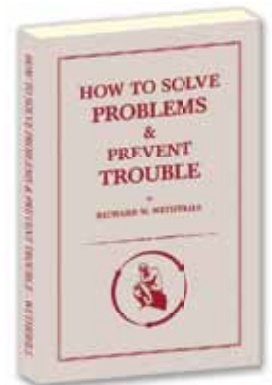
Most people know that natural laws require obedience, but innumerable are unaware of this natural law. Mistakenly they try to get *their way*. We try to inform people not to contradict the creator's *law of right behavior*, inviting death.

*These guiding thoughts explain why people finally die. You might disagree, but a Garden of Eden awaits any who adhere to nature's law of absolute right. They stop their efforts to get their way and embrace the rational, honest way of the creator of life.*

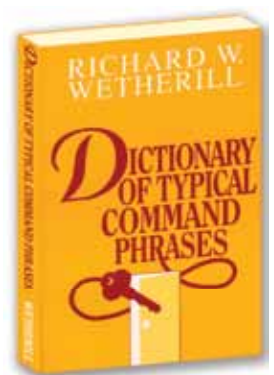
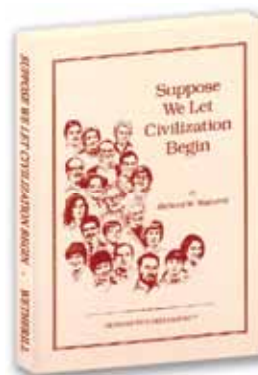
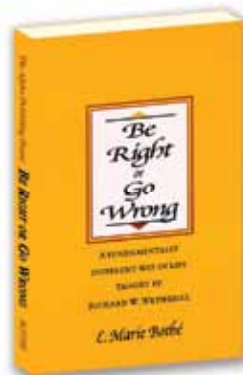
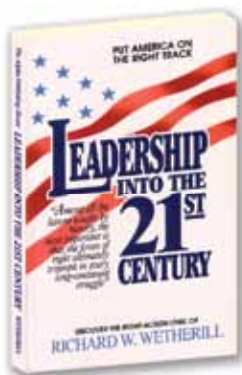
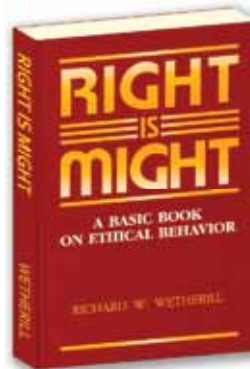
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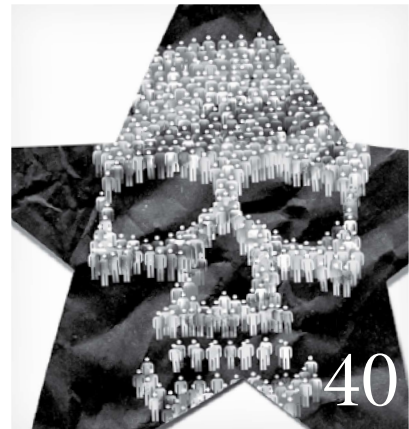
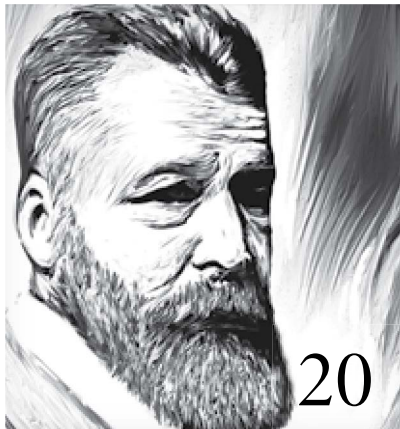


"I have finished reading the book How To Solve Problems. So simple, yet so profound and powerful. Thank you."  
- Alex



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# Reactions

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## PRO-GROWTH CONSERVATISM

“Springtime for Keynes” (May/June) argued properly that economics shouldn’t be the root of a conservative political philosophy. I agree, but good economic policy will complement that philosophy. And economic prescriptions can’t do the job unless they are rational.

The rational way to encourage economic growth and increase the wealth of all in society (even if the achievers get more than their less capable or less lucky or more leisure-oriented brothers) comes from providing policies to incentivize people to work to create wealth and economic growth.

Fiscal policy is crucial and it must be understood. George W. Bush said he wanted to “put money in people’s pockets” and when he did that it was as futile as Obama’s stimulus spending. Demand stimulus is Keynesian and it is baloney.

Good fiscal policy changes relative prices. That means it makes work, risk, and investment more attractive. It rewards pro-growth activities. That means marginal tax rates must be cut and that translates into more real rewards—real income to those who work, save, and invest.

Spending is not irrelevant. When government spends more to extend unemployment benefits or lowers the age of Social Security eligibility, it makes it foolish for many to work. Undercutting the welfare reform rules requiring the able-bodied to work changes the relative prices of working versus taking welfare.

A conservative would also note that

a government’s cultural policies can also damage the economy. Policies that contribute to the destruction of the family also destroy the greatest incubator of economically successful people.

Finally, I would add that we suffer a set of non-fiscal governmental policies that cut economic growth and the chance of millions to lift themselves to the level of prosperity they desire. That is the “tax” of uncertainty. Today, the President advocates higher taxes and thus is positing a future with fewer incentives for work, risk, and investment. The Federal Reserve System’s monetary policy foretells a future set for inflation making savings seem like less of a good idea: why save a dollar today when in the future it will be worth fifty cents? Twenty-five? Our regulatory regime today threatens to make great swaths of business less successful, reducing the incentives to build a booming society. And this “tax of uncertainty” nets the Treasury not a dime.

Keynes changed his views and his every word isn’t baloney. But a conservative political philosophy is properly accompanied by a pro-growth economic philosophy that rewards the virtues that a conservative values. It provides the framework for prosperous families, and a prosperous society that can use its added wealth to address society’s problems. Prosperous people have fewer problems, give more to charity, and have time to help others.

Keep up this important discussion.  
HOWARD SEGERMARK  
*Washington, DC*

## IMMIGRATION AND THE GOP

William Chip (“Immigration Made Right,” May/June) is right to observe that the mainstream media has reported erroneously and incessantly since the election that Gov. Romney’s loss was attributable to his failure to win enough Hispanic voters.

As the *New York Times*’ statistical guru Nate Silver demonstrated with his interactive election modeling program, the truth is that Romney would have lost the election even if he had won a *majority* of the Hispanic vote. Silver and a handful of other independent analysts have shown that Romney’s loss was due to his failure to win as much of the non-Hispanic white vote as other GOP presidential candidates have in the recent past.

More evidence of the mainstream media’s collective decision to become a mere propaganda outlet for comprehensive immigration reform and amnesty for illegal aliens can be found in their refusal to report on the only referendum actually dealing with illegal immigration to appear on a statewide ballot in 2012.

In Montana, which Gov. Romney carried by a comfortable 55 percent to 42 percent margin, a Proposition 187-style measure called Legislative Question 121 denying state funded benefits to illegal aliens, won by a landslide 80 percent.

Imagine the reporting frenzy that would have erupted had Question 121 lost.

K.C. MCALPIN  
*Harbor Springs, MI*

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# The American Conservative

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## Localism's Green Shoots

This is a season of regeneration for America, unlikely though it seems. Unemployment remains above 7 percent—if we count labor-force dropouts and the underemployed, the picture is darker still—and the economy is brittle. The surveillance state, by contrast, is robust, as National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed when he exposed the agency's collection of “metadata” records for every American's phone calls, emails, and Internet activities. Meanwhile, even as the war in Afghanistan slumps to an end, hawks left and right—from Bill Clinton to John McCain—caw for intervention in Syria's civil strife. To judge by the national or world scene, cause for cheer is sparse.

But closer to home Americans are beginning to find alternatives to the habits that brought us “too big to fail.” Finding expression in everything from farmers' markets and the “food rights” movement to a burgeoning body of conservative scholarship, a rebirth of localism is underway. It entails, for many young people especially, embracing more personal, human-scale modes of production—not agrarianism, exactly, but attention to craft and to sourcing food locally.

These practices are as yet small scale in application as well as ambition: Wal-Mart and other chain stores won't be going away any time soon. But the new localism is less concerned to protest corporate megaliths, in the manner of

left-wing activists of the past, than to rediscover community in commerce and everyday life. It's a humble resistance that repudiates “too big to fail” more powerfully than any amount of Tea Party or Occupy Wall Street placard-waving ever could.

What drives this rejuvenated localism isn't hipster fashion—though there's an element of that—but alienation from the failed institutions of neoliberalism: its political parties, its mass media catering to the lowest common denominator, its factory food and cubicle work. For once, this is a kind of alienation that advances conservatism—or has the potential to do so. Liturgy, poetry, and traditional arts in all their forms are among the refuges a deep cultural conservatism affords men and women storm-tossed by the 21st-century. But before they can offer these goods to others, conservatives must themselves rediscover them. That means refocusing on places, persons, and their stories and turning away from the narrow horizons of politics and economics; the utilitarianism that has pervaded the right for a generation has proved, in the long run, useless.

The trend in national life has long been toward making the individual something less than human: a Social Security number, a consumer, a demographic. Redressing the balance between neighborhood and nation, between context and abstraction, will take time. But this is a beginning. ■

# Front Lines

## Thrown to the Lions—by America

*In our Mideast wars, “collateral damage” includes Christian extinction*

by ANDREW DORAN

**T**he dedication this spring of George W. Bush’s presidential library in Texas briefly rekindled debate about the defining event of his presidency, the Iraq War. With the visceral hatred of much of the media for the war and the man himself having diminished over time, a more sober assessment of both seemed to prevail in the coverage. In the same news cycle there appeared a seemingly unrelated event, the abduction of two Orthodox bishops in Syria. In fact, the ongoing conflict in Syria and the American invasion of Iraq are linked by a common thread: the failure of the U.S. to consider the effect of its foreign policy on vulnerable religious communities, especially Middle Eastern Christians.

In March 2003, on the eve of war in Iraq, Pope John Paul II dispatched Cardinal Pio Laghi, a senior Vatican diplomat, to Washington to make a final plea to Bush not to invade. Laghi, chosen for his close ties to the Bush family, outlined “clearly and forcefully” the Vatican’s fears of what would follow an invasion: protracted war, significant casualties, violence between ethnic and religious groups, regional destabilization, “and a new gulf between Christianity and Islam.” The warning was not heeded.

Two weeks after the Bush-Laghi meeting, Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced. Shortly after combat operations concluded on May 1, the real conflict began. Amid the chaos and sectarian violence that followed, Iraq’s

Christians suffered severe persecution. Neither the U.S. military nor the State Department took action to protect them. In October 2003, human-rights expert Nina Shea noted that religious freedom and a pluralistic Iraq were not high priorities for the Bush administration, concluding that its “diffidence on religious freedom suggests Washington’s relative indifference to this basic human right.” Shea added, “Washington’s refusal to insist on guarantees of religious freedom threatens to undermine its already difficult task of securing a fully democratic government in Iraq”—more prescience that would be likewise disregarded.

Iraq’s diasporic Christian community in America had also foreseen the danger and quickly took action, helping thousands of refugees with humanitarian assistance. The Chaldean Federation’s Joseph Kassab, himself a refugee from Baathist Iraq decades before, advocated zealously for their protection. Kassab’s brother Jabrail, a Chaldean archbishop, helped organize relief in Iraq during the Western-imposed sanctions that lasted from 1991–2003, doing “all that he could to help the Iraqi people—Christians and Muslims together.” Jabrail Kassab remained at his post until October 2006, when a Syrian Orthodox priest, Fr. Paulos Eskander, was abducted and beheaded, after which Pope Benedict ordered him to leave Iraq. Fr. Eskander’s murder was part of a campaign that targeted the most conspicuous of Christians—the clergy.

In February 2008, Archbishop Paulos Rahho’s vehicle was attacked after he finished praying the Stations of the Cross in Mosul. His driver and bodyguards were killed. Rahho, wounded but alive, was put into the trunk of the assassins’ car and taken from the scene. He managed to pull out his cell phone and call his church to tell them not to pay his ransom, saying he “believed that this money would not be paid for good works and would be used for killing and more evil actions.” His body was found in a shallow grave two weeks later.

During this systematic violence, the U.S. military provided no protection to the already vulnerable Christian community. In some instances, the clergy went to local American military units to beg for protection. None was given. As Shea noted at the time, the administration and the State Department—whose record on Christian minorities and religious freedom leaves much to be desired—still refused to “acknowledge that the Christians and other defenseless minorities are persecuted for reasons of religion.”

A month after the murder of Archbishop Rahho, President Bush addressed the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. Joseph Kassab had been invited to pray the Hail Mary and Our Father in Aramaic following Bush’s remarks, an act of solidarity with the Christians of the Arab world. “I had two or three minutes with the president behind the curtains,” Kassab said in a recent interview. “He said he thought you had to fix the whole picture before coming to the other elements. It was disappointing. He knew it was a failure and his administration refused to acknowledge that.”

Rosie Malek-Yonan, an Assyrian Christian who testified before Congress, would call the Bush administration a “silent accomplice” to “incipient genocide.” Anglican Canon Andrew White of Baghdad’s Ecumenical Congregation captured the reality bluntly: “All of my leadership were taken and killed—all dead.”

Those Iraqi Christians who fled to America encountered tremendous obstacles in seeking asylum. Many Chaldeans and Assyrians were detained, until their cases could be heard, in what an attorney familiar with the situation describes as “prisons,” adding that she “never worked on a case where a Chaldean was granted asylum, but I heard that it happened.” Throughout these deportation proceedings, the administration and the State Department steadfastly refused to recognize the conditions from which they were fleeing—which the U.S. had helped to bring about—as “persecution.” In consequence, most were deported.

Ironically, hundreds of thousands of Christians would find refuge in the quasi-autonomous republic of Kurdistan in northern Iraq. “They arrived,” Kassab noted, “with nothing on their backs, and the Kurds came to the rescue.” Traveling to the region to assist with resettlement efforts, Kassab observed a Kurdish government willing, despite inadequate resources, to help the fleeing Christians. The Kurds went to the U.S. government, which they believed was partly responsible for the refugee crisis, to ask for help. “This fell on deaf ears,” Kassab recalls.

Today Iraqi Kurdistan is assimilating refugees from a neighboring country torn apart by sectarian violence: Syria. Among the refugees are more Iraqi Christians, who originally fled to the relative freedom and tolerance of Syria only to find themselves again facing persecution, hunted by Syria’s rebels. Many of these rebels are affiliated with the al-Qaeda network. The Obama administration, bewilderingly, has chosen to support Syria’s rebel groups

without any apparent thought to the consequences. As in Iraq, the insurgent Islamist campaign in Syria targets priests, the most visible symbols of the Christian faith.

The protection and perseverance of minority religious communities—indeed, of religious freedom—continues to be a low priority for the State Department under the Obama administration. The U.S. fails to recognize that the Islamist-Wahabbist commitment to eradicating Christian minorities today will result in the extinction of diverse modes of Islam tomorrow, a fact that is not lost on moderate Muslims.

The objective of the Iraq War—to democratize the Middle East—may yet be realized. But democracy in the Middle East is proving less tolerant than the regimes it has succeeded. Unless swift action is taken, the region’s democracies will evolve into bastions of intolerance and violence beyond our comprehension. These democracies will not march ineluctably toward liberty and pluralism, as some naïve Westerners continue to forecast despite the evidence, but will end in the ordered barbarism of Saudi Arabia, where punishments include beheading

and crucifixion, according to Amnesty International.

When he came to office, President Bush famously scribbled in a report on the Clinton administration’s inaction during the Rwandan genocide, “Not on my watch.” Bill Clinton today admits that inaction in Rwanda is his greatest regret. One day Bush may look back on the neglect of the Middle

*Democracy in the Middle East is proving less tolerant than the regimes it has succeeded.*

East’s Christians with similar regret. Cardinal Laghi has recalled that Bush “seemed to truly believe in a war of good against evil” and that his work was providential. “You might start, and you don’t know how to end it,” the prelate warned. In a broad sense the Iraq War continues, and with it the extinction of Middle Eastern Christians. ■

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*Andrew Doran served on the Executive Secretariat of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO at the U.S. Department of State, where he has since worked as a consultant. His views are his own.*

## Tomb of the Four Freedoms

*New York’s cold monument FDR’s internationalist vision*

by LEWIS MCCRARY

**D**espite his recognition as one of the great modernists of the 20th century, post-war architect Louis Kahn claimed to be inspired by the crumbling edifices of the ancients. After trips to Italy, Greece, and Egypt, he developed his signature style: “I thought of the beauty of ruins ... of things which nothing lives behind ... and so I thought of wrapping ruins round buildings.” Fittingly for an architect

influenced by the remains of temples and other sacred spaces, Kahn’s final commission was a public monument.

New York City’s Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park, designed by Kahn shortly before his death in 1974, finally opened last fall, four decades after it was first conceived and several generations after the 32nd president’s 1941 speech setting out the moral case for the coming war in terms of “freedom of speech,” “freedom of worship,”

## Front Lines

“freedom from want,” and “freedom from fear.” The Four Freedoms rhetoric would outlive Roosevelt and become a cornerstone of the American-led postwar international order, what was hoped to be a new era of perpetual peace and universal human rights.

The new tribute to this grand vision occupies a dramatic space at the southern tip of a narrow island in the East

dominate the island. Yet one prominent reminder of the past, the 1856 Smallpox Hospital, sits abandoned and in advanced decay. Executed in the Gothic Revival style by James Renwick Jr.—who also designed St. Patrick’s Cathedral and the original Smithsonian Institution—it is a genuine ruin just steps from Kahn’s newly constructed one.

blinded. The entrance, a wide series of shallow steps, is set into a 12-foot slab that rises at an angle, like some ancient Aztec or Egyptian structure, and stands high enough to obscure what waits above and beyond.

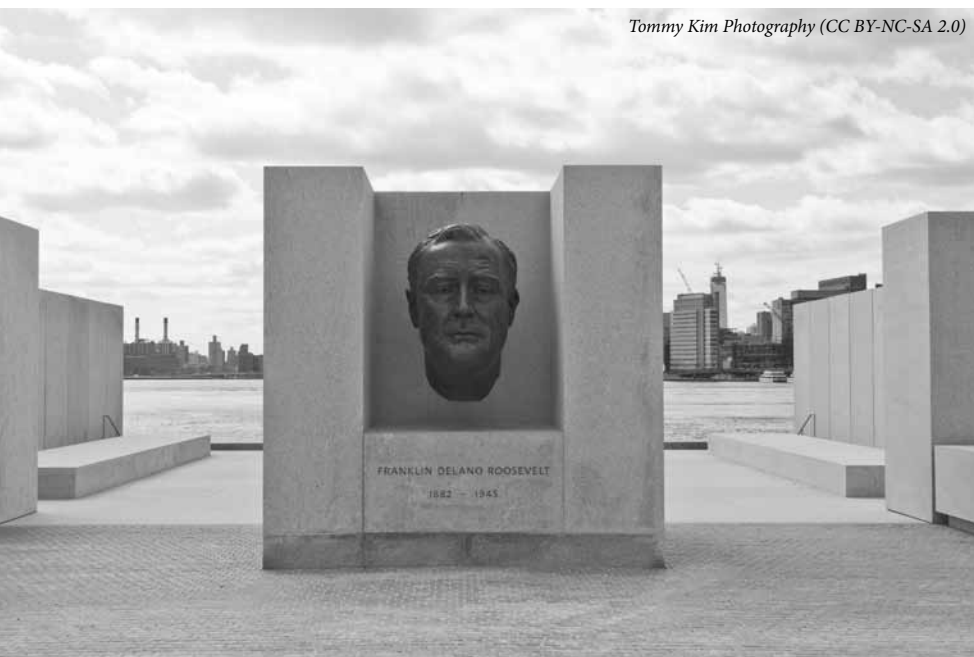
Ascending this staircase suddenly reveals the memorial’s largest space, a triangular plaza. Sparingly landscaped, it features a lawn flanked by two symmetrical rows of linden trees, under which cobblestone paths meet at the same point several hundred feet away. The converging walkways are an impressive visual trick, making the space appear larger than it is.

The clean lines first evoke a Parisian green, but the lack of furniture reminds one that despite its designation as a park, this is not a place for leisure. Indeed the memorial’s posted rules require that visitors leave picnics and pets at home in order to “preserve its sanctity.” The lawn space instead acts as the nave of a cathedral, a place that points to more hallowed precincts beyond.

At the terminus of both arboreal colonnades—the formal tone suggests walking on the grass is scorned—one is deposited in front of a Goliath-sized bust of FDR. Suspended in a large, recessed niche, it appears to float like the giant head in the *Wizard of Oz*.

But beyond this portrayal of Roosevelt as the Oracle of Hyde Park lies Kahn’s most dramatic feature. On either side of the small forecourt containing the bust, one enters a space that widens slightly to form an outdoor room, open to the sky but surrounded on three sides by 12-foot-high slabs of gleaming white granite. Upon crossing the threshold to this tomb-like space, one directly faces the fourth side, completely open to the river and the Manhattan skyline, prominently framing the United Nations complex.

Here anyone who has been to presidential memorials in Washington expects to see the words of the great man chiseled into the tablets for the ages. On one central panel the visitor is not



River between Manhattan and Queens. Around the same time the memorial was commissioned, the city renamed the 147 acres after FDR, and today Roosevelt Island is an increasingly upscale urban neighborhood, its thousands of residents connected to midtown Manhattan by an aerial tramway.

But it wasn’t always so idyllic. Before the FDR rebranding, it was known for decades as Welfare Island, a legacy of its history as the place where the city sent all its undesirables. From the early 19th century, the sick, insane, and destitute—and until the 1930s, most of the city’s convicts—were housed in this purgatory in the East River.

Most of the infrastructure of prisons and asylums has been demolished or repurposed, and today high-rises

Given the island’s slender profile, under 800 feet wide in most places, a visitor en route to Four Freedoms Park cannot avoid encountering the former hospital, which officials plan to stabilize but leave in its current romantic condition. Dark stone walls, embattled parapets, and pointed-arch windows provide the illusion of medieval origin, and it is hard to imagine a more striking contrast to the FDR memorial and the new era it represents. The age of the charity hospital, imperfect but ornate, gives way to the abstract yet shining promise of the new world order and the welfare state, a place where diseases like smallpox are eradicated.

Approaching Kahn’s park—a series of outdoor spaces surrounded by bright white granite—one is nearly



disappointed. Ninety-seven words that form the key passage of the 1941 State of the Union address are faithfully reproduced, ensuring one doesn't leave without actually encountering Roosevelt's formulation of the Four Freedoms:

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want ... everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear ... anywhere in the world. That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation.

A score of additional slabs line the 60-square-foot space, all unadorned. The overall effect is more unsettling than inspiring—a feeling that the tabernacle is empty. Gazing a short distance across the water at Turtle Bay, the UN complex, perhaps the most lasting legacy of FDR's vision, appears as a sad relic of another era, when the victorious Allies were confident that a permanent international order would rise from the ashes of World War II.

In choosing Kahn, Roosevelt Island's planners may have simply been deferring to a man considered one of the most cutting-edge architects of the 1970s. But their choice has inadvertently resulted in a monument that presents the Four Freedoms as a cold, technical formula. Both Kahn's monument and FDR's doctrine overemphasize form at the expense of narrative.

Other attempts to canonize the Four Freedoms were more successful. Norman Rockwell's series of paintings on them helped the U.S. Treasury raise \$132 million in war bonds. Another

monument commissioned by FDR himself used four angels to represent the freedoms—once revealed to great fanfare in Madison Square Garden, it now resides in obscurity in a small town in the Florida panhandle, hometown of an early war hero who died in combat at Pearl Harbor.

One of the most famous depictions of political freedom lies downstream from Roosevelt Island in New York Harbor. The Statue of Liberty provides an allegory that enables many potent narratives, including the celebrated lines from the sonnet inscribed at its base: "Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free ..." It is an image that endures because it tells a powerful story.

## John Boyd's Art of War

*Why our greatest military theorist only made colonel.*

by WILLIAM S. LIND

Off and on for about 20 years, I had the honor of working with the greatest military theorist America ever produced, Col. John Boyd, USAF. As a junior officer, Boyd developed the energy-management tactics now used by every fighter pilot in the world. Later, he influenced the designs of the F-15 and F-16, saving the former from becoming the turkey we are now buying in the F-35 and making the latter the best fighter aircraft on the planet. His *magnum opus*, a 12-hour briefing titled "Patterns of Conflict," remains a vast mine of military wisdom, one unlikely to be exhausted in this century.

Boyd is best known for coming up with the OODA Loop or Boyd Cycle. He posited that all conflict is composed of repeated, time-competitive cycles of observing, orienting, deciding, and acting. The most important element is orientation: whoever can orient more quickly to a rapidly changing situation acquires a decisive advantage because

Whether the lack of similar energy in the new FDR memorial is due to the shortfalls of Kahn's method or the eclipse of the Four Freedoms internationalist vision, the park is a missed opportunity—it was a place positioned to be an American analog to Paris's Île de la Cité, the site of Notre Dame. But visitors to Roosevelt Island can instead take a page from the Victorians and picnic under the ruins of Renwick's hospital, remembering a time when monuments drew on the full range of human passions, displaying those elusive qualities that lie between form and function but make all the difference. ■

Lewis McCrary is managing editor of *The National Interest*.

his slower opponent's actions are too late and therefore irrelevant—as he desperately seeks convergence, he gets ever increasing divergence. At some point, he realizes he can do nothing that works. That usually leads him either to panic or to give up, often while still physically largely intact.

The OODA Loop explains how and why Third Generation maneuver warfare, such as the German Blitzkrieg method, works. It describes exactly what happened to the French in 1940, when Germany defeated what was considered the strongest army on earth in six weeks with only about 27,000 German dead, trifling casualties by World War I standards. The French actually had more and better tanks than the Germans.

It is also a partial explanation for our repeated defeats by Fourth Generation non-state entities. Our many layers of headquarters, large staffs, and centralized decision-making give us a slow OODA Loop compared to opponents

## Front Lines

whose small size and decentralized command enable a fast one. A Marine officer stationed with our counter-drug traffic effort in Bolivia told me the traffickers went through the Loop 12 times in the time it took us to go through it once. I mentioned that to Colonel Boyd, and he replied, “Then we’re not even in the game.”

Another of Boyd’s contributions to military theory explains more of our failure in recent conflicts. To the traditional levels of war—tactical, operational, and strategic—Boyd added three new ones: physical, mental, and moral. It is useful to think of these as forming a nine-box grid, with tactical, operational, and strategic on one axis and physical, mental, and moral on the other. Our armed forces focus on the single box defined by tactical and physical, where we are vastly superior. But non-state forces focus on the strategic and the moral, where they are often stronger, in part because they represent David confronting Goliath. In war, a higher level trumps a lower, so our repeated victories at the tactical, physical level are negated by our enemies’ successes on the strategic and moral levels, and we lose.

Boyd had a reservoir of comments he repeated regularly, one of which was, “A lot of people in Washington talk about strategy. Most of them can spell the word, but that’s all they know of it.” The establishment’s insistence on an offensive grand strategy, where we attempt to force secular liberal democracy down the throats of every people on earth, is a major reason for our involvement and defeat in Fourth Generation conflicts. A defensive grand strategy, which is what this country followed successfully through most of its history, would permit us to fold our enemies back on themselves, something Boyd recommended. With us out of the picture, their internal fissures, such as those between Sunni and Shiites in the Islamic world, would become their focus. But as usual, Boyd was right: virtually no one in Washington can understand the advantages of a defensive grand strategy.



John Boyd during the Korean War

Being involved in every conflict on earth is useful if the real game is boosting the Pentagon’s budget rather than serving our national interests. Here too Boyd had a favorite line. He often said, “It is not true the Pentagon has no strategy. It has a strategy, and once you understand what that strategy is, everything the Pentagon does makes sense. The strategy is, don’t interrupt the money flow, add to it.”

Perhaps Boyd’s most frequently uttered warning was, “All closed systems collapse.” Both our military and our policy-making civilian elite live in closed systems. Because Second Generation war reduces everything to putting firepower on targets, when we fail against Fourth Generation opponents, the military’s only answer is to put more firepower on more targets. Ideas about other ways of waging war are ignored because they do not fit the closed Second Generation paradigm. Meanwhile, Washington cannot consider alternatives to our current foreign policy or grand strategy because anyone who proposes one is immediately exiled from the establishment, as was Boyd himself. It says something about

our current condition that the greatest military theorist we ever produced retired as a colonel. At John’s funeral in Arlington, which I attended, most of the people in uniform were junior Marine officers. His own service, the Air Force, was barely represented.

John’s work was often elegant, but in person he was always the direct, and sometimes crude, fighter pilot. Boyd’s favorite, inelegant phrase for defeating one of his many opponents in the Pentagon was “giving him the whole enchilada right up the poop chute.” That is what history will shortly give this country if we continue to allow closed systems to lead us. Boyd’s work, which is best summarized in Frans Osinga’s book *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd*, could put us on a different course. But learning from Boyd would require open systems in Washington. Perhaps after the establishment collapses, Boyd can help us pick up the pieces. ■

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## What China Is About

As America grew in the 1800s from a republic of a few millions, whose frontier stopped at the Mississippi, into a world power, there were constant collisions with the world's greatest empire.

In 1812, we declared war on Britain, tried to invade Canada, and got our Capitol burned. In 1818, Andrew Jackson, on an expedition into Spanish Florida to put down renegade Indians harassing Georgia, hanged two British subjects he had captured, creating a firestorm in Britain.

In 1838, we came close to war over Canada's border with Maine; in 1846, over Canada's border with the Oregon Territory.

After the Civil War, Fenians conducted forays into Canada to start a U.S.-British battle that might bring Ireland's independence. In 1895, we clashed over the border between Venezuela and British Guiana.

War was avoided on each occasion, save 1812. Yet all carried the possibility of military conflict between the world's rising power and its reigning power. Observing the pugnacity of 21st-century China, there appear to be parallels with the aggressiveness of 19th-century America.

China is now quarreling with India over borders. Beijing claims as her national territory the entire South and East China Seas and all the islands, reefs, and resources therein, dismissing the claims of half a dozen neighbors. Beijing has bullied Japan and the Philippines and told the U.S. Navy to stay out of the Yellow Sea and Taiwan Strait.

In dealing with America, China has begun to exhibit an attitude that is at

times contemptuous. Here is a partial list of the targets of Chinese cyber-espionage: *The Wall Street Journal*. *The New York Times*. Bloomberg. Google. Yahoo. Dow Chemical. Lockheed Martin. Northrop Grumman. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Adm. Mike Mullen. Los Alamos and Oak Ridge nuclear-weapons labs. The classified avionics of the F-35 fighter jet. The U.S. power grid.

U.S. computers are being hacked and secrets thieved, as Beijing steals the technology of our companies and manipulates her currency to minimize imports from the U.S.A. and maximize exports to the U.S.A.

No one wants a war with China, and provocative though it is, China's conduct does not justify a war that would be a calamity for both nations. But China's behavior demands a reappraisal of our China policy over the past 20 years.

Consider what we have done for China. We granted her Most Favored Nation trade status, brought her into the World Trade Organization, threw open the world's largest market to Chinese goods, encouraged U.S. companies to site plants there, and allowed China to run trillions of dollars in trade surpluses at our expense.

In 2012, China's trade surplus with the United States was over \$300 billion, the largest in history between any two nations. What has China done with the wealth accumulated from those trade surpluses with the United States? How has she shown her gratitude?

She has used that wealth to lock up resources in Third World countries, build a world-class military, confront America's friends in neighboring seas,

engage in cyber-espionage, and thieve our national and corporate secrets. Is this the behavior of friends or partners?

For years they have engaged in cyber-espionage. They know we know it, and they have seen us back off calling them out. For years we have threatened to charge them with currency manipulation, and for years we have backed off.

If they have concluded we are more fearful of a confrontation than they, are they wrong? Other than fear or cowardice, what other explanation is there for our failure to stand up to China, when its behavior has been so egregious and insulting?

Does America fear facing down China because a political and economic collision with Beijing would entail an admission by the United States that our vision of a world of democratic nations all engaged in peaceful free trade under a rules-based regime was a willful act of self-delusion?

What China is about is as old as the history of man. She is a rising ethno-national state doing what such powers have always done: put their own interests ahead of all others, suppress ethnic minorities like Tibetans and Uighurs, and crush religious dissenters like Christians and Falun Gong.

There is no New World Order. Never was. The old demons—chauvinism and ethno-nationalism—are not ancient history. They are not extinct. They are with us forever. And America is not going to be able to deny reality much longer or put off facing up to what China is all about. Given her current size and disposition, one day soon we are going to have to stop feeding the tiger. And start sanctioning it. ■

# Story Lines, Not Party Lines

*Why conservatives must master the narrative art*

by ROD DREHER

Here's a story for you. For years I devoted much of my journalism—op-eds, blogs, even a book about cultural politics—to lamenting the rootlessness of American life and prescribing solutions for it from within the conservative intellectual tradition. Yet I never quite found the wherewithal to live as I preached. It's as if I didn't find my own arguments convincing.

Then, from my home in faraway Philadelphia, I watched my sister Ruthie die slowly from cancer, cared for by family and community in our south Louisiana hometown. The doctrines and ideals I professed as true unexpectedly took concrete form in the heart-breaking story unfolding there.

When we arrived from Philadelphia for the funeral, my wife and I were overwhelmed by what we saw. At the little Methodist church where my family has been baptized, married, and given funeral rites for generations, over a thousand townspeople stood outside in the heat and amid mosquitoes to pass by Ruthie's body and pay their respects. Many of them were my school-teacher sister's friends, colleagues, and former students. Nearly all had, in some way, helped support Ruthie and her family throughout her 19-month ordeal.

In that church, on that night, I had an epiphany. This is what community means. This is the way my sister lived: rooted in and faithful to the community that nurtured her, and that she in turn helped to nurture.

My wife and I experienced a conversion. Standing under a live oak tree in front of the church, we grasped that what the people in St. Francisville, Louisiana, had, we needed. The poetry of Ruthie's passion and the drama of the characters that played their parts did for my wife and me what syllogisms and abstractions could not—change our hearts and, in turn, our lives. Days later, we went back to Philadelphia, told our friends goodbye, and soon thereafter moved to my Louisiana hometown.

What happened brings to mind Pope Benedict XVI's observation that the most convincing arguments for Christianity aren't propositional arguments

at all but rather the art and the saints that the faith produces—that is, the stories Christians tell and live. Similarly, the ideals I held to be true did not speak to me with authority—at least, not authority sufficient to command me to pack up my U-Haul and drive—until I saw them lived out in my sister's narrative.

Such is the power of story.

Argument has its place, but story is what truly moves the hearts and minds of men. The power of myth—which is to say, of storytelling—is the power to form and enlighten the moral imagination, which is how we learn right from wrong, the proper ordering of our souls, and what it means to be human. Russell Kirk, the author of *The Conservative Mind* whose own longtime residence in his Michigan hometown earned him the epithet “Sage of Mecosta,” considered tending the moral imagination to be “conservatism at its highest.”

Through the stories we tell, we come to understand who we are and what we are to do. This is true for both individuals and communities.

Stories, as carriers of ideas, have consequences. Lincoln, upon meeting *Uncle Tom's Cabin* author Harriet Beecher Stowe, supposedly remarked, “Is this the little woman who made the great war?”

Kirk understood that the world might be won or lost on front porches, in bedrooms at night, around family hearths, in movie theaters and anywhere young people hear, see, or read the stories that fill and illuminate their moral imaginations. If you do not give them good stories, they will seek out bad ones.

“And the consequences will be felt not merely in their failure of taste,” Kirk said, “but in their misapprehension of human nature, lifelong; and eventually, in the whole tone of a nation.”

True story: in 2003, I watched a segment of ABC's “PrimeTime Live” in which Diane Sawyer profiled the quest of a gay male couple to adopt a baby from an unwed teen mother. The couple was plainly unprepared

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to raise a child, and though their fatherhood experiment failed, Sawyer concluded her charming piece with unambiguous sympathy for them and for the cause of gay adoption.

I knew that night that we were going to have gay marriage in this country. The news media were only going to tell one kind of story about marriage, family, and homosexuality—and eventually this narrative, repeated often enough, would determine politics and policy. Ten years later, with the false, distorted, and simplistic anti-gay narratives of the past having been wholly replaced by false, distorted, and simplistic pro-gay narratives, a cultural revolution has substantially been achieved. Stories have consequences.

Societies governed strongly by tradition keep their collective wisdom alive through storytelling, says Baylor University literature professor (and TAC blogger) Alan Jacobs. So why are contemporary conservatives so lousy at telling stories?

In Jacobs's view, conservatives have "done what other Americans have done: they've off-loaded the responsibility for storytelling to the mass media.

"And as, thanks to the upheavals of the Sixties, the mass media shifted further and further Left, conservatives found themselves stuck with stories told by people who didn't share their beliefs," he continues. "By the time they began to realize that this was a problem, they had lost the habit of making their own culture, and had no cultural institutions they could draw upon to train up their young people in really thoughtful and culturally serious ways."

What's more, says Jacobs, having gone through two or three generations in which serious storytelling, across all media, has been associated with cultural liberalism, the right faces a situation in which its creative children are offered a choice: serious culture or conservatism.

I get this. As a bookish kid struggling to find a place in a world of hunting, fishing, and athletics, I was offered refuge in art, literature, and music my ninth-grade English teacher. She was quite liberal, but she was the only person I knew who shared the passion for creativity awakening inside me. I came to believe that all people who were serious about art were naturally liberal—and I became liberal too, for years. Over the years, I've seen that most of my conservative friends who are artistically inclined became so in spite of their conservatism—that is, despite the fact that the right-wingers they knew disdained the arts as effete and impractical. A love for art and literature was not part of the conservative story, as they received it.



Micah Mattix, who teaches literature at Houston Baptist University, also gets this. That's one reason he's launched *Prufrock*, a daily e-mail newsletter compiling links to worthwhile writing on art, literature, and ideas, hoping to awaken fellow conservatives to the good within contemporary art and storytelling. It is, one imagines, a hard sell, given the prejudices today's conservatives inherit from historical experience. Mattix explains that as long as anyone today has been alive, artists have often associated their project with the goals of progressivism and radicalism.

"Other than Futurism, most art movements in the 20th century have been sympathetic to the Left," Mattix says. "There's this idea that you see in Picasso, and a number of poets, of using art as a 'weapon' against tyranny and war—these things being embodied by Franco, Hitler, Mussolini. Though his poems weren't very political, Frank O'Hara used to refer to some of them as 'bullets' in this sense."

The point is not that art and narrative are designed to manipulate, but rather that stories are unavoidably bearers of worldview. This fact leads some on the right to conclude, crudely, that the solution is to raise up a generation to create art infused with conservative ideology—as if culture-making, of which storytelling is key, could be reduced to ideological utility.

In a 1995 Heritage Foundation lecture, historian Wilfred M. McClay told a wonderful parable illustrat-

ing the problem with viewing story as merely a means to an end. A tourist wandering through the back alleys of San Francisco's Chinatown finds his way into an antique store. A bronze statue of a rat catches his eye, and he asks for its price.

"The rat costs twelve dollars," the shopkeeper says, "and it will be a thousand dollars more for the story behind it."

The tourist, being a shrewd American, pays for the rat, telling the old man he can keep his costly story.

Walking away from the shop, the tourist sees rats emerge from the sewer drain and begin to follow him. As he strides faster, a mass of rats swarm behind him. Running for the harbor pursued by thousands of rodents, the terrified tourist climbs a lamppost and hurls the statue into the Bay. The rat horde follows its idol into the water, and drowns.

The tourist runs back to the antique shop, and confronts the smiling shopkeeper. "So now you've seen what the statue can do, and you've come back to find out the story?" asks the Chinese man.

"No, no, no," says the tourist. "Now I want to buy a bronze statue of a lawyer!"

The tale means more than the punch line indicates, McClay told his audience. It reveals, he said, "a characteristic American attitude toward the past": that if the statue can achieve intended results, the story that accompanies it doesn't matter.

McClay's point is relevant to the way many latter-day American conservatives regard storytelling. To recognize that worldviews inhere in stories is not the same as believing that they simply determine anyone's worldview. This is because stories work by indirection: not by telling us what to believe but by helping us to experience emotionally and imaginatively what it is like to embody particular ideas.

If story is true to human experience, there will be an element of ambiguity in the telling, and this is something ideologues of all stripes—from postmodernists in English departments to Christians of the sort who chastised Flannery O'Connor for not telling "nice" stories—cannot abide.

This is why Mattix, who trained in economics before studying literature in graduate school, believes that a properly understood conservatism—one thinks of Kirk's observation that conservatism is "the negation of ideology: it is a state of mind, a type of character, a way of looking at the civil social order"—has far more in common with literary art than many people think.

"At its root, conservatism acknowledges that humans are selfish with an aptitude for evil," he says. "This, in my view, is more accurate than progressivism's belief in the inherent goodness of mankind." Yet with the cul-

ture war having turned so decisively against conservatives, perhaps it's not surprising if a besieged minority fears it cannot afford the luxury of ambiguity.

"Could it be that if you're in a position of power, you can risk ambiguity in telling your story," asks Mattix, "But if you're fighting against that story, as conservatives have been doing, the tendency might be to feel that we can't risk people not getting it the first time around, so we have to be crystal-clear and say everything in black and white?"

Still, it's a dead end—creatively, philosophically, and politically—for conservatives to mimic left-wing storytellers.

For one thing, conservatives today lack the artistic skill to tell stories as well as the left does. More philosophically, the business of a conservatism with integrity is not to impose an idealistic ideological narrative on reality but rather to try to see the world as it is and respond to its challenges within the limits of what we know about human nature.

Today, movement conservatism has made this task more difficult because the stories conservatives tell themselves about themselves are exhausted and have taken on the characteristics of brittle dogma. The great challenges facing conservatism today are not those of the postwar era and cannot be meaningfully addressed by Reaganesque narratives. The things we cherish are not primarily under threat by statism in either its Soviet or social democratic versions. The more relevant problem is how to preserve authoritative lessons about the good life in an era characterized by triumphant global capitalism and autonomous individualism.

Conservatism has within it the capacity to answer these challenges, but not if conservatives cling to stories that have lost their salience. We don't need stories that offer prepackaged ideological answers to questions few people are asking. We need stories like the one told in the comments section of my blog on the *American Conservative* website by a Texas reader.

The reader, who asked to remain anonymous, recalled how his West Texas hometown disappeared in the 1980s and 1990s, its native population dispersed. It had to do with the collapse of government support for farm programs, which occasioned a localized depression. Yet those same New Deal-inspired government programs, which had been meant to support those communities, incentivized bad agricultural and financial practices. Government, having lured farmers out onto the limb of dependence, sawed off the branch behind them, at the same time the oil-price collapse devastated the Texas economy.

Families lost their farms. The town bled out of all the people the reader grew up with. They were in time

displaced by Mexican migrants getting by on seasonal work and welfare. Liquor stores now play a central role in Main Street commerce. “I miss the hometown where I grew up,” wrote the man, now in Dallas. “It doesn’t exist anymore.”

This Texas story is politically ambiguous, in that it tells a story about how federal policies—some authored by the New Dealers, others by Reaganites—doomed his town. The facts fail to conform to ideology: it’s possible to read the story and come away with different political and policy conclusions. Yet the story incarnates policy debates in the lives of real people. Enter into a story like that and ideological abstractions seem both incapable of describing the world as it is and telling us how to act in it.

We need stories like the one told by Sam MacDonald, a libertarian journalist who helps administer a small-town hospital near Pittsburgh. He’s neck-deep in the healthcare policy debate and is struck by how little most people care about its details. He’s also struck, as an industry insider, by how massively complex the system is and how difficult it is for ordinary people to understand.

This is where stories come in. MacDonald’s experiences show that ordinary people understand policy through storytelling.

“Our way of discussing these issues doesn’t take that into account,” MacDonald says. “We try to round off the edges with spreadsheets and best practices. We try to build policies or align incentives. That’s great. I am all for efficiency.

“But that stuff misses what actually happens. Using spreadsheets to talk about healthcare is like trying to understand a strip club by analyzing its annual tax return.”

Sam has this story about the neighborhood he grew up in and how the people there received health care back in the day. In the story, Dolly, a little girl in the 1940s, learned to take care of her sick neighbor and saw how much nurses did to help the suffering and rally the community. It made Dolly want to be a nurse when she grew up. So that’s what Dolly became—and she was a good one. At 73, she still is.

Her son grew up admiring her, and eventually becoming what we call a “health care provider” himself. Now he’s the sort of man whose job it is to make sure there are no more Nurse Dollys—that is, no more women like Dolly MacDonald, his own mother. This tale is about the demoralization of a community through the bureaucratization of health care. You can learn as much, and maybe more, about what’s happening in American health care by contemplating the story of Sam, his mother, and their community than

by reading studies, position papers, and op-eds.

MacDonald came from a working-class western Pennsylvania family, graduated from Yale, and worked in Washington journalism at *Reason* before returning home to raise his kids. His experience has taught him how hapless the right is at understanding the power of storytelling.

“The smart people on the Right are working in the conservative infrastructure,” he says. “You want a conservative view on healthcare? It comes from Heritage, or maybe the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed page. Except most people don’t care. It’s too confusing.”

It would make a much greater difference, MacDonald believes, if conservatives were bringing their insights to bear writing for the network medical drama “*Grey’s Anatomy*.” But that is hard to imagine, he says.

To become a truly creative minority, Micah Mattix advises, conservatives need to throw off the chains of ideology and teach themselves to recognize beauty in art and talents in artists that don’t easily fit our moral and political assumptions. The skill with which creative people tell their stories, in word, sound, and picture, should inspire conservatives to mastery of craft.

Stories work so powerfully on the moral imagination because they are true to human experience in ways that polemical arguments are not. And because the moral imagination often determines which intellectual arguments—political, economic, theological, and so forth—will be admitted into consideration, storytelling is a vital precursor to social change.

“We need to learn to tell stories—‘To bend the ear of the outer world,’ in O’Hara’s line—to change culture not today, but in a hundred years,” says Mattix.

For his part, Sam MacDonald, an ideology-resistant conservative who has taught writing at the University of Pittsburgh, hopes to start a literary movement dedicated to telling the stories of working-class people of the Rust Belt. Recalling the Southern Agrarian literary movement of the 1930s, MacDonald wants to do the same for the postindustrial culture of his native region.

“The Agrarians lamented that factory and town living destroyed community and family life. But the experience of Pittsburgh and, on a smaller scale, my hometown, proved that wrong,” he says. “Someone who is teaching can be the Allen Tate or John Crowe Ransom of this movement. Someone who’s working a factory floor can be the Wendell Berry. I’m not comparing myself to these guys, but someone needs to write about these things in a sustained way.”

My own disaffection with standard right-wing polemics, and the experience of writing about my sister’s experience and my return home, leads me to a similar conclusion. I first lived the story, then I wrote it down

in a memoir titled *The Little Way Of Ruthie Leming*.

An interesting thing happened after that. Brian and Julie Swindell, a pair of Louisiana expatriates living in Florida, read my story this spring and discovered that their longings for home and intuitions about the importance of family had finally found expression. They decided to return home to raise their three children around their extended families. Julie's mother wrote to thank me for my book, which she said gave her the thing she had been longing for: a life with her children and grandchildren close to hand.

Like my wife and I, the Swindells weren't persuaded to change their lives by argument; they were converted by the power of story—the story of how my politically unaware sister lived and died according to customs and traditions that can only be called conservative. I contributed Ruthie's story, and in turn my own, to the moral imagination of my book's readers, some of whom may, like the Swindells, use it to change their own narratives and tell new stories.

This is not necessarily how a political party wins elections. But it is how a culture is reborn. ■

## DEEPBACKGROUND by PHILIP GIRALDI

Developments in the Middle East frequently confound even the most astute observers. Turkey, with its booming economy, NATO membership, and business-friendly government is often cited as critical ally and model Muslim-majority state embracing many Western social and economic values. The U.S. ambassador in Ankara, Francis Ricciardone, has nevertheless privately warned Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan that Washington will be unable to support his violent repression of demonstrators protesting massive government development projects.

The Turkish people have begun to refer to the Syrian conflict as Ankara's Vietnam, while secular Turks unite to push back against Islamization, and the country's security services warn about a new wave of al-Qaeda style terrorism. The U.S. Embassy and CIA have been caught flatfooted by the developments. The State Department has had virtually no contact with opposition political parties because of fear of offending Erdogan, a pattern similar to the one that prevailed with Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. CIA officers are routinely subject to blanket surveillance by the Turkish intelligence service MIT and have consequently considered it prudent to avoid developmental contact with any politicians, working instead against targets that Ankara would consider agreeable, like terrorism. Beyond its limited understanding of the political opposition, the Embassy has generally handled Erdogan with kid gloves, only gently rebuking the government's execrable treatment of journalists and the media while reserving most of its political influence to advance Turkish rapprochement with Israel. CIA and State analysts have been scrambling to come up with cogent finished intelligence explaining the deteriorating situation, but have found that they have little independent reporting to identify the players in the emerging opposition.

Some Turkey analysts believe that this crisis will not go away, leaving Erdogan with two options. He can resign "for the good of the country" and turn over the prime ministership to some Justice and Development Party nonentity as a placeholder for him. He will meanwhile work behind the scenes to increase the power of the presidency through tweaking the constitution and will run for that office next year. Or he can call for his supporters to confront the demonstrators, as in Mubarak's Egypt. If security breaks down, the role of the army could prove critical, and Erdogan is not greatly loved by many in the officer corps.

Many Turks, even those who are religious, fear a drift into the type of intolerance that characterizes Islamic regimes like Iran and Saudi Arabia. Erdogan, saying the demonstrators are "arm-in-arm with terrorism," insists he will do what he wants, emboldened by his successful clamp down on the once vibrant press. The Taksim riots were largely unreported in the Turkish media, and Erdogan blamed the part that he does not control, online social networks, for the unrest.

Erdogan's authoritarianism and his Islamist beliefs appear to go hand in hand. The national air carrier Turkish Airlines recently stopped serving alcohol on most domestic and some international flights and air stewardesses have been told to refrain from wearing makeup and bright colors. The drinking of alcohol in public and after certain hours was banned to "protect new generations from such un-Islamic habits," and in an attempt to rewrite Turkey's rich culinary history, Erdogan even declared the nonalcoholic yoghurt drink ayran to be the national beverage, leading critics to note that the modern republic's founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, was rarely seen in photos without a glass of alcoholic raki in hand. ■

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# Texas Water War

Does economic growth trump property rights?

by HENRY CHAPPELL

**T**he Sulphur River rises in northeast Texas and flows eastward through some of the last and best hardwood bottomland in the state. Culturally and ecologically, this region is the South, a country of turbid waters flowing beneath white oak, bur oak, Shumard oak, and ash. Here a few cowmen still work in the Cracker manner, with the help of rough “cur-dogs” that might pull night shifts baying feral hogs.

Scattered about the region are small communities—Cuthand, Naples, Omaha, Dalby Springs. All support, and are supported by, farming, logging, and the broader timber industry. Hunting and fishing are deeply embedded in the culture. Recreational hunters from urban areas pay landowners for access to forest and field and patronize local businesses.

The first Anglo settlers trickled into the region in 1820s and began displacing the Kickapoo, who had settled there after the contagion-induced collapse of the Caddo. Area farmers eked out a living growing cotton, peanuts, and corn. Half-wild cattle and swine foraged on open range. By the early 1940s, descendants of those who first plowed former Caddo land found themselves displaced when urban land buyers began to put up fences to keep out free-range livestock. Many smalltime stockmen left; others resorted to sharecropping. Fence cutting was common.

Some held on, however. Their heirs still draw all or part of their livelihoods from the land. But a new threat looms. While sixth-generation Sulphur River farmers look at their grandkids and see eighth-generation landowners, 120 miles west, on the semi-arid Blackland Prairie, Dallas-area business interests and water developers see in the verdant Sulphur watershed the essence of unlimited urban and suburban prosperity.

They want Sulphur River water “to ensure continued economic growth” and claim that their region’s

economic contribution to the state gives them a right to it. If they prevail, 67,000 acres of prime hardwood bottomland—all privately owned—will be condemned, taken under eminent domain, and drowned beneath a reservoir that will supply water to a growing Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Then, to satisfy environmental requirements, additional land—as much as 140,000 acres—will be condemned and set aside to mitigate the loss of high-quality wildlife habitat.

The taking of private property has a way of provoking unlikely alliances—whether small farmers and anarchists fighting construction of the planned *Aéroport du Grand Ouest* in France, elderly urban preservationists and youthful hipsters beating back philistine incursion from chain stores in America’s urban cores, or in this case, Northeast Texas farmers, environmentalists, hunters, loggers, timber companies, and local real estate agents fighting to protect their independence from outside power.

Traditionalist conservatives concerned about community and continuity and libertarians offended by threats to private property share common enemies here, though these neighbors on the political right fight on different fronts. Libertarian economist Murray Rothbard dipped an anarchic toe into the roiling Texas waters in a 1993 article, “Environmentalists Clobber Texas.” Rothbard blamed environmentalists and the Endangered Species Act, calling them egregious obstacles to private and municipal use of water and suggesting that the Sierra Club preserve endangered “critters of various shapes and sizes” in zoos. More seriously, he suggested,

A longer-run solution [to water-use conflicts], of course, is to privatize the entire system of water and water rights in this country . . . . If all re-

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*Henry Chappell is a novelist and journalist in Parker, Texas.*

sources are privatized, they will be allocated to the most important uses by means of a free price system, as the bidders able to satisfy the consumer demands in the most efficient ways are able to outcompete less able bidders for these resources.

He has a point. Water development is heavily subsidized, and Dallas-area residents and businesses are among the most profligate water users in the state, in part because they aren't paying anywhere near true market value. Surface water is treated as a public resource—despite, in some cases, byzantine systems of junior and senior water rights—and the citizens of northeast Texas can't claim Sulphur River water as their own. By extension, since flowing water must be impounded for use by large municipalities, landowners in the Sulphur watershed now stand to lose property that has been in their families since before the fall of the Alamo.

The proposed impoundment, named Marvin Nichols Reservoir in honor of one of the founders of Freese & Nichols, Inc., a Fort Worth engineering firm, will cost an estimated \$3.3 billion. A 2002 study by the Texas State Forest Service estimated that construction of Marvin Nichols Reservoir would cost the northeast Texas economy 400-1,300 jobs and \$87-\$275 million annually.

But like old Jeremy Bentham tallying “hedons” and “dolors” to calculate the greatest good for the greatest number, urban business interests, water developers, and politicians make a utilitarian case for eminent domain. Their accounting involves population growth, economic growth, and especially, of course, jobs. They assure us that while they feel for rural landowners, we must face reality and look to the future. The landowners will be fairly compensated.

In 2007, I attended a meeting of the state Senate Committee on Natural Resources. At issue was a bill that would “designate” 19 future reservoir sites, including sites on the Sulphur River. A dozen or so citizens expressed their opposition or support. A Fort Worth attorney explained with reptilian equanimity that all opposition was futile, and in a moment of poorly hidden exasperation, a pro-reservoir senator said, “Like it or not, these millions of people are coming. It's our responsibility to make sure the needed water is there.”

In a bitter legislative battle that year, urban interests—to the accompaniment of constant tub-thumping by editorialists at the *Dallas Morning News*—prevailed. Many northeast Texas landowners now walk pastures and woodlands that have been designated as possible reservoir sites. Although the properties have

not yet been formally condemned, they cannot be used in any way that could interfere with future reservoir construction. If a farmer decides to cut his losses and sell, what kind of price can he expect under this restriction on the property?

Whether or not new reservoirs are required to meet projected population growth and the economic goals of the Dallas-Fort Worth elite is a matter of fierce debate. Landowners and environmentalists argue that needs can be readily met with existing reservoirs and through increased conservation and improved technology. In his indispensable muckraking blog at *The Texas Observer*, Forrest Wilder summed up the view of most reservoir skeptics: “There's big money in building reservoirs, but not so much in fixing leaky pipes... I mean, who's lobbying for a sensible plumbing code?”

As it happens, the engineering analysis that forms the basis of Dallas region's water plan was performed by Freese and Nichols—the Fort Worth firm likely to receive the lion's share of the reservoir-engineering contract.

Is this cronyism a Texas thing, or is it representative of powerful bodies everywhere that push for giant engineering projects that require eminent domain? Must such projects go forward because “these people are coming” or so that “these people will come”? And how will the projected benefits be distributed—put another way, how will the natural wealth be redistributed?

At first blush, this kind of disruption seems a perfect example of what economist Joseph Schumpeter called capitalism's “perennial gale of creative destruction.” Yet what's creative about the destruction of land and livelihoods in the Sulphur River basin; what advances have made stock farming and logging in that region obsolete? Is this not simply a transfer of vast human and natural capital from one region to another?

In “Prospects for the Proletariat,” Russell Kirk described the destruction wrought by urban renewal on venerable working class neighborhoods in Detroit.

What resulted were urban deserts and urban jungles, not renewal; great profits, though, were made by eminent developers and contractors ... The newcomers to Detroit had only begun to settle into tolerable community ... when down the streets came the federal bulldozer. Where to flee now?

Land grabs like the proposed Sulphur River projects—or like China's Three Gorges Dam, which sent millions of peasants streaming into the cities—represent proletarianization on an egregious scale.

At a bar in Omaha, Texas, I met a self-employed

logger who'd spent his working life in the Sulphur River basin. A huge, bearded man right out of central casting, he bred and trained mules for pulling logs from places where industrial skidders would be too destructive. "That reservoir will probably put me out of business," he said.

What does a middle-aged logger do after the source of his livelihood is inundated or put off-limits? "Where to flee now?" To the city, perhaps, where he can compete amid the burgeoning workforce that justifies the reservoir that prevents him from earning a living in his home region. No doubt the economy will boom.

Besides the obvious disruptions, a growth-at-all-costs ideology that treats land, water, and communities as nothing but raw material inflicts insidious damage to the foundations of constitutionalism. In *Ideas Have Consequences*, conservative thinker Richard Weaver argued that the right of private property is "the last metaphysical right remaining to us," the only one to survive the "rancorous, leveling winds of utilitarianism." Drawing on Locke and Jefferson, Weaver called widely distributed ownership of small property the most effective barrier against an encroaching state and predatory capitalism. "Respecters of private property are really obligated to oppose much that is done today in the name of private enterprise," he wrote.

Similarly, in *How to Think Seriously About the Planet*, philosopher Roger Scruton argues that love and community arise from a sense of permanence. But if no place is safe from plunder, then no place can be safely loved. Over time, nihilism will pervade.

Gary and Dolores Cheatwood have spent their lives in the community of Cuthand, in Red River County. They own 600 acres, nearly all of it timber of the highest grade. Gary was born there. His grandfather bought the first 100 acres around 1917. The Cheatwoods graze a few cattle on the property; they hope to leave the timber for their two children and five grandchildren to use judiciously. No one will draw a living entirely from that 600 acres, but it provides the family a degree of independence. It's there if they need it. Marvin Nichols Reservoir would cover their property.

"It's tough," Gary says. "Our grandkids love the land. We haven't cut any timber on it in our lifetime. There are state and national champion trees there. My grandparents and great-grandparents lived there.

We've been in this fight for about 10 years, and I expect my son and grandkids will take up the fight too."

Andrew Sansom, Executive Director of the Meadows Institute for Water and the Environment at Texas State University-San Marcos, writes in *In Water for Texas: An Introduction*, "We must find a way to move water westward in Texas. This is inevitable, but, again, the prospect of interbasin transfer is one that is not universally accepted." Inevitable, perhaps—and even democratic, given that residents of Dallas Fort-Worth far outnumber those of the Sulphur River basin. But



that doesn't make it right.

Conservatives and libertarians tend to be sanguine about population growth, and I'm confident that humans can engineer around shortages for generations to come. But I doubt that the politicians or the giants of global capitalism who tout the benefits of an infinite labor pool possess either the imagination or empathy to keep a debit column of human expense. Perhaps if these visionaries stood in a river bottom, amid giant hardwood trees, and listened to a rural Texan say that she prays for an endangered species to appear on her property... ■

# The Anti-Alinsky

John Jay Chapman teaches conservatives the spirit of practical agitation.

by ALAN PELL CRAWFORD



On Sunday, August 13, 1911, in the steel town of Coatesville, Pennsylvania, an African-American man named Zachariah Walker killed a white security guard in what Walker insisted was an act of self-defense. Fleeing the police, he attempted to commit suicide and was taken to the hospital to recover from a gunshot wound. That night, six masked men forced their way into the hospital and dragged Walker from his bed. Forcing him to crawl for half a mile, they then turned him over to a mob, which the *Philadelphia Inquirer* estimated to number between 3,000 to 5,000 men, women and children, including “many of [Coatesville’s] leading citizens.” These respectable townspeople “without any effort to conceal their identity, looked on without any evidence of disapproval.”

The scene they witnessed was Walker “tossed upon a pyre of blazing hay, straw and fence rails,” as

the *Inquirer* reported. After he “crawled out of the flames, with shreds of flesh hanging from his charred body, he was roughly seized and flung back into the fire, where the mob had decreed he should die.” When ropes restraining him burned, Walker somehow managed to crawl out of the flames once more, only to be hurled back into them, his “cries of agony ... drowned by the jeers of the crowd.”

In time the cries died away, and members of the mob waited around until the ashes cooled. Then they collected bone fragments. The next day, boys stood on street corners and sold souvenirs of what remained of Walker’s body. Fifteen men and boys were indicted for their roles in the atrocity, but public outcry against their prosecution was intense, and no one was convicted.

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Accounts of the event appeared in newspapers along the East Coast. One reader who was “greatly moved” by the lynching was a vigorous and well-connected New York writer, political activist, and sometimes lawyer named John Jay Chapman. For a full year, Chapman “brooded silently,” according to Richard Hovey, one of the few scholars to undertake a serious study of his work. “Then he took action,” Hovey writes. “He did a symbolic thing, unique in the annals of this nation.”

Chapman wrote that he believed “the whole country would be different if any one man did something in penance.” So he traveled to Coatesville “and declared my intention of holding a prayer meeting to the various business men I could buttonhole.” That few showed the slightest interest in his idea did not deter him, nor did the difficulty of hiring a hall. On August 16, 1912, he took out an ad in the *Coatesville Record* that read:

In Memoriam

A Prayer Meeting will be held

On Sunday morning, at 11 o'clock

At the Nagel Building

Silent and aral [sic] prayer:

Reading of the Scriptures:

Brief address by John Jay Chapman

In memory of the Tragedy of August 13, 1911

O Lord receive my prayer

The words Chapman spoke that night would come to feature in textbooks of rhetoric and anthologies of America's greatest speeches. But he addressed an almost empty audience—and therein lay much of his act's significance.

Not many people today know a thing about Chapman, and precious few conservatives would reserve a plinth for him in their statuary hall. Chapman had already been forgotten more than three-quarters of a century ago when Edmund Wilson wrote in 1976, “hardly one reader in a million has heard of even the name of John Jay Chapman.” More's the pity, since Wilson regarded Chapman as perhaps the finest writer on literature of his generation, an opinion shared in many respects by Jacques Barzun, who edited *Unbought Spirit*, an anthology of Chapman's works published in 1998. As an observer of politics, Chapman is equally stimulating, and as a writer on the mechanics of political change—and as a practitioner of the methods he promoted—this remarkable man should be of special interest to conservatives.

Chapman himself was a Progressive—an anti-Tammany Hall reformer who had a considerable influence, scholars say, on *New Republic* founder Herbert Croly. Conservatives today have been browbeaten into scorning the Progressives, but theirs was a response to problems that troubled conservatives, too: a society busily producing, in the words of Chapman's admirer and near contemporary Albert Jay Nock, “an upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, a lower class brutalized.”

Born in New York City in 1862, Chapman was the son of Henry Grafton Chapman, president of the New York Stock Exchange, and great-grandson of Supreme Court Justice John Jay. Chapman's grandmother was an associate of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, about whom Chapman would write a book-length study. A Harvard man, Chapman practiced law until 1898, when he devoted his energies to politics and journalism.

From 1897–1901 he ran his own bracingly independent newsletter, *The Political Nursery*, which publicized reformist politicians and policies. A friend and one-time ally of Theodore Roosevelt's, Chapman eventually broke with TR, concluding that he was a “broken-backed, half-good man ... [and] trimmer”—an opportunist. Besides a number of books, Chapman wrote literary essays, poems and plays, though only the books and literary essays bear re-reading.

A Hudson River grandee, he was a convivial soul and a devoted family man. A son, Victor Chapman, who joined the French Foreign Legion in 1914 and flew as a member of the Lafayette Escadrille, was shot down over France. Another son, Chanler Chapman, who died in 1982, was the model for Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*.

Chapman was especially busy during the New York City elections of 1895, working to dismantle Tammany Hall and playing what Edmund Wilson called

a spirited and provocative part. He made speeches from the cart-tail in the streets and created a great impression by getting down and manhandling hecklers who were trying to break him up—he was a man of formidable build—then going back and finishing his speech, and afterwards buying his opponents drinks.

Chapman could confound even admirers' attempts to pigeonhole his thought or predict his moves. “He just looks at things and tells the truth about them—a strange thing even to *try* to do,” William James

wrote, “and he doesn’t always succeed.” It has never been “easy to make peace with him,” Barzun concedes, “for he is so unsettling. There is the matter of the man’s perpetual cross-grainedness—a cross-grainedness that is going to offend every reader sooner or later.” Some reasons for this offense, as we will see, are understandable.

We Americans have too readily persuaded ourselves that, no matter our station in life, we are among the powerless and disenfranchised. This is an ironic twist on our “rugged individualism.” Because we like to see ourselves as rebellious challengers to authority, we also like to exaggerate the forces arrayed against us. This is why Rush Limbaugh and Fox News like to think they speak for the disenfranchised and offer an “alternative” to the mainstream media. Thus even conservatives have come to see themselves as aggrieved underdogs, forever besieged by forces so vast and intimidating that there is nothing much we can accomplish as individuals.

This is true of white people as well as black, rich as well as poor, male as well as female. Impotent as individuals, we are convinced that the only leverage we have is by combining forces with thousands—ideally, millions—of others who share our sense of injustice, persecution or resentment. We speak—or shout—truth to power, but always in chorus. We march, we assemble, we occupy, to show that our outrage is shared by countless others.

Taking our cue from street theater, from college

*Chapman could confound even admirers’ attempts to pigeonhole his thought or predict his moves.*

sporting events, from flash mobs, and from the preachments of Saul Alinsky, we hide our otherwise timid souls behind face paint and engage in acts of gooney exhibitionism the whole point of which is to get on cable TV. That is what we call a “demonstration,” as if there is no other way to express ourselves as citizens.

Chapman at Coatesville offers another way. He reminds us that in a “demonstration” something is exemplified and incarnated—in this case, a troubled conscience or, as Chapman put it, a penance. Chapman acted alone, and his action was rooted in

a larger theory of social change, one that is particularly well suited to a political tradition that puts great stock in the individual. This is a country established in part in the belief that individuals matter and what we have to say as individuals—rather than just as anonymous members of sociological groups or political movements—is important.

“We are met,” Chapman told his audience in Coatesville, “to commemorate the anniversary of one of the most dreadful crimes in history—not for the purpose of condemning it, but to repent of our share in it.” It was perhaps fitting that the effort to prosecute those who tortured Zachariah Walker had failed “because the whole community, and in a sense our whole people, are really involved in the guilt. The failure of the prosecution in this case, in all such cases, is only a proof of the magnitude of the guilt, and of the awful fact that everyone shares in it.”

Although Chapman lived on the Hudson, he continued,

I knew that the great wickedness that happened in Coatesville is not the wickedness of Coatesville nor of today. It is the wickedness of all America and of three hundred years—the wickedness of the slave trade. All of us are tintured by it. No special place, no special persons, are to blame. The trouble has come down to us out of the past. The only reason that slavery is wrong is that it is cruel and makes men cruel and leaves them cruel. Someone may say that you and I cannot repent because he did not do the act. But we are involved in it. We are still looking on.

Patriotic Americans have a hard time hearing these words. Conservative Christians insist on the depravity of man and say they believe all nations come under judgment, but they somehow manage to exempt their own country.

That only two people showed up for Chapman’s prayer service—an African-American woman from Boston and a police informant—does not make what he said any less true. The poor attendance might even make his accomplishment more impressive, insofar as it is still discussed today—if only by those few who know of Chapman. That an apparent failure can actually reverberate into the next century supports Chapman’s understanding of social change, or, as he called it in a book of the same title, “practical agitation.”

Published in 1900, *Practical Agitation* is a manual for political activism that does not seek immediate

gratification and does not insist that “demands” be met. His is agitation for the long haul, and in that it is conservative in ways that Alinsky’s, for example, is not. Chapman’s is activism for grownups.

“We think that political agitation must show political results,” he writes. “This is like trying to alter the shape of a shadow without touching its objects.” The results of practical agitation “cannot show in the political field till they have passed through the social world.” The goal should be to change the way people think and feel, rather than how they vote. A vote is “only important because it is an opinion,” and it is opinions that must be influenced. This can be done by argument, by the amassing and dissemination of data. Evidently this can also be done—when the right imitates the tactics of the left—by bullying legislators at town hall meetings or subjecting young women in difficult circumstances to gruesome images on placards at abortion-clinic protests.

But there is another way, one that involves personal example and calls all of us to repent, not just those of whom we disapprove. This way is also more effective. “Everyone is aroused from his lethargy by seeing a real man walk on the scene, amid all the stage properties and marionettes of conventional politics.” Chapman had discovered from his own hard-won experience. People might object to what such a brave soul says and does, but they listen, and their hearts and minds are changed whether they admit it or not. They do not necessarily vote for such a candidate, “but they talk about the portent with a vigor no mere doctrine could call forth, and the discussion blossoms at a later date into a new public spirit, a new and genuine demand for better things.”

That is why the practical agitator should never compromise his views. “It is the very greatest folly in the world for an agitator to be content with a partial success,” Chapman wrote. “It destroys his cause.” He becomes part of the corrupt system he sought to clean up. You can give up 10 percent of what you want only at the cost of “ninety percent of your educational power; for the heart of man will respond only to a true thing.” The agitator must never settle. “If, by chance, some party, some administration gives him one percent of what he demands, let him acknowledge it handsomely; but he need not thank them. They did it because they had to, or because their conscience compelled them.”

Conscience looms large for Chapman, and conscience is closely tied to the private will, which is

“always set free by the same process: by the telling of truth. The identity between public and private reveals itself in the instant a man adopts the plan of indiscriminate truth-telling. Let a man blurt out his opinion. Instantly there follows a little flash of reality.” Indiscriminate truth-telling requires a sense of humor, or at least a gift for satire. Complacent people

### *Indiscriminate truth-telling requires a sense of humor, or at least a gift for satire.*

“are so soft with feeding on political lies that they drop dead if you give them a dose of ridicule in a drawing-room. Denunciation is well enough, but laughter is the true ratsbane for hypocrites.”

It is the individual—the individual conscience, to be precise—that determines political and social change, and it follows that the man or woman who seeks to prick the conscience of his neighbor will be no stranger to loneliness. Do not expect cheering throngs in hotel ballrooms celebrating your victories with you because, if you are doing it right, the victories will be slow in coming. That should not trouble disciples of Edmund Burke or Russell Kirk, who believe change should not be rushed. This is something “movement conservatives” in recent decades seem to have forgotten.

“Do not think you are wasting your time, even if no one joins you,” Chapman wrote a full decade before he failed to raise a crowd at Coatesville. “The prejudice against the individual is part of the evil you are fighting.”

The first thing anyone hears about Chapman involves Coatesville. The second is the business about his arm, which is mighty grisly too. In 1886, while he was a student at Harvard Law School, Chapman attended “the most innocent kind of party,” where he met a friend from childhood. When this friend was making what Chapman decided were improper advances toward a young lady he admired (and would later marry), he invited this rival to step out onto the lawn. There Chapman picked up a stick and thrashed the man.

The next thing Chapman remembered was returning to his room in Cambridge where a coal fire

burned in the fireplace. Overcome with remorse for beating his friend, Chapman wrapped a pair of suspenders tightly around his left forearm, plunged the left hand into the fire, “and held it down with my right hand for some minutes.” When he removed the hand, “the charred knuckles and finger-bones were exposed.”

“This will never do,” Chapman told himself, and he set off for Massachusetts General Hospital. Put under ether, he woke up the next morning “without the hand and very calm in my spirits.” A few days later he was visited by Dr. Reginald Heber Fitz, “the great alienist” and “an extremely agreeable man.” In the course of his examination, Fitz asked Chapman whether he was “insane,” and Chapman said, “This is for you to find out.” The arm “healed up rapidly” while Chapman’s “inner composure, so far as I remember, was complete.”

The question of Chapman’s sanity is complicated. Throughout his life, he was weighed down by mental

*Overcome with remorse for beating his friend, Chapman wrapped a pair of suspenders tightly around his left forearm and plunged his hand into the fire.*

afflictions of one kind or another. A nervous breakdown in 1899, when he was 37, confined him to a dark room for 18 months. A few years later, he suffered another collapse, and after half a year of bed rest in which he was spoonfed by a nurse he hobbled about on crutches for six months more. He contemplated suicide “but somehow thought it wasn’t of much importance.”

Like a number of remarkable men of his time—William and Henry James, Mark Twain, Abraham Lincoln—Chapman wrestled with demons that sometimes won the battle, if not the war. It seems obvious that at times he was out of his mind. To his credit, he realized this about himself. He also came to accept that this madness could find expression in indefensible enthusiasms, and he would take measures to cool down. This is one way to account for the fact that in the 1920s Chapman gave voice to half-cracked utterances that are repulsive and disappointing—and all-too-characteristic of the Hudson Valley aristocracy at that time of great social upheaval.

A social critic as trenchant as John Adams or H. L. Mencken, Chapman was troubled his entire life

by what he saw as the vulgar and vertiginous swirl of American life. In the years between the wars, he became convinced that it was the masses, not the middle class, that were “most inimical,” according to his biographer Hovey, “to the things of the mind and spirit.” Reading of “labor troubles,” he began to fear that the nation was “rocking with Bolshevism in every form, from parlour to garret, from pulpit to slum.” In Woodrow Wilson’s internationalism, he detected the influence of the “Jewish peril.” More than that, he feared the waves of Irish Catholic immigrants. When he protested Harvard’s decision to elect a Catholic as a Governing Fellow, he began receiving letters of support from cranks, including Madison Grant, who was at once an enlightened conservationist and a celebrated theorist of “scientific racism.”

That same year, 1924, Chapman in an unpublished manuscript bemoaned the timidity of respectable citizens in the face of mounting threats. The Ku Klux Klan, he wrote, at least was not afraid to discuss the “true dangers—the Negro question, the Jewish question, the Catholic question and immigration.” He began to fantasize about connecting the “Ku Klux element with the better elements of the East. The K.K. are on the right track, i.e., open war, and the rest of the country is in a maze of prejudice against the K.K. due to manipulation of the Eastern Press.” The following year, Chapman’s poem “Cape Cod, Rome and Jerusalem,” which traced America’s troubles to the “Jesuit and the Jew,” appeared the Klan’s *National Courier*.

These eruptions seem uncharacteristic of Chapman, and they were. For most of his life, he was a forthright opponent of racism and bigotry. In 1897, he wrote that “the heart of the world is Jewish” and called it a “monstrous perversion—that we should worship their God and despise themselves!”

For all his anti-Catholicism, which he said he inherited from Huguenot forbears, in 1914 Chapman rented a storefront in New York’s Hell’s Kitchen and turned it into a boys-and-girls club for the neighborhood children, most of whom were Irish immigrants. This was a popular activity of its time, reflecting a certain condescension, perhaps, but well meaning. In 1923, when Harvard President Abbot Lawrence Lowell prohibited a black student from living in the same dorm with whites, Chapman protested in the *New York World* that the action was an attempt to “keep alive at Harvard the idea of white supremacy.” Such blacks “among us as can receive a college education must be offered one which is without stigma.”



College, in fact, was where otherwise prejudiced young people can be educated out of their ignorance.

In his classic *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America*, E. Digby Baltzell concedes that even in his most “fanatic” period, Chapman “had the insight to see the dangers and fallacies of his extreme anti positions.” In mid-1925, for example, he wrote to a friend in France, “The decay of life, mind, and character of the American has got on my brain and come out in the form of anti-Catholicism,” a mania he clearly felt was something to be gotten rid of. “It is all too easy to become *toqué*”—meaning cracked—“in agitating anything that is anti.” Such a stance toward the rest of the world, “turns into a mystic hostility and this in turn grows very often into a *‘manie des persecutions.*’ Men come to believe they are spied on, followed, and treated with black magic by the organization or sect that they hold in horror.”

Chapman needed to get a grip on himself, and he did. He sailed to Europe to clear his brain. Four years later, after Herbert Hoover defeated Democrat Al Smith, the first Catholic to be nominated for president by a major party, Chapman told a friend he had become “quite calm about the Roman question ever since the election—somehow got rid of it.” That was an exaggeration, but he was making progress. In 1931, with good-humored self-deprecation, he said he was perfectly capable of passing a whole “row of convents and Roman Churches on the way up the Hudson with equanimity. All is well.” In two years, he was dead.

There are lessons for conservatives not only in Chapman’s sunnier moments but also in his bleaker ones. His obsession with immigration fueled his feelings of isolation, and in the dank prison cell of his disordered mind, he saw in the Klan virtue where there was only venality. His seemingly willful blindness to the evils of racism led him to forget and then violate the methods for meaningful civic action he had established with such eloquence years before. He cut away for all time much of the moral authority he once possessed, squandering the “educational power” that, for him, was the quintessence of successful agitation.

“In the twenties,” Chanler Chapman wrote, “my father fought a twilight battle with the present.” Conservatives know how that can feel. This is a movement, after all, that defined itself back in 1955 as standing “athwart history, yelling Stop.”

Where the conservative movement has made great gains in recent decades is in establishing networks

of well-financed organizations in Washington that provide comfortable careers for ideologues and opportunists. Assuming that the way to influence the political world is by amassing mailing lists and raising money, they have funded think tanks, front groups, lobbying firms, and other agitprop factories, and they have elected senators and congressmen and countless state legislators. But by their own admission, conservatives have very little to show for all this effort. That is because these activities can become ends in themselves, and they almost always do. That is the danger of attempting to change “the shape of a shadow without touching its objects.”

*There are lessons for conservatives not only in Chapman’s sunnier moments but also in his bleaker ones.*

Chapman’s approach is closer to that of Francis of Assisi, at least as described by G.K. Chesterton. Moved to repair the ruins of San Damiano, Francis understood that the way to build a church “is not to pay for it, certainly not with somebody else’s money. The way to build a church is not even to pay for it with your own money. The way to build a church is to build it.” So Francis collected stones and begged others for stones. Enduring ridicule, he rebuilt the church with his own hands, discovering, in Chesterton’s words,

that his glory was not to be in overthrowing men in battle but in building up the positive and creative monuments of peace. He was truly building up something else, or beginning to build it up; something that has often enough fallen into ruin but has never been past rebuilding; a church that could always be built anew though it had rotted away to its last foundation-stone, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

It would be a mistake to confuse conservatism with a church. But it is not an error to approach the ordeal of its restoration with reverence, with humility, with a sense of individual and collective responsibility alike and in full awareness of the fact that to make real gains, as Chapman once wrote, we must “never reap but only sow.” ■

# Civil War Comes Home

“Copperhead” dramatizes the ’60s antiwar movement—1860s, that is.

by JORDAN BLOOM

*Loss became commonplace; death was no longer encountered individually; death's threat, its proximity, and its actuality became the most widely shared of the war's experiences. ... for those Americans who lived in and through the Civil War, the texture of the experience, its warp and woof, was the presence of death.*

— Drew Gilpin Faust

In the living room of his house in Rappahannock, Virginia, filmmaker Ron Maxwell brings up the 2008 book from which that quote is drawn: *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. We're talking about the costs of the war Maxwell—director of “Gods and Generals” and “Gettysburg”—has made a career of interpreting. “All of the numbers are being revised upwards” since Faust's book came out five years ago, he says—by 20 percent in 2012 alone.

His new movie concerns those Northern Democrats who adjudged the costs too high and called for a settlement with the South. They were dubbed “Copperheads” by their opponents and likened to the venomous snake. It was a name they accepted, and now it's the name of the new film. Produced and directed by Maxwell and written by antiwar populist historian (and *TAC* columnist) Bill Kauffman, “Copperhead” is about a small town in upstate New York where divided opinions about the war threaten to tear the community asunder. Based on an 1893 novella by Harold Frederic of Utica—whom Maxwell calls the “Charles Dickens of upstate New York”—it focuses on two families, one Copperhead and one abolitionist.

It is a film about the Northern home front: there is not a single battle scene or slave, though characters returning from the South talk of both. “The whole point is that the war intrudes on the people where they are,” Maxwell says.

“Copperhead” opens in 1862 to six boys traipsing across a field and talking about a distant war. In time two will be killed in battle, two will be maimed, and two will survive unscathed, albeit only in the sense

that they're unwounded. The movie is narrated by one who stayed behind, an orphan named Jimmy (Josh Cruddas), who lives with the Copperhead Beeches. The father of the family, Abner Beech, is according to Kauffman “neither a doughface nor a congenital contrarian: he is, rather, a Jefferson-Jackson agrarian in the Upstate New York Democratic tradition.”

Abner's son, Jeff (Casey Brown), named after his political icon Thomas Jefferson, is in love with Esther (Lucy Boynton) the daughter of the town's most fervent abolitionist, Jee Hagadorn, played powerfully by Angus McFayden. In an early scene Esther renames her suitor Tom since his other name evokes the traitorous president of the Confederacy.

As Jeff and Esther grow closer, the rest of the town, led by her father, turns against the Beech family. First it was just Jee. Then, to quote Harold Frederic, “there came to be a number of them—and then, all at once, lo! everybody was an Abolitionist—that is to say, everybody but Abner Beech.” The once peaceful town falls sick with war fever and Abner is accused of everything from disloyalty to watering down the milk he sells. In one memorable scene the pastor of the town's one church lists notable Democrats as the seven heads of the Beast from Revelation. Abner, not normally one for needless provocation—the boys in the beginning of the film only remember him resorting to violence once in their lives—walks out quoting the Beatitudes: “blessed are the peacemakers.”

In the midst of it all Jeff joins the Union army—rebellious by enlisting—to impress his future wife. So as not to spoil the movie, suffice it to say that things get worse before they get better, though on the last page of the novella Esther comes around to calling him Jeff again.

“Copperhead” is the first sympathetic take on the Northern dissenters from the Civil War in recent popular culture. We are all abolitionists in retrospect, and you need only look as far as the *New York Times*'

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Ciarán Macgillivray, Josh Cruddas, and Francios Arnaud in “Copperhead”

sesquicentennial remembrances to get a feel for the Copperheads’ tarnished reputation—they are “peevish and bordering on paranoid,” prone to “mystical thinking.”

Needless to say, the film’s writer and director disagree. In one of his books Kauffman describes the opposition as “honorable and deep-set in the old American grain.” Some Copperheads were indeed guilty of plotting to overthrow or withdraw from the Union, but that was not characteristic of the movement as a whole—in the film, the Beeches’ only formal expression of any political opposition is in voting for Democrats. (An act that, to be sure, almost causes a riot.)

After Maxwell’s expensive, logistically intense earlier work—which involved many historians, the consent of national parks, and thousands of reenactors—his next project after 2003’s “Gods and Generals” had to meet three strict criteria, he says. It had to “absolutely motivate me as a filmmaker,” it had to have a novel angle on the war, and it had to be economical to produce. The planned sequel to “Gettysburg” featuring the conclusion of the war is often discussed but, being another costly war epic, only meets one of Maxwell’s preconditions. “Copperhead” meets all three.

“I find it obscene that we have to, for the twentieth time in a motion picture, see the prolonged, agonizing death of Abraham Lincoln,” says Maxwell. “Spielberg does it again in his beautiful style, he’s the filmmaker of our age. But how many times do we have to be dragged through that hagiography? ... The untimely death of any man is to be deplored, but what about the other seven hundred thousand?”

For Kauffman the affinity with the subject matter is even deeper. “Over the years I’ve written about anti-expansionists and loco-focos and populists and people who wanted to save the small rural schools, people who

opposed the Interstate Highway System and all sorts of stuff like that,” he says, quoting William Appleman Williams’s injunction to “let us think about the people who lost.” Abner Beech is a man who lost. Moreover, Kauffman’s first novel, *Every Man a King*, was consciously working in the regionalist tradition of which the author of “Copperhead” is a part, and the screenwriter admits that “as an upstate New York patriot, it’s really exciting to me that we have Harold Frederic, who I think is a great American novelist, reintroduced to a lot of people who haven’t heard of him.”

Kauffman’s favorite scene in the film has the same charming admixture of localist anarchism and literary worldliness that makes his own books so entertaining. It’s an exchange between Abner and Avery, a minor character who might be called the town’s spokesman for the Union, played by Peter Fonda (an eclectic reactionary himself), recalling his father in “Young Mister Lincoln.” After Abner goes on about Lincoln’s tyrannies—imprisoning dissidents, shuttering newspapers, conscripting young men—Avery asks him, “Doesn’t the Union mean anything to you?” Avery replies: “It means something. It means more than something. But it doesn’t mean everything. My family means more to me, my farm, the corners means more. York State means more to me. Though we disagree Avery, you mean more to me than any Union.”

“That to me is the most poignant scene in the movie,” says Kauffman. “Maybe that’s just because I guess there’s a little bit of me in that particular disquisition.”

When talking about the story of “Copperhead,” both Kauffman and Maxwell are quick to invoke political ideas, so it’s a dimension that’s hard to ignore. “Obviously in one sense it’s an antiwar movie,” Kauffman says, “but if there’s a political point to the film, it’s a defense of dissent, which sounds sort of innocuous.

## Film

‘Well *that’s* really brave.’ But in fact films, books, theater, pieces of art, when they treat the subject they’re almost always cheating. They stack the deck, and the author flatters himself and the audience because the dissenter is always someone with whom all right-thinking people of our age agree. It’s this ‘Inherit the Wind’ bullshit, you know? It’s a cheat.”

We don’t automatically identify with Abner because he dissents from “what’s probably the sacredest cow in American history,” says Kauffman. “In that sense it’s provocative, and it’s meant to be provocative.”

“Our proclivity is to identify with the dissenter, except here the dissenter has been essentially discredited by our history,” Maxwell says. “Our official history and our received wisdom, right or wrong, is the reality. There’s a big monument on the Mall to Abraham Lincoln, he’s seated there like Zeus in a temple. So to anyone who was in the North, the Southerners were just the enemy; but anybody in the North who was against Lincoln’s war had to be either misguided or a traitor.”

The question is whether filmgoers are willing to be provoked in this way, and much of that depends on their impression of how fair the film is being to both sides. “They’re only willing to be challenged by it if the challenge is emotional and personal,” says Maxwell. “As soon as you get into any kind of didactic, manipulative scenario, an audience will reject it. I would reject it.”

The Harold Frederic novella takes itself a good deal less seriously than this movie does—it’s downright funny in parts—though the filmmakers’ circumspection makes sense in light of the sensitive subject matter, and they’re at pains to be evenhanded toward both sides. Jee, as he’s written, is a “real caricature,” says Kauffman. “We humanized him, or Angus McFayden did, who’s tremendous in that role. Jee is absolutely right about the central moral question of the age: slavery, its immorality, the need to abolish it decades ago. But he has subordinated all that’s nearest and closest to him to an abstraction.

“Abner too, to a lesser extent, suffers from Jee Hagadorn-ism, depicted most harshly in the scene when he’s getting on his soapbox again, talking about ‘tearin’ up the Constitution, making every house a house of mourning,’ and it doesn’t occur to him that his wife is sitting in the same room and thinking about her own son who’s gone, quite possibly dead. At that moment, he’s an all-forest, no-trees guy.”

Now at the tail end of a long career, Maxwell has decamped from the hubs of the film industry to the heart of Civil War country in the northern Shenandoah, on top of a mountain. He tells me about his childhood in Clifton-Passaic, New Jersey, and the

“profound sense of loss” brought about by accelerated technological and cultural change.

The places that formed him as younger man are now unrecognizable. The people have moved and the landmarks are gone—the Zeta Psi frat house where he lived as a student at NYU’s old Bronx campus, gone. The Jewish community center where he used to direct plays, gone. “Garret Mountain, where we used to have picnics. Half of the mountain has been sheared away as a quarry.”

The old Metropolitan Opera House, where he first saw Wagner’s “Ring” cycle: a “jewel, a world jewel! It had the best acoustics of any room on earth, it was renowned for its acoustics, Caruso sang there, Zinka Milanov sang there. Great conductors performed there. Razed to the ground and an ugly skyscraper put up!”

The appeal of “Copperhead” very much stems from this sense of loss, and just as Kauffman and Maxwell’s life experiences and artistic pursuits drew them to the story, the average American movie-goer is primed to... not really get it. Roger Ebert wrote in his rather unkind review of “Gods and Generals” that it was a movie for people who do things other than watching movies, like reenact Civil War battles. That’s true enough; but then, who is this one for if it doesn’t even have any battles?

If nothing else, the film is a reminder that the Civil War began a process of centralization and upheaval that continues today, and to resist it is neither futile nor racist. If Lincoln’s modern critics often downplay the racial animosity his opponents tapped into, Kauffman writes, “the eulogists of Father Abraham ... gloss over the extent to which the Civil War enshrined industrial capitalism, the subordination of the states to the federal behemoth, and such odiously statist innovations as conscription, the jailing of war critics, and the income tax.”

“The meaning of the war had come to inhere in its cost”—to cite Faust again—even in Lincoln’s second inaugural address, which presumed to weigh the “blood drawn with the lash” against the “blood drawn by the sword” on the scales of divine justice. To question whether anyone has the authority to commit human lives to such a calculation is to know Abner Beech.

His kind of patriotism begins at home; it’s built of stronger stuff than a “Mission Accomplished” banner and can’t be embodied in a jobs bill. To the extent that those local affinities still hold power, the message of the film’s ending is hopeful. It takes a tragedy—and I won’t tell you what it is—but the fever in the Corners breaks. The community comes back. And to the extent that they don’t, we might nonetheless remember that to love thy neighbor is still a subversive act. ■

# Rock for Republicans?

How the GOP misunderstands John Mellencamp's heartland ethic

by DAVID MASCIOTRA

John Mellencamp is a walking contradiction: a self-identified redneck but politically liberal; a world famous musician who has married or dated models and actresses, but who never had a permanent residence outside southern Indiana. He is one of America's best and most authentic songwriters, but he began his career with the fake name of Johnny Cougar, singing songs he now admits were "terrible."

Without fail, every campaign season an ambitious Republican candidate adopts "Small Town," "Pink Houses," "Our Country," or another Mellencamp hit as entrance music. And without fail, John Mellencamp politely requests that the politician stop playing his songs at rallies.

He has performed at rallies for noble causes. Mellencamp is one of the founding board members of Farm Aid—the longest running benefit show in American history, providing assistance to small family farmers—and he has lent his talents to the fundraising campaigns of homeless shelters, children's hospitals, and even independent bookstores. He is one of the few musicians to perform for the troops and their families at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Although I'd prefer that he not, he has also opened for Democratic politicians at various rallies beginning in 2008, breaking a policy of issue advocacy but electoral neutrality he maintained through the first 25 years of his career. The difference between his performances at Democratic functions and his co-optation at Republican rallies is the obvious one of consent. He chooses to play at the former and rejects participation in the latter. Why, then, do so many members of the GOP continue to play his music at their events? What is the appeal to them, and what are they missing?

Equal parts James Dean and the Marlboro Man in appearance, gravelly voiced, Mellencamp has a rough aesthetic that speaks to American character and

myth. The handsome guy in jeans and T-shirt, wavy hair in a Presley pompadour, cigarette hanging from his mouth is as American as cowboys, baseball, and the stars and stripes.

Mellencamp likely comes off as a brute to hip urbanites. He once told a story about ducking into a Los Angeles alley to smoke a cigarette. An employee at a high-priced clothing boutique found him and scolded him, "Your smoke is wafting into our store." Mellencamp took a look at the thick cloud of smog in the sky and asked, "You live in this filth and you care about me smoking?"

The values and principles that Mellencamp celebrates are heard in the songs for which he is most famous. "Pink Houses," perhaps his signature anthem, features the instantly memorable chorus—"Ain't that America / For you and me / Ain't that America / Something to see, baby / Ain't that America / Home of the free / Little pink houses for you and me." The nearest rival to "Pink Houses" is "Small Town," the song he wrote to pay tribute to Seymour, Indiana, the farm community where he was born, raised, and "taught the fear of Jesus." "I cannot forget from where it is that I come from / I cannot forget the people who love me," Mellencamp sings in the catchiest version of localism ever crafted.

"Small Town" represents much of what Mellencamp embraces in his art—micro-patriotism prioritizing love of country with love of community, Christian principles, and the virtues of family bonds, neighborhood ties, and individual freedom. In "Cherry Bomb"—a beautiful blend of folk, beach R&B, and early rock 'n' roll that deserves admission into the

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## Music

American songbook—Mellencamp looks back on his early twenties with infectious fondness and unapologetic nostalgia, remembering the days when “holding hands meant something.”

The portrait of American life that Mellencamp paints appears traditional. It doesn't matter how many times he writes and sings muscular rock songs about casual sex and wild nights underneath street lamps, he always returns to the traditions of “love your neighbor,” “do unto others as you would have done unto you,” and “the greatest among you is your servant.”

Mellencamp was raised in the Nazarene Church and left when he was 16 because, as he tells it, “They said, ‘no smoking, no drinking, no dancing, and girls

*When Mellencamp sings about his country in “Pink Houses,” he does so with a sense of joy and celebration, but the ecstasy is tempered with agony.*

can't wear make up.’ And I said, ‘That doesn't sound like much fun.’”

He might have left the church of his childhood, but he never fully left the faith. The image and name of Jesus hovers over Mellencamp's music. He often performs on stage with a white porcelain statue of Jesus in front of his amplifier. A painting of Jesus hangs over a jukebox on the album jacket for his best record, “The Lonesome Jubilee,” and he invokes Christ's teachings in many of his songs, from some of his biggest hits to some of his most obscure album cuts. On “Jack and Diane,” his only number one single, he combines both of his belief systems into a visceral prayer: “So let it rock / Let it roll / Let the Bible Belt come and save my soul...”

According to the red-state-versus-blue-state mentality that dominates discourse on cable television, a middle-aged white Christian man who lives in Indiana, proclaims his love for the Bible Belt, and attacks political correctness—in “Peaceful World,” he sings, “We all know this world is a wreck / We're sick and tired of being politically correct”—is obviously a Tea Party member who subscribes to Glenn Beck's *The Blaze*, flies a “Don't Tread On Me” flag in his yard, and believes the Republican Party is too moderate.

John Mellencamp is not a Republican. He is a self-avowed liberal—but his is a community-based leftism that distrusts bureaucracy and hates pater-

nalism, yet believes in social assistance for the poor, sick, and hungry, the widows and orphans that the Bible identifies. Mellencamp inhabits common ground with libertarians on social issues, and he is a consistent opponent of war and foreign intervention, but he does not believe that an unfettered free market will solve every social problem.

He has watched the corporate conquest of family farms and sings about it on the angry lament, “Rain on the Scarecrow.” He has witnessed how after decades of politicians relegating poverty relief to an inefficient welfare state or indifferent corporate state, poor men, women, and children have become collateral damage, and he sings about it on the heartbreaking “Jackie Brown,” the story of a desperately impoverished man who commits suicide.

He has seen the wreckage that a market-driven, money-obsessed, and materially measured culture has piled up in place of the small communities he cherishes, and he measures the damage in “Ghost Towns Along the Highway.” The mode of American life that prioritizes mobility above all and instructs the young to conduct themselves in a constant search for the next big thing has created generations whose “love keeps on moving to the nearest faraway place.” In “The West End,” he sings of a dying neighborhood and in a powerful turn of phrase manages to capture and condemn decades of destructive policies from big government and big business: “It sure has changed here since I was a kid / It's worse now / Look what progress did.”

One of the problems of movement conservatism is a resistance to—and often flat out rejection of—complexity. Too much of the American right is dominated by a mentality that views its country with childlike simplicity and awe. Any invocation of American iconography must be worshipful, and for those who combine Christianity with nationalism to create a civil religion, any sign of the cross must be celebratory of everything American.

When Mellencamp sings about his country in “Pink Houses,” he does so with a sense of joy and celebration, but the ecstasy is tempered with agony. The verses tell the stories of poor black neighborhoods, young people who watch the steady erosion of their dreams, and the “simple man” who “pays for the bills, the thrills, and the pills that kill.” His more recent anthem of patriotism “Our Country” is optimistic but prays that one day “poverty can be just another ugly thing” and “bigotry can be seen only as obscene.” He

searches for peace in the culture wars, proclaiming that “there’s room enough here for science to live” and “room enough here for religion to forgive.”

Most of Mellencamp’s spiritual lyrics are personal pleas for the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. (The song “Ride Back Home” is particularly beautiful in this respect.) But in a political context, Jesus’ role as the “prince of peace” seems especially important to Mellencamp. In “To Washington,” he sings about the sins of war and asks, “What is the thought process to take a human’s life / What would be the reason to think that this is right / From Jesus Christ to Washington.”

John Mellencamp’s America is a conflicted country full of beauty and brutality, mercy and cruelty, life and death, and sin and redemption. Republican politicians and right-wing commentators often miss the conflict as they seek opportunities for static categorization. They proceed down this path at their own peril. Ignoring the problems that plague America will only lead to their exacerbation, and that certainly doesn’t seem wise—much less patriotic.

In 1987, Mellencamp added a violin, an accordion, a banjo, a dobro, and gospel backup singers to his already powerful rock band. He called the hybridization of traditional Americana with rock ‘n’ roll, “gypsy rock.” It was an innovation that in large part catalyzed the “no depression” and “alternative country” movements of the 1990s, and which still influences popular music in the sounds of Mumford and Sons, the Avett Brothers, and several other rock and country bands.

Mellencamp never receives the acclaim he deserves for such a groundbreaking venture. He combined some of the best elements of American music’s past—black gospel, Appalachian folk, Delta blues—with some of the best elements of anthemic rock and melodic R&B.

He created a sound of conflict: the jubilation of the gospel struggling against the anger of the blues and the sadness of the folk fiddle, sublimated into the aggression of rock ‘n’ roll. It is an aural map for an



intelligent traditionalism that holds the values and treasures of the past sacred but takes into account the gifts of modern times.

Mellencamp’s “gypsy rock” was no small achievement, but it might be easier accomplished in art than in politics. The singer has often said most of his fans are Republicans, and judging by the politicians who most often play his music and the audiences at his shows across the Midwest, he is probably right. Free-market fundamentalists, big-government Republicans, and war hawks enjoy Mellencamp’s music. Maybe eventually they will start to listen.

The quality that colors most of Mellencamp’s work is hopeful nostalgia. That might seem like a contradiction, but in a country that has a progressive movement dedicated to wiping out the past and a conservative movement too often committed to killing the future, it might be exactly what the culture needs. It is frustrating, infuriating, and also, against all odds, inspiring. But ain’t that America? ■

# Not Hitler's Pope

What history taught Pius XII about resisting tyrants

by JOHN RODDEN AND JOHN ROSSI

This year marks the 80th anniversary of one of the landmark moments in the recent history of the Catholic Church—the signing on July 20, 1933, of a concordat between the Vatican and Hitler's Nazi regime. What makes this event so significant is that it constitutes the starting point for bitter accusations regarding the Catholic Church's alleged failure to condemn the tyrannical, totalitarian Third Reich and the Holocaust that flowed from it. Ever since the appearance of Rolf Hochhuth's play, "The Deputy," in 1963, the Catholic Church and Pope Pius XII have been excoriated for their silence before the horrors of the Holocaust.

Recent revelations, based on interviews with a Romanian spymaster, indicate that Hochhuth may have been the dupe of a clever KGB plot to undermine the influence of the Vatican after World War II. But for the last half century, Hochhuth's charge has put the Vatican on the defensive, particularly during the last decade, when a firestorm of international controversy accompanied Pope Benedict XVI's approval of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints' recommendation to name Pius XII "venerable," a step towards possible canonization. That move triggered new rounds of recrimination about the Vatican's alleged callousness toward Hitler's victims, especially Jews, and about the historical issues surrounding Pius XII's dealings with the Nazis.

Yet lately the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial began softening its view of Pius XII. The wall text criticizing him for not speaking out against Nazi treatment of the Jews has been retitled from "Pope Pius and the Holocaust" to "The Vatican and the Holocaust." Significantly, Pius's message of Christmas 1942 is now highlighted, in particular his declaration that "hundreds of thousands of persons, without any fault on their part, sometimes only because of their

nationality or ethnic origin, have been consigned to death or slow decline."

The *New York Times* at the time observed of Pius XII's Christmas address, "This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out in the silence of a continent." Pius XII's message was carefully analyzed by Reinhard Heydrich's branch of the SS, which saw the pope's message as an attack on the Nazi regime and its anti-Semitism. Calling the Christmas address "a masterpiece of clerical falsification," the SS reported that the "Pope has repudiated the National Socialist New European Order" and noted his assertion that "all peoples and races are worthy of the same consideration." "Here," they argued, "he is clearly speaking of the Jews."

Pius XII was not, as the title of one book about him charges, "Hitler's Pope." And the 80th anniversary of the *Reichskonkordat* is a timely occasion for a fresh look at how that agreement between the Vatican and Nazi Germany came about.

The concordat with Germany was signed by Pope Pius XI. But it was formulated and negotiated by his close aide, the papal secretary of state, Cardinal Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Pacelli, who would succeed him as Pope Pius XII. Regulating relations between the Vatican and various nations, concordats in no way amount to official endorsement of a regime. Nonetheless, popular opinion has typically treated them as such.

In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and of the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I, the Vatican used concordats to safeguard the Church's financial and geopolitical in-

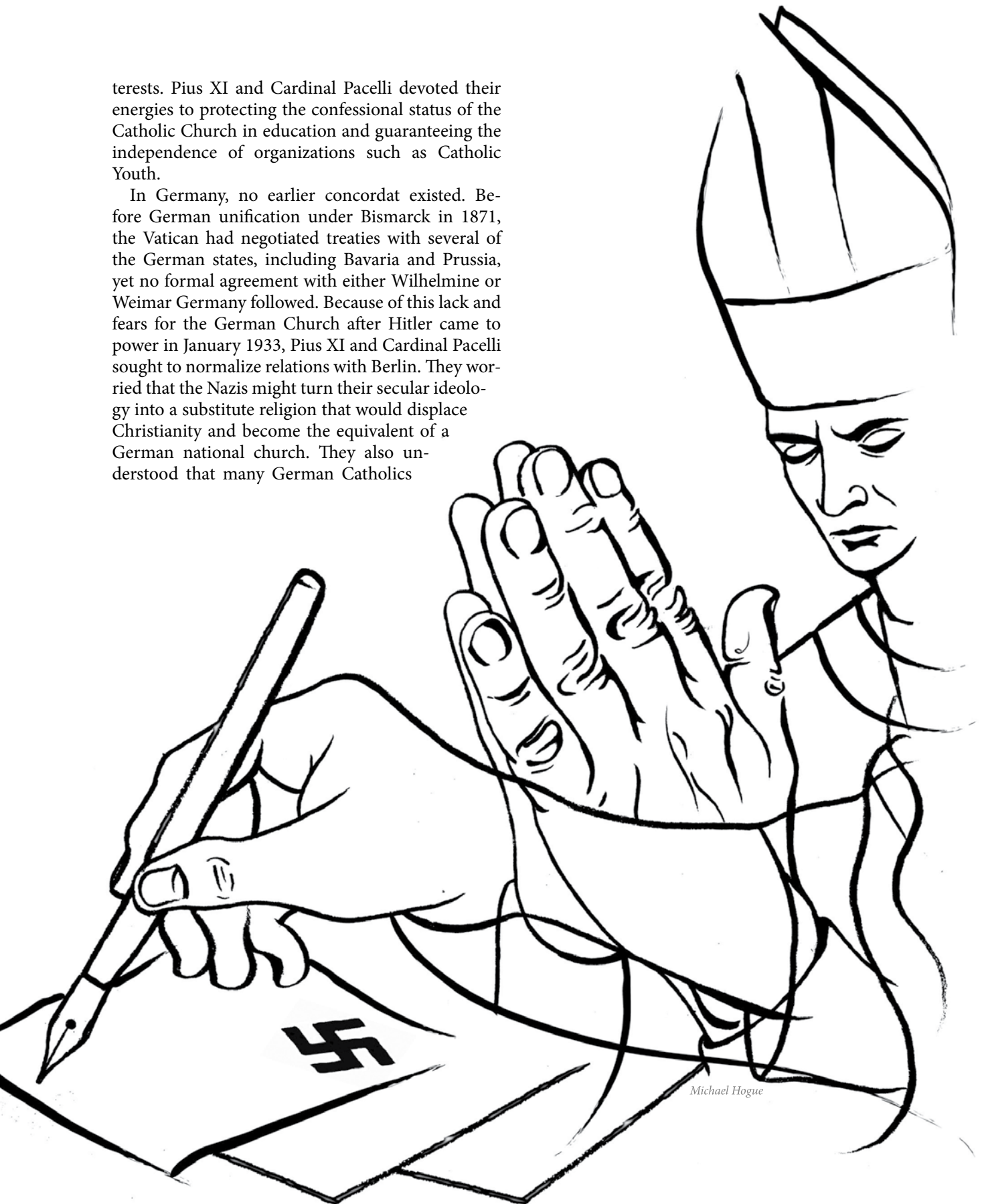
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terests. Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli devoted their energies to protecting the confessional status of the Catholic Church in education and guaranteeing the independence of organizations such as Catholic Youth.

In Germany, no earlier concordat existed. Before German unification under Bismarck in 1871, the Vatican had negotiated treaties with several of the German states, including Bavaria and Prussia, yet no formal agreement with either Wilhelmine or Weimar Germany followed. Because of this lack and fears for the German Church after Hitler came to power in January 1933, Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli sought to normalize relations with Berlin. They worried that the Nazis might turn their secular ideology into a substitute religion that would displace Christianity and become the equivalent of a German national church. They also understood that many German Catholics



# Religion

viewed themselves as a persecuted minority ever since Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s. A deal with the new German state would demonstrate the patriotism of German Catholicism.

Already by the mid-1920s, the Vatican recognized the blasphemous evil of Nazism: the worship of the state, the deification of Hitler, the atheistic secularism of the Nazi ideology. But Pius XI and Pacelli felt any condemnation of the movement would rebound against the Church.

One option for dealing with Nazism was off-limits—a papal bull, an official condemnation by the

*Already by the mid-1920s, the Vatican recognized the blasphemous evil of Nazism.*

Pope of the Nazi regime. According to Oxford University historian Diarmaid MacCulloch, the leading British scholar of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, the use of a papal bull excommunicating a secular ruler was rejected because of the Church's experiences during the Counter-Reformation. In *The Reformation: A History*, MacCulloch argues that the 1570 papal bull excommunicating Queen Elizabeth I of England "was so generally recognized as a political blunder that it was even remembered in the 1930s when the Papacy considered how to react to Hitler's regime."

Honest, idealistic, and fanatically puritanical, Pope Pius V (1566-72) issued a papal bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, to deprive Elizabeth I of her title as Queen and absolve her subjects "from any type of duty" to her. In his capacity as "Prince over all nations and kingdoms," Pius V proclaimed that Elizabeth was "a servant of vice," "a heretic and abetter of heretics," and merely the "pretended queen of England."

What followed was a terrible backlash in Tudor England: a wave of persecution against English Catholics, the execution of hundreds of priests, the definitive secession of the Church of England from Rome, the fatal identification of Catholicism with treason, and the loss of tens of thousands of formerly faithful Catholics who decided to remain loyal to the temporal order.

The Vatican is not a sound-bite culture, and the backfires of 1570 taught Cardinal Pacelli during the rise of Nazism in the 1930s. As MacCulloch notes,

"discreet voices in the Vatican privately recalled the bad precedent" and reminded Church leaders of what had happened. Much of Cardinal Pacelli's measured response to Hitler and Nazism rests on this historical experience.

As John Connolly, a scholar of modern European Catholicism at the University of California, Berkeley, writes in *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1945*, after Pacelli became Pius XII he pondered and ultimately rejected a condemnation of Hitler. On the eve of World War II, Father John Oesterreicher, a Catholic convert of Jewish descent born in Moravia, and Karl Thieme, a German Catholic, implored the Vatican to release Catholic German soldiers from their oaths of loyalty to Hitler on the grounds that he was about to launch an unjust war. Writing in April 1939, Oesterreicher argued that Catholics are "not bound in obedience" to a ruler if the ruler "launches war in criminal fashion."

The proposal garnered no support. Pacelli—now Pius XII—told to a confidant that a papal bull condemning Nazism or excommunicating Nazis who were Catholics would help neither Catholics nor Jews. And just what Pius XII feared took place in Holland in July 1942. Without informing the Vatican, the cardinal of Utrecht issued a pastoral letter condemning the persecution of Dutch Jews. The Nazis responded by arresting all baptized Dutch Jews, including the philosopher-nun Edith Stein, and sent them to extermination camps.

Fast-forward to a scene decades later and a continent away. During the 1976-83 rule of the military junta in Argentina, the Catholic Church was urged to denounce the regime. Today's Pope Francis I—then Jorge Bergoglio—served as the provincial of the Jesuit order in Argentina during the 1980s and chose instead to exert indirect pressure on the junta. In *The Jesuit*, the authorized biography of Bergoglio written by Argentinian journalist Sergio Rubin, Bergoglio revealed that he had hidden people on church property to evade the dragnet. He even once slipped his identity papers to a dissident who resembled him, thereby allowing the man to flee the country. But he never openly confronted, let alone condemned, a regime that was torturing, kidnapping, and murdering thousands of "state enemies." Rather than castigate the junta for its human rights violations, he publicly supported the regime and sermonized about the need for "patriotic" Catholics.

Bergoglio preferred to operate off-stage, in the

wings, ever conscious—like Pope Pius XII—that a public confrontation might incite the wrath of the regime. If Pius XII had spoken out more forcefully, his statements might well have endangered Italian Jews in hiding who were secretly sheltered in the Vatican. Bergoglio harbored similar anxieties about Argentines on the run from the junta. Bergoglio's seeming failure to oppose state terror publicly was a strategic, pragmatic decision to adopt a surreptitious approach against overwhelming tyrannical power.

In the Nazi era, similarly, the Vatican didn't wish to inflict on the German Church what had happened when the papacy previously resorted to bulls of excommunication; it preferred to resist through back channels. In his groundbreaking study *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War*, Owen Chadwick, dean of historians of Vatican-German relations during the Nazi era (and a non-Catholic), expressed the Papal strategy as follows:

History is long, tyrants are short. They rise, and kill people and suppress monasteries, and close churches. But protest will change nothing; and soon the tyrants come to a bad end, and the Church shakes itself after the persecution ... We bow to the storm, and put down our heads, and wait. For we have faith, and know that our day will come.

This view was not just the Vatican's. In 1925 the Soviet foreign minister, Georgy Chicherin, a friend of the future pope since Pacelli's days as papal nuncio in Germany, argued that communism would defeat capitalism, but the church might indeed endure and prevail against all secular ideologies. "Rome will prove a harder nut to crack. If Rome did not exist, we would be able to deal with all the various branches of Christianity. They would capitulate before us. Without Rome, religion would die."

Given the disastrous results of official papal condemnations of national rulers when last issued in the late 16th century, in 1933 a concordat rather than a papal denunciation seemed to Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli a wiser course with Germany's new leader. They believed that the time to deal with Hitler was when the Third Reich was not yet firmly established: just as Mussolini had needed the endorsement of the Church in Italy to secure his position,

so they believed would Hitler in Germany, which was still nominally led by President Paul von Hindenburg. This was a serious misreading of the German situation and an equally serious misjudgment of Hitler.

The Vatican's desire to broker a deal also arose from its opposition to communism and "godless Russia." Pope Pius XI had served in Poland during the conflict between Poland and Russia just after World War I, and like many traditional conservatives he viewed communism, with its proclaimed atheism, as the Catholic Church's most dangerous enemy. Cardinal Pacelli had shared this view ever since his stint as Germany's papal nuncio during the 1920s, shortly after the communist uprisings in Munich in 1918-19 that temporarily seized power. Pacelli believed German and Italian fascism could function as an effective bulwark against Marxism-Leninism. Most European democracies harbored similar views about the choice between fascism and communism. Hitler ingeniously exploited this belief leading up to World War II: the appeasement policies of various European governments owed much to a perception of Hitler's non-negotiable anti-communism. The bombshell announcement of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939 abruptly shattered that illusion.

*A lapsed Catholic who regarded all branches of Christianity as degenerate offspring of Judaism, Hitler nonetheless saw a treaty with the Vatican as a title to moral legitimacy.*

A lapsed Catholic who regarded all branches of Christianity as degenerate offspring of Judaism, Hitler nonetheless saw a treaty with the Vatican as a title to moral legitimacy and as a diplomatic coup, an act of recognition by the most influential nonpolitical institution in the world. So in the spring of 1933 he made all the right public noises about respect for the church and the state's jurisdiction being limited to temporal affairs. Privately, he crafted his plan for eliminating all domestic enemies, whereby neutralizing the Catholic Church in Germany would represent a valuable opening move.

The Holy See realized that the Third Reich was an aggressive, power-mad regime. Cardinal Pacelli told Ivone Kirkpatrick, British charge d'affaires at

# Religion

the Vatican, that he viewed the Nazi regime with disgust. Kirkpatrick informed the British Foreign Office that Pacelli “deplored the action of the German government at home, their persecution of the Jews... their reign of terror to which the whole nation was subjected ...” Yet Cardinal Pacelli justified the concordat on the grounds that he had to face the reality of the Nazi regime and gain diplomatic leverage with a signed document, for if the German government violated the concordat, Ivone reported, then “the Vatican would have at least a treaty on which to base a protest.”

Given the reputation of the Holy See for glacial speed, negotiations for a concordat in the spring of 1933 proceeded with uncharacteristic haste. Within

*Putting aside his preferred diplomatic approach, Pacelli affirmed that he now had no illusions about the Nazis, who were “false prophets with the pride of Lucifer.”*

two weeks of official meetings, the agreement was finalized. In theory it granted much that the Vatican sought: guaranteed independence of the Catholic schools, firm protection for the Catholic press, financial support for Catholic clergy, and state recognition of the rights of special Church institutions such as the Catholic Youth organizations. The concordat’s primary purpose was to safeguard the Church’s activities to administer the sacraments and celebrate Mass: if its sacred, divine functions could proceed, Pacelli reasoned, then the Church could outlast the Nazi regime as it had survived a long list of threats to its existence in the past.

However pleased Hitler was with the *Reichskonkordat* for the respectability it lent his regime, he didn’t take long to begin violating its terms. By early 1934, the freedom of the Catholic press was infringed, Catholic schools were closed, and in the next two years the Catholic Youth organizations were absorbed into the Hitler Youth movement. Protests from German bishops and the Vatican alike were ignored by the Nazi government.

In light of these treaty violations, Pacelli determined that he had grounds to act. In 1937, after consultations with the German bishops, Pacelli drafted a sharply worded papal encyclical. Putting aside his preferred diplomatic approach, he affirmed that he

now had no illusions about the Nazis, who were “false prophets with the pride of Lucifer.”

The encyclical, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, usually translated as “With Burning Anxiety,” owed something to Pius XI’s acerbic directness, but the Germans accurately attributed most of it to Pacelli. He spoke fluent German, and the encyclical was published in German—and meant to be read by German Catholics—instead of the Latin usual for Church documents. Quite clearly, it was designed to send a message, and the Nazis took it as an insult.

*Mit Brennender Sorge* was drawn up in Rome, smuggled into Germany by couriers to avoid confiscation, and issued in March 1937 on Palm Sunday. It was read from every Catholic pulpit in Germany.

The encyclical represented the most blistering indictment of Nazism by any government or major institution before World War II. While the encyclical specifically skewered Nazi Germany for breaking the concordat, the document also attacked the Nazi doctrines of racism and paganism. Pacelli used strong language, with Hitler himself charged with “aspirations to divinity” and labeled “a mad prophet possessed of repulsive arrogance.”

The German government reacted with immediate outrage. Hitler suppressed the Catholic press, confiscated all copies of the encyclical, and forbade German newspapers to print or report it. The German ambassador to the Vatican, Diego Von Bergen, lodged a formal protest against what he called an unacceptable interference in German domestic affairs. Speaking for the Pope, Cardinal Pacelli dismissed the protest and reaffirmed every accusation leveled in *Mit Brennender Sorge*.

Relations between the Vatican and the Reich deteriorated, as the Vatican watched with dismay the dramatic events of 1938: the *Anschluss* with Austria in March, the Munich agreement to carve the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia in October, and the terror of Kristallnacht in November, when the Nazis unleashed the fury of the mob against the Jewish community in Germany.

With war on the horizon, Cardinal Pacelli and Pius XI vainly issued a series of diplomatic protests. After the Munich pact, the Vatican announced, “In the past nations had been offered as matrimonial presents; today they are being traded away without their consent.” Regarding the persecution of the Jews, Pius XI told Belgian pilgrims visiting the Vatican that Christians should not “take part in anti-Semitism

because in Christ we are all Abraham's descendants ... Spiritually we are all Jews." In September 1938, when Mussolini instituted anti-Semitic legislation in Italy, Pius XI declared scathingly, "Catholic means universal, but not racialism, nor nationalism, nor separation ... One wonders therefore why Italy has felt the need in an unfortunate spirit of imitation to copy the example of Germany."

Looking back, let us remain vigilant about our Lown all-too-ready surrender to what Lord Acton identified as "the tyranny of the present." The Vatican and Pope Pius XII have endured a half-century of sustained criticism for failing to combat the Nazi horrors. Yet it is only fair to ask: who spoke louder at the time? In the mid-1930s, the European powers counseled caution in the hope that Hitler would prove himself a moderate statesman. Even when the regime showed its true face to the world in 1937–38, calls to avoid rash action prevailed. After the Munich pact, Western statesmen voiced support for appeasement; President Roosevelt sent Prime Minister Chamberlain a simple congratulation for the agreement: "Good man." The list of leading European statesman and intellectuals taken in by Hitler during these years is a long one: Lloyd George, ex-president Herbert Hoover, and G.B. Shaw, among others. Even the otherwise perspicacious Winston Churchill admired Hitler's "patriotic achievement."

Some publications in Britain and France, and even in the Catholic press, did raise their voices in protest against Hitler more loudly than did the Vatican, at least before *Mit Brennender Sorge* in March 1937.

The press organs on the left, particularly the Marxist left, condemned the Third Reich unequivocally—at least until the Nazi-Soviet pact. In the U.S., liberal Catholic magazines such as *America* and *Commonweal* also criticized Hitler during the early and mid-1930s more strongly than did the Vatican.

Nonetheless, to hold the Vatican and Pius XII guilty of inaction regarding Nazism, when they did speak out after 1937 against the evils of racism and rampant nationalism, is unhistorical. One may contend that a clear condemnation of National Socialism was part of the church's duty as a teacher on faith and morals. Yet just as plausibly, one can argue that saving lives by not provoking a megalomaniacal dictator like Hitler was more judicious than delivering a grand moral gesture.

The Vatican recognized in the 1930s that it wasn't living in the Middle Ages. In the Age of Faith, the papacy's powers were far-reaching and excommunication represented a plausible deterrent to a tyrant, as the German Emperor Henry IV discovered when he had to beg forgiveness at Canossa. But the disastrous blowback when Pope Pius V deployed the ultimate power of a papal bull against Queen Elizabeth I remained seared in the Vatican's institutional memory. That misfire led to Catholicism being equated with treason in the mind of the English public. No evidence suggests that a similar condemnation of Nazism would have had much effect other than to turn the full force of Hitler's terror against the Church, while failing to help Jews or other victims of Nazi racism.

The concordat of July 1933 and the Vatican's subsequent response to Nazism emerged from its historical experience. The Church's institutional memory is measured not in years but in centuries. Its policy towards Hitler and Nazism was rooted in the conviction that it would ultimately endure this temporal evil as it had others in the past. Imperfect though it was, the conduct of the Vatican in the face of Nazism is no cause for shame when compared to that of

*To hold the Vatican and Pius XII guilty of inaction regarding Nazism is unhistorical.*

its contemporaries. According to the eminent British historian Martin Gilbert, a scholar of World War II, the Christian churches saved a half million Jewish lives during the Holocaust, with the majority of those rescued by Catholic clergy and laity receiving the support of the pope. An estimate that "hundreds of thousands of Jews were saved by the entire Catholic Church under the leadership of Pope Pius XII," Gilbert stated in an August 2003 interview, "would be absolutely correct."

Eugenio Pacelli was a diplomat by training and a man of caution by temperament. Whether he was a "saint" or not is for Vatican officials to decide. Certainly there is much to debate. This, however, should be clear: to dub Pius XII "Hitler's Pope" is almost as absurd as calling Hitler "Pacelli's Puppet." ■

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# A League of My Home

I am writing this on a sunny and fragrant June morning, sitting in the bleachers off the Little League field on which I played all those summers ago. My Little League coach, Larry Lee, died last week, and it is a Kauffman family habit (not an eccentricity!) to revisit places associated with the recently deceased.

I can see myself out there at short-stop for the Cubs in the National League playoff game. Bottom of the sixth, tie game, bases loaded, ground-er hit my way, I field it cleanly, throw home... and into the dirt, skipping it past the catcher. Game over, season over, Little League career over. Shucks.

Pretty much every male relative of mine—father, brother, cousin, uncles—was all-league in baseball or football, but as for me, well, they also serve who only sit and watch from the bench. I'm a quinquagenarian now, rather to my astonishment, and I still bring out the glove to toss the ball with our daughter, who humors the old man with a game of backyard catch in the high grass.

I don't hold, however, with my Upstate landsman Frederick Exley's morose conclusion that "it was my destiny—unlike my father, whose fate it was to hear the roar of the crowd—to sit in the stands with most men and acclaim others. It was my fate, my destiny, my end, to be a fan." (Exley's books belie any such shrinking violetism.)

This is the 75th year since professional baseball came to Batavia, and we are among the last of the train-whistle towns in the low minors. I sit

in these bleachers, too, with friends and apparitions, conducting decades-long conversations and hearing ghostly echoes.

Even in the bushes, alas, those ghostly echoes can get lost in the din.

Each batter has his own "walk-up music," which means that every time a home team lad strides to the plate we are treated to a ten-second snatch of his favorite song. Year in and year out, the boys' collective taste is execrable. I've yet to hear, say, X or Neil Young, though what I really long for is the sound of silence.

Conversation is the casualty in the empire of noise. I am vice president of the team but I can't get the damned decibelage turned down. John Nance Garner was right about the impudence of VPs.

In minor-league baseball, the place, and not the players, is the thing. This place is: My old friend Donny Rock, the groundskeeper, lining the base-paths. Grande dame Catherine Roth, now 92, refusing to stand for the vapid "God Bless America," which since 9/11 has afflicted our ears during the seventh-inning stretch. My mom, who has lived her entire life in our Snow Belt county, putting on her jacket when the temperature dips below 80. Yappy Yapperton, countless sheets to the wind, yelling inanities from the beer deck. (Scratch that: Yappy is either dead or in prison today.)

The boys of summer come and go; I prefer life in the bleachers. A fair number of big leaguers have passed this way, and I follow them in the box scores. Especially Phillies' stars Ryan

Howard and Chase Utley, who were, in successive years, very kind to our daughter during the Muckdogs v. Muckpuppies games. (These tilts required the boys to come to the park the Saturday morn after a Friday night game and presumed revelry. The guys who showed—Utley, Howard, and some very good-natured Latin American players—were saints.)

As for the majors: yawn. I can rattle off the starting lineup of the 1975 Kansas City Royals but I couldn't identify a single player on the 2013 Royals roster. It's not early-onset dementia, or so I hope; I just don't care.

Several years ago I had a free afternoon while visiting D.C. and thought I'd take in my first Nationals game. The Metro ride to the stadium, with its passengerial cargo of black and white ball-capped fans, was a rare and heartening sight in our segregated capital city.

As I neared the ticket booth I hesitated. Did I really want to spend three hours fidgeting through interminable TV timeouts, which make between-innings breaks and coaches' trips to the mound foretastes of eternity? Nah. So attending a Nats game remains on my list of Things to Do in D.C. Before I Die (along with visiting the Frederick Douglass home and the gravesites of Gore Vidal and Clover Adams at Rock Creek Cemetery).

Back in the bleachers I think of William Cullen Bryant's poetical wish that he die "in flowery June/When brooks sent up a cheerful tune." Bryant got his wish. It's the little victories that count. ■

# Arts&Letters

## Vietnam: A War on Civilians

by CHASE MADAR

*Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam, Nick Turse, Metropolitan, 370 pages*

Few Americans born after the Tet Offensive know even the barest facts about the Vietnam War. I aim this generalization not at the oft-underrated Joe Sixpack but at graduates of our finest universities. I remember getting coffee with an old friend, then fresh out of Yale, right after she had backpacked through Vietnam. Whenever she mentioned the war she referred to the former South Vietnam as “the democratic side.” It was immediately clear that she, like virtually everyone else of her and my generation, had never heard of the Geneva Accords of 1954 to guarantee free elections in South Vietnam, elections scuttled after the CIA predicted that Ho Chi Minh would win. My friend had had no sense that the U.S. invaded (a word rarely used, but what else can you call sending 500,000 troops to a foreign nation?) South Vietnam to prop up an authoritarian government with little popular

legitimacy. We launched a ruthless pacification campaign; it failed—but not before Washington spread the war into Laos and Cambodia and ultimately killed some two million civilians. This was the war, and there was no “democratic side.”

By contrast, my interlocutor—an intelligent and cultured person—did show a sure command of the political history of Tibet, which had been the next stop on her Asian tour.

From Generation X on down, there is a gaping lack of knowledge about the most foolish and brutal of our postwar wars. (Yes, worse than Iraq.) But this is not a vacant lot ready for intellectual development. Instead this block of nescience is something dense, opaque, and fenced off with barbed wire. Why is there so much socially reinforced ignorance about our bloodiest war since World War II?

One reason is that uttering any less-than-flattering account of the war is likely to make one feel, even in 2013, like a bit of a traitor. By airing unpleasant facts about the war am I smearing my Uncle G—, an avid gardener, terrific father, husband, and all-around great guy who was an Army Ranger in Laos? Am I blood-libeling my brother’s beloved high-school English teacher who served in the Special Forces advising

and fighting with the Khmer Khrom ethnic minority and wrote a memoir about it? I don’t doubt this man’s courage any more than I believe that our war in Southeast Asia can be recast as a “Lost Crusade”—his book’s title—to protect Vietnam’s ethnic minorities.

Nobody wants to be called out for “spitting on the troops.” Not that historians have found a single instance of people actually expectorating on returning Vietnam soldiers. That this piece of revanchist folklore has taken such firm root shows how hypersensitive America remains to any hint that the war was anything less than noble. Even after four decades, you don’t make friends by implying that the personal sacrifice of members of your community was for nothing.

Or worse than nothing. Because the main reason we don’t want to know about Vietnam is that it gave so much to not want to know about. Yes, Vietnam was a military defeat that killed some 58,000 American soldiers and left 75,000 severely disabled—reason enough, for many, to stuff it down the memory hole. But as scholar and journalist Nick Turse shows in a new book that is scrupulously documented, what makes the memory of this war so worthy of repression is that its defining feature was mass atrocities





against civilians. Rape; the massacres of women, children, and the elderly; military vehicles running over civilians for sport; “Zippo raids” that burned down villages; indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombardment; despoliation of crops and drinking water; routinized torture—this was the unredeemable essence of our Vietnam War, not American teenagers coming of age and bonding against a bamboo backdrop, not “good intentions” in Washington leading us into a “quagmire.”

Of the 33,000 books about the Vietnam War, all but a few eagerly sidestep

the atrocious carnage inflicted on hundreds of thousands of civilians. Nick Turse’s scholarly mission is to haul it into the center of historical inquiry and public memory, where it belongs. *Kill Anything That Moves* offers neither argument nor a new narrative—it simply aims to make violence against civilians “the essence of what we should think of when we say ‘the Vietnam War.’”

The war was “a system of suffering.” Turse is sick of hearing about My Lai—the programmatic slaughter of over 500 Vietnamese women, children, and elderly men carried out on March 16,

1969 by Americal Division’s Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry—not because it wasn’t an appalling war crime but because the event, now fashioned as a horrific one-off anomaly, has perversely absolved the rest of the war, obscuring for instance the massacre of 118 civilians at Dien Nien or of 68 civilians at Phuoc Binh; of 200 civilians at An Phuoc; of 86 killed at Nhon Hoa; 155 killed at the My Khe (4) hamlet.

Turse’s book is sometimes repetitive, by design: “I thought I was looking for a needle in a haystack,” he says

about embarking on his research, “what I found was a veritable haystack of needles.” There was nothing exceptional about My Lai. In the words of Ron Ridenhour, the former helicopter door-gunner who did more than anyone to expose that particular massacre, it “was an operation, not aberration.”

The numbers are numbing. According to study by Harvard Medical School and the University of Washington, there were 3.8 million violent war deaths, of which two million were civilian, with similar estimates reached by the Vietnamese government and Robert McNamara himself. Up to 500,000 Vietnamese women turned to sex work. 14,000 South Vietnamese civilians were killed, mostly by U.S. firepower, during the Tet Offensive. 70 million liters of herbicidal agents, notably Agent Orange, were dumped across the countryside. (“Only you can prevent forests” was the travestied Smokey the Bear slogan.) 3.4 million combat sorties were launched by the U.S. and South Vietnam between 1965

## *The relentless violence against civilians was more than the activity of a few sociopaths: it was policy.*

and 1972. The amount of ammunition fired per soldier was 26 times higher than in World War II. In the northernmost province of South Vietnam, Quang Tri, only 11 out of 35,000 villages were not damaged by bombing or artillery. A survey found that 96 percent of Marine Corps second lieutenants said they would torture prisoners to obtain information.

Turse paints a fresco of casual cruelty and the wholesale destruction of an agrarian society relocated at gunpoint into “strategic hamlets” (a plan dreamed up by Harvard professors

like Samuel Huntington) and urban slums. He tells the stories of dozens of individuals, mostly Vietnamese, whose lives were ruined by the war. Pham Thi Luyen, 13 years old on October 21, 1967, when American members of Company B, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment came to her village of Trieu Ai and massacred a dozen civilians, including her father. Nguyen Thi Lam, a villager from the Mekong Delta, who was gunned down by U.S. helicopters on the morning of May 20, 1968 while at work in the rice paddies; she lost her left leg, her sister-in-law lost her life. (As Turse reports, “Even a U.S. Senate study acknowledged that by that by 1968 some 300,000 civilians had been killed or wounded in free-fire zones.”) Bui Thi Houng, gang-raped by five members of a Marine unit as other Marines shot dead her unarmed husband, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law in Xuan Ngoc hamlet on September 23, 1966.

It was a great big homicidal carnival. Sergeant Roy Bumgarner of the Army’s 1st Cavalry Division, then the 173rd Airborne Brigade, achieved celebrity within the ranks for his slaughter of Vietnamese civilians, and when in 1969 he was finally court-martialed for the murder of three civilians, his only penalty was a reduction in rank and a monthly fine of \$97, which lasted only half a year. Bumgarner stayed on active duty throughout, quickly rose back from private to sergeant, and was one of the last U.S. infantrymen to leave the country. One civil affairs lieutenant involved in the case—and outraged by its lack of consequence—chalked up the light sentence to “the M.G.R.—the Mere Gook Rule” which granted free rein to homicidal violence.

But the relentless violence against civilians was more than the activity of a few sociopaths: it was policy. This was a war fought along Fordist

principles—Robert McNamara had gone to the Department of Defense straight from the helm of the auto giant—and the slaughter was industrial in scale. Victory over the Viet Cong was to be achieved by quantifiable “kill ratios,” to reach that elusive tipping point where the insurgency could no longer replenish its troops. This approach hard-wired incentives to secure a high “body count” down the chain of command, with the result that U.S. soldiers often shot civilians dead to pad their tallies and thereby move up the ranks.

It was Gen. Julian Ewell who made the killing of Vietnamese civilians into standard operating procedure. Ewell assumed the military command of the Mekong Delta region in early 1968 and immediately upped the requisite body count to 4,000 a month, then to 6,000. At the end of the year, he started Operation Speedy Express, a six-month infantry assault on the delta region, killing thousands of Vietnamese, a great many of whom were civilians. (Civilian war casualties were 80 percent of all patients at provincial hospitals.) Air power raised the killing to industrial scale, with a total of 4,338 gunship sorties, 6,500 tactical air strikes dropping at least 5,078 tons of bombs and 1,784 tons of napalm. One American regional adviser described it as “nonselective terrorism.” As another veteran recalled, “A Cobra gunship spitting out six hundred rounds a minute doesn’t discern between chickens, kids and VC.”

Ewell, known by his men as “the Butcher of the Delta,” was awarded a third general’s star and made a top U.S. military adviser at the Paris peace talks. His book about the operation was taught at West Point.

Some readers (and many more non-readers) in the United States will reject this knowledge and accuse Turse of beating up the troops, hating America, etc. In fact, Turse shows quite a bit of empathy for the American grunt, a heavily armed teenager in a wholly

foreign environment. But he does not look away from the senseless destruction U.S. troops perpetrated, “fueled by a toxic mix of youth, testosterone, racism, anger, boredom, fear, alienation, anonymity, impunity and excitement.” Turse will not have Lt. William Calley alone made the fall guy for My Lai, “as if the deaths of more than five hundred civilians, carried out by dozens of men at the behest of higher command, were his fault alone.” As the files of the Pentagon’s own War Crimes Working Group show, “atrocities were committed by members of every infantry, cavalry and airborne division, and every separate brigade that deployed without the rest of its division—that is, every major army unit in Vietnam.”

Telford Taylor, a retired brigadier general and former Nuremberg prosecutor, daringly argued in 1971 for war crimes tribunals that would try American officers—this idea went nowhere. Throughout the war there was a veneer of law regulating the soldiers, but impunity for war crimes was close to absolute. Even when atrocity allegations (usually made in the face of heavy peer pressure and intimidation) did result in investigations, there were few convictions, and such sentences as did get handed down were generally minimal—and then usually reduced further. Most cases were allowed to flounder until collapsing upon the soldier’s discharge. (The pattern of impunity is redolent of Central American state violence in the 1980s—except the perpetrators have jarringly non-Latin surnames like Duffy, Cushman, Bowers, Parker.) The War Crimes Working Group, whose files are the backbone of Turse’s research, was formed not to investigate and prosecute but to perform damage control: after the My Lai story broke, never again would the military be caught off-guard when an atrocity hit the news.

The main effect of the My Lai news was to provoke a wave of sympathy for Lieutenant Calley, with state

legislatures from Mississippi to New Jersey passing resolutions in support of the man, who was under house arrest at Fort Benning. (In Georgia, Calley had a vigorous defender in the young Democratic governor, Jimmy Carter.) *Newsweek’s* Vietnam correspondents, Kevin Buckley and Alex Shimkin, fought a losing battle to make their magazine publish a long story about the systematic nature of wartime atrocities, arguing, like Turse today, that My Lai massacres were widespread and “normal.” The magazine eventually published a heavily edited version shorn of its most important findings.

A book with such an elevated atrocity-per-page ratio demands the greatest rhetorical finesse, lest chapters like “A Litany of Atrocities” and “Unbounded Misery” become mere litanies of atrocities of unbounded misery. Turse is up to the task: he doesn’t rant, doesn’t scold, and his writing never raises its voice. His research is a triumph of the historian’s craft, with sources including hundreds of interviews with American veterans and dozens with civilian survivors of atrocities, conducted over several trips to Vietnam. More impressive still is his mastery of archival resources: Turse was bequeathed the copious notes of *Newsweek’s* Buckley and Shimkin, and he has broken new ground with the previously unexplored files of the Army’s War Crimes Working Group—which he happened upon in the National Archives and photocopied for several days straight while sleeping in his car in the parking lot. And a good thing he made copies because the drive to suppress memories of Vietnam has entered even the archives: the files were later removed from the shelves.

But the word is out. Turse’s book has shifted the focus of the Vietnam War from the stories of American soldiers

to the stories of the civilians whose suffering was orders of magnitude higher. It will be the work of others to unpack the implications of this seminal work, which raises so many questions. Do counterinsurgency and pacification campaigns unavoidably lead to rampant slaughter of civilians? (The *New York Times* marked the 10th anniversary of the Iraq invasion with an op-ed from counterinsurgency guru John Nagl attempting to salvage his pet tactic from blood-soaked ignominy

*The Geneva Conventions on the treatment of enemy prisoners weren’t so much flouted as shot in the temple.*

of Afghanistan and Iraq.) Can armies “control” and “protect” a population without routinized atrocity?

And how much of the slaughter was, according the laws of armed conflict, legal? Turse generally sticks to the non-legal term “atrocity” rather than “war crime”—which is very wise, given that the two terms don’t overlap as closely as many would like to believe. There is no doubt that American, South Vietnamese, and Viet Cong soldiers violated the laws of armed conflict in their treatment of civilians. The Geneva Conventions on the treatment of enemy prisoners weren’t so much flouted as shot in the temple, a finding confirmed by the Pentagon’s own investigations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. But how much of the carnage, particularly that stemming from aerial bombardment, was perfectly legit under international humanitarian law? The point is still argued, with military lawyers like W. Hays Parks contending that the “Rolling Thunder” campaign that dropped 640,000 tons of bombs on North

Vietnam and killed tens of thousands of civilians was in strict compliance with international law.

Many humanitarian-minded lawyers will bristle at this, but why not admit that the law is on the side of the B-52s, not that of the civilians below? Who do you think wrote the law in the first place? We urgently need to see how the laws of war work in practice, given that so many hawks of both left and right insist that law and lawyers are a viable means of fashioning military force into a precise, therapeutic instrument. But as this book suggests throughout, the primary function of the Rules of Engagement and military law in general is not to restrain lethal force but to authorize it. In Vietnam, the overriding principle of International Humanitarian Law, the current preferred euphemism for the laws of war, turned out to be the Mere Gook Rule.

War puts incredible stress on the rule of law—when not putting it through the shredder—and beneath the law, our sense of justice and morality. Consider the example of U.S. Army Major Carl Hensley, charged with investigating war-crime allegations. Under pressure to suppress his findings, he blew his brains out with a shotgun on the day of April 15, 1971. The military came instantly and removed every piece of paper in the Hensley home. “They pulled the trash cans. They left nothing behind,” remembers his daughter Karla Hensley, then a child.

What happens when no honest memories of atrocity get left behind? We learn nothing and repeat the carnage in new places with names like Fallujah, Haditha, and Helmand. We cover ourselves with the “fog of war” like a thick fleece blanket, and those who would lift it from us do not get our thanks. But Nick Turse and his disturbing and necessary book deserve our deepest gratitude. ■

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*Chase Madar is an attorney in New York and the author of The Passion of Bradley Manning.*

## Unlearning to be Human

by J.P. O'MALLEY

*The Silence of Animals: On Progress and Other Modern Myths, John Gray, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 222 pages*

In 1896 the Anglo-Polish writer Joseph Conrad wrote a short story called “An Outpost of Progress.” It recalls the tragic fate of two traders—Kayerts and Carlier—who are sent by a Belgian corporation to a remote part of the Congo.

Afforded the luxury to buy local slaves to complete their physical work for them, the two men spend much of their days idle. Over the next few months their food supplies run out, and the ship they are expecting from Europe fails to arrive. In a quarrel over sugar rations, Carlier is the first man to die.

Witnessing the death of his colleague, Kayerts soon loses the will to go on. He hangs himself from a wooden cross, which was put there to mark the death of an earlier trader, who, the narrator tells us, had “watched the construction of this outpost of progress.”

If such a thing as a philosophical lesson can be gleaned from this short story, it is this: without the prospect of a future or a society to guide them in how to live, these men see no reason for existing. Faced with a choice between living without a purpose or death, both choose the latter.

As the story reaches its climax, Conrad juxtaposes an image of the steamer finally arriving from Europe just as Kayerts breathes his last hanging from the cross. But all is not lost, it seems. Kayerts finds the redemption in death that he could not find in life, while humanity—it appears—rolls onwards in the great march of progress, as the European settlers sail down the river.

While Conrad’s ideas about imperialism would today be considered

racist, his thoughts on Christianity can be seen as a reflection of his suspicious attitude to progress. In a letter he wrote to the novelist and playwright John Galsworthy in 1901, Conrad declared, “Scepticism, the tonic of mind, the tonic of life, the agent of truth—way of art and salvation.”

It’s with admiration for Conrad’s antipathy to dogmatic principles that John Gray references this short story at the beginning of *The Silence of Animals*.

For Gray—emeritus professor of European thought at the London School of Economics—Conrad’s lucid prose is a reminder of how instrumental myth is in helping human beings cope with the existential ennui that is central to the human condition. As Gray eloquently puts it: “The power of myth is in making meaning from the wreckage of meaning.”

Conrad is one of many writers from the canon of modern literature that Gray references in this short polemic. Others include Ford Madox Ford, John Ashbery, Sigmund Freud, and Wallace Stevens. Gray interconnects abstract lines of poetry, memorable passages from some of the age’s finest writers, and insights from his favorite philosophers and thinkers—along with a number of his own aphorisms. Here are a few examples: “Humankind is, of course, not marching anywhere”; “There is only one human animal, forever at war with itself”; “To think of humans as freedom-loving, you must be ready to view nearly all of history as a mistake.”

When I began reading this book, it felt as if Gray was simply going over the same old ground, rehashing his mantra about the myth of progress, which goes something like this: history does not follow a linear pattern, mankind is not on a march to progress, and anyone who thinks otherwise is either a fundamentalist or slightly deluded. Yet while there is an element of this, *The Silence of Animals* offers a more nuanced approach.

Over his distinguished career, Gray

has come to be seen as a cantankerous know-all by his enemies and as a genius by disciples who share his nihilist vision of the world. While to many he remains one of the most revered political theorists in contemporary Western philosophy, his opponents see him as a contrarian who refuses to nail his colors to the political mast.

Some of the intellectual giants he has learned from—on both the left and the right—he now regularly criticizes, including John Stuart Mill and Frederick Hayek. (He has written acclaimed books about both.)

In the 1980s, Gray was an advocate for Thatcherite free-market principles. But as Tony Blair carried the Iron Lady's ideology into New Labour's successful 1997 election campaign, Gray swung left of center and gave up on the New Right.

This process of reassessing his own political and philosophical judgment is what makes him such an interesting critical thinker. While he has changed ideological clothes a number of times, there is one side of Gray that has been extremely consistent: his deep suspicion about massive projects for human freedom.

This is something he inherited from his intellectual hero, Isaiah Berlin.

The most dangerous man in the world, in Berlin's humble opinion, is he who thinks he has discovered the true meaning of life, for such a character believes that an earthly paradise can be achieved in this divided world of ours.

What Gray takes from Berlin is the idea that every actor in each of these massive thought-projects has been convinced of his own infallibility. But, as history has proven, all have been mistaken. Lenin believed he had discovered—via Marx—the laws that governed history; Hitler was sure the Jews and the bourgeois were the root cause of all evil in the world. Francis Fukuyama was convinced that free-market capitalism would be the last phase in the evolution of the modern political system, while George W. Bush

was certain that liberal democracy—however it was achieved—would be the West's gift to those countries that hadn't quite figured out how the process of government worked.

The argument doesn't end with the discipline of politics, either.

For rational atheists like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens, the world will magically transform itself into a coherent place if we just embrace science and reason.

Another of Gray's habits is to take two seemingly opposite ideologies

and show how they are similar. In *Al-Qaeda and What it Means to be Modern*, Gray argued quite convincingly that the neoconservative movement and fundamentalist Islam were cut from the same cloth: both are apocalyptic myths of utopian hope that stem from the Jacobin principle of revolution and progress.

Almost every major political ideology we have been exposed to in the last hundred years, Gray posits, is a product of Enlightenment thinking, and if we want to trace the trajectory of the Enlightenment idea of progress back to

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its sources, we must go back to ancient Greece and the early days of Christianity. Gray writes:

Mixing a Greek idea of reason as giving access to timeless truths with a Christian view of salvation in history has not produced anything like a coherent synthesis; but the resulting humanism—secular and religious—has formed the central western tradition.

Sometimes such grand declarations feel like Gray is stating that nothing matters, so contemplating a notion of a brighter tomorrow is a waste of time. But within this black hole of despair, a white light emerges, if one allows some time for Gray's argument to ferment.

When it comes to ontology, Gray's guru is Sigmund Freud. For it was Freud who understood that human

*If human beings want to attain inner peace, they could learn a thing or two from the animal kingdom.*

beings are constantly at war with their own reflections and in a state of perpetual discontent. Put simply: it's part of the human condition to wonder why you exist and what your purpose of being is. But answering that is a war no human being is ever going to win. Freud believed the only way out of this conundrum was to deal with life through metaphors and myth.

As Gray puts it: "Freud's mythology captures features of human experience that are enduring and universal. Of course [these] ideas are systems of metaphors ... so is all human discourse, even if metaphors are not all of one kind."

In Gray's worldview, the great enemy of all philosophical thought is

certainty. Human beings are the only animals who have equipped themselves with symbols to help make sense of an existence they cannot understand. They have a tendency, says Gray, to think and act as if these symbols actually exist. Much of philosophy and religion—particularly in a Western context—Gray contends, "is not much more than a rationalization of this conceit."

If human beings want to attain inner peace, they could learn a thing or two from the animal kingdom. To illustrate this point, Gray recalls a story of a bird watcher from Essex in South East England called J.A. Baker. In a book he wrote called *The Peregrine*, Baker described how he obsessively followed this bird for a period of ten years. His hope was to shed his human identity and become the bird. The horror that Baker was fleeing from, says Gray, was a "world in which humans encountered only reflections of themselves."

If the human mind is ever to escape the various myths that make up our lives, it must be through small moments of what Gray calls "Godless contemplation." What this offers, he explains, is "mere being." Gray believes, as the book's title suggests, that "the silence of animals"—who don't share our capacity of language to construct meaning—is something that everyone should strive for.

This is perhaps Gray's least controversial book to date, but it's up there with the best that he has written. Gray would admit that his own thesis isn't infallible. In fact, one suspects he prefers people to read his books with a critical eye—as another great English philosopher, Bertrand Russell, once commented, "When a man tells you that he knows the exact truth about anything, you are safe in inferring that he is an inexact man." ■

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*J.P. O'Malley is an Irish writer living in London.*

## The Fight for Food Rights

by MARK NUGENT

*Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Food Rights: The Escalating Battle Over Who Decides What We Eat, David Gumpert, Chelsea Green, 280 pages*

Over the past two decades Americans have taken unprecedented interest in the way food is produced. Those who discover the grim facts tend to move toward traditionally and locally produced foods. Some are motivated by health concerns, others by environmentalism or alarm at the ill treatment of animals in factory farms. Many also appreciate the sheer sensual pleasure of a more traditional diet and way of life. As it happens, the neatly packaged wares lining supermarket aisles usually aren't as tasty or nourishing as what you get from local farms.

Small farmers and food producers welcome the newfound interest in their work, given that industrialization and consolidation have imperiled their craft. As David Gumpert notes in *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Food Rights*, "The United States lost nearly 90 percent of its dairy farms between 1970 and 2006, even while the number of milk-producing cows declined only 25 percent." Now farmers increasingly sell directly to consumers, freeing themselves from the relentless downward pressure on prices that comes with selling to large distributors.

That merciless pressure gave us the \$1 double cheeseburger and the factory farm—otherwise known by its creepy acronym, CAFO, for "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation." As we've become accustomed to dirt-cheap prices at the supermarket, the drive-through, and just about everywhere else, we've overlooked the costs imposed by the CAFOs' filthy conditions, toxic waste products, and confined,

sickly cows pumped full of antibiotics. In that light, the \$1 cheeseburger seems like an awful swindle. And when consumers pay more for high-quality meat from a nearby farm, interacting with people who raised the animals humanely and with a sense of stewardship toward the land, it makes economic sense.

But farmers and consumers who want to secede from America's industrialized food system eventually cross swords with state and federal regulators. Originally intended to oversee large, capital-intensive operations, these regulators now police small producers who often can't afford to abide by requirements designed for much larger ones. Amid the intensifying clash between regulators, police, and big agriculture on one hand and small farmers and their customers on the other, Gumpert's titular "food rights" concept was born.

America's food regulatory system heavily favors the goal of eliminating pathogens from the food supply over promoting health broadly understood. One could subsist entirely on Mountain Dew, Slim Jims, and Lucky Charms without any interference from the government—which is as it should be in a free society. Of course, the gas-tation gourmand invites chronic disease, stratospheric costs for medical care and prescription drugs, and an early death. But should he eschew his modern diet for traditionally produced farmers' goods, he is likely to encounter all sorts of legal obstacles. If he develops a taste for raw milk, he may as well have a target on his back.

Much of Gumpert's book focuses on this forbidden commodity—unpasteurized and non-homogenized ("raw") milk—and the rebellion of milk-drinkers and producers amid crackdowns and legal struggles. Gumpert skillfully tells the story of the food-freedom movement, and of raw-milk producers in particular, here and on his blog, "The Complete Patient."

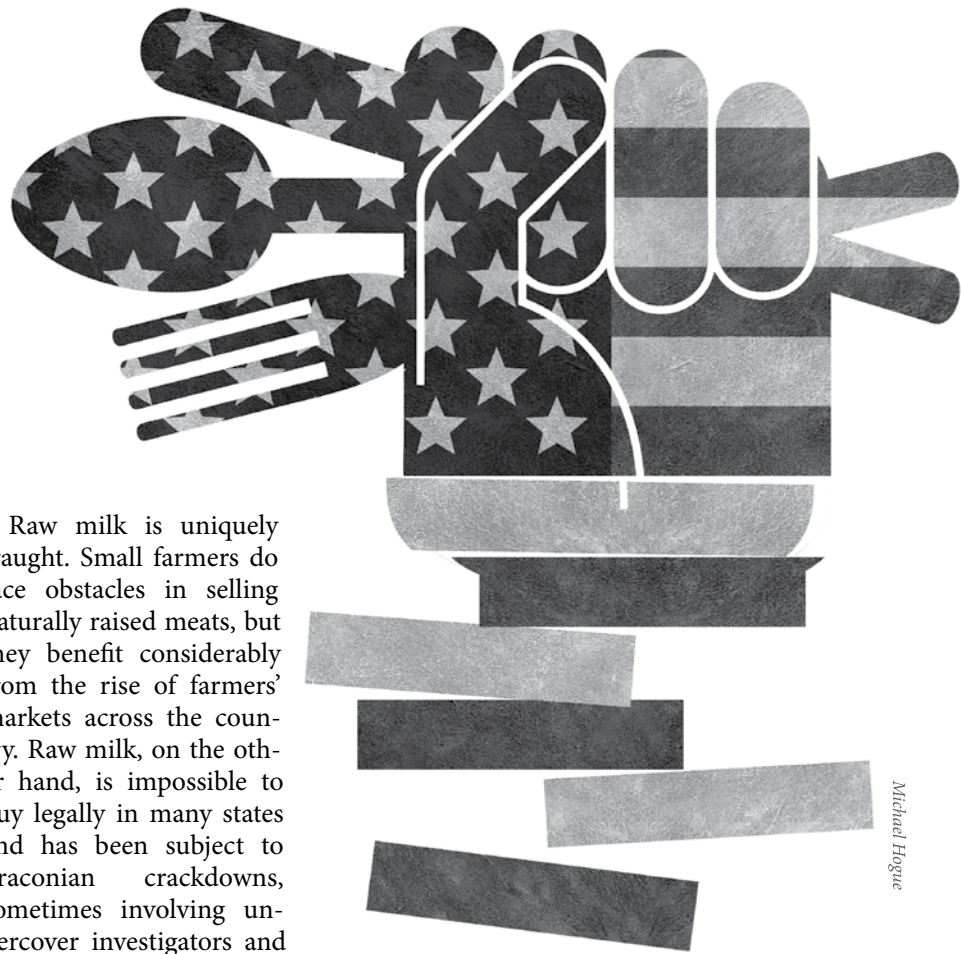
Raw milk is uniquely fraught. Small farmers do face obstacles in selling naturally raised meats, but they benefit considerably from the rise of farmers' markets across the country. Raw milk, on the other hand, is impossible to buy legally in many states and has been subject to draconian crackdowns, sometimes involving undercover investigators and SWAT-style raids. Raw-milk drinkers, undeterred, circumvent the law through novel contractual arrangements of uncertain legality.

Why the intransigence on both sides over something as mundane as milk? The industrialized production system requires the sterilization of milk through pasteurization. The system demands that milk have a long shelf life and travel great distances from cow to fridge—and betray no sign of its less-than-sanitary origins. In the process, raw-milk partisans say, it's stripped of a broad array of health benefits. Many of their claims are as yet unsubstantiated by scientific research—though a large 2006 study of 15,000 children in Europe (where raw milk remains generally legal) suggested that those who consumed raw milk had lower incidences of asthma and allergies. The authors of a similar 2011 study concluded that certain whey proteins in raw milk, which are reduced or destroyed by pasteurization, probably account for the differ-

ence. Raw-milk advocates also claim that pasteurization kills off not just pathogens but also beneficial, health-promoting bacteria in milk.

Regulators and their allies, however, dismiss health claims for raw milk as fantasy and pseudoscience, condemning the product as inherently unsafe. Indeed, a number of outbreaks of foodborne illness have been associated with raw milk. According to the Centers for Disease Control, raw milk has been responsible for two deaths and hundreds of illnesses in the United States between 1993 and 2006. Gumpert concedes the heightened risk but dismisses CDC estimates of foodborne illnesses in general as "wild extrapolations." Many enthusiasts suspect that hostile regulators are quick to home in on reports of illnesses associated with raw milk, thus inflating the reported number of outbreaks in relation to other foods.

While the health claims and concerns alike remain nebulous, the law regarding raw milk is a thicket of



Michael Hogue

detailed federal and state regulations. The act of drinking raw milk is legal in every state, and farmers and their families can consume milk produced from their own cows. But that's where the simplicity ends. Federal regulations bar the transport of raw milk across state lines for sale. In some states, all sales of raw milk for human consumption are illegal. Among those states, though, several allow raw milk to be sold as "pet food"—even when it's clearly intended for human consumption. Other states bar retail sales of raw milk but allow it to be sold directly from the farm. Several states, including California, allow for regulated retail sales of raw milk.

Farmers and consumers have responded by circumventing the regulated food system, with limited success. One method is the private food club, in which members pay an annual fee to gain access to farmers' products. An early example was the

Washington, D.C., group Grassfed on the Hill, which distributed milk, meat, eggs, and fermented vegetables from a Pennsylvania Amish farmer named Daniel Allgyer. He had previously supplied milk to large dairy processors for \$2 to \$2.50 per gallon but was able to more than double his price by selling directly to consumers. He also found a market for yogurt and cheese for the first time. (Large processors tend to buy only milk, preferring to make derivative products themselves). Following a lawsuit by the FDA, a 2011 ruling barred Allgyer from continuing to supply food to Grassfed on the Hill, and he became a carpenter.

Another model for distributing raw milk is the cowshare or herdshare, in which the consumer purchases a share of a dairy cow or herd. The price paid for a gallon of milk is said to be the fair value of the farmer's labor in caring for the herd and producing the

milk. Technically, no retail sale has taken place: members are taking delivery of products they already own. A handful of states that prohibit the retail sale of raw milk have ruled herdshares legal by statute, regulation, or court decision. In others, the legality is ambiguous.

Over the past several years, small farms and buying clubs have come under attack, with numerous raids, arrests and prosecutions by state and federal agencies. Gumpert offers a number of reasons for the apparent crackdown. First, highly publicized outbreaks of foodborne illness stemming from dangerous conditions at factory farms raised alarm. In 1992, beef from the fast-food chain Jack in the Box tainted with a virulent strain of *E. coli* sickened hundreds of people and killed four children. Lawmakers and the media brought intense scrutiny to the issue of food safety after that. This period also saw the rise of a young attorney named Bill Marler, who had landed record-breaking settlements for victims of the outbreaks. "The publicity made Marler the go-to lawyer for food safety cases," writes Gumpert, arguing that the tactics by which he made a name for himself have contributed to "an ever-mounting—and at times unwarranted—climate of fear around food safety."


In a post-9/11 climate that favored stronger law enforcement, the 2002 Bioterrorism Act granted new powers to the FDA with the ostensible goal of protecting the food supply from terrorist attacks. Mission creep soon set in, Gumpert writes, and he details evidence of FDA coordination with state prosecutions of food clubs in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Georgia.

In one high-profile case, after an undercover investigation by the FDA, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the L.A. County Health Department, a food club called Rawesome was raided by state, county, and federal agents. Three of those arrested became known as the "Rawesome

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Three’: James Stewart, who co-founded and headed Rawesome; Sharon Palmer, a small farmer and supplier of eggs and dairy; and Eugenie Bloch, who helped Palmer sell her goods to local farmers’ markets. A year later, Rawesome was shut down for good. The prosecutions gained widespread attention but never became a *cause célèbre*, thanks to infighting among Rawesome’s founders and erratic behavior among the Rawesome Three. James Stewart skipped court appearances and thus violated bail and was arrested by three bounty hunters in an incident captured on YouTube. Sharon Palmer was accused of outsourcing eggs represented as having been produced on her farm and obtaining loans from Rawesome members under fraudulent pretenses.

In another recent case that attracted national attention, a Wisconsin farmer named Vernon Hershberger—who “had been born into an Amish community but left to live a more conventional life”—had organized customers of dairy and meats from his Grazin’ Acres farm into a private club. In 2010, his farm store was raided by Wisconsin officials who sealed refrigerators in his store and poured blue dye into a huge vat of his farm’s raw milk. Following a jury trial, in May 2013 Hershberger was acquitted of three of the four charges against him, which involved operating his business without retail and dairy licenses required by the state. (The fourth charge was for violating a holding order and continuing to sell his goods, which Hershberger had admitted.)

In addition to courtroom battles against state and local regulators, farmers are taking their cause to the voters. In Maine, new restrictions on small dairy farms met with spirited resistance. Opponents launched a campaign for town ordinances that would essentially nullify state law, allowing farms to sell unregulated food directly to consumers. Sedgwick, Maine in 2011 became the first town to pass a Food Sovereignty ordinance,

and five other Maine towns soon followed its lead. The movement hit a roadblock in May, however, when a judge ruled that municipalities do not have the power to exempt themselves from state licensing requirements.

Throughout *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Food Rights* Gumpert expresses sympathy for the idea that “food rights”—the principle that consumers should be able to obtain the food of their choosing—constitute rights on par with others guaranteed by the Constitution. Indeed, this liberty was so self-evident at the time of Constitution’s drafting that no one saw the need to codify it. Like many other champions of an embattled cause, Gumpert invites comparisons to the civil rights movement, wondering when the food-rights movement will see its “Rosa Parks moment.”

Activists, then, look forward to a future in which “food rights” take their place beside religion, speech, and guns in the American pantheon of Constitutional liberties. But theirs is perhaps a better rhetorical strategy than a legal one: in a society thickly webbed with commercial regulations, courts are unlikely to recognize such absolute claims.

Nor are judges likely to accept the legal loopholes of food clubs and herdshares in which consumers own cows and pay farmers for their board, care, and milking at a price charged per gallon of milk. Thus no goods are technically bought or sold—but to the naked eye, the arrangement looks uncannily like customers buying milk from farmers, and judges can’t be blamed for seeing things that way. And food-rights activists are unlikely to attract wide support from a supermarket-faring public that is easily spooked by potentially unsafe foods. Most people don’t know or don’t care

about the travails of eccentric refugees from the domain of Big Ag and Big Food. The invocation of novel rights to unregulated foods and lofty appeals to the civil rights movement are not going to foment a revolution against America’s regime of state and federal food regulations.

There’s reason to be skeptical of the localist ideal, too. Many members of private food clubs live in big cities and place their orders online, and their food will be transported hundreds of miles over several states. These buyers may be reassured by the fact that their milk and pork is coming from

*Activists look forward to a future in which “food rights” take their place beside religion, speech, and guns in the American pantheon of liberties.*

Amish farms, but the circumstances of its faraway production might be as opaque as those of products at the local Whole Foods. This commerce is happening on a large enough scale, and with goods traveling long enough distances, that it’s unlikely to escape scrutiny—and even sympathetic observers might question whether it should.

Raw-milk advocates nostalgically point to a time in the early 20th century when raw milk was legally sold throughout the country alongside the pasteurized variety. This milk came from dairies certified by an industry organization called the American Association of Medical Milk Commissions. The establishment of a similar organization to certify the producers supplying today’s private buying clubs could offer the public assurance that this milk was produced according to the industry’s best practices of

sanitation. Similarly, if USDA standards for slaughtering animals or state permit requirements are designed for large producers, it's conceivable that small producers wishing to operate outside that system could devise and adhere to an alternative set of reasonable but fair standards.

This isn't to suggest that the stamp of approval from a private certification board will prompt the FDA and USDA to abandon their enforcement efforts: change at these agencies only comes from above. But we've seen court cases, such as *Vernon Hershberger's*, in which juries prove to be less concerned with the letter of the law than with safe products and responsible producers, and are therefore willing to leave the parties to these buying arrangements to their business. If off-the-grid food producers were certified by third parties to have submitted to rigorous safety procedures, public opinion and the legislative climate might begin to turn.

Whatever the future holds for food-culture fringe-dwellers, *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Food Rights* is a compelling account of their clashes with government. Gumpert fosters a sense of justified outrage at the plight of the farmers who have lost their livelihood after these prosecutions. It shouldn't be an ordeal, or require shady legal arrangements, to purchase or supply high-quality food.

There will be deaths from pathogens when people skate around regulations, whether on the farm or the factory floor. The industrial food system carries considerable health risks of its own, of which the public is only now becoming aware. We should be allowed to evaluate and act on these tradeoffs, as we do in other areas of life. These decisions shouldn't be made for us, particularly not by regulators who are bound up with the industrialized food system that has made Americans so sick in the first place. ■

Mark Nugent is a TAC senior editor.

## How Rod Dreher Went Home Again

by JEREMY BEER

*The Little Way of Ruthie Leming: A Southern Girl, a Small Town, and the Secret of a Good Life, Rod Dreher, Grand Central Publishing, 288 pages*

**T**he *Little Way of Ruthie Leming* isn't quite what one expects. The title alludes to the little way of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, but Ruthie Leming was not a saint. She has no little way that could be wholeheartedly endorsed as a universally valid spiritual practice. And the pathos of the story derives not so much from her own story, gutwrenching as it is, as from the struggle of her only brother—the author—to come to terms with it.

The basic outline of Ruthie's story will be familiar to readers of Rod Dreher's blog at *The American Conservative's* website. Ruthie was 40 when she was diagnosed with a viciously aggressive form of lung cancer. She finally succumbed 18 months later, leaving behind three daughters (Hannah, Rebekah, and Claire), a husband (Mike), her parents, and her brother. Her serene courage in the face of catastrophe inspires and changes many of those around her, especially Rod.

Ruthie also left behind, and was in the intervening months loved and supported by, the community of Starhill in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana—"one of the last real places in America," as one of her brother's friends later describes it. Dreher tells the story of Ruthie's life and death against the backdrop of the place and people to which she belonged, and to which she was unquestioningly loyal. It is a beautiful story that never cheaply tugs at a single heartstring. Dreher's disciplined rejection of sentimentality makes for an incredibly moving narrative.

Whether Ruthie's story means precisely what the author thinks it means

is less clear.

Dreher begins by portraying Ruthie in quasi-Rousseauian terms as an unspoiled child of nature, uncorrupted because uninterested in civilization's higher echelons. She cares for abandoned animals, fishes, excels at sports, and gets into fights, sometimes on her brother's behalf. We see her as a teenager, shooting at a deer and answering her Paw's question whether she has hit her target with the joyful cry, "Hell yeah, I did." Later, we encounter her as a young woman dancing un-self-consciously on the bar at a Cajun hangout. She liked to drink and make out down by the river.

For Dreher, all of this conveys the essential core of Ruthie's personality: in stark contrast to himself, she suffered from no crippling anxiety, no paralyzing self-analysis. No restlessness, either. "She was satisfied with what she had in front of her," he writes. Either by nature or by an act of will, she was a happy and contented member of the Starhill community.

That is impossible for Dreher. As a child, he is a dreamy indoors kid trapped in a practical outdoors world. He is of little use to his father and, as will happen to dreamy indoors kids, he eventually becomes a target of the mouth-breathing set at school. Soon after one especially scarring episode of bullying, he finds freedom by enrolling at a boarding school in distant Natchitoches. College follows, and a journalism career that takes him to ever-more-distant cities. He never comes to hate West Feliciana, to which his family has many and variegated ties; indeed, he comes to respect and champion its virtues. But he is not of it, and he is glad to be out.

Ruthie never understood. She liked where she was from and apparently never considered leaving. She married her high school sweetheart, took a teaching job at the local school, and built a home on her parents' property. She accepted everything about Starhill just as it was. The place nurtured her soul as much as it confined her brother's.

This fundamental difference in out-

look finally creates a chasm between Ruthie and Rod. There is the time, for example, when they were both in school at LSU, eating lunch with one of Rod's friends. Rod and his friend begin to mouth the usual sort of stereotyped undergraduate philosophical musings about Nietzsche and the death of God. Ruthie doesn't demur, argue, or laugh them off. She is simply contemptuous. "What is wrong with y'all? ... Listen to you. You sit here for hours talking about this crap, and it doesn't mean anything. You're just talking. You're not *doing* anything!"

Dreher reads this as evidence of her incapacity, or at least disdain, for abstract reflection unrelated to immediately practical concerns. But more fundamentally, Ruthie must have suspected that her brother and his poseur friends studied philosophy not so much to discover the truth of things as to develop an arsenal to be used against West Feliciana, their family, and everything she loved.

This raises the question of what it means to be faithful. For Ruthie—as for many people—it meant to not question that to which one is obligated, one's own. Rod was more concerned about being faithful to his perception of the good, the true, and the beautiful—whatever that might mean for his loyalties to place and kin. Neither's conception of faithfulness was capacious enough to include the other's.

Thus, for example, Ruthie does not wish to know the details surrounding her diagnosis. She does not research her disease online, she asks few questions, and she refuses to hear her prognosis. Her primary concern is to remain faithful—to her family, her community, her God, her friends, her students. And she is worried that knowing all the facts about her disease will make this impossible, that she will sink into self-pity and anxiety.

Rod is baffled by this approach. He cannot understand that Ruthie's principled rejection of knowledge about her disease allows her to be faithful to

the most important things in her life. He has "difficulty in squaring her confident faith in God's providence with her white-knuckled refusal to admit any facts that stood to undermine her hope." Dreher attributes this stance to her "active" nature and her "commitment to duty, even to the point of self-sacrifice." But this may be too moralistic an interpretation. Ruthie was committed to being faithful to that which was her own, which isn't quite the same as self-sacrifice. This component of her character is her glory, but because it is also ruthlessly exclusionary it is also her limitation.

In the months leading up to Ruthie's death Rod begins to see what he has missed in living the life unrooted. Friends, neighbors, extended family, even strangers give deeply of their resources and their time to help Ruthie and her family. Testimonials to her deep and lasting impact on others multiply. In this dying observed, Dreher shows us a community unified, even sanctified, by love—a community whose storytelling, casual neighborly interaction, and bonds of friendship added up to so much freedom from loneliness, meaninglessness, isolation. "We saw, here in our town, in the life and death of Ruthie Leming, a foreshadowing of the redemption of the world," Rod says in his eulogy. It is a conclusion amply supported by his narrative. I defy any living person with a soul to read these chapters without blubbering like a fool.

Ruthie's death brings even more clarity for Rod. He begins to think "about how little I really knew about Ruthie's life, and how I understood even less. I had somehow come to think of her living in a small town as equivalent to her living a small life. That was fine by me, if it made her content, but there was about it the air of settling. Or so I thought. What I had seen and heard these last few days showed me how wrong I had been."

The story does not end there. Very soon after Ruthie dies Rod and his wife

decide to move from Philadelphia to West Feliciana, where they have experienced scenes of intense emotional power. Even someone who believes that repatriation is very often a good thing may have counseled them to let a little time pass before making such a decision.

Predictably, difficulties arise. A sometimes maddeningly analytical fellow, upon his return to West Feliciana Rod cannot help but to pick at old scabs. He is troubled by his failure to understand just how a wall arose between his sister and him in the first place. He is tortured by new evidence

*Communities need their boundary-challengers as much as they need their boundary-protectors.*

that Ruthie never came to accept his choices and way of life. He is consumed by a deep need for affirmation—a need that the reader suspects may be impossible ever to fulfill. Despite the author's intentions, with respect to these issues the book ends on a note of uncertainty.

Ruthie Leming was a remarkable woman who met death with remarkable bravery. But the truth is that communities need their boundary-challengers as much as they need their boundary-protectors, their Rods as much as their Ruthies—even if the former can never occupy a central place in those communities. After all, the only effective challenges come from those who share fully in their community's trials, sufferings, obligations, and celebrations, and can therefore speak with the credibility that membership confers. *That* is the importance of loyalty to place. With his return to West Feliciana, one hopes that Dreher will see that he has fully as much to offer his community as did his lovely and loving sister. ■

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## Un-American Conservative?

by GERALD J. RUSSELLO

*Edmund Burke in America: The Contested Career of the Father of Modern Conservatism*, Drew Maciag, Cornell University Press, 285 pages

In the 1950s, American conservatives—then a scattered group of fugitives—sought an intellectual ancestor who embodied their principles and whose writings could be applied to the contemporary United States. Books like Peter Stanlis's *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* and, most famously, Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* repackaged the 18th-century Anglo-Irish statesman Edmund Burke into an all-purpose conservative champion. Where Burke stood against Jacobinism during the French Revolution, conservatives could resist communism during the Cold War. As

*In his own day Burke was not a reactionary or even a conservative in our sense but a reforming Whig.*

Burke had stood for eternal verities in 1790, so too he could now stand for the natural law against an emerging liberal relativism.

Although in retrospect seemingly obvious, this choice was not one everyone would have made. In his own day Burke was not a reactionary or even a conservative in our sense but a reforming Whig. Moreover, while he is eminently quotable, his words are just as suitable to support liberal causes as conservative ones. In the 19th century writers such as the historian George Bancroft considered Burke an admirable, but outdated,

opponent of tyrannical power not suited for emulation in democratic, egalitarian America; others labeled him a simple utilitarian.

Russell Kirk forcefully rejected this interpretation, both in *The Conservative Mind* and in his later biography of Burke. For Kirk, the defense of tradition Burke mounted conveyed not some utilitarian calculus but rather an argument that customs that had developed over centuries—while perhaps also representing the greatest good for the greatest number—were at root an expression of enduring principle. This was the farthest thing from what Kirk derisively termed “Benthamism,” a utilitarianism that would change customs and tradition as soon as some abstract principle bid it to do so. Rather, Burke championed the principle of order, which Kirk described as “an anticipatory refutation of utilitarianism, positivism, and pragmatism, an affirmation of that reverential view of society which may be traced through

Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, the Roman juriconsults, the Schoolmen, Richard Hooker, and lesser thinkers.”

Burke, therefore, was for the ages. But not all conservatives agreed with the picture Kirk and others were painting. Libertarian-minded thinkers like *National Review* senior editor Frank Meyer rejected Kirk's conservatism as an aristocratic collectivism. Richard Weaver, author of the seminal conservative work *Ideas Have Consequences*, wrote a famous essay arguing that Burke's “argument from circumstance” was, from a conservative point of view, inferior to Lincoln's “argument from principle.” Yet the view of Kirk and Stanlis has prevailed: Burke is now routinely considered a founder of American conservatism.

Drew Maciag considers why Burke's stock has risen so high on

the American intellectual right in this study of the reception and use of Burke in the U.S. since the Founding. *Edmund Burke in America* is a concise treatment of the many ways Americans have thought of Burke, and Maciag presents an important historiographical treatment of the emergence of a Burkean conservatism—even as he concludes it is something of an artificial growth on these shores.

Burke inspired ambiguous reactions shortly after the Founding. He had, after all, been the agent of New York colony prior to the Revolution, and he supported the colonists' grievances through the 1760s and 1770s. In a telling detail Maciag recounts, the Continental Congress toasted to Burke's health in 1775 as a friend of liberty. But his interest in the colonies lasted only so long as they were a part of the Empire; once that was no longer the case, it disappeared.

Not until 1791 did Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* reach America, and when it did his former admirers and friends, such as Thomas Paine, were disappointed by his fervent stance against the French Revolution. Burke's relation to the new nation changed. By that time, according to Maciag, the die had been cast: America was a revolutionary nation, even if that revolution was qualified by respect for certain British political traditions. Burke's devotion to a hereditary king and aristocracy, however, was bound to fall on deaf ears.

Burke became a controversial if not disfavored figure among the Founding generation. Maciag highlights this in a chapter comparing Burke to John Adams, who is sometimes considered a sort of American Burke. The Englishman himself understood his mission as being to “apply the brakes to the momentum of Enlightenment overreach.” But Adams was an American and sought to implement “Enlightenment thought in some workable, responsible manner.” The two were aligned in opposition to the French

Revolution, but even there Maciag sees a difference. As the only Federalist president,

Adams fit the bill for the forces of order and continuity, as well as Jefferson did for the forces of innovation and progress. If the Republican-Enlightenment ideal was to become the dominant national vision, and so give rise to an ideology of liberalism and progress, then certainly a counter-persuasion, loosely defined as conservative, was needed in order for the dynamic progress to function.

Maciag also devotes chapters to Jacksonian America; the antebellum Whigs, who attempted a partial restoration of Burke's reputation in reaction against the mob rule of "King Andrew" Jackson; the post-Civil War period and Gilded Age, when John Morley and E.L. Godkin identified Burke as a utilitarian; and Theodore Roosevelt, who alternately detested and admired a conservatism that owed less to Burke than "religious fundamentalism, monopoly capitalism, and 'tory' attitudes toward culture and society." Roosevelt leads to Woodrow Wilson, who wrote substantially, and positively, about Burke in the 1890s. Wilson's Burke was opposed to abstraction and favored responsible reform; he was getting closer to the postwar conservative's vision.

The second part of the book, "Postwar America," considers how and why Burke became the right's intellectual standard-bearer. Maciag rightly focuses on larger intellectual movements, such as the revival of "natural law thinking" on Catholic campuses in the late 1940s, as well as on more concrete factors, such as the 1948 publication of Burke's correspondence. The conservative reappropriation of Burke brings Maciag to his second theme: for Maciag, conservatism is a vital but junior

partner in the American political culture. He writes that "American Burkeans quickly learned that they were unlikely to prevail. The exceptionalist environment proved too resistant to the innate traditionalism of the Burkean message. In reaction to this, the Burkean perspective became transformed into a perennial counterpoint that was played against the major themes of egalitarianism and competitive material progress." In other words, conservatism is destined to play "the loyal opposition—strong enough to influence the agenda, not strong enough to set it."

Maciag's treatment of Kirk, whom he calls "the greatest postwar Burkean," is sympathetic while focusing on a central problem. For Kirk, Burke represented the entire intellectual ancestry of the West sharpened to a point thrust at the heart of revolutionary France. Kirk clearly wants Burke to be the source of a tradition opposed to what he called "defecated rationality," yet one still connected to the primordial wisdom of the natural law, about which Burke said little explicitly. But because Kirk took a "holistic and inseparable view of civilization," he could not incorporate "the modern ideals of progress, equity, democracy, and the pursuit of happiness." In that sense, Kirk was more reactionary than Burke ever was: "while Burke was a progressive reformer who defended British traditions that were declining but not yet extinct, Kirk condemned liberal reformers and sought to impose ancient, foreign, and vague traditions that had never really existed in the United States." This is for Maciag ultimately a mistaken endeavor because Burke can never quite fit in America, and his resurgence in the 1950s was merely an opportune moment for a movement looking for a father.

Kirk never really explained—in the way, say, T.S. Eliot did for England—what traditions defined the nation. He wrote little, for example, on American creations like jazz or even baseball, often a go-to source of pop wisdom for right-wingers. Yet Maciag does not fully address what Kirk was doing with his invocation of Burke. Kirk was waging a battle of imagination, not only with liberalism and other strains of conservatism—a nuance Maciag notes but whose significance

*Kirk clearly wants Burke to be the source of a tradition opposed to what he called "defecated rationality."*

he passes over—but with what he saw coming after liberalism, what Kirk called the Age of Sentiment. Kirk, like others such as Daniel Bell, Marshall McLuhan, and Philip Rieff, saw liberalism and the rational Enlightenment that brought it into being coming to an end. What would replace it had the potential to be shaped by a powerful imaginative vision of human society, a vision Kirk saw in Burke. This was not a rigid aristocratic vision but one that recognized society as an interlocked union of communities. It's a vision that caused one writer, Catholic University professor of politics Claes Ryn, to call Burke the first postmodern. In this, Kirk was Burke's true heir: Kirk once went so far as to say that it "may be the conservative imagination which is to guide the Post-Modern Age."

Conservatives are ever in the minority, for Maciag, because modernity has unleashed a power that can go in only one way: "you cannot turn back the clock." But as Chesterton responded to that aphorism, since a clock is

manmade, as is culture, the clock can be turned anywhere we like. Maciag notes the (in some ways) changing nature of conservatism but without addressing the changing nature of liberalism. A century ago, many liberals were eugenicist elitists who would no more have supported gay marriage or a liberal welfare state than does Rush Limbaugh today. To argue that conservatism must always be a junior partner, merely correcting liberalism's excesses, implies that there is a definitive direction not only to liberalism but to history itself, a contention that, if it is not unfalsifiable, certainly has little to confirm it.

Seen in this way, the conservative reappropriation of Burke becomes more comprehensible. Burke's mysticism and reliance on some form of natural law were not meant to convey a legalistic structure of metaphysics, with "ought" confidently derived from "is." Nor is Burke's common resort to "circumstance" a rejection of natural principles. Rather, it is a recognition that mystery—not reason—lies at the heart of each individual and the societies the human race creates, thus conservatives are enjoined to eschew social engineering and respect the bewildering array of ways in which we can organize our life together. There are enduring principles, but they must be sifted from particular facts, not theorizing.

Although Maciag defines Kirk and his supporters as premodern "anti-rationalists," the reality is more complicated. Maciag is right that at times Kirk seems to be speaking from a world "that had already passed away." But that is what makes the imaginative vision of Burke, as seen through the work of Kirk, the most formidable alternative to liberalism among the conservatisms vying for attention today. ■

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## Umpire Strikes Out

by ANDREW J. BACEVICH

*American Empire, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, Harvard University Press, 440 pages*

“William Appleman Williams viewed world history through the wrong end of the telescope,” writes Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman in her novel reinterpretation of American statecraft. “On balance, American diplomacy in the twentieth century has been far more triumphant than tragic.” While others might characterize the 20th century as dismal or barbaric, Hoffman looks past the bad news and finds much to celebrate. Most importantly, during the 20th century imperialism went out of fashion. In place of empire, new norms—“access to opportunity, arbitration of disputes, and transparency in government and business”—evolved and have now “taken hold around the world.” They have today become “the leitmotifs of national policy and global history.” Further, these new norms fostered the spread of “democratic capitalism,” which “drove material progress and facilitated enough peace and cooperation for humanity to flourish.” For Hoffman, a professor of history at San Diego State University, this describes the world in which we live.

Many factors account for this happy development. Chief among them, however, has been the role played by the United States, the “bellwether” and “pivot of this worldwide transformation.” America “nurtured new global trends” and “pioneer[ed] the new norms.” It provided “the cutting edge of a larger and growing international critique” of colonialism. As these “new international norms took hold... America gave history a decisive shove.”

In 1789 the Constitution had established the federal government as arbiter of disputes among the several states comprising the Union. By fits and starts

over the next two centuries, the United States established itself as arbiter of disputes among the growing roster of nations comprising the international order. Unlike the imperial powers of old, the United States established itself as an “*umperial* power,” assigned the responsibility “to compel acquiescence as necessary with rules that had earned broad legitimacy.” Today, writes Hoffman, America has become “the enforcer of what is, most of the time, the collective will.” To charge the United States with committing the sin of imperialism, therefore, “is not simply improbable but false.” It’s also a pernicious slander. Those who perpetrate this do immense harm: “Diagnosing America’s problem as ‘imperialism’ is damaging,” she writes. Rather than suggesting an alternative approach to policy, “this flawed characterization merely saps morale.” Hoffman worries about American morale.

In any human endeavor requiring supreme effort, morale helps determine outcome. If citizens are uncertain about their own or their government’s motivation, they will find it difficult to prevail against enemies, inertia, pessimism, and all the other forces that continuously complicate human achievement.

By implication, historians bear some responsibility for bolstering the nation’s collective spirits, lest inertia and pessimism impede the onward march of progress.

Were that not enough, those falsely charging the United States with imperialism sow the seeds of anti-Americanism abroad. Take terrorism, for example. As Hoffman sees it, American critics of U.S. foreign policy helped persuade violent Islamists that “all Americans [are] part of a malignant imperialist plot,” thereby providing ammunition to the likes of Osama bin Laden. Put simply, she writes, “the events of 9/11 teach that words must be as precise as possible, for they can be-

come like slippery knives. An umpire accused of being an empire may bleed out, to everyone's detriment."

As a determinant of the way that others see the United States, Hoffman implies, scholarly judgments carry greater weight than do the words and actions of those who actually make policy. By extension, historians should keep their criticism of U.S. policy within bounds. "American academics have a sober responsibility," Hoffman warns, "to make sure that incriminations of their country and fellow citizens are made only to the extent warranted."

Readers curious as to how over the period of a century and a half an inconsequential republic perched on the eastern seaboard of North America emerged as the globe's preeminent superpower will want to look elsewhere. "Organically, over the course of time," Hoffman remarks, "the United States had become indispensable to maintaining order against the evils of chaos on a crowded, globalized world." Yet *American Umpire* does not explain how the United States acquired the muscle needed to perform this indispensable function.

Indeed, Hoffman's interests lie elsewhere. She wants to show that access, arbitration, and transparency constitute the abiding themes of American statecraft. In addition, she aims to drive a stake through the canard of American imperialism. Making good on this dual purpose requires two things. First, Hoffman must show how the United States has promoted common global norms while serving as "umpire, arbitrator, bouncer, playground supervisor, policeman, whatever." Second, she must demonstrate that U.S. actions others describe as imperialistic are not what they appear to be.

On the first count, she achieves modest success. Without doubt, the United States has on occasion functioned as an umpire of sorts. Hoffman opens her book by recounting the Suez Crisis of 1956, in which the "Soviet-American bloc" [sic] brought to heel an Anglo-

French-Israeli coalition seeking to do in Egypt's annoying Gamal Abdel Nasser. (On how the Soviet-American bloc fared in enforcing global norms with respect to the simultaneous Hungarian Revolution, she opts for silence.) Hoffman concludes *American Umpire* by describing Western interventions in the Balkans during the 1990s. Once U.S. forces entered the fray, the opposition, she writes, "folded like a cheap paperback" and "genocide came to a stop." Points well taken.

On the second count, however, Hoffman makes her case by cherry-picking or ingeniously reinterpreting the historical record. Here are five examples.

- During the 1840s, in their disputes with Mexico, peace-loving Americans "showed a decided preference for arbitration," according to Hoffman. More specifically, "on three occasions [Washington] attempted to persuade Mexico, known to be insolvent, to sell all or part of sparsely populated California." Mexican leaders perversely refused. Sure, the United States subsequently invaded and dismantled the country, but hadn't Mexicans asked for it?
- Does the Boxer Rebellion suggest American complicity in imperialistic exploitation of China? No, says Hoffman. Instead, with U.S. troops participating, military intervention offered a "new prototype for international policing."
- Annexation of the Philippines? Ill-advised, yet hardly proof of American imperialism, the episode amounting to "an adolescent identity crisis expressed in Euro-American cross-dressing." Besides, no prominent American actually "praised colonialism outright"; Hoffman thereby airbrushes imperialist progressives like Senator Albert Beveridge out of the picture.
- The Iranian coup of 1953? Washington was "forced by escalating events to pick a side," Hoffman writes. "British officials maneuvered their

U.S. counterparts into becoming ever more involved." And anyway, Mohammad Mossadegh was an odd duck who "received diplomatic visitors in his pajamas" and "wept openly when moved." Perfidious Albion made us do it.

- Vietnam? After the 1954 Geneva Accords, "indigenous opponents of Ho Chi Minh formed a permanent government in the south and refused to hold the promised elections." To judge by Hoffman's version of events, the United States played no part in these developments. And don't tag the presidents who stumbled into Vietnam with being imperialists. "The dynamics of the Cold War imprisoned them all."

"This book concludes with the Balkans," Hoffman writes, "where the twentieth century began and ended." The conflicts of the post-9/11 era get little more than a passing glance, Hoffman noting that "These wars have not yet receded into history. They bridge past, present, and future, where only fools, angels, and journalists dare to tread."

Still, terminating *American Umpire* in the 1990s is the equivalent, say, of publishing a history of American statecraft in 1950 and disregarding everything that had happened since 1938. It's a tad too convenient. How, for example, might Hoffman incorporate the Bush Doctrine of preventive war or the Obama Doctrine of targeted assassination into her themes of access and arbitration? As for transparency, how does that mesh with Washington's growing appetite for secret surveillance? Finally, in the wake of the Iraq debacle, is it really still possible to speak, as Hoffman does, of "the military harmlessness of the United States"?

No, it's not. Whatever the implications for American morale, let's not pretend otherwise. ■

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## Manchester Heroes

by A.G. GANCARSKI

*A Light That Never Goes Out: The Enduring Saga of the Smiths, Tony Fletcher, Crown Archetype, 704 pages*

*Unknown Pleasures: Inside Joy Division, Peter Hook, It Books, 416 pages*

If there was one moment that was central in the formation of the Manchester music scene, it was a sparsely attended Sex Pistols show in 1976. Among the few dozen people in attendance at the Free Trade Hall that night were youths who would become some of the most important people in British music history. Mick Hucknall from Simply Red was there, as were the Buzzcocks, and Peter Hook and Barney Sumner from what would become Joy Division, also Steven Morrissey, who would eventually form the Smiths. Morrissey would go on to a prolific solo career, while Joy Di-

*At the next Sex Pistols gig, Peter Hook asked Ian Curtis to be lead singer of what was to become Joy Division.*

vision, after the suicide of its singer, would regroup as New Order.

For Peter Hook, Joy Division/New Order bassist and the author of *Unknown Pleasures*, the memoir about the band's earlier incarnation, the experience was transformative. Thinking that the Pistols were, like him, "working-class tossers," Hook had a revelation watching them perform. "Sounds awful but f---ing a, I could do that." At the next Sex Pistols gig, which was much more widely attended, Hook asked Ian Curtis to be lead singer of what was

to become Joy Division. (Morrissey's ascent to pop stardom was still years down the road).

So what was Joy Division all about? The question still resonates because the band's music—despite being rooted in riffs and keyboards of the late 1970s—still matters. Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys claimed that Joy Division's most successful single, "Love Will Tear Us Apart," is the perfect pop song, and Bono has talked at great length about what an influence the brooding, mercurial, ultimately doomed Curtis was on his development as a musician. They mattered just as much to people who couldn't play a note if their lives depended on it.

Joy Division didn't begin fully formed, of course, and Hook's wry and deft documentation of the band trying to find its way highlights his book. The band played its share of gigs to empty or near-empty rooms, as well as to crowds that would sooner attack the band than appreciate its sonic subtleties. Long before Bernard Sumner—the Joy Division guitarist who would go on to become the voice of New Order after Ian Curtis's suicide—became a pop superstar in his own right, Hook remembers him being compared to Barney Rubble. Throughout this book, Hook demystifies the idea that the band, or Curtis, was somehow exempt from typical rock-band behavior, playing "japes" on each other and chasing women.

Before Joy Division was Joy Division, the band was called Warsaw, a name chosen right before a gig to replace an even more forgettable name, Stiff Kittens. And like all bands in formation, they had trouble filling out their personnel spots—specifically, the drum kit. Hook tells of a former drummer, Steve Brotherdale, who spurned the band to join another outfit that seemed more promising.

Years later, Hook would encounter Brotherdale again—behind the counter, taking Hook's order at McDonald's.

Even as Joy Division coalesced musically, the musicians were not the best of friends. Sumner failed, for example, to invite Hook to his 1978 wedding—though *Unknown Pleasures* is conveniently short on insight as to why this snub happened and what it might have said about the character of the author. Despite this internal acrimony, Curtis held the band together with his presence and his lyrics, which Hook likens to a "conversation with a genius." Hook throughout the book comes back to the idea that without "captain of the ship" Ian, the band's music as New Order was not nearly as meaningful.

As Joy Division matured, Hook took issue with producer Martin Hannett for creating sonic environments that were too "spacy" and buried the bass in the mix. The bassist wanted a more traditional hard-rock sound. A recurrent theme in these pages involves Hook biting the hand that feeds him: he goes on to make repeated references to Curtis' impotence due to his epilepsy medication, a side effect that extended to the singer's affair with Belgian temptress Annik Honore, which Hook seems to relish saying was "never consummated." (The author and Sumner both reportedly "had a go" at her.)

The band found critical success as they synthesized influences ranging from Kraftwerk to the Velvet Underground, but Curtis's medical condition got worse, with intense stage shows leaving him exhausted and in a delicate state which extended beyond gigs: he even fainted when his daughter was born, around the time the band's first album, also called "Unknown Pleasures," was released. Hook puts Curtis's eventual suicide into context of his doomed love triangle and his wife's unwillingness to accept his affair with Annik Honore. Curtis



attempted suicide with phenobarbital on Easter Sunday 1980 and finished the job a few weeks later, before what would have been Joy Division's inaugural American tour.

For fans of the band, the darkness of the book is alleviated with great narrative details, everything from William Burroughs telling a broke Curtis to "f-- off" when the singer tried to wangle a free book from him to stories of how Hook did cocaine for the first time (spoiler: at the "Pretty In Pink" premiere, as guests of OMD). For all its flaws, Hook's volume tells the story of how Ian Curtis and Joy Division were just working-class kids on the make.

The Hook book has the singular luxury of first-person, self-interested narration. In contrast, *The Light That Never Goes Out*, by veteran music biographer Tony Fletcher, adopts an academic tone and reads as if its author were getting paid by the word. There is, to be fair, a lot of information here about the Smiths, but not much of it will be new to anyone who followed the band through the British press as they became a phenomenon.

The first third of the book rehashes familiar trivia. Did you know Morrissey was a fan of Shelagh Delaney and Oscar Wilde? Or that Morrissey and Marr bonded over a B-side by the Marvelettes? And that a song by the Smiths was central to pseudo-indie treacle-fest "500 Days of Summer"? If that stuff is new to you, this book may be of some value. Smiths fans of long standing will have seen this material before.

Much of the material on the band's early history is used to establish the culturally reactionary posture of the band's songwriting duo, Morrissey and guitarist Johnny Marr. It is no surprise to any serious fan that the Smiths' single "Panic" owes a debt to "Metal Guru" by T Rex or that "The Headmaster Ritual" was inspired by Moz's secondary school experience. A third of the book is over before

the Smiths start gigging—200 pages of sludgy summary of the formative years of Morrissey and Marr. While it is interesting enough that Morrissey found his school years full of casual abuse, how much really needs to be said about it that is not already delineated in the Smiths' lyrics?

One might hope for some insights about how a band like Joy Division, and a front man like Curtis in particular, influenced the Smiths. Fletcher has only about 500 words on the local legend's suicide and pop music's loss; we hear that Morrissey saw it as a cautionary tale. We also get very little about Morrissey's obsession with James Dean, which led to the early career pamphlet-sized "book," *James Dean Is Not Dead*. But we get dozens of pages about such utterly prosaic subjects as the Smiths' dodgy management situation. Why? Probably because the author could get these guys to go on the record. If only Fletcher could have gotten the roadies to opine, he might have been able to stretch this material into two volumes!

Fletcher does make clear why the Smiths had such a brief if acclaimed existence, spanning only 1982–1987. Johnny Marr couldn't leave the coke, speed, or weed alone, and the rhythm section—drummer Mike Joyce and bassist Andy Rourke—were basically adjuncts in terms of creative control, and they were all too eager to party it up. The band couldn't figure out when it would have been to their advantage to make a music video, and they couldn't agree on their management situation, or their record label, or their producers.

One point that Fletcher makes well bears mentioning. There is a school of thought that says that the Smiths' breakup might have been avoided if the band had permitted Marr to take a break instead of forcing him into the

studio to record B-sides for a single off the final album, "Strangeways, Here We Come." The strongest part of this book documents that last session, in which Morrissey forces the band through a workmanlike cover of Cilla Black's "Work Is a Four Letter Word." The end is near, and it is vivid. If only there were more genuine revelations like that in this text. But they are sparse.

*A Light That Never Goes Out* is simply weak on sources, which consist mostly of interviews with peripheral figures and a few quotes from Johnny Marr in which he seems utterly unin-

*Johnny Marr couldn't leave the coke, speed, or weed alone, and the rhythm section were all too eager to party it up.*

terested in rehashing his group from 30 years ago. The lack of Morrissey's involvement in this project is crippling.

What we get about Morrissey—the central figure—reads like robot summarizing his Wikipedia entry. There is no resolution of the competing claims about Morrissey's sexuality—gay, straight, celibate, asexual, or a combination thereof—in part because the author couldn't get anyone to talk and perhaps also because he feared to speculate and risk legal action. The book reads as if Fletcher is still hoping till the end that the singer will give him an interview at last. As a biographer, this guy is like Willy Loman.

Perhaps there is nothing new for an outsider to say about the Smiths. Over a quarter-century after their breakup, their music still holds up, but that doesn't mean Fletcher's book needed to be written, certainly not at its door-stop length. ■

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*A.G. Gancarski writes from Jacksonville, Florida.*



Taki

## The Art of Artie Shaw

Sixty-five years or so ago, the biggest star in Hollywood, as well as the biggest stud, was a clarinetist whose combination of good looks, extraordinary musical talent, and great intelligence made him the brightest figure under the California sun. His name was Artie Shaw, but he was born Arthur Jacob Arshawsky, the son of Jewish immigrants. Artie married eight times and among his wives—check this—were Ava Gardner, the smoldering beauty from the deep South that drove men mad, including Frank Sinatra; Lana Turner, the blonde that went through men like a Panzer division through French infantry; Kathleen Windsor, the novelist and author of *Forever Amber*; Evelyn Keyes, Scarlett O’Hara’s younger sister and later the great love of director John Huston; and some others whom I’ve never heard of.

But wait. Artie wasn’t finished. He left my personal favorite, Betty Grable, at the altar. Can you imagine leaving Betty and her million-dollar (of that time) legs waiting in front of a justice of the peace while you were out playing the clarinet with some buddies? Betty was the all-American cheerleader type, with the best gams in town, a pouty mouth surrounded by white-white perfect skin, and an attitude that was deliciously wholesome as well as extremely sexy. Try and top that today, you Hollywood uglies.

One of the few that escaped Artie

was Rita Hayworth, and there was another great seductress. Just think “Gilda” and you’ve got my point.

When Shaw threw in the towel, he was making \$60,000 per week, a colossal sum in those days, when his band was number one in the United States. The reason he quit was because he saw the coming of the cacophony that today represents our culture. He wrote Duke Ellington a letter saying that dishonesty, lack of dignity, cheapness, shoddiness, and ignorance were becoming the taste of the masses. He lived to a very old age incognito in Los Angeles, writing a book he never finished that ran to millions of words investigating the possibilities of language.

Artie concluded all his concerts by hitting a cosmic high with his C at the end of his own creation, “Concerto for Clarinet.” Here are some of his greatest hits: “Begin the Beguine,” “Frenesi,” “Star Dust,” and hundreds of other recordings I was lucky to hear time and again while growing up. Shaw hired Billie Holiday, Mel Tormé, Buddy Rich, “Hot Lips” Page, and many others. He volunteered for the Navy in World War II, saw action, and performed under fire in the Pacific, something that our last three presidents would deem a very dumb act, I am sure.

Even his great rival, Benny Goodman, apparently not a very nice man, conceded that Artie was the tops. Duke Ellington called him his idol.

So, there you have it. A very good-

looking man who is the world’s greatest clarinetist and takes the greatest beauties America has produced as wives and mistresses, who collects 15,000 books and gives it all up because he is also a prophet and sees where our culture is going. I’m sure some vulgar wise guy asshole in Hollywood might think him a nutcase, but if only we had more such nutcases around. Just imagine what Artie Shaw would think or say about today’s rock scene. Or the Kardashians women.

Whereas the ancient Greeks preferred and trusted only the beautiful—Socrates was an exception—the egalitarian society of today prefers and trusts the homely. The freaks. How in heaven’s name can Madonna or Jennifer Lopez be taken seriously and be paid for being ugly? Those oversized lips of that ghastly Angelina Jolie would be called *une deformation professionnelle* by the French, and they would be right. Poor Jennifer Aniston looks like a maid my parents once had, not a movie star, and don’t get me started on Paris Hilton. Her fathomless vulgarity is matched only by her physical obscenity.

These are times for the odious, the untalented, the ugly, the hirsute, the cacophonous so-called rock stars. Artie saw it coming and did the right thing. The trouble is I can’t even get my children to listen to his recordings—you can lead someone to the well, but it doesn’t mean they’ll drink. Oy vey! ■

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