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LETTERS

The bishops' 'preeminent priority,' supporting LGBTQ couples, etc.

CONSISTENT ETHIC

I'm writing to respond to Matthew Sitman's alarm about how the U.S. bishops prioritized the issue of abortion at their annual meeting this November in Baltimore ("Preeminent?" December). After a lengthy debate, by majority vote the bishops excluded some of Pope Francis's pronouncements on a comprehensive position of life issues and stated, "the threat of abortion is our preeminent priority." This statement was then included in the USCCB's updated election guide *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*. A closer reading shows that Sitman's alarm is overstated.

First, the bishops left untouched the other parts of their 2015 guide that require Catholic voters to consider other intrinsically evil issues, such as racism, euthanasia, genocide, torture, and treating the poor as disposable (Paragraphs 22 and 23), as well as other "compelling and serious threats to human life, such as global climate change, the death penalty, immigration reform, and others" (Paragraph 29). The U.S. bishops reiterate, "As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support" (Paragraph 42). Had the bishops wanted to diminish the pope's concern over the other life issues, they would have done so. Instead, they wrote that Catholic voters should "apply a consistent moral framework to issues facing the nation and world" (Page 1 of the guide's Introductory Note). These words are really a restatement of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's teaching on "a consistent ethic of life." Second, their concern that abortion should be a preeminent priority is nothing new. The bishops stated as much in their 2015 version of the election guide (Summary of Part II).

Three other points on the abortion issue presented in the bishops' election guide suggest that a more moderate approach is worth considering. First, the bishops express the need for Catholic voters, when considering a candidate, to factor in "the [candidate's] ability to influence an issue" (Paragraph 37). History has shown that since the 1973 Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, Supreme Court justices have failed to repeal this decision—even when the court had a majority of Republican-nominated justices. Since *Roe v. Wade* has become settled precedent, the president's ability to influence the abortion issue by appointing prolife justices is minimal. Second, the bishops' election guide allows Catholic voters to consider "incremental improvements" rather than an all-or-nothing approach on the abortion issue (Paragraph 32; and St. John Paul II's *Evangelium vitae*, no. 73). Therefore, a Catholic voter could consider supporting a candidate whose prolife position is moderate, similar to the current compromise law in Catholic Ireland. Third, the bishops express the need to depolarize America's unfortunate political divide: "Our commitment as people of faith to imitate Christ's love and compassion should challenge us to serve as models of civil dialogue" (Paragraph 2 and Introductory Note). And at the same time as the bishops issued their recent election guide, they also announced a year-long program called *Civilize It: Dignity Beyond the Debate*, which is recommended for use by dioceses and parishes. Since the abortion issue is so divisive, it would stand to reason that Catholics should be more tolerant in their approach to this and other life issues.

Robert Anderson
Marquette, Mich.

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LETTERS

MATTHEW SITMAN REPLIES:

I thank Mr. Anderson for the thoughtful letter. We simply disagree about the significance of the bishops' new letter supplementing *Faithful Citizenship* for the 2020 election, which specifically names abortion as the "preeminent" issue Catholics should consider when voting. In light of their decision to exclude a complete passage from Pope Francis that offered guidance on how to approach politics, which underscored that the lives of the poor or the elderly are "equally sacred" and urged Catholics to resist thinking that only one ethical issue truly "counts," my short article made clear that I thought it all was rather telling.

WHOLE AND HAPPY

I applaud Mollie Wilson O'Reilly's article "A Harmful Doctrine" (January). The Bible seems to reference homosexuality only briefly—and only homosexuality between men. Perhaps this is the clue to a taboo rooted in ancient times that does not translate to today. If the increase of your immediate family, your tribe, your people is paramount to survival, then procreating can seem not only a vital activity, but maybe even a moral dictum. But when this practicality became wedded firmly to morality we created a problem that doesn't need to exist. The reality is that many heterosexual couples also engage in sexual practices that are non-procreative and may be very similar to the practices of LGBTQ couples. This is because human beings, uniquely, are creative, playful, and varied in their sexual practices. And this has been true for millennia. Some cultures have been able to assess and accept the practical aspects of human coupling without hysteria (see *The Spirit and the Flesh* by Walter L. Williams). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Spouses to whom God has not granted children can nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning, in both human and Christian terms. Their marriage can radiate a fruitfulness of charity, of hospitality, and of sacrifice" (1654). Why can't the church use that criterion for couples whose biology is also not naturally procreative? We would do more good as a church by helping all individuals and couples develop relationships that are faithful, generous, and mutually respectful. As a church we should be strengthening and supporting all families, as that is where whole and happy people are formed.

Mary Lu Callahan
Iowa City, Iowa

A CANDLE IN THE DARK

Over the years I have always been in awe of the wisdom and reasoning Cathleen Kaveny lends to the many topics she has written about—the abortion issue as a primary guide for Catholic voters, refusing Communion to lawmakers who back present abortion rights, how to communicate with people who disagree with us without vilifying them for their opinions ("Bridge Burners," December). If only the general population could open their minds and consider these topics the way she does.

In the several different parishes where I worship both in the Northeast and Florida, I've experienced the divisiveness of the flock. In one parish a priest preaches so beautifully on the love and mercy of Jesus, while in another I heard a shocker of a sermon on our duty to rebuke our family members or friends who are gay and tell them "of their sin." (Almost walked out on that one.) In one parish, we are encouraged to follow Pope Francis's exhortation to care for the earth, but in another a secret letter was passed around suggesting that Pope Francis is the "Frankenpope," leading all Catholicism astray.

So when I read Ms. Kaveny, I see a candle in the dark, I'm encouraged to stay and pray. I can only hope her wisdom reaches those who need to hear it—or better yet, penetrates the hard heads and hard hearts of those culture warriors who defend their beliefs as absolute truth.

Beverly Eskel
Methuen, Mass.

Trump & Iran

"He was saying bad things about our country, like we're going to attack, we're going to kill your people. I said, 'Listen, how much of this shit do we have to listen to, right?'" That is the latest explanation for why President Donald Trump ordered the assassination of Iranian Gen. Qasem Soleimani earlier this month. He said this not to Congress, nor to the American people, but to donors at his Mar-a-Lago resort during a dramatic rendition of how the airstrikes unfolded, according to a recording of the comments obtained by the *Washington Post*.

That makes as much sense as any of the other rationales for killing Soleimani that have been offered so far. At first Trump said he did so because Soleimani was about to launch an "imminent" attack on Americans. But no concrete, specific evidence has yet been offered to support that assertion. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo admitted as much. "We don't know precisely when and we don't know precisely where," he said on Fox News, "but it was real." When Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley briefed Congress on the strikes, he provided three dates on which they were concerned attacks would take place, but a lawmaker at the briefing told the *New York Times* that they were all "before the strike on General Soleimani and no attacks actually occurred then." Sen. Mike Lee, a Republican from Utah, called it "probably the worst briefing" he'd experienced in his nine years in office. "We never got to the details," he said.

No matter. Trump started filling in the details himself, saying that he assassinated Soleimani because of a plot to attack an embassy. That quickly became a plot to "blow up" the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. But that didn't last very long, either, because he soon went on Fox News to further embellish the story. "I can reveal that I believe it would have been four embassies" Soleimani was going to hit, he said. Eventually, basically conceding that he was making it up as he went along, Trump confessed that "it doesn't really matter" what the reason was.

He's right. The presidency has now accrued vast, mostly unaccountable powers to carry out assassinations abroad. Since President Gerald Ford issued an order banning "political assassinations," but leaving the meaning of that term hazy, his successors have steadily turned the prohibition into little more than words on paper. As recently explained in the *New York Times*, the Reagan administration argued that only "unlawful" killings counted as assassinations—a definition that has stuck. The problem is that "executive branch lawyers typically determine when the government has the power to kill someone abroad," a kind of circular reasoning that makes the use of executive power answerable mostly to those wielding it.

This is the killing machine Trump inherited and is recklessly deploying, having brought the United States and Iran to the precipice of outright war just as he was facing a Senate trial after being impeached by the House of Representatives. In this case, cooler heads have prevailed: for now. Trump threatened to destroy fifty-two sites in Iran—including cultural sites—if the Iranian government retaliated against the assassination. But when Iran hit a U.S. base in Iraq with missiles, killing no Americans, the immediate situation seemed to stabilize. Trump accepted that as a proportional response, and the possibility of escalation was momentarily defused.

But we still have an unstable, impulsive president who has claimed the right to kill foreign leaders he deems "bad" enough—a standard that, depending on Trump's mood, could apply to any number of adversaries. And we still face a volatile relationship with Iran, one that, since Trump pulled out of the 2015 Iran deal, careens from crisis to crisis. It also should be underscored that at the same moment an American strike killed Soleimani, the United States also tried—and failed—to kill Abdul Reza Shahlai, a key commander of Iran's elite Quds Force in Yemen. The *Washington Post* reported that the unsuccessful operation suggests that the Soleimani assassination "was part of a broader operation than previously explained, raising questions about whether the mission was designed to cripple the leadership of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps or solely to prevent an imminent attack on Americans as originally stated."

Just what is Trump trying to do with Iran—and are there any limits to how he might try to achieve his aims? Congress needs to find out and rein in the president. Sen. Tim Kaine's and Rep. Elisa Slotkin's War Powers resolution, which has already passed in the House and attracted enough Republican support to succeed in the Senate, is a good first step, putting pressure on the rest of congressional Republicans to check the president. But it's not veto-proof. The "No War Against Iran Act," introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, which would block funding for any unauthorized use of military force against Iran, would be even more effective. As a candidate, Trump promised to avoid more wars in the Middle East, but his desperate need to be seen as tough makes that seem increasingly unlikely. In this, as in so many other aspects of his political persona, he remains a fraud.

—Jaunary 23, 2020

American Gangsters

The same day that the articles of impeachment of Donald Trump were delivered to the U.S. Senate, Lev Parnas—an associate of Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani—went public with his insider's knowledge of the scheme to pressure Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden. "Everyone was in the loop," Parnas declared: the president, from whom Giuliani's orders came, along with Vice President Mike Pence, Attorney General William Barr, and others in Trump's close orbit. Parnas's allegations, supported by a trove of text messages and other documents he had shared with several House committees, triggered new calls for witnesses and the introduction of new evidence at Trump's trial.

The text messages also included unsettling exchanges from last spring between Parnas and a Republican congressional candidate from Connecticut named Stephen Hyde. The two seem to have been discussing active surveillance of Marie Yovonovitch, then America's ambassador to Ukraine, whom Giuliani said he needed "out of the way" in order to carry out Trump's orders. Hyde appears to be relaying information about her whereabouts, movements, and computer activity, at one point referring to her as "this bitch." It was around that time the State Department urged Yovonavitch to leave Ukraine for her own safety.

The president himself has acted no less menacingly. Testifying at the House impeachment hearings last fall, Yovonavitch spoke of the fear and anxiety she experienced on learning that Donald Trump had promised Ukraine's president that "she was going to go through some things." Moments later America watched in real time as Trump issued a pair of tweets plainly meant to intimidate her. Trump clearly has the capo's appetite for retribution, and the helpful knack for attracting eager henchmen. Cartoonish and sometimes bumbling henchmen, yes, but fluent in the manners and language of extortionate enterprise. It's been noted that Parnas, who is facing federal campaign-finance charges, has something to gain by turning on Trump and may not be a credible witness. But much of what he alleges has already been corroborated.

Parnas and Hyde have provided vague explanations of the messages they sent each other while they were tracking Yovonavitch—the former calling it all a laugh, the latter blaming first his own excessive drinking and then manipulation by supposed anti-Trump actors. There's a tendency to make light of the unsavory characters carrying out Trump's below-board errands: "It's like *The Sopranos* meets *Veep*," and "It's *Goodfellas* starring the Three Stooges." Perhaps the pop-culture comparisons help some people cope with a reality that increasingly strains belief—were personal associates of an American president actually arranging a hit on an American ambassador?—but this risks trivializing what would be a violation without precedent. Of course, Senate Republicans could put the matter to rest by hearing more evidence. Their reluctance to do so amounts to another endorsement of Trump's thuggery. Perhaps they are afraid of what else could turn up.

Two days after the Parnas revelations, the State Department still hadn't commented on the alleged surveillance of Yovanovitch by Trump's associates. Eventually, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated there would be an investigation, but he also clearly signaled that it wouldn't be a serious one. By that time another government—Ukraine's—had already announced its own investigation: "The published messages contain facts of possible violations of Ukrainian law and of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations, which protect the rights of diplomats on the territory of another state.... [Ukraine] cannot ignore such illegal activities." President Trump always said he wanted Ukraine to root out corruption. Will he get his wish?

—Dominic Preziosi

Australia on Fire

The fires in south and east Australia began in August—an unusually early start to the fire season—and have been burning longer and hotter than the wildfires the region typically experiences. As of this writing, at least thirty-three people have died, thousands are homeless, and many more have been displaced. It's been reported that one billion animals have died, not including bats, frogs, insects, and other invertebrates. The animals that survived the initial fires will struggle for survival in ecosystems devastated by flame and ash. The fires are expected to continue for months.

Climate experts agree that the combination of hotter temperatures and drier conditions made this year's fires particularly severe, and that human-caused global warming has likely played a role. Australia's average temperature has increased one degree Celsius since 1910; 2019 was Australia's hottest year on record. Though it's "difficult to diagnose" (as one scientist put it) a specific cause for the severity of this season's fires until more research is done, there is little doubt that climate change has something to do with it.

That doesn't stop some from continuing to peddle uncertainty. Rupert Murdoch's News Corp—which controls more than half of Australia's newspaper market (and in America owns Fox News)—has waged a disinformation campaign about the role of global warming. According to one such false narrative, arsonists are solely to blame. True, some of Australia's fires were intentionally set, but then, no one claims that climate change *starts* fires—just that it makes them more dangerous, regardless of what sparks them.

Murdoch outlets have also blamed environmental advocates for the fires, accusing them of opposing fire-prevention techniques like "prescribed burning," the setting of small, controlled burns of underbrush to keep yearly bushfires from becoming too destructive.

Similar accusations surfaced during California's 2018 wildfire season; then, as now, it was untrue. Environmental-advocacy organizations generally support prescribed burning. It's possible that had more prescribed burning been done in Australia, this season's fires wouldn't have been as severe. But, ironically, the rising temperatures associated with climate change shortened the window in which prescribed burning was permitted.

Meanwhile, Australia's leaders have done little to dispel confusion. Prime Minister Scott Morrison has a long record of climate denialism and friendliness to the fossil-fuel industry. Australia is the world's largest exporter of coal, and one of the world's biggest per-capita emitters of the greenhouse gases known to contribute to global warming, accounting for 1.3 percent of global emissions. While Australia has committed to reducing emissions, its pledge falls short of the Paris Agreement target. At December's United Nations Climate Change Conference, Australia derailed talks on carbon trading; also in December, a group of climate-change think tanks labeled Morrison's government "an increasingly regressive force" in global efforts to combat warming. Morrison has ignored requests for meetings by fire chiefs to discuss their concern about fire preparedness; he even explored the possibility of outlawing climate-related demonstrations on the basis that such activism would harm the economy.

As their country burns, tens of thousands of Australians have taken to the streets to protest the government's response and its inaction in combating global warming. So far, Australia's fires have released more than 400 metric tons of emissions, three-quarters of the nation's annual total from all other sources—and more than the combined annual total of the 116 lowest-emitting countries. The fires are thus not only a symptom of climate change but also another contributor to it.

—Regina Munch

The Opioid Crisis

In early September, Purdue Pharma tentatively settled lawsuits with thousands of municipal governments and almost two dozen states. Purdue, the plaintiffs argued, had deceptively marketed Oxycontin, an addictive opioid, fueling a nationwide epidemic of dependency and overdose. The agreement stipulated that the company would file for bankruptcy, then create a public trust and pay plaintiffs with its profits. They would also donate addiction-treatment and overdose-reversal drugs to afflicted counties. Finally, the Sackler family, owners of Purdue, would pay out $3 billion of their personal fortune over seven years.

Jurisdictions around the country, from cities to Native American tribes like the Cherokee Nation, are attempting to hold pharmaceutical companies, drug distributors, and pharmacies like CVS and Walgreens accountable for their role in America's "opioid crisis." Of the 70,000 overdose deaths in 2017, close to 70 percent involved opioid drugs. And though most of these deaths were caused by illegal opioids, the connection to the medicine cabinet is apparent: nearly 80 percent of heroin users misused prescription drugs first.

In August, Johnson & Johnson was ordered to pay $572 million to the state of Oklahoma; Purdue paid out $270 million to the state earlier in 2019. In October, four companies tentatively settled with Ohio, which, in 2017, had the second-highest number of opioid-overdose deaths in the United States.

Across all these cases, the allegations are consistent. Drug manufacturers aggressively sold their drugs, now-household names like Percocet and Vicodin, and encouraged doctors to overprescribe them: to patients with chronic back pain, to kids after wisdom-teeth surgeries who could have just taken ibuprofen.

One report estimates the economic impact of the opioid crisis—taking into account lost human "productivity," plus health care, substance-abuse treatment, and criminal-justice costs—at $2.5 trillion between 2015 and 2018. In light of that expense, are pharmaceutical companies paying enough? Twenty-five state attorneys general refused to sign the Purdue settlement, demanding that the Sacklers pay out an additional $1.5 billion, sell Purdue's sister company Mundipharma immediately, and stop producing drugs for international markets. In December, an audit revealed that the Sacklers had stashed nearly $10 billion in trusts and overseas holding companies over the past dozen years. Johnson & Johnson's $572 million payment will fund Oklahoma's recovery plan for only one year, while state officials say the recovery will take twenty.

Meanwhile, the problem these drugs were deployed to address hasn't been solved. Americans are complaining of more chronic pain; we're sicker than other developed nations. We're more obese, thanks in part to the sugar lobby. We're more anxious about work (studies show opioid use increases during economic downturns). Our insurance often doesn't cover alternative, long-term treatments, like physical therapy, for conditions like back pain.

Of course, some patients need opioids. Last year, the CDC had to clarify its 2016 guidelines over concern that they were being used to deny needed drugs to patients with cancer or sickle-cell disease (cancer patients are ten times less likely to die from opioids than the rest of the population). Non-addicted patients who rely on high doses of opioids are suffering dangerous withdrawal symptoms, as panicked doctors put them on "forced tapering " plans.

Meanwhile, Mundipharma—Purdue's international affiliate, also owned by the Sacklers—is selling the nasal spray overdose treatment naloxone abroad. The family is profiting by treating addictions to their own drugs—a darkly ironic indication of the extent of corporate greed, and the powerlessness of individuals in the face of it.

—Katherine Lucky

RITA FERRONE

For the Love of the Word

Francis inaugurates the 'Sunday of the Word of God' to renew Catholics' relationship with Scripture.

Pope Francis has been acclaimed by the world largely for his moral leadership. Welcoming migrants and refugees, caring for the earth, prioritizing engagement with the poor, and listening to victims of abuse have been hallmarks of his pontificate. His institutional leadership as a reforming pope has also met with applause, as he has taken on the task of patiently working out knotty financial and organizational problems in the church.

He has been given less credit, however, for his specifically religious leadership. A perfect example of this has been the dull thud with which the announcement of the new "Sunday of the Word of God" (the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time) landed when it came out in September. Contrary to the wonderment that greeted so many of his other plans, his initiative on a religious topic of relevance to every believer got lackluster treatment. There were dutiful acknowledgements but hardly an enthusiastic response. Most Catholics I know didn't even hear about it.

Yet how lovely this day could be: a shot in the arm for religious devotion, spiritual growth, and theological literacy, and a dose of fresh energy for ecumenism. What Francis proposed is that the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time will be observed henceforth as a day on which to renew our love and gratitude for the Word of God. It includes a call to "enthrone the Word" during the liturgy, to give out Bibles, and to promote reading and reflection on sacred Scripture by people in all walks of life. Such an observance could enhance the Eucharist, and help us better realize the hopes of the Second Vatican Council that the Word stand at the heart of prayer, catechesis, and preaching, becoming "the soul of sacred theology" (*Dei verbum* 24).

So why such a weak response? Part of the reason is surely that controversy drives media coverage, and this isn't controversial. Popes since Pius XII have been recommending that the lay faithful read the scriptures. Also, Vatican II furthered commitment to the Word in the everyday life of Catholics in all sorts of ways, from the expansion of the lectionary to Bible study to the singing of psalms and scriptural songs. Perhaps we feel we've already "been there, done that."

I wonder, however, if another reason might be that we've tacitly reduced Francis to a political figure whose role is limited to moral and organizational leadership. As important as such leadership is, the pope has a prior claim to an even more important role: to help us grow in our relationship with God. Engagement with the scriptures

CNS LOGO / COURTESY OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING NEW EVANGELIZATION

A detail from the official logo for the Sunday of the Word of God, which was unveiled at the Vatican on January 17. It depicts "The Road to Emmaus," and is based on an icon written by the late Benedictine Sister Marie-Paul Farran.

is essential to this project. Toward this end, I think that the Sunday of the Word of God is actually more important than it looks.

North American Catholics who lived through the Council know that an explosion of interest in the scriptures followed it, but that passion gradually faded. In Latin America, however, Scripture reading became an integral part of the daily life of the Christian base communities and achieved lasting significance as a lay phenomenon. Indeed, it was at the request of two missionary bishops from Argentina, Jorge Kemerer and Alberto Devoto, that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy included a warm recommendation of "Bible services."

Kemerer was the first bishop of Posadas, a remote community first evangelized by Jesuits in the seventeenth century (the so-called Reductions of the Guarani in the Jesuit Province of Paraguay were made famous to a U.S. audience through the 1986 film *The Mission*). Priests were so few that Kemerer wrote a guidebook for Celebrations of the Word in the absence of a priest soon after he arrived in 1957. Devoto, the bishop of Goya, was also a groundbreaking figure who chose to live in poverty, close to his people. A major influence in the Third World Priests movement, and an inspirer of liberation theology, his desire to share God's Word was part of a living faith. According to writer Marguerite Feitlowitz, to this day peasants keep pictures of him on altars at home, and refuse to believe he's dead. "No, he's a saint," they say.

Now here comes another Argentinian, sure that the Word will help us. Francis's proposal is a gesture with roots in Vatican II, popular movements, and the experience of how the Word can kindle light and joy among the poorest of Christ's poor. He could have produced a teaching statement and left it at that, but instead he decided to inaugurate a liturgical observance—a wise choice, perhaps, because even if we missed it this time around, there's always next year.

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI

Which Ratzinger?

How the pope emeritus is damaging his own legacy

The publication of *From the Depths of Our Hearts*, Cardinal Robert Sarah's book on clerical celibacy "co-authored" with Pope Benedict XVI, illustrates once more the problem with the institution of the emeritus papacy as it is currently functioning. Much has already been said about this aspect of the latest controversy, but less about what Benedict's contribution to the book signifies in terms of his continued revisionist thinking on Vatican II, where he played a significant role as a theological expert. Italian theologian Andrea Grillo has astutely remarked that "Benedict is one of the fathers of Vatican II, but full of remorse." Indeed, the defense of clerical celibacy put forth in *From the Depths of Our Hearts* is built on a view of Scripture, liturgy, and the church that makes no reference whatsoever to the documents of Vatican II.

Of course, it's hard to know at this point just how direct a hand the "pope emeritus" has had in the writing that has appeared under his name in the past year (including his musings on the genesis of the abuse crisis last April). Nevertheless, it fits within a pattern of theological drift dating back much further than Francis's papacy. Some see signs of Ratzinger distancing himself from the council as early as August 1965, while Vatican II was still underway and the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* was taking shape. Others date it to the student protest movement in Germany in 1968 and 1969, when he was teaching at Tübingen before moving to the quieter University of Regensburg in Bavaria. The German national synod of 1972–1975 seems to have contributed to his disillusionment.

Then came his twenty-four-year tenure as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under John Paul II, during which he repeatedly intervened to regain control or even reverse some of the theological developments afforded by Vatican II (especially on the liturgy). And his own pontificate's relationship with Vatican II can be framed by his December 2005 speech on the "hermeneutics of continuity and reform" and his February 2013 address to the clergy of Rome in which he confessed his disappointments with the council. In between came one of the most consequential pronouncements on the doctrinal policy of Vatican II: the July 2007 motu proprio *Summorum pontificum*, which liberalized the use of the pre–Vatican II rite.

There were also the public pronouncements that seemed in keeping with his attempts to reverse the trajectory of Vatican II. These included the Regensburg speech of September 2006, in which he quoted a fourteenth-century Byzantine emperor who equated Islam with violence, and the reinstatement of four excommunicated Lefebvrian bishops, one of whom, Richard Williamson, turned out to have a history of making anti-Semitic statements. The institutional constraints of the papacy limited, to some extent, certain practical aspects of Benedict's drift from John Paul II's teaching on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue (for example, in 2011 Benedict XVI went, despite his deep skepticism, to Assisi for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1986 interreligious meeting for peace). But as emeritus, those institutional constraints no longer apply. The entourage Ratzinger has surrounded himself with has embraced Vatican II revisionism, and his statements

Pope Francis visits his predecessor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, at the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery at the Vatican, December 21, 2018.

are amplified in a way that would have been impossible before the internet. Now, as Benedict nears the end of his life, a deep contrast is evident between his statements on Vatican II and those of his predecessor. John Paul II, in a testament published after his death, spoke of the council as a "great patrimony to all who are and will be called in the future to put it into practice." Benedict XVI's last writings either exhibit a negative view of the effects of Vatican II, or completely ignore the council's documents and theology. The introduction to the volumes of his writing on Vatican II published in 2012, in the series of the complete works of Joseph Ratzinger, confirm the urge to establish some distance from the council.

It must also be stated that there are some disturbing convergences between Ratzinger's theological agenda on Vatican II in the past few years and the theological and ecclesial agenda of the anti-Francis network. It is hard to overstate the role of Ratzinger's theology and Benedict's pontificate, for example, in the ongoing transition of the culture of U.S. Catholic hierarchical and episcopal leadership from a moderate Vatican II conservatism (seeking continuity with the previous tradition) to an extremist anti-Vatican II traditionalism (seeking a rupture with that moment of the tradition that is Vatican II). How one defines a "Ratzingerian" theology of Vatical II depends on which period of Ratzinger's writings one is referring to. A pope's death usually seals and preserves his magisterial teaching in a way that a pope's resignation does not. How Benedict and his entourage have interpreted and managed the post-resignation period is a perfect illustration of this. Benedict XVI no longer owns his theological narrative; it's now at the service of an agenda that he helped create but that increasingly puts him at odds with a healthy sense of the church.

The truly unfortunate thing about all of this is that Ratzinger was one of the most important theologians of Vatican II. Shortly after the council concluded, he wrote a fundamental commentary on the constitution on Revelation, *Dei verbum*. From this writing there emerges a dynamic, fecund view of theological truth. It's what makes his repudiation of Vatican II all the more troubling. It's sad to see the bishop of Rome estrange himself from his own conciliar legacy.

MICHAEL DRIESSEN

A Short-Sighted Rebuke

Why it was a mistake for Austria to close a Saudi-funded center for interreligious dialogue

In June, the Austrian Parliament voted to close KAICIID, the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, in protest against Saudi Arabia's human-rights record. KAICIID was inaugurated by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in 2012 as an intergovernmental organization with four founding states—Saudi Arabia, Spain, Austria, and the Holy See—and its constitution mandates that its board of directors be composed of members from the world's major religions. Newly appointed Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, the incoming president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, currently sits on the board representing the Catholic Church. Most of the funding and support for the organization, however, comes from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I am a political scientist, and I've spent the past five years researching the politics of interreligious dialogue in the Middle East. I recognize the paradox of Saudi Arabia presenting itself as a global champion of interreligious dialogue. Such contradictions were also apparent in Pope Francis's trip to Abu Dhabi in February 2019, when he drafted and signed the Document on Human Fraternity in partnership with Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb under the sponsorship of the United Arab Emirates. A number of scholars have raised serious concerns about the ways in which states in the region, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have engaged in interreligious-dialogue initiatives as a useful distraction or, worse, as a way to extend authoritarian policies at home and abroad. The vote in Austria followed months of protests, often staged in front of the KAICIID building, against Saudi Arabia's imprisonment and flogging of the young liberal blogger Raif Badawi. The murder of *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, and the news of a possible execution sentence for the teenage Saudi dissident Murtaja Qureiris increased the urgency of the vote. Meanwhile, the fall of the Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who had defended KAICIID's presence in Vienna, left the organization vulnerable. In a sign of Islam's precarious position in Europe, the vote won the support of Austria's social democrats *and* its far-right Freedom Party. The bill—sponsored by Peter Pilz, formerly of Austria's Green Party—seemed to confirm the struggle on both the left and the right in Europe to articulate a political model capable of accomodating the public presence of Islam there. In the absence of such a model, parties from both ends of the spectrum have employed the language of religious freedom to defend, alternatively, a secular liberal or Christian Europe from Islam.

Saudi Arabia, for its part, is certainly an awkward advocate for interreligious dialogue. As various policymakers have pointed out, it would be difficult for Saudi Arabia to host an interreligious center within its own borders—churches and other non-Islamic religious institutions are banned in the kingdom, and it is formally illegal for non-Muslims to worship in public. This is one reason why high-ranking Vatican diplomats had refrained from visiting Saudi Arabia for decades, and why Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran's diplomatic visit to Riyadh in 2018 represented such a breakthrough in relations between Saudi Arabia and the Holy See.

And yet, in trying to pressure Saudi Arabia on its human-rights record and avoid complicity in its policies, the Austrian law is expelling a growing institution that is substantively advancing the possibility of interreligious-dialogue initiatives to contribute to global peace efforts. KAICIID does this in two ways: by connecting multireligious collaboration to concrete policymaking efforts, and by helping legitimize new ideas about religious pluralism and citizenship in the region.

On the first point, KAICIID has developed a number of programs that encourage collaboration between interreligious dialogue and humanitarian development projects. KAICIID's team inaugurated a major international fellowship program in 2015 that has

A young Buddhist monk visits a local mosque as part of a KAICIID training in interreligious dialogue, intercultural communication, and peacebuilding for young changemakers in Mandalay, Myanmar, 2019.

PHOTO BY AUNG MOE OO. COURTESY OF KAICIID.

offered professional training to over two hundred young leaders of multiple religious traditions from all over the world. I recently spent time with a Yazidi scholar and advocate from Iraq who participated in the program, and he attributed the formation he received at KAICIID with helping him advance his own work for peace and reconciliation in northern Iraq. KAICIID has also helped organize national interreligious platforms for religious leaders, offering them support and training. For example, the interreligious platform that KAICIID sponsors in the Central African Republic (CAR) has played an important role in mediating tensions between Muslim and Christian communities there. KAICIID has also launched an ambitious interreligious platform for the Arab world that brings an array of religious leaders in the region together for regular working meetings. The regions where KAICIID is most active, including Central Africa, the Middle East, and Myanmar, are places where improving interreligious relations and coordination can change a country's chances for peace. Not surprisingly, the two leaders of the platform in CAR, Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga and Imam Omar Kobine Layama, were among the first leaders to publicly come to KAICIID's defense after the vote in the Austrian Parliament, along with many of the organization's recent fellows and religious partners.

In constructing these projects, KAICIID has proved its mettle as a serious and mostly independent organization. As a multireligious, intergovernmental organization, KAICIID has

taken on a useful role as an institution that bridges new forms of partnership between international organizations and religious communities around a range of humanitarian and developmental goals. It has worked with an array of faith-based organizations, like Religions for Peace, the Parliament of the World's Religions, and the World Council of Churches, especially in international policymaking arenas like the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union. This institutional bridging has helped produce new policy projects, like the 2017 *UN Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence That Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes* as well as regular G20 interfaith meetings.

With such initiatives, KAICIID represents the arrival of new forms of collaboration between religious leaders and states that have emerged in a post-9/11, post–Arab Spring, post-ISIS world. These new models are recasting the role that religious communities, ideas, and actors might play in the global public sphere. Particularly in the context of the Middle East, KAICIID's work has helped support new and creative thinking about religious pluralism and citizenship from within the matrix of Islamic jurisprudence, including by actors like Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, who orchestrated the landmark 2016 Marrakesh Declaration and who also worked with KAICIID on the 2017 UN Action Plan. The language and practice of interreligious dialogue, which sets religious pluralism and religious dynamism in a positive relationship, has proved attractive to religious leaders and states who have sought a model of political development distinct from either religious authoritarianism or secular liberalism. Across a number of recent declarations and projects originating in the Middle East, KAICIID, bin Bayyah, and other actors representing official and influential Islam have adopted the language of "common" or "inclusive" citizenship to express this religiously rooted model of political development.

To many in the Middle East, European religious freedom invariably appears to protect secular and Christian practices while punishing those of Muslims: as recent legislation on burkas, burkinis, and circumcision would suggest.

This model of inclusive citizenship echoes central ideas in recent Catholic political thought, especially the concept of integral human development, which has been a centerpiece of Pope Francis's papacy. These parallels can be clearly traced in the Document of Human Fraternity that Francis signed with Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb of al-Azhar University, in which both committed to a strong vision of religious renewal in response to the twin ills of religious extremism and secular materialism.

Although important public figures in Saudi Arabia like Muhammad al-Issa, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, have increasingly supported this vision of inclusive citizenship (and taken major symbolic steps to reformulate the public relationship between Saudi Arabia and both Christian and Jewish communities), the religious-reform process within Saudi Arabia remains complex and contradictory. Nevertheless, with official Saudi support and in collaboration with the Vatican and other religious organizations, KAICIID is actively participating in a major renegotiation of religion and state in the region, one in which ideas of religious freedom, citizenship, and pluralism might find deeper social and religious grounding.

But for all of its advances, this process of reform and renewal remains a fragile one; it ought to be supported, not snuffed out. Booting KAICIID from Vienna might win short-run concessions (the execution order on Qureiris has been overturned), but it does so at a heavy cost. The move will likely drain support for interreligious dialogue in the Middle East, and fuel the perception that "religious freedom" in Europe is really a code word for preserving exclusivist versions of either secularism or Christianity. In other words, by attempting to unveil the apparent contradictions of Saudi Arabia's interreligious dialogue efforts, the Austrian law also reveals the apparent contradictions of European policies on religious freedom. Whether or not the perception is accurate, to many in the Middle East, religious freedom in Europe invariably appears to protect the religious practices of secular and Christian individuals while punishing those of Muslims—as recent European legislation on burkas, burkinis, and circumcision would suggest. If Europe is interested in supporting a model of religious pluralism that meaningfully includes Islam, then interreligious-dialogue initiatives like KAICIID have much to offer. Surely the Austrians can find other ways to protest Saudi Arabia's human-rights policies.

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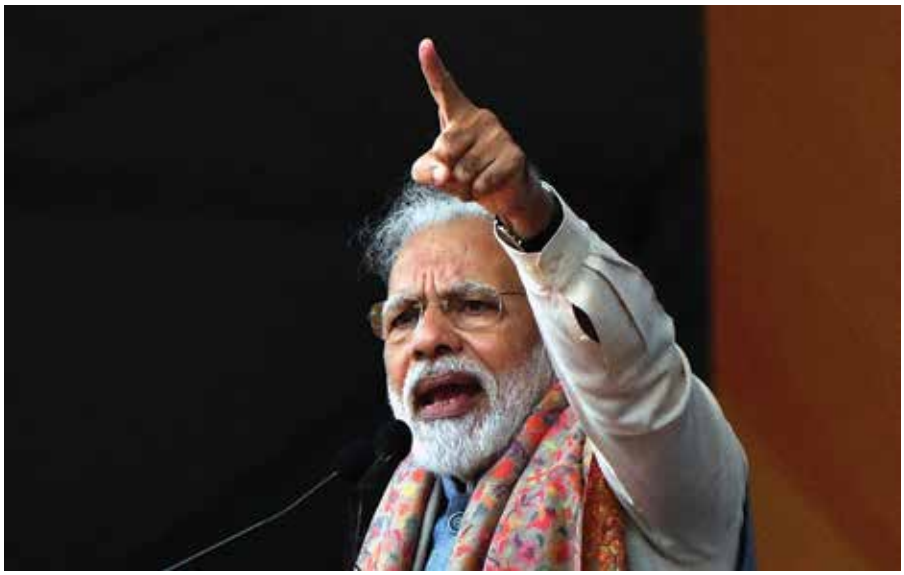
OUR CORRESPONDENT IN INDIA

'True Indians'?

In India, the Modi government is scapegoating Muslims to distract from the country's most pressing problems. But citizens are resisting.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses his supporters at a Bharatiya Janata Party rally in New Delhi, December 22, 2019.

XINHUA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

It is difficult to describe India these days. I start to write each morning and by evening everything has changed. In the years I have lived here, only once have I seen anything like what is happening now. That was in 1990 during the first flood of protests against India's version of affirmative action. In those days, as a young mother with children to bring up, and without phone or television, I was not paying such close attention. Yet even I was aware that feelings were running incredibly high. Schools were closed for months; courts shut down; transport was disrupted. For three unforgettable days, a curfew was imposed in our city and in many others. (A curfew may sound harmless when it's happening somewhere else. If it's happening in your own town, it feels sinister.)

These days most Indians are more politically aware. Even the poorest families have TV, and almost everyone has a cell phone. WhatsApp and Twitter are powerful organizing tools: crowds can be summoned in a matter of minutes. But that alone does not explain the scale of the protests against the government's recent Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which makes Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh immigrants from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan eligible for citizenship, but excludes Muslims. The new social-media platforms have helped channel the anger, but they don't explain the feeling of fear and dread so many Indians now wake up with every morning. Many people here are beginning to realize that, with the rise of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism), the basis of India's democracy is in jeopardy. The country's constitution, for which so many gave their lives, is being violated by its government. Indians are incredibly patriotic citizens. Here in the world's largest democracy, the Freedom Struggle is still a living memory for millions. And the average person—like my own husband—feels personally responsible for what their parents and grandparents fought and died for.

Most Indians want to trust their leaders. It is natural for people who have ousted a foreign power to assume that a government of their own can be believed. But in August the crackdown in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, set warning bells ringing more widely than ever. Today, nearly five months later, restrictions on daily life in Kashmir are still in force. Phone service is curtailed, internet access almost nonexistent. Schools have been closed since the crackdown began and people are largely confined to their homes.

I recently met two Kashmiris who appeared to have been traumatized by the events in their region. They were nervous, disoriented. Both social workers, they spoke in low voices about the confusion, frustration, and depression many Kashmiris are experiencing. They spoke of people with chronic illnesses who can't buy the medicines they need, of the anxiety of not knowing how relatives are faring. They described shops empty of all but the most basic supplies. The Indian media reports that all is now well in Kashmir: everything is normal and daily routines have resumed. No internet and no phones, true, but that's just for the people's own safety.

Demonstrators in Delhi, India, protest the new citizenship law, December 27, 2019.

Meanwhile, the rest of the country has been encouraged for some years now to be wary of Muslims in general. Their loyalties have been questioned in various public forums, as well as in private channels. Many of my friends report deciding to leave family WhatsApp groups because of the anti-Islamic hatred expressed there. A Muslim colleague's son developed school phobia after being bullied and isolated because of his religion.

India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, has repeatedly suggested that Muslims are behind the violence that has sometimes erupted during mass demonstrations against his government's new citizenship law. "You will know them by their clothing," he says. Old tropes about Muslims breeding like rabbits in order to take over the country are repeated at rallies and on social media. In fact, the percentage of India's population that is Muslim has remained almost exactly the same for the past seventy years. Christians are sometimes also mentioned by the Hindu nationalists, but only half-heartedly. Muslims are the real enemy.

Amit Shah, India's Home Minister, has described illegal Muslim migrants from Bangladesh as "infiltrators" and said they are "like termites in the soil of Bengal." In defense of the CAA, Shah now assures the public that "no citizen of India need worry about anything." Since neither Shah nor Modi has ever publicly denounced the lynchings, mob violence, and other targeted attacks against India's Muslim citizens, people here don't find this reassuring.

The real question is why the country suddenly needs a new registry of citizens. India already has a robust census, conducted every ten years, as well as a massive Aadhaar (identity) initiative that has registered all residents by name, address, and biometric details. There are also voter IDs and PAN (Permanent Account Number) cards for anyone who comes under the Indian Income Tax Department.

The new registry will be expensive and time-consuming. The 2011 census cost approximately $1.2 billion and involved 2.5 million "enumerators"—all government workers (teachers, primarily) who stop doing their regular jobs until they finish the count. With preparations for the 2021 census already underway, people are asking what justifies yet another such exercise. The fear is that the turn to a formal registry is a clear signal that data collected elsewhere will now be used to determine who counts as a "true" Indian according to Hindutva ideology.

Hence the unprecedented opposition to the CAA, which was passed by India's parliament in December. Spontaneous and massive demonstrations have swept the entire country. These gatherings are remarkable not only for the extent to which they have caught the authorities off guard but also for the wide range of people attending them. It's not just students or the urban elite who keep showing up. Village women's groups, unions, fisher-folk, and farmers are also out in force, outnumbering the educated elite, speaking eloquently and authoritatively to huge groups in the streets.

CNS PHOTO / ANUSHREE FADNAVIS, REUTERS

Muslims are of course the people most deeply worried about the CAA, because they are its main targets, but poor people in general have good reason to be anxious. While government officials insist that no citizen has any reason to fear, poor people frequently do not have the documents required to prove their identity. Simply having a government-issued identity card is not enough. The act also requires proof of parents' and sometimes grandparents' citizenship, but previous generations frequently had no written records of anything. A long paper trail of identifying documents is still largely a middle-class luxury.

For many who live in the northeastern state of Assam, the nightmare has already begun. Assam borders Bangladesh and has a long history of immigration from that country, so the national government has been testing its citizens registry there since 2015. In the first round of registration, 8 million people were left off the rolls. Recounting reduced that number to 1.9 million, mostly Bengali Muslims.

The new registry is a recipe for a humanitarian crisis. Detention camps have already been constructed (and more are planned) to house those awaiting deportation, yet there appears to be no plan either for what the detained will do while they're living in these camps or for where to deport them. Bangladesh, which is already dealing with thousands of displaced Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar, has said it will not accept refugees from India, and it's unlikely that any other country will volunteer to take them in.

Like other major initiatives of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—for example, its demonetization policy—this one has been rammed through without much regard for the consequences. There is already a worldwide refugee crisis of staggering proportions: in 2015, the number of displaced persons was over 61 million according to the UN Refugee Agency. If India succeeds in deporting even 10 percent of its 200 million Muslims, most of whom were born and raised in this country, the global implications will be massive.

Some observers here say that the CAA is a distraction technique, designed to keep people from paying attention to flagging economic growth, massive unemployment, and steadily worsening indicators in health, education, and the environment. In general, the quality of life in India is poor. Deemed the most dangerous country in the world for women in a 2018 Thomson Reuters Foundation survey, India also has the distinction of being home to twenty-two of the thirty most polluted cities in the world. Thirty-eight percent of Indian children are stunted because of malnutrition. Yet, despite all these problems, the BJP government somehow has the time and energy to worry about who worships where, who's wearing what, and who eats what kind of meat. Like all bullies, this government is insecure about its own abilities and eager to shift the blame for its own failings onto a scapegoat.

Fortunately, most Indians know a bully when they see one. Because voters are more concerned with a living wage and good public services than with who prays to whom, the BJP is no longer calling all the shots here. Elections in the states of Jharkhand and Maharashtra in December delivered decisive blows to the ruling party, and it's likely there will be more blows from other states in the next year. Many Hindus say they will register as Muslims if the CAA is enforced, while many Muslims have decided not to register at all. Ten states have announced that they simply will not implement the Citizens' Amendment Act.

Meanwhile, several people have already given their lives in this battle for India's constitution, including teenagers shot by police during riots in some of the country's most impoverished areas. While India celebrates the strength and tenacity of its democracy, it is still the young and the poor who suffer the most to keep real democracy from being hollowed out by bigots and opportunistic politicians.

ANDREW J. BACEVICH

Beyond Impeachment

Our political crisis will outlast this presidency.

With the impeachment process hurtling toward its conclusion, the endgame has now become unmistakably clear: President Trump will retain his office. Indeed, notwithstanding the hullabaloo of gavel-to-gavel coverage and the constant media drumbeat of instant analysis, Republican control of the Senate made that outcome all but foreordained. The only question is whether Trump will emerge from this episode of political theater weakened or strengthened as he runs for reelection. Sadly, the latter seems quite likely.

Not for the first time, the American people have been played for suckers. Hearings conducted by the House Intelligence and Judiciary Committees that radio and television commentators have repeatedly described as "historic" have turned out to be banal or, worse still, largely beside the point.

Democrats charge Trump with abusing the power of his office and violating the Constitution. Republicans rebut that charge by accusing Democrats of conniving to overturn the results of the November 2016 presidential election, which they have never accepted. Both claims possess very considerable merit.

Yet the events mounted on Capitol Hill conceal this great irony. Even as they exchange volleys of acrimony and accuse each other of acting in bad faith, the two opposing sides conspire to deflect public attention from matters of far greater moment than whether holding military aid hostage to promises of political favors qualifies as an impeachable offense.

Observers of the House impeachment inquiry blessed with patience and a sufficiently strong stomach have been treated to ringing testimonials in favor of democracy and the rule of law, coming from members of both parties. Do House Democrats genuinely believe that allowing Trump to remain in office until the next election, now just eleven months away, poses a risk to the basic political order? Do House Republicans genuinely believe that Trump's accusers are engaged in a witch hunt conjured up out of nothing but pure spite? Who knows? Motives are not easily discerned, especially among politicians preoccupied with their own survival.

Yet this much we can definitively say: members of Congress themselves, individually and collectively, have failed to perform their duties on matters of far greater moment than whether or not to ship U.S. weapons to Ukraine. In that sense, the impeachment hearings amount to little more than a head fake. Whether by design or incidentally, they divert attention from far more serious issues—crimes, even—in which Congress itself has been complicit.

Were there any doubts on that score, "The Afghanistan Papers," recently released by the *Washington Post*, remove them once and for all. Prepared under the aegis of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, this trove of documents reveals the immensity of the incompetence, dishonesty, and corruption that have pervaded the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan since it began more than eighteen years ago. By extension, the documents reveal the grotesque failure of Congress to provide even minimally adequate oversight of the longest war in U.S. history.

More broadly, legislators have allowed this president and his several predecessors to exercise essentially unlimited latitude in conducting war, thereby gutting key provisions of Article 1, Section 8 of the very Constitution that has been the subject of endless ostensibly heartfelt tributes in recent weeks. The damage done to U.S. interests and the human and monetary losses sustained by the nation as a whole are incalculable. Together, in my view, they dwarf the sins that Trump committed in his cockamamie scheme regarding Ukraine.

And when you've finished toting up the harm caused by the misguided and mismanaged war in Afghanistan, take a breather and turn to Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Syria—further examples of Congressional complicity in foreign policy disasters.

Were there any doubts on that score, the Congressional response to the U.S. assassination of Iranian General Qas-

U.S. soldiers in the dust from a departing helicopter along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border

DOD PHOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

sem Soleimani disposed of them. President Trump had ordered this extraordinarily reckless attack without bothering to consult or even notify Congressional leaders. With only a handful of exceptions, Republican members of the Senate and House of Representatives applauded, in effect affirming that the president as commander-in-chief has unlimited authority to use military force whenever and wherever he sees fit. The Democratic-controlled House, meanwhile, passed a resolution directing "the president to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces to engage in hostilities in or against Iran or any part of its government or military," unless receiving explicit Congressional authorization. But the resolution was non-binding, that is, toothless and merely for show. Trump ignored it, as would any other president of either party.

I have no doubt that historians will judge harshly the House and Senate Republicans who kowtow to Trump, whether because they fear the president's wrath or that of his followers or because they take seriously his bogus promises to "Make America Great Again." They are either knaves or fools.

Yet historians are unlikely to judge much more favorably those Democrats who act as if removing Trump from the scene will restore American politics to a state of pristine purity. Our president may well be corrupt, but corruption pervaded the political scene long before he took his famous ride down the escalator at Trump Tower.

Furthermore, the principal sources of corruption are well known. They include cynical gerrymandering, the corrosive influence of corporate lucre and special interests, and the whole dialing-for-dollars racket to which members of Congress are obliged to submit if they want to stay in the good graces of party leaders. And anyone who thinks that Moscow's intrusion into American politics in 2016 represents something unique has not been paying attention to the machinations of the Israel lobby and the lubricating impact of oil money flooding Washington from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

Trump is a crude, ignorant, and incompetent lout. But let us not kid ourselves about the breadth and depth of the political crisis enveloping the nation. There will be no emerging from this crisis until Congress summons up the courage and integrity to live up to its responsibilities. Physician, heal thyself.

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MATTHEW SITMAN

Misreading the British Elections

Corbyn is no Sanders, Johnson is no Trump.

In the weeks leading up to the Conservative Party's triumph in the British elections earlier this month, there were just enough glimmers of hope to let Labour partisans nurture what, deep down, they probably knew were unrealistic dreams of an upset—anecdotes about surging voter registration, talk of armies of canvassers, a bit of movement in the polls. In the end, that only made the final results more stunning. Boris Johnson will lead a commanding majority in Parliament with a mandate, as his campaign slogan went, to "get Brexit done."

The vote tallies had barely been announced when pundits began churning out dire warnings about what this meant for Democrats in the United States: See what happens when you move too far left? In the *Atlantic*, Yascha Mounk gravely suggested that if Democrats "position themselves outside of America's cultural mainstream, they may suffer the same dismal fate as Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party." In *New York Magazine*, Andrew Sullivan admonished them to "ignore the woke." The *New York Times* rushed out an article about the "ominous signs" centrist politicians like Joe Biden and Rahm Emanuel saw in Labour's defeat. Roger Cohen, also in the *New York Times*, published a column titled "Boris Johnson and the Coming Trump Victory in 2020." His colleague Bret Stephens seemed to agree, concluding that to oppose Trump with "progressive primal screams is to ensure his re-election."

Not much of this was serious analysis. It's true that Donald Trump could win again in November, especially in the absence of an economic downturn. But the direct comparisons between U.S. politics and what happened in Great Britain strain credulity. Most of all, Jeremy Corbyn was a deeply unpopular candidate, quite apart from his politics. His approval rating going into the election was forty points underwater. While some of this was surely due to an onslaught of negative press, including charges of anti-Semitism, it's also true that Corbyn could seem evasive in his answers about Brexit, allowing his position to be tagged as "dither and delay"—during his final debate with Johnson, he refused to say whether he would campaign for or against the deal he promised he would negotiate with Brussels and put to a second referendum. Bernie Sanders, often compared to Corbyn, is viewed quite differently. As Eric Levitz pointed out, he's "more than 15 times as popular as his British comrade."

Both Trump and Boris are oafish and untrustworthy, but one is a dolt while the other is too clever for his own (and his country's) good—half Bertie Wooster, half Machiavelli.

There's little evidence that Labour's leftwing agenda should be blamed for their loss. One exit poll found that only 12 percent of respondents cited the party's economic policies as the reason they didn't vote for Labour, while 43 percent said it was because of the party's leadership. Polling on the Labour platform was summarized this way by the *Independent*: "The public are absolutely not scared of government intervention and quite like Labour's socialist platform. These policies individually range from quite popular to ridiculously popular." Proposals to raise taxes on the rich and nationalize railways and water companies, for example, garnered broad support. Whatever else this means, it certainly doesn't prove that Democrats should tack to the center instead of embracing a wealth tax, Medicare for All, or the Green New Deal.

There is at least one lesson Democrats should take away from the British elections, however: right-wing populism remains a potent political force. Johnson's clear position on Brexit appealed to the same kinds of voters who swung to Trump in 2016—working-class whites from places hit hard by deindustrialization, eager to find a scapegoat for their plight anywhere but among the Tories who inflicted austerity on the country over much of the past decade. Yet even this comparison breaks down. No issue in U.S. politics, not even immigration or "the Wall," will do for Republicans what Brexit did for the Tories. As Ell Smith noted in the *Guardian*, "of the 54 seats that the Conservatives gained from Labour, 52 of them were in areas that voted leave in 2016."

Despite their superficial similarities, Trump is no Boris, and the Tory Party is not the GOP. Both Trump and Boris

Boris Johnson speaks after being announced as Britain's next prime minister, July 23, 2019, at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in London.

CNS PHOTO / TOBY MELVILLE, REUTERS

are oafish and untrustworthy, but one is a dolt while the other is too clever for his own (and his country's) good—half Bertie Wooster, half Machiavelli. Johnson has pledged to protect the very popular NHS (true socialized medicine), and produced plausible plans to build new hospitals and hire more nurses, while Trump, not nearly so capable, has tried to kill the relatively modest provisions of Obamacare. At every turn, Trump has showed that his populist rhetoric, especially on economic matters, was just that—rhetoric. When he runs for reelection, he'll no longer be a blank screen onto which voters can project their hopes, but a candidate who has to defend a record of astonishing cruelty, incompetence, and pathetic obedience to the demands of corporations and plutocrats.

But most of all, the working class in the United States is rapidly becoming more diverse—in a decade or two, half of it will be people of color. Much of the commentary on the British elections has simply erased this fact, treating the aging white population of a middling island as representative of our own electorate. Lacking a controversy as galvanizing as Brexit, and faced with the prospect of the United States becoming a majority-minority country within many of our lifetimes, the GOP increasingly relies on undemocratic institutions such as the Electoral College, the Senate, and the courts, as well as assaults on voting rights and foreign interference in elections, to cling to power. If Trump wins again, it will not look like the wave that delivered Johnson his impressive majority. It's more likely that he'll win while receiving millions fewer votes than his Democratic opponent—a prospect that reveals a different task for those who want to see him defeated.

Whatever else it might include, that task is to activate U.S. workers of all races who, unlike in Great Britain, lack even the rudiments of a decent healthcare system and social safety net, and to turn out the black and brown voters whom Republicans are desperately trying to keep away from the polling stations. That will not be easy. But it will happen only if Democrats offer a real alternative to Trump—not simply following his lead while promising to be a touch less racist, or to keep immigrant children in more comfortable cages, or to cozy up to billionaires with less enthusiasm. Of course, this strategy means that the election would hinge on whether or not the tens of millions of well-off, well-educated white voters who voted for Trump—not the semi-mythological "white working class"—choose differently this time. Perhaps that's the hard reality that our elite pundits, who pose as tribunes of the aggrieved masses, refuse to consider.

MATTHEW SITMAN *is the associate editor of* Commonweal.

Speaking Love to Power

Eugene McCarraher

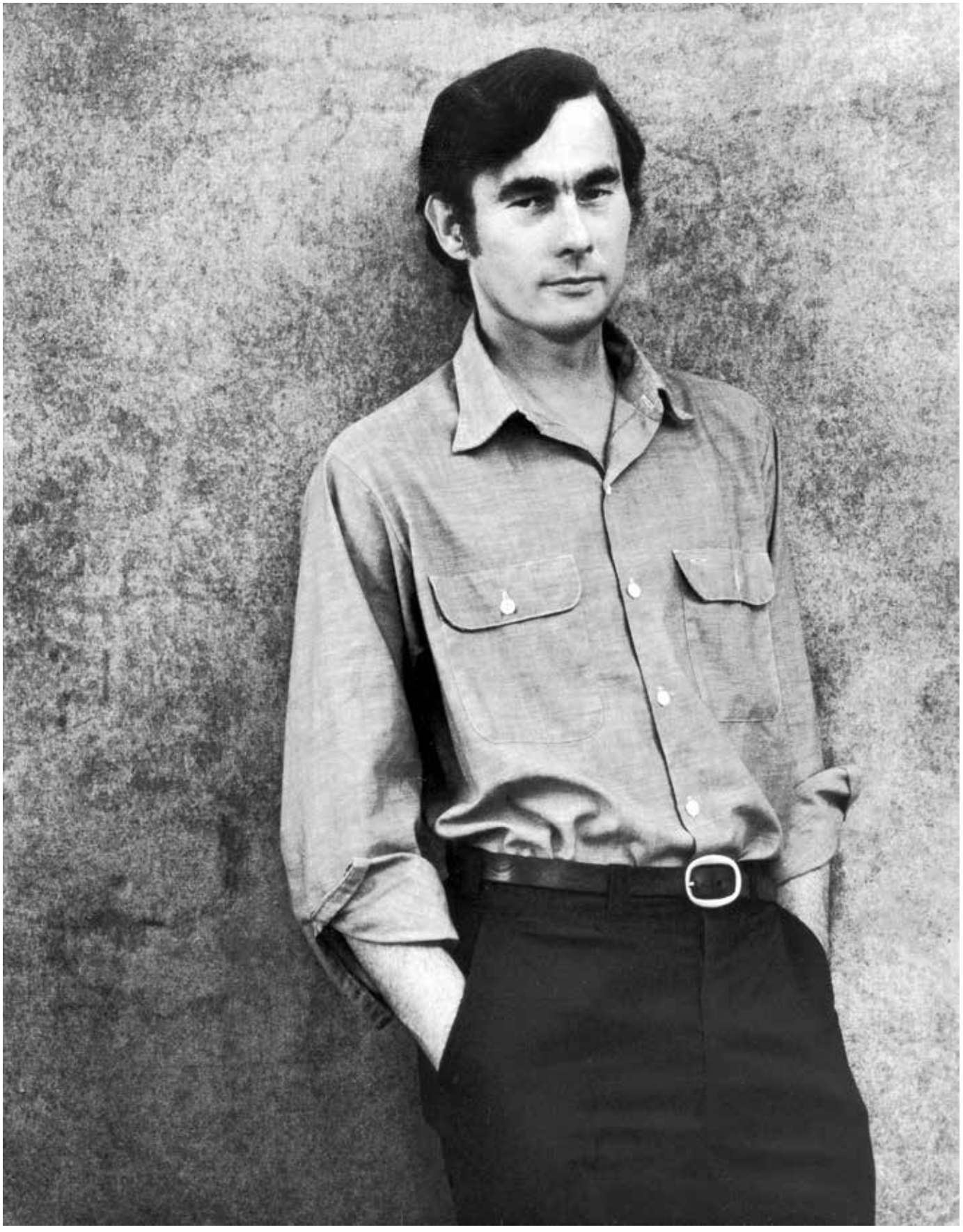
Theodore Roszak's visionary commonwealth

"Theodore Roszak, '60s Expert, Dies at 77," read the headline of a *New York Times* obituary on July 11, 2011. Reducing Roszak's life and career to digestible nuggets of cliché, the article might as well have dismissed him as a "'60s Period Piece." As the author of *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969) and *The Making of an Elder Culture* (2009), Roszak, the obit implied, had been a maven of radicals and hippies. Though not quite a Boomer himself (he was well past thirty when he wrote his bestselling anatomy of the counterculture), he acted, the obit explained, as an avid "cheerleader" for cultural upheaval. Tracing the arc of the Boomers from campus rebellion to retirement and senescence, Roszak had "chronicled a generation's journey from hippies to hip replacement."

This portrayal of Roszak as a bard of the Boomers ratified the popular memory of "the Sixties," in which the "counterculture" figured as a carnivalesque insurrection of the id against the military-industrial superego. Punctuated by the iconic milestones—the 1966 Trips Festival, the 1967 Summer of Love, and Woodstock, all conjured to a score of Donovan, Hendrix, or Jefferson Airplane—this story hasn't changed much in half a century. Seeking release from suburban conformity, repression, and blandness, thousands if not millions of Boomers instigated a moral andcultural revolution, a jubilee of sense and sensibility unprecedented in American history: rock music, the drug culture, sartorial flamboyance, experiments in communal living, the liberation of sexual behavior from the traditional constraints of marriage and propriety. The counterculture flouted the interdictions on desire that made Americans so inhibited and hypocritical. Hippies refused to run in the desperate rat race through the corporate labyrinth, preferring to work (if they worked at all) on organic homesteads or in handicraft cooperatives. They rejected the religion of their parents as so much stolid Judeo-Christian sanctimony, finding more spiritual depth and fulfillment in Zen Buddhism or Gestalt therapy. Against a bourgeois utopia of consumer domesticity—automobiles, ranch houses, canned goods, and patio furniture, all blessed by God in His heaven as long as the mortgage payments were on time—the counterculture posed a paradise of festivity and pleasure enveloped in mysticism.

For many, this account is a celebratory tale of emancipation and pluralism: the countercultural revolution in manners and morals cleared space for feminism, ecological sensitivity, and sexual lib-

Photo of Theodore Roszak by Bernard Gotfryd, Getty Images.



eration. Of course, the custodians of traditional mores take the opposite line: the counterculture was a sexual and hallucinogenic pandemonium that prefigured our decadence, undermining marriage, family, work, and faith. To historians, the hippies, beatniks, and flower children were more reformers than revolutionaries, conducting unpaid, pioneering research in the cultural laboratory of capitalism. With their moral and stylistic revolt co-opted and even anticipated by admen, they danced as the barefoot prototypes for today's bourgeois bohemians. As Thomas Frank writes, the counterculture was "a stage in the development of the values of the American middle class, a colorful installment in the twentieth-century drama of consumer subjectivity."

Theodore Roszak predicted this ironic denouement, but he also saw something more valuable in the counterculture. In *The Making of a Counter Culture* and *Where the Wasteland Ends* (1972), Roszak argued that the cultural ferment of his day was nothing less than a critique of modernity, a challenge to "the myth of objective consciousness," which reduced the world to the parameters of scientific and technological rationality. In Roszak's view, the culture that needed to be countered was much broader and more insidious than that of white suburbia. Whether pursued under capitalist or socialist auspices, the whole project of "enlightenment" and mastery threatened to impoverish and obliterate humanity as well as poison and desecrate the planet. Politics had been corrupted by a secular inhumanism oblivious to anything but productivity; it would need to be re-grounded in a beatific longing for a "new heaven and a new earth"—a world transformed by some transcendent power, usually understood as love. Rooted in his own spiritual turmoil, Roszak's work was far more than an apologia for the '60s counterculture. It constitutes one of the era's most impassioned attempts to revitalize the utopian imagination.

Roszak was born in Chicago on November 15, 1933, into a working-class, Roman Catholic family. In search of work, his father, a carpenter, moved them to Los Angeles when Roszak was a child. Always struggling to make money, Roszak's father died at the age of forty-seven, one of those countless workers who "grind their substance away at hard and dirty work for too little pay and appreciation," as Roszak later wrote. Determined to avoid a similar fate, Roszak enrolled at UCLA, where he majored and excelled in history. He then pursued doctoral study at Princeton, where he finished in 1958 with a dissertation on Thomas Cromwell and the Henrician Reformation. (He never published it or even returned to the topic.) Roszak seemed destined for a sterling academic career; but for the next five years, his curriculum vitae was desultory: he taught at Stanford, the University of British Columbia, and San Francisco State University before settling at California State at Hayward, where he remained until he retired in 1998.

Along with his professional itinerancy, Roszak wrestled with unfulfilled longings that survived the death of his Catholic faith. Unlike his contemporary Garry Wills—who, in *Bare Ruined Choirs* (1972), remembered the Catholic parish of his youth as "a ghetto, but not a bad ghetto to grow up in"—Roszak recalled little of his own Catholic boyhood but "shame and dread." Priests engaged in "ruthless creed mongering," forcing Roszak to read the Baltimore Catechism, "a jackbooted parade of lifeless verbal formulas." Inducing anxiety and guilt, penance was little more than "a humiliating and wholly trivial exercise in self-condemnation." Stuck in this spiritual dungeon, an adolescent Roszak waged "mind-murdering struggles" to protect and unfetter his soul. At UCLA, he "learned the death of God like a data point in freshman survey courses," and he quickly surmised that secularism was the only respectable position among intellectuals. Among educated people, one didn't speak of anything so maudlin and retrograde as "the needs of the spirit." Yet despite God's consignment to historical oblivion, Roszak longed for something beyond: "the transcendental impulse that cried out in me for life…had to stay jailed up in my mind as a personal fantasy." Though happy to be free of his clerical tormentors, he now felt imprisoned by atheism.

Roszak grappled with his spiritual ambivalence during a period of two congruent historical trends: the emergence of what historians have called a "post-materialist" political outlook among liberals and socialists, and the halcyon days of the Cold War university, flush with students, talent, and money. The "golden age of capitalism" in the three decades after World War II engendered a new and often buoyant optimism among reformers and radicals throughout the North Atlantic democracies. Thanks to industrial and cybernetic technologies, so the thinking went, advanced capitalist societies had crossed the economic threshold that separated scarcity from abundance. That meant they were now free to cast off the strictures of frugality. Exponentially expanding prosperity permitted the use of economic planning to eradicate poverty, extend the range of public services, and mitigate

or abolish the business cycle. Though crystallized in Keynesian economics and public policy, the post-materialist political vision encompassed more than the Great Society programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson. Across the liberal-left spectrum, the impending disappearance of scarcity provoked speculation about new moral and existential possibilities: the reduction of work, the rehabilitation of leisure, the relaxation of sexual restraints and taboos, the cultivation of humanity as an end in itself rather than as a means to greater productivity. As the sociologist David Riesman declared in 1953, "we have approached the accomplishment of one mission, and are searching for another." In the Port Huron Statement, the 1962 manifesto of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Tom Hayden declared that the material plenitude generated by automation would finally allow men and women to explore their "unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity." By the end of the 1960s, the Frankfurt School Marxist Herbert Marcuse was proclaiming in *An Essay on Liberation* (1969) that "utopian possibilities are inherent in the technical and technological forces of advanced capitalism," and that it is only "their use and restriction in the repressive society which makes them into vehicles of domination."

The university was to train the intellectual vanguard of a post-materialist society; yet it was also the university that showcased the tensions and contradictions of the liberal imagination. University presidents such as James B. Conant of Harvard and Clark Kerr of UC Berkeley lauded what Kerr called the "multiversity": higher education as service provider to advanced industrial societies, training the managerial, professional, and technical cadres of the Organization. While liberal academics hoped to imbue the Organization Man with post-materialist values, savants of what the liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith called "the technostructure"—scientists, engineers, and technicians—forged links with the national-security state, conducting research and development sponsored by the U.S. weapons and surveillance apparatus.

The multiversity also reflected what the sociologist Daniel Bell dubbed "the end of ideology": the translation of political conflicts into problems soluble by trained professionals. As President John F. Kennedy put it in 1962, "most of the problems that we now face…are technical problems, are administrative problems. They are very sophisticated judgments which do not lend themselves to the great sort of passionate movements which have stirred this country so often in the past." There was no longer any need for the prophets or visionaries so often included in the canon of the humanities. Although Bell and other liberals believed that "the end of ideology" heralded more rational, humane approaches to public policy, its technocratic implications were not just undemocratic but morally bizarre. Under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara prosecuted the Vietnam War in much the same way that he'd managed the Ford Motor Company: it was all about an efficient administration of resources, with "body counts" and "kill ratios" measuring the output of napalmed, bullet-riddled flesh. "Defense intellectuals" such as Herman Kahn prided themselves on "thinking the unthinkable," contemplating the thermonuclear incineration of millions with sociopathic equanimity.

While many humanists quietly acquiesced in the ascendency of their better-funded colleagues in the sciences, Roszak raged that the multiversity was a grotesque travesty of intellectual life. In a June 1961 article for the *Nation*, he scolded academic scientists and engineers for abandoning the university's traditional mission for a mess of military-industrial pottage. While these experts justified their participation in the development of Titan and Polaris missiles by invoking "the grand romance of scientific progress," Roszak denounced academic munitions makers for "prostituting to such demonic purposes the nobility of pure intellectual aspiration." Against their respectable lunacy, he posed figures such as Franz Jägerstätter, the Austrian Catholic who was executed for refusing to serve in the Nazi army (see page 58). Lacking any intellectual sophistication, this "overly pious, strait-laced…colorless, uncomplicated and naïve" man nonetheless "recognized deceit, barbarism, and bloody murder for what they were." Although his neighbors remembered Jägerstätter as "a zealot, a fanatic, a demented fool," Roszak thought it was the *neighbors* who needed to be explained. Like the military-industrial intelligentsia, they were "realistic" and "practical" people who imperturbably rationalized homicide.

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The health of Roszak's "transcendental impulse" also explains why, in the fall of 1964, he began a year-long sabbatical from Hayward. Rather than use this time to finish a book or churn out academic articles, Roszak (accompanied by his wife Betty and their young daughter) went to London to edit *Peace News*, a renowned British pacifist journal. Though dismissed by one Marxist writer as "a

vegetarian tabloid with a Quaker emphasis," *Peace News* had had an illustrious roster of contributors since its founding in 1937: Vera Brittain, George Lansbury, A. J. Muste, Richard Gregg, Alex Comfort (yes, *that* Alex Comfort), Kenneth Kaunda, and Kwame Nkrumah. Alas, Roszak found working with the British peace movement a bleak and dispiriting experience. British pacifists, like their U.S. counterparts, were lethargic and isolated, "suffocating in pessimism and dismal introspection." Made up almost entirely of middle-class intellectuals, pacifists resisted engaging with workers, the poor, and the broader middle class. Pacifism needed, Roszak thought, to evolve into a more ambitious social movement that tied opposition to war to other social and economic issues.

But Roszak also criticized the traditional left's concentration on material issues. Reflecting on his sojourn a year later, he lamented a politics unleavened by "post-materialist" concerns. In an article for the *Nation*, he wrote, "When political parties talk about anything worthwhile at all, it is the bread-and-butter issues, which is the stuff man does not live alone by." Only anarchists, "Marxist humanists," and the nascent London bohemia were talking about cultural, even spiritual matters: anomie, alienation, the lack of meaningful work and community, the attrition and impoverishment of personal experience in advanced capitalist societies.

Over the next four years, Roszak shuttled back and forth between London and Hayward, acting less as an anthropologist of the counterculture than as a careful participant-observer. Along with other disgruntled academics, Roszak helped form the "Antiuniversity of London" in 1967, one of the first in an archipelago of "free universities" that blossomed over the next five years. Rejecting traditional hierarchies and curricula, the "Antiuniversity" attracted students, drifters, and other seekers eager to learn, in Roszak's words, about "Timothy Leary, anarchist politics, and Tantric sex." They often possessed little more, he recalled, than "guitars, begging bowls, and a stash of magic mushrooms."

While he conceded to readers of the *Nation* that hippies were "a scruffy, uncouth, and often half-mad lot," he diagnosed their raffish alienation as "a symptom of grave default on the part of adults." That dereliction was not, as Joan Didion wrote in her grim and apocalyptic "Slouching Toward Bethlehem" (1967), that "we had somehow neglected to tell these children the rules of the game we happened to be playing," but rather that the game itself was so unjust and dishonest that the children were refusing to play. Middle-class adults had failed to articulate any worthy and demanding ideals. The Organization wanted only diligent workers and consumers, while the State wanted cannon fodder. Yet Roszak knew that even the left and its traditional constituencies—industrial workers and racial minorities—were usually hostile to the new counterculture. Thoroughly bourgeois in its mores, the Old Left was stuffy, prudish, and judgmental, while unionized workers and the non-white poor wanted not to reject but to savor and accumulate the fruits of technological innovation. Indeed, the counterculture vilified the very standard of living to which the Old Left had always aspired.

Thus, although Roszak recoiled from the drug scene and (apparently) refrained from sexual adventures ("he had his feet on the ground," as Betsy later told an interviewer), he sensed that the counterculture harbored more than delinquency from middle-class mores. If, for rebellious youth, Marxism had become—like the *Baltimore Catechism* of Roszak's youth—a set of "lifeless verbal formulas," it was because it repressed a transcendental impulse that cried out for life. By the late 1960s, Roszak was convinced that the counterculture offered a more trenchant critique of the affluent society than most conventional forms of radicalism. "There was more to these matters than sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll," as he mused in 2007. Eager to explain the new children's crusade to the elders—and even to the children themselves—he embarked on a mission to give the counterculture "a more accessible philosophical translation."

Rather than act as "handmaidens" for the corporation or the Pentagon, universities, Roszak demanded, must become "an independent source of knowledge, value, and criticism."

Roszak wasn't the first to attempt a "philosophical translation" of the counterculture. When the Beat phenomenon began to coalesce in the San Francisco of the mid-1950s—especially in the literary culture created by Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Kenneth Rexroth—many writers flocked to the Pacific Coast to study the folkways of this aberrant tribe. In *The Holy Barbarians* (1959), the journalist Lawrence Lipton traced the genealogy of the Beats back through the leftists of the 1930s and the expatriates of the 1920s. The difference was that the young people Lipton encountered in Venice, California, were not "protesting" anything; in his telling, they were "disaffiliated" rather than alienated, uninterested in being a revolutionary vanguard. To the anarchist social critic Paul Goodman, "the Beat Generation" he described in *Growing Up Absurd* (1960) was a "major pilot study of the use of leisure in

an economy of abundance." Goodman wasn't too impressed with the results: Beat literature and religious heterodoxy struck him as all too "ignorant and thin," and he wished they weren't so dependent on "ancient superstitions and modern drugs."

At the same time, in the wake of the barbarism unleashed during World War II—the strategic bombing conducted by both the Axis and the Allies, the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and, above all, the Holocaust—some on the left grew disappointed with the inherited political traditions of modernity. In Norman O. Brown's words, many liberals and socialists witnessed in these events "the superannuation of the political categories which informed liberal thought and action in the 1930s." The ominous sense that there was something fundamentally perverse about modern civilization—a position usually attributed to conservatives—pervaded postwar "personalism," a constellation of religious and secular thinking that included Muste, Goodman, Dorothy Day, Dwight Macdonald, and contributors to journals such as *politics* and *Liberation*, two prominent venues for pacifists, anarchists, and other non-Marxist radicals. Personalists were appalled by the leviathan scale of contemporary social and economic structures and by the enlistment of science and technology in the service of mass extermination. They argued not only for more decentralized and face-to-face communities but for new forms of political ontology that could replace both left or right versions of *realpolitik*. As Muste insisted, "there are in our universe resources for living the life of love which we have hardly begun to tap, but which we must learn to draw upon." In the personalist political imagination, love was a *power* and not merely an ideal.

The vernacular of "love" was not alien to the American left. In the Progressive era, Randolph Bourne had envisioned the goal of radical politics as "the good life of personality lived in the Beloved Community." In the Port Huron Statement Hayden described "participatory democracy" not only as a form of governance but as a way of life devoted to exploring our "unfulfilled capacities for freedom, reason, and love." Characterized by "fraternity and honesty," a new, more substantial democracy would "replace power rooted in possession" with "power and uniqueness rooted in love, reflectiveness, reason, and creativity." The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) echoed Bourne's hope for "beloved community," translating it into a more Christian idiom in its brief and forthright "Statement of Purpose" (1960). The SNCC sought a "social justice permeated by love," and defined love as "the force by which God binds man to himself and man to man." When Martin Luther King Jr. declared that "the moral arc of the universe is long, and it bends toward justice," he did so confident that the arc was part of a larger cosmology in which love was the quintessence of the universe. As he put it, "Unconditional love will have the final word in reality."

As a fellow-traveler of this personalist milieu, Roszak commenced his countercultural project with an anathema upon the multiversity: *The Dissenting Academy* (1968), in which he assembled a number of left-wing scholars—the historian Staughton Lynd, the sociologist Gordon Zahn, and the linguist Noam Chomsky, among others—to indict the intellectual and political subservience of professors to the national-security state. Rather than act as "handmaidens" for the corporation or the Pentagon, universities, Roszak demanded, must renounce their narrow conception of "service" and become "an independent source of knowledge, value, and criticism." Though encouraged by the student uprisings at Berkeley in 1964 and Columbia in 1968, Roszak argued that the prominence of academics in the citadels of power meant that something about academic life itself had led to the intellectual legitimation of the war. By sanctioning both thermonuclear weapons and the brutal tactics of "counter-insurgency," the Cold War professoriate had violated and even abandoned "any defensible standard of intellectual conscience."

Roszak echoed a broader radical critique of higher learning in America, one that called into question the wisdom and benevolence of those Chomsky had dubbed "the new mandarins"—scholars who swanned between the multiversity and the Beltway political directorate, epitomized by McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and the "Whiz Kids" in the Kennedy administration. As Chomsky had asked in *American Power and the New Mandarins* (1969), "What grounds are there for supposing that those whose claim to power rests on knowledge and technique will be more benign in their exercise of power than those whose claim is based on wealth or aristocratic origin?" Their meritocratic hauteur made them "dangerously arrogant, aggressive, and incapable of adjusting to failure"—a judgment confirmed by the butchery in Vietnam, produced and directed by the Whiz Kids. Radicalized by the antiwar movement, many young scholars embraced Chomsky's skepticism, sponsoring teach-ins, sit-ins, demonstrations, and "free universities."

The crescendo of university tumult came in the spring of 1969, when teach-ins and work stoppages at over thirty major universities provoked the social critic Paul Goodman to identify a "religious crisis" among younger intellectuals in *New Reformation* (1970), his keen diagnosis of the maladies besetting university life. The title was carefully chosen: the savagery of the Vietnam War, as well as the growing awareness of the ecological costs of industrial growth, provoked intellectual youth to blaspheme the liberal faith in science and technology—a "beneficent religion" whose promises were increasingly perceived as hollow or lethal. Though put off by the splenetic self-righteousness of many cultural and political radicals, Goodman nonetheless praised the "metaphysical vitality" of dissident students and the counterculture.

While Roszak stopped short of characterizing faith in science and technology as a *religion*, he did consider it a *myth*: not a lie or a legend, but rather a story that illustrates a culture's most cherished values. In advanced industrial societies—both capitalist and socialist—the preeminent narrative was "the myth of objective consciousness," a "Reality Principle" purportedly "cleansed of all subjective distortion, all personal involvement." "Objective consciousness" was the purely instrumental rationality maligned by Frankfurt School Marxists, the "one-dimensional thought" of vapid efficiency and technological prowess excoriated by Marcuse. Affirming Weber's account of "the disenchantment of the world," Roszak traced the origin of objective consciousness to Protestantism's aversion to Catholic sacramentality, then followed its growth through the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions. Objective consciousness claimed to be unbiased, disinterested, and antiseptic, hermetically sealed against the vagaries of passion, desire, or ideology. "Objective consciousness" also denied the terrestrial efficacy of any supernatural power, explaining the world entirely in terms of forces that could be identified and measured scientifically.

Objective consciousness was the cultural foundation of what Roszak called "the technocracy": the conglomerate of executives, managers, scientists, technicians, and politicians who made up the ruling elites of industrial civilization. United by a faith in the legitimacy of scientific and technological expertise—"the prestigious mystagogy of the technocratic society"—the technocracy justified its authority by invoking the allegedly "objective" standards of economic growth and technological progress. Roszak never denied the material benefits of the technocratic regime; but the technocracy's munificence was, in his view, at once its most convincing argument and its most treacherous seduction. Like critics such as Jacques Ellul, Lewis Mumford, and even Norbert Wiener (the penitent father of cybernetics), Roszak feared that industrial societies would allow prosperity to cover a multitude of sins. "Deeply endorsed by the populace," the mystique of technocracy legitimized the exploitation of workers, a callously extractive relationship to nature, and—most perniciously—"the repression of the religious sensibilities," the erasure of spiritual vision and hope from the minds of modern societies.

Roszak saw no alternative to technocracy on the standard liberal-left spectrum. In his view, Soviet socialism, European social democracy, and Great Society liberalism were all mere appendages of the soulless technocratic regime. Though he noted Marcuse's status as an intellectual preceptor to the New Left, Roszak rejected the psychoanalytically inflected Marxism of Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *An Essay on Liberation*. For all his celebration of the freedom made possible by technologically generated abundance, Marcuse had to resign himself, in the end, to the melancholy necessity of death. This herald of liberation, Roszak shrewdly observed, "cannot conceive of life as anything other than a tragic discontent."

Roszak was more sympathetic to Norman O. Brown, whose *Life Against Death* (1959) remains one of the boldest and most searching artifacts of psychoanalytic cultural criticism. Brown's contention that we could overcome the fear of death, recover the sensual enchantment of the infant body, and dwell in the joyful exuberance of Eros was more radical, Roszak believed, than Marcuse's revolutionary but mournful vision. Roszak applauded Brown for "going off the deep end" into religious territory: Brown's more oracular later work—especially *Love's Body* (1966)—offered a portal into what Roszak called "the visionary imagination," an ontological dimension traversed by mystics, Romantic poets, and now the counterculture.

For Roszak, the counterculture was the unlikely but legitimate heir to this prophetic tradition. The counterculture's exemplary prophet was Allen Ginsberg, the notorious author of "Howl" (1956) who launched the Beats into international prominence. In Ginsberg's poetry, Roszak thought, "the cry is not for a revolution, but for an apocalypse: a descent of divine fire," a flame that illuminates the world as a province of everyday epiphanies. Often set in subways, bathrooms, offices, and factories, Ginsberg's poems exhibited "an unashamed wonder at the commonplace splendors of the world." Ginsberg's popularity suggested to Roszak that

the counterculture represented "a new, eclectic religious revival."

In *Making of a Counter Culture* and especially in *Where the Wasteland Ends*, Roszak probed this religious revival with a deft and sympathetic intelligence, suggesting an elective affinity between his own spiritual pilgrimage and that of the counterculture. Roszak assumed that orthodox Christianity had nothing to offer the counterculture: discredited by science and corrupted by its unctuous fealty to power, it would survive only as long as it posed no threat to the technocracy. The counterculture turned instead to what Roszak called "the Old Gnosis," or—more revealingly—"sacramental consciousness": "the old way of knowing, which delighted in finding the sacred in the profane," and which encountered the "*really* real" through "a visionary style of knowledge, not a theological one." "Its proper language is myth and ritual; its foundation is rapture, not faith and doctrine; and its experience of nature is one of living communion," he wrote. Unlike the scientist, the technician, or the capitalist, the avatars of sacramental consciousness—the shaman, the magus, the oracle, the sibyl, the prophet, the poet, or the artist—not only hope but "know that there is more to be seen of reality than the waking eye sees."

One could easily—perhaps *too* easily—characterize Roszak's account of sacramental consciousness as a projection of his truncated Catholicism onto the counterculture. He discarded penance and the *Baltimore Catechism* while retaining the mysteries of the sanctuary. Roszak spoke for millions whose religious experience, such as it was, had been stiflingly doctrinal and moralistic, devoid of what William James once called "ontological wonder": a gratitude for the sheer actuality of things that lies at the heart of all true reverence. Orthodox religion, in Roszak's view, had countered the myth of objective consciousness by inadvertently imitating it, insisting on moral and doctrinal scrupulosity at the expense of jubilation and ecstasy. The sacramental consciousness survived outside church walls in the Romantic tradition—in Blake's "auguries of innocence" and William Wordsworth's "sense sublime."

The pre-scientific sacramental imagination is what Roszak believed the counterculture sought in psychedelic drugs—a pharmaceutical beatitude that he dismissed as "a counterfeit infinity." Too many young people believed that drugs would give them the same kind of aesthetic and spiritual experiences that shamans or Romantic poets enjoyed. But Native Americans ingested peyote in careful religious rituals, and William Blake needed no mescaline to witness the marriage of heaven and hell. Besides, Roszak noted, middle-class Americans already relied too heavily on drugs—to sleep, wake, work, have sex, evacuate, or relax. He lamented that when Timothy Leary advocated LSD as "better living through chemistry," he meant it "the way Du Pont means it": the message was that "there exists a technological solution to every human problem." (Roszak identified Leary early on as a blend of the guru and the grifter.) Drug use was already fueling the rise of a hippie capitalism: not only the illegal drug trade, but "head shops" that sold psychedelic commodities like any other petty-bourgeois enterprise. Anticipating Thomas Frank's critique of the "conquest of cool," Roszak predicted that even the technocracy would eventually get its groove on: "It can let long hair grow in high places. It knows how to swing." The Organization Man in the gray flannel suit would buoyantly yield to the huckster in denim. The drug culture, Roszak predicted, would "distract the young from all that is most valuable in their rebellion" and "destroy their most promising sensibilities."

For Roszak, the counterculture's greatest promise lay in a "visionary commonwealth," a federation of spiritual renegades resisting the technocracy and plumbing "the religious dimensions of political life." What bound these renegades together was their awareness that "politics is metaphysically and psychologically grounded." If the world is composed of nothing but forces to be mastered by science and technology, then politics is just the administration of people and things in accordance with the latest expertise. But if the world contains forces that elude the control of the professional intelligentsia, then a different sort of polity is possible, one whose deliberations can be informed, not only by expertise, but by "magic and dreams," archaic lore, and "visionary poetry." In the nuclear age, the stakes were nothing less than the survival of the species. Once, Roszak reflected, the spiritual renegades could withdraw from the moral and spiritual pestilence around them: "the God-intoxicated few could abscond to the wild frontiers, the forests, the desert places to keep alive the perennial wisdom that they harbored." But there were no such refuges left. If the party of "sacramental consciousness" wanted to resist the technocracy, "they must now become a political force." If not, "their tradition perishes."

The future political economy of this visionary commonwealth would not be anarchy, in the pejorative sense of chaos, but anarchism—"the

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political style most hospitable to the visionary quest." Preceded by the early Christians, Taoists, Buddhists, medieval heretics, radical Protestants, Romantics, and the utopian communities of antebellum America, anarchism represented the desire for personal fulfillment in a beloved community. "A wisdom gathered from historical experience," anarchism was not an arcane ideological system such as Marxism; it favored mutual aid, freedom from bosses and bureaucrats, and direct workers' control of production. Long dismissed as the bray of peasants and artisans crushed by industrialization, anarchism, Roszak thought, was reappearing in "the communitarian experiments and honest craftsmanship of the counterculture": organic farms, cooperatives, and rural and urban communes. Roszak argued that "peace and personal intimacy" required "the life of small, congenial groups."

It was no surprise, then, that Roszak wrote the introduction to the U.S. edition of E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful* (1973). With his numerous references to Buddhism, Hinduism, and scholastic philosophy (Schumacher had converted to Catholicism a few years before), the British economist and philosopher impressed Roszak as "the Keynes of postindustrial society." Following Schumacher's counsel that "the task of our generation is metaphysical reconstruction," Roszak rejected not only capitalism and its "phony plebiscite of the marketplace," but also the dubiously "objective" assumptions of the discipline of economics: inert, disenchanted matter, a metaphysical "scarcity" that licensed competition, and a conception of men and women as nothing more than rational utility-maximizers.

Writing at the dawn of the neoliberal era, Roszak was faintly hopeful that countercultural economics could prevail. "If there is to be a humanly tolerable world on this dark side of the emergent technocratic world-system," he claimed, it would emerge from the "fragile renaissance of organic husbandry, communal households, and do-it-yourself technics." Over the next generation, however, the technocracy triumphed, evolving into a ruthless plutocracy. Invaluable and indispensable as they are, "small, congenial groups" were not enough to withstand the juggernaut of capital accumulation. Yet the more fundamental problem with Roszak's "philosophical translation" of the counterculture was that it was never clear how seriously Roszak took any particular manifestation of "sacramental consciousness." Animism, karma, and Christian sacramentality are extremely different forms of what Roszak called "visionary splendor." If politics is indeed metaphysically grounded, we need more than an amorphous sense of "transcendence" to foster solidarity.

Roszak believed the Christian tradition was so compromised by its subservience to power that only the broadest syncretism could preserve the sacramental imagination. But is Christianity really as exhausted as Roszak believed? Two of his contemporaries, Thomas Merton and Kenneth Rexroth, drew upon "sacramental consciousness" for some of the period's most incisive social criticism, echoing the counterculture's impatience with "objective" rationality. "Every blade of grass is an angel in a shower of glory," Merton rhapsodized in 1966, "every plant that stands in the light of the sun is a saint and an anthem." An erudite and still undercelebrated poet and critic, Rexroth urged his fellow radicals to be saintly, as "the saint saw the world as streaming / In the electrolysis of love." Though modified by elements of Buddhism and Taoism, Rexroth's religious anarchism flowed naturally from this sacramental perspective. For him, anarchism was a form of "*agape*, the love of comrades in a spiritual adventure."

The left—even much of the Christian left—has grown shy and embarrassed about the language of love in political life, convinced that the only realistic dialect is that of power, interest, victory, and defeat. (Cue the snarky references to Marianne Williamson.) But if we really believe that the power of love resides in the marrow of creation, then that assurance must inform our political imagination. Roszak's countercultural wisdom receives an imprimatur of sorts from Pope Francis in *Laudato si'* (2015), his encyclical on ecology and economics. Opposing the same "technological paradigm" that Roszak and the counterculture rejected, Francis claims that love is "the fundamental moving force in all created things," and that our efforts to dispel the false objectivity of our technocratic age must be "illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion." It is not enough to speak truth to power as long as truth is understood in exclusively scientific terms; we must also speak *love* to power. Roszak reminds us that, despite all its confusions and excesses, the counterculture of the 1960s conveyed the oldest and most venerable realism.

EUGENE MCCARRAHER *is an associate professor of humanities at Villanova University. His latest book is* The Enchantments of Mammon *(Harvard University Press).*

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Commonweal CONVERSATIONS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2020

Kerry A. Robinson
Global Ambassador,
Leadership Roundtable

Amy R. Goldman
CEO and Chair,
GHR Foundation

This year we are proud to honor two leaders in Catholic philanthropy with our Catholic in the Public Square Award.

KERRY A. ROBINSON is the Global Ambassador of Leadership Roundtable, an organization of laity, religious, and clergy working together to promote best practices and accountability in the management of the Catholic church. She is also a member of the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities and FADICA (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities).

Kerry has served as a trustee for many Catholic and philanthropic organizations, including the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, the Gregorian University Foundation, and the National Catholic AIDS Network. She is also a trustee of Saint Thomas More Center at Yale University, where, as director of development, she led a successful capital campaign that transformed the capabilities and facilities of Yale's campus ministry.

Kerry is a frequent writer and speaker on philanthropy, development, and faith. She is also author of the award-winning *Imagining Abundance: Fundraising, Philanthropy, and a Spiritual Call to Service.*

AMY R. GOLDMAN is CEO and Chair of GHR Foundation, a global philanthropy of service to people and their limitless potential for good, and a member of FADICA.

Amy brings a background in diplomacy, governance, and investment to steer GHR's philanthropic approach and priorities. She is leading GHR to build bridges across ideas, sectors, and people; elevate powerful movements of faith and interfaith actors for sustainable development; implement systems change strategies across public, private, and faith sectors to keep children in families; promote effective leadership and new governance models for Catholic schools; and support and unlock significant funding from industry and government to prevent Alzheimer's Disease.

Amy serves on the board of Georgetown University and the University of St. Thomas, as well as Opus Holding, the Visitation School, Jesuit Refugee Service International Development Group, Mayo Clinic Leadership Council, and she is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

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More than a Symbol

Peter Steinfels

Are liberal Catholics too quick to dismiss evidence that belief in the Real Presence may be declining?

No signature phrase from the Second Vatican Council is so completely affirmed across the entire theological and political spectrum of the Catholic Church as that the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." Liberal Catholics are particularly wont to quote it, either in support of the Council's reform of the liturgy, or in lament that many of the faithful, for want of sufficient numbers of ordained ministers, are deprived of the Eucharist.

That is why the liberal Catholic reaction to recent findings about Catholics' understanding of the Eucharist is so puzzling. Last summer, the Pew Research Center announced with some fanfare that a recent survey of Americans' religious knowledge showed that only 31 percent of self-identified Catholics believe that at Mass the bread and wine "actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ." By contrast, 69 percent told the Pew pollsters that the bread and wine are "symbols" of Christ's body and blood. Weekly Mass-goers were the only group of Catholics in which a majority (63 percent) chose "actually become" rather than "symbols."

CNS PHOTO / JACLYN LIPPELMANN, CATHOLIC STANDARD

Boston Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley carries a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament as he leads a Eucharistic procession in Panama City, January 23, 2019.

Naturally the Pew announcement sparked some sharp reactions. As might be expected, conservative Catholic leaders expressed alarm. More surprising, to me at least, was the rush of liberal Catholic commentators to pooh-pooh the findings.

Efforts to explore how ordinary Catholics understand the Eucharist are not new. I myself am responsible for one of them. Twenty-five years ago, when the *New York Times* was about to conduct a survey of American Catholics, they asked me, as the paper's senior religion correspondent, for advice. I expressed dissatisfaction with the standard polling that seemed to assume that "hot button" questions about contraception, women's ordination, priestly celibacy, etc., were an adequate measure of Catholic faith. I urged at least one question about worship. After much discussion about wording we settled on this: "Which of the following comes closest to what you believe takes place at Mass: (1) the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, or (2) the bread and wine are symbolic reminders of Christ." We hoped that the "comes closest" phrase might cover a multitude of theological subtleties.

The results were not all that different from Pew's latest. Of all self-identified Catholics, 34 percent said "changed into the body and blood" came closest; 63 percent said "symbolic reminders." Even weekly Mass-goers favored "symbolic reminders" (51 percent) over "body and blood" (44 percent).

Frankly, those results startled us. They began coming in over a weekend, and the non-Catholic overseeing the survey was so taken aback that she called me at home. Had we made some terrible mistake in the wording?

Which was of course possible. One friend argued that the *Times* survey should have included the catechism formula "under the *appearances* of bread and wine" in its first choice. Similar surveys taken since then have varied in asking whether Christ's body and blood become "actually" present or "really" present. As far as I can see, the biggest dif-

ference emerges between two kinds of questions. The first simply ask Catholics, yes or no, whether they believe the bread and wine are really changed into Christ's body and blood. The second, like the questions from the *Times* or Pew, give Catholics a choice of alternative understandings. Very roughly, the first variation reverses the results, with about two-thirds affirming the church's teaching and one-third not. One might suppose that this, too, should disconcert guardians of church teaching, but it is at least reassuring compared to the Pew findings.*

(It should be interjected here that, to my knowledge, we have no measures of ordinary Catholics' belief about Real Presence before, say, World War II. It is simply assumed that everyone knew and held what the church teaches. I had a good friend in college whose very devout parents were American-born, one of pious Irish immigrants and the other of pious Italian immigrants, but none of these people had been beneficiaries of Catholic schooling. When my friend came home from parochial school and told his parents what he had learned about the Eucharist, they were astonished, even appalled. They made an appointment with the pastor to find out whether what their son had reported was actually church teaching—and therefore true! That may have been an exceptional case. But we don't really know just how people generations back would have answered poll questions about the Eucharist.)

Obviously we should learn more about all this, and CARA (the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) has promised a new survey. But will the reactions be any different? I can understand conservatives' alarm, even if I don't agree with a number of their remedies. Less understandable is a reaction among liberal Catholics that I have observed over many years: an almost reflexive hostility to disturbing findings about Eucharistic belief and practice.

**Commonweal*, in its June 14, 2004 issue, published an article by the late James D. Davidson, a leading sociologist of American Catholicism. It was titled, "Yes, Jesus Is Really There" and subtitled, "Most Catholics still agree." After a measured review and critique of all the surveys until that time, Davidson concluded with "two hypotheses": "First, there has been some real decline in the belief of Catholics in the Real Presence.... Second, the situation is not as bleak as the 1992 Gallup survey and the 1994 *New York Times*/CBS News poll suggested.... a majority of Catholics, including young Catholics, still agree with the church's teaching."

Consider the lengthy story on the Pew survey in the August 14 *National Catholic Reporter*. Written by Heidi Schlumpf, it is in many ways an admirable piece of reporting, probing the complexities of polling on this topic and the insights of theologians about the Eucharist. But as so often in news reporting, the key choice was how the reporter defined the "problem" being examined. In this case, the problem was not what Catholics believe about the Eucharist but the poll itself and the alarm it might be stirring, especially in conservative ranks. The headline asks a question, "Do Catholics 'Actually' Believe in the Real Presence?" And the subhead replies, "Scholars question recent headline-making survey."

The story's first sentence warns that the poll's "purported" findings "had commentators blaming Communion in the hand, lay Eucharistic ministers, and even the Second Vatican Council." The article does not cite any such commentators, though I'm sure that, somewhere in the angry corners of the internet, they exist. Instead the article cites the Episcopal Apologetics-Meister Bishop Robert Barron and Fr. Dwight Longenecker articulating debatable but much less far-fetched reactions.

From there the article turns to "sacramental theologians, liturgists, and pollsters" who contrast Pew's question with that of other polls and offer other less "dichotomous" ways of viewing terms like "real" and "symbol." Eventually, the article warns against insisting on church teaching about "transubstantiation"—a word that in fact the Pew question never used.

If Catholics leave Mass "charged with charity, compassion, and justice," one theologian is quoted as saying, "they're getting it, even if they are not drawing on the distinctions of Aristotelian substance and accident." Another theologian advises that Eucharistic change in the bread and wine must serve a larger change in the people. "We are supposed to become the body and blood of Christ, broken and poured out for the life of the world. That's the real change that ultimately matters."

In the same issue of *NCR*, executive editor Tom Roberts rolls his eyes at the idea that the Pew findings show "we have to get our catechetical hair on fire." Schlumpf's article, he writes, is an antidote to "the breathless indignation of church elders," e.g., Bishop Barron, "the hip hierarch of evangelizers," whom Roberts expects to soon be marketing a new video on the Eucharist.

What's common to these reactions?

1. A scramble to dismiss the poll's finding as both dubious ("purported") and insignificant.

2. Immediately situating the findings in the right-left Catholic combat zone, linking them with allegedly extreme conservative hysteria ("hair on fire," "breathless indignation") and even opposition to Vatican II.

3. Attributing the low support for "actually becomes the body and blood" to the philosophical difficulties of the Aristotelian-Thomistic language of transubstantiation.

4. Confidence that, regardless of polls or theological theories, most Catholics "get it" with, in Roberts's words,

"an innate and compelling understanding of real presence."

5. Subordinating the question of Christ's presence in the transformed bread and wine to the question of Christ's presence in the (hopefully) transformed worshipers, who will manifest that transformation in ethical conduct.

Here's another first-rank liberal Catholic commentator (and friend), the Jesuit Thomas Reese, in his column at Religion News Service. The Pew findings, he writes, have caused "a lot of clerical hand-wringing." But in fact they represent "an impoverished idea of what the Eucharist is really all about."

He then launches into a critique of transubstantiation, a 13th-century legacy, he explains, of an era when few Catholics received Communion. Using such Aristotelian terms today "is a fool's errand," he declares. "When was the last time you met an Aristotelian outside a Catholic seminary?" (Note to Tom: Actually a number of Aristotelians occupy prominent places in contemporary scholarship.)

Reese does not suggest that Catholics would benefit from some alternative explanations. "I don't think we have a clue what Jesus meant when he said, 'This is my body.' I think we should humbly accept it as a mystery and not pretend we understand it."

He continues

> The Mass is not about adoring Jesus or even praying to Jesus.... We pray to the Father through, with, and in Christ.... The Eucharistic prayer asks that the Spirit transform us so that we can become like Christ.... Ultimately, the Mass is more about us becoming the body of Christ than it is about the bread becoming the body of Christ.... About making us more Christ-like so that we can continue his mission of....bringing justice and peace to the world.

Now I probably suffer from "an impoverished idea of what the Eucharist and the Mass is really all about"—I'm still working on it—and some of that impoverishment is no doubt inherited from all those centuries when peasant Christians didn't receive Communion and had nothing to do but adore from afar. Yet Reese's elimination of adoring or even praying to Jesus from his description of the Mass seems exorbitantly severe and sits oddly with texts from the *Kyrie* to the Communion invitation by way of parts of the *Gloria* and *Sanctus*, as well as the Memorial Acclamation and the *Agnus Dei*. It also seems unduly abstract from human reality in draw-

POETRY

AFTER PARADISE

Mark Kirby

Reading Dante changes everything:
the vision is the fact
and the vision an eternal spring
an angel-muse makes exact
of innocence, at journey's end
given back; one looks up into night,
one remembers what is beyond:
the empyrean, its great rose pane
(each facet like a sun is a soul
alive with holy love, alight;
bright angels racing through the whole
of it, singing, numerous as rain).

MARK KIRBY, *retired after thirty-five years in cyberspace at the Social Security Administration, writes from his native Baltimore.*

ing sharp lines between the intimate movements of heart and mind that can be labeled adoration, prayer, thanksgiving, praise, petition, or recommitment. Even if that were not the case, I would hesitate to dismiss the devotional Eucharistic spirituality of all those centuries, however conditioned by cultural circumstances or vulnerable to sentimentality or excessive individualism.

Nonetheless, Reese's column is very eloquent, even in the abbreviated form I have presented here. It sparkles with explanatory insights that don't usually surface in a news service like RNS. A condensed theology of the Mass and its Trinitarian orientation in 750 words. No mean feat.

But note: it also fits into the framework above. The poll results are denigrated ("an impoverished idea") and associated with the conservative excess ("clerical hand-wringing"). Whatever might be troubling in the poll's results stems from what is troubling in the definition of transubstantiation ("using Aristotelian terms…in the 21st century is a fool's errand"). The need for any intellectual explanation or fancy-pants apologetics à la Bishop Barron is rejected out of hand ("I don't think we have a clue.… We should humbly accept it"). And the focus shifts from the question of the transformation of the bread and wine to the moral transformation of ourselves ("making us more Christ-like so that we can continue…bringing justice and peace to the world").

It was not until early October that I encountered a full-throated conservative reaction to the Pew finding: the September 29–October 12 issue of the *National Catholic Register* with its 60-point headline, "Eucharistic Wake-Up Call."

The issue contained no less than fourteen articles on the Eucharist, including articles on the production of hosts and Eucharistic wine and sidebars on Eucharistic miracles, Eucharistic books and DVDs, and Eucharistic papal encyclicals.

Nowhere did I find any outright blaming of the Second Vatican Council, although there was a lot of familiar grumbling about the post-conciliar "spirit" and lack of catechesis. If many of the articles could have fit into my pre-conciliar childhood, they were less dogmatic and more conscious of contemporary challenges to understanding the sacred. Most of the articles were more positive in proposing remedies than negative in targeting enemies.

Not that there weren't grounds for disagreement. The *Register* articles were full of references to liturgical reverence but not to liturgical participation. There was a lot about the centrality of the tabernacle but not about the mystery of the altar. The transformation of bread and wine often seemed detached from the drama of salvation through death and resurrection, the Mass less a sacrificial meal ritually memorializing Christ's Passover than a solemn means to "confect" the Blessed Sacrament, enabling worshipers to adore and implore Jesus, whether briefly entombed in their bodies or more lastingly enthroned in the tabernacle.

So liberal Catholics might well be critical of what could be considered a cramped as well as nostalgically pre-conciliar view of the Eucharist. But why were liberal commentators (and not for the first time) so quick out of the blocks with quips about "hair on fire catechetics" and "clerical hand-wringing"? Why did they seem so resistant to *any* possibility that there has been a serious erosion of Catholic belief in the Real Presence? Why are they not more bothered by findings like Pew's, or even less drastic than Pew's?

The puzzle is all the greater because over the years I have participated at countless liturgies of large and small groups of overwhelmingly liberal Catholics, and their belief was palpable, their fervor sufficient to energize St. Peter's Basilica. So here are my own best answers.

Simple polarization. Let conservatives approve of something and liberals start sniffing for the hidden agenda, probably something to roll back Vatican II. (Conservatives entertain parallel suspicions about anything endorsed by liberals.) To acknowledge that anything at the heart of Catholic belief and practice has eroded since the Council risks handing ammunition to conservative critics. A series of surveys done over many years by William D'Antonio et al. for the *National Catholic Reporter* always insisted that Catholics were hewing to "core beliefs." Dissent was limited to questions like contraception, conscience, ordaining women, and so on. An impression of continuity was strengthened by the design of those periodic surveys, which missed the growing number of young people dropping out of the sample in each generation.

Fear of extra-liturgical, para-liturgical, or devotional diversions. The liturgical renewal recentered Catholic spiritual energy on participation in the Mass, after centuries of obstacles to participation had dispersed that energy into devotions, including those surrounding the Blessed Sacrament like Solemn Benediction or Forty-Hours Adoration.

Commitment to social justice and Gospel witness. Do concerns about Catholic belief in the Real Presence reflect an otherworldly, individualistic spirituality of personal salvation? Does so much focus on the sacramental change in the bread and wine eclipse the necessary change in the recipients—and in the world they should be serving?

Naïve or materialist interpretation of Eucharistic change. The history of Christianity has been marked by some strange and distorted understandings of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. "Barbarian" warriors wanting Jesus to lead them into battle put consecrated bread on their lances. Reports of miraculously bleeding hosts have stirred the imaginations of pious but literal Catholics who envision a tiny Jesus, as physical as on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, crouched within or behind the white veiling of the consecrated bread.

These are all legitimate worries, but they strike me as overwrought. Or, if not overwrought, suggestive of the need for precisely the kind of theological explanation or catechesis that liberal commentators have been swift to spurn.

Reflexive polarization needs no rebuttal. As for devotional and para-liturgical backsliding, a half-century after Vatican II the reformed liturgy is well established. Active participation at Mass is not threatened by every silent prayer of veneration before the Tabernacle or celebration of Solemn Benediction. Investigation might even show that fervent participation is increased. This is not a zero-sum game.

That is also true about belief in the Real Presence and commitment to social justice. The erosion of the former hardly means growth in the latter. At Mass the Lord is present, in distinct ways, in the Word proclaimed, the bread and wine transformed, and the congregation sent forth. There is no reason to assume that playing down one of these transforming modes of presence will strengthen another; no reason to think that the risk of otherworldly individualism—or the commitment to justice and healing—is any less among those choosing a "symbolic" understanding of the Eucharist.

At Mass the Lord is present, in distinct ways, in the Word proclaimed, the bread and wine transformed, and the congregation sent forth. There is no reason to assume that playing down one of these transforming modes of presence will strengthen another.

Finally, the constant temptation to concretize a spiritual mystery almost to the point of gross superstition or intimations of cannibalism should warn liberals against dismissing rather than pursuing theological reflection about Real Presence. Such theological reflection, and its corresponding catechesis, must be humble about the inevitable limitations of our language and intellects; but "we haven't got a clue" is no substitute for rethinking our understanding of transubstantiation. An article by Brett Salkeld in a recent issue of *Church Life Journal* is an enlightening example of such rethinking and a good advertisement for his ecumenically sensitive new book *Transubstantiation: Theology, History, and Christian Unity* (Baker Academic).

One ray of common sense in this controversy came from Fr. Raymond J. de Souza in that issue of the *National Catholic Register*. De Souza contrasted the Pew findings about all self-identified Catholics with much higher levels of belief in the Real Presence found by Pew among weekly Mass-goers. Another poll put the figure among the latter at more than nine out of ten.

So in the end is this all about Mass attendance? I have always believed that many pioneering liturgical reformers were overly confident that the renewed, vernacular liturgy would be its own catechesis; consequently, little was required to instruct people in the pews. But the reformers were surely right about belief in the Real Presence. Again and again throughout the Mass, word and gesture proclaim the Real Presence, even more so, I believe, in the renewed liturgy than in the mumbled Latin ones I knew as an altar server. In this sense, Roberts and Reese are probably correct: most Catholics simply "get it," without any further need for catechesis or theological explication. If, that is, they are regular Mass attenders. As fewer and fewer are.

Father de Souza has further things to say about secularism and the way "the entire sacramental system has lost its hold." But he ties this in with the challenge of remedying the massive drop in Catholic Mass attendance, about which he offers more common sense: "Successful programs of parish renewal stress a welcoming community, a sense of belonging to a common mission, good music, and good preaching."

Much easier to spell out that agenda than accomplish it, for a lot of reasons. Still, I cannot imagine liberal Catholics disagreeing. So why should we view possibly disturbing poll findings about belief in the Real Presence as a dubious distraction? Why not as a compelling call for parish renewal, with all the implied challenges for mission, music, and preaching? Why not as a "wake-up call" for bringing people back to the Eucharist?

PETER STEINFELS, *a former editor of* Commonweal *and religion writer for the* New York Times, *is a University Professor Emeritus at Fordham University and author of* A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America *(Simon & Schuster)*.

Giving Doctors a Say

Michael Redinger

Why Catholic end-of-life ethics needs to integrate the concept of futility

The tragic cases of British infants Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans received significant international media attention. They drew comments from a wide range of influential figures, including President Donald Trump and Pope Francis. Not since Terri Schiavo has an end-of-life case received as much media attention as these two did, or as much passionate debate among Catholic commentators. Unfortunately, much of this debate was characterized by overwrought rhetoric that obscured the real issues at stake.

At the core of the controversy in both cases was a question about the proper role of the state in mediating disputes between physicians and the parents of seriously ill children when they cannot agree on a plan of treatment. Specifically, these cases highlighted a tension between developments in secular bioethics and Catholic teaching. In the aftermath of the Schiavo case, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith clarified the church's teaching on the moral status of artificial hydration and nutrition, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops formalized this clarification in its Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services. With the Gard and Evans cases still fresh in our memory, this is an excellent opportunity to take stock of where they fit within the broader context of Catholic end-of-life ethics and to consider what lessons they may teach us.

It is axiomatic that good medical ethics begins with good medical facts. It would be helpful, then, to review the basic medical facts surrounding each case. Briefly, Charlie Gard suffered from a very rare mitochondrial depletion syndrome. Beginning in the first few months of life, this caused progressive neurological and muscular decay. At the end of his short life, he was unresponsive—though perhaps not entirely unaware—and required mechanical ventilation. His physicians in the United Kingdom believed that the state to which he had been reduced and the devices required to sustain his life might both be causing him discomfort without any hope for future improvement. His parents believed that he might be experiencing the love and care they were providing, and held out hope that a potential experimental treatment would improve his neurological functioning. After the physician who had offered the experimental treatment withdrew his claim that it could be effective in Gard's case, the British courts, acting in what they believed to be the child's best interest, ultimately sided with the child's physicians, allowing them to remove Gard from the ventilator against his parents' wishes (though, in the end, they acquiesced).

Like Charlie Gard, Alfie Evans suffered from progressive neurological and muscular decline. While physicians never identified the underlying cause of his condition, his treatment team concluded that it must be mitochondrial in nature. When it reached a point of severe and irreversible brain decay and dysfunction, which sometimes caused the child to have seizures at even the slightest touch, his physicians and hospital also petitioned the British courts to allow them to withdraw artificial ventilation over parental objection, which, citing the Gard case, the courts granted.

MADELEINE RATZ / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Nearly every Catholic commentator who assessed these cases did so by applying the traditional Catholic principles governing when certain medical treatments are morally obligatory and when they are optional. Since life is a gift of God and intrinsically valuable, there is a general moral obligation to pursue medical treatments for which the benefits exceed the burdens. However, when the burdens of a treatment begin to exceed its benefit, a patient may choose to forego it.

These principles—which go all the way back to Aquinas and were explicitly formulated in the CDF's 1980 "Declaration on Euthanasia" and John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Evangelium vitae*—provide some important guidelines for cases like those of Gard and Evans. First, despite the unavoidability of death, respect for the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person requires that the actions of physicians never aim to cause death. The principle of double effect may allow the provision of treatments primarily intended to relieve suffering even if they may also hasten a patient's death. Still, in such cases, the patient's death is not *intended*. Next, concerns about a patient's general quality of life—as opposed to the burdens or side effects a specific treatment may entail—are not a sufficient reason to deny or discontinue medical treatment. A patient continues to have the right to beneficial treatments and *a fortiori* the right not to be intentionally killed even if her physician believes that her life is no longer worth living because of pain or extreme disability. Relatedly, patients maintain their intrinsic dignity regardless of their need for medical treatment. Here, John Paul II strongly condemns a "culture of death" that "sees the growing number of elderly and disabled people as intolerable and too burdensome" to society. Finally, only the concrete circumstances of an individual patient indicate when the burdens of treatment have become disproportionate to the expected benefits. The Ethical and Religious Directives are fairly broad in their description of the types of burden that patients and their surrogates may consider; they include pain, cost, travel, and distress.

Because the relevant Catholic doctrinal statements seem to place the decision-making authority squarely in the hands of patients themselves, or of their appropriate surrogates when

Mourning at the British Embassy in Warsaw, Poland, April 28, 2018, after the death of Alfie Evans

patients are unable to express their preferences, many commentators concluded that the physicians' turn to the courts was unjustifiable. These commentators often supplemented this argument about competence with further theological reflection on the proper relationship between the family and the state. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is abundantly clear that the family is an institution that is "prior to any recognition by public authority, which has an obligation to recognize it." The family "constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion…a domestic church. It assumes singular importance in the Church…a sign and image of the communion of the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit" (2202). The *Catechism* describes the right of parents to rear their children as primordial and inalienable. Catholic commentators have therefore claimed that the parents of Gard and Evans were in a better position than the doctors to determine what was in their children's best interest—a position generally accepted by secular ethicists as well. What about these cases would prompt the physicians to go to court to overrule parental decisions about life-sustaining treatments?

Here we encounter the major point of tension between commentaries grounded in the church's most recent guidance on end-of-life care and more than thirty years of secular bioethical discourse on the concept of "futility" with regard to medical treatment. During that period, a rough consensus about that concept has emerged among medical ethicists, though there is still plenty of debate about its proper application. Furthermore, while Catholic documents have not used the term "futility," they have alluded to the concept, albeit somewhat obliquely.

The significance of "futility" in bioethics can be understood only in light of the way this field has developed since its inception. About sixty years ago, an increasing focus on individual human rights began to challenge the old paternalistic model of medical decision-making; until then, a physician had usually made treatment decisions on behalf of his patients according to his own conception of a patient's best interest. Sometimes, but not always, he would also consider the patient's preferences. New focus on patient autonomy was solidified by prominent cases that clearly enshrined the patient's right to forego increasingly advanced medical treatments. Respect for patient autonomy and informed consent became a basic ethical principle, if not the primary one. At the same time, clinicians were becoming more attuned to the potential harms of new medical technologies, particularly those that caused pain and discomfort with little benefit. Eventually, however, the pendulum appeared to have swung too far in favor of patient autonomy, making it all but impossible for physicians to resist the demands of patients (or their families) for medically unrealistic and inappropriate treatments. Hippocrates admonished physicians not to treat those "overmastered by their disease." But physicians now felt they had little choice in the matter. As a result, they turned to medical ethicists for help in dealing with situations in which treatment seemed to be futile.

Various definitions of "futile"—or, more commonly, "non-beneficial"—treatment have been proposed. Some of these are now generally accepted; others remain quite controversial. In any case, it is now hard to argue that futility isn't an important consideration in some clinical situations, or to deny that the failure of doctors to reject requests for futile treatment can cause real harm.

The least controversial definition of clinical futility pertains to treatments that have no physiological rationale. A good example of this kind of futility is the widespread over-prescription of antibiotics for common viral infections. These cases can be tricky for physicians since patients often come to them with an unrealistic expectation for a curative treatment that does not exist (antibiotics work only on bacterial infections). Rather than risk a negative patient evaluation, physicians are more apt to prescribe the demanded antibiotic, despite knowing that it probably won't help the patient, that a small number of patients risk a severe allergic reaction, and that the overuse of antibiotics has made them generally less effective, placing other patients at risk for formerly treatable bacterial infections. Another example is the opioid epidemic, which was the result of physicians prescribing narcotic pain medications despite their addictiveness, and even after research had demonstrated that they are ineffective for chronic, non-cancer pain.

It is now hard to argue that futility isn't an important consideration in some clinical situations, or to deny that the failure of doctors to reject requests for futile treatment can cause real harm.

The Gard and Evans cases presented a more challenging situation. Here mechanical ventilation, which can be uncomfortable or even painful, served several valid medical purposes beyond sustaining life. These included: buying time in order to try to clarify a diagnosis, exploring the possibility of conventional or experimental treatment, and maximizing the time that the children could interact with their families. The ethical dilemma for physicians arose once the diagnosis (for Gard), and prognosis

(for both Gard and Evans) became clear, experimental therapy was off the table, and the illnesses had caused a degree of neurological impairment that made interaction between the patients and their families impossible but may not have prevented the two boys from feeling discomfort from ongoing treatment. Simply sustaining life, absent all other goods, is not and never has been a proper goal of medicine. While Pope John Paul II correctly challenged a "culture of death," physicians and clinical ethicists are now far more likely to encounter denial of death and an uncritical embrace of medical technology. In response, professional medical societies, including the American Medical Association, have officially discouraged futile treatment, with the caveat that the concept of futility must be applied judiciously and with due-process protections for the patient.

In fact, the church's teaching acknowledges that, at the end of their lives, patients are sometimes "overmastered by their disease," both physically and psychologically. While the Vatican's *Declaration on Euthanasia* (1980) clearly places decisions about when to end treatment in the hands of patients, it also states clearly that

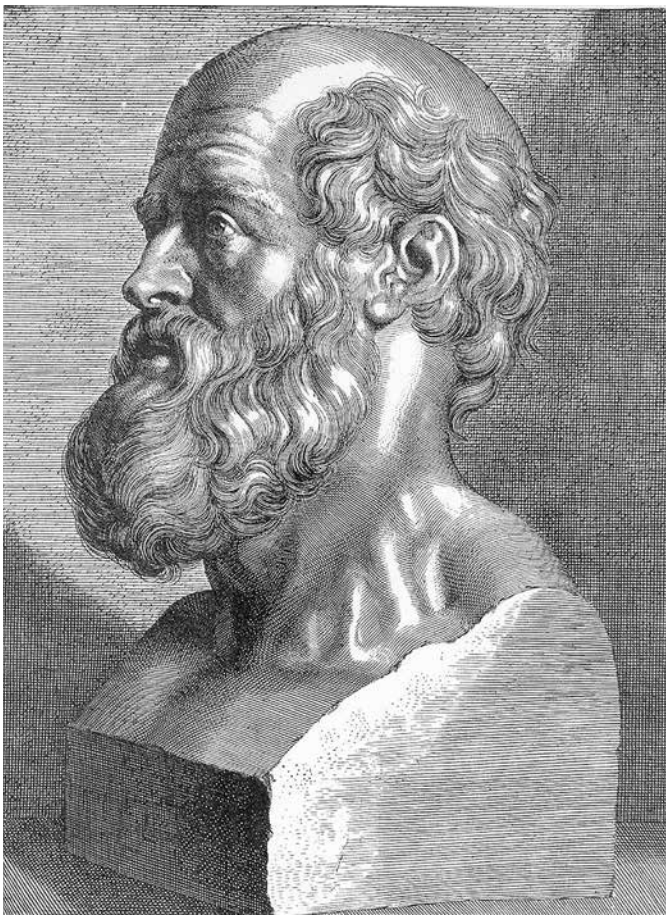
> for such a decision to be made, account will have to be taken of the *reasonable* wishes of the patient and the patient's family, as *also of the advice of the doctors who are specially competent in the matter*. The latter may in particular judge that the investment in instruments and personnel is disproportionate to the results foreseen; they may also judge that the techniques applied impose on the patient strain or suffering out of proportion with the benefits which he or she may gain from such techniques [emphasis added].

Acknowledging the possibility of disagreement between patients and their physicians about the futility of treatment, the USCCB's "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services" states:

> The use of life-sustaining technology is judged in light of the Christian meaning of life, suffering, and death. In this way, two extremes are avoided: on the one hand, an insistence on useless or burdensome technology even when a patient may legitimately wish to forgo it and, on the other hand, the withdrawal of technology with the intention of causing death.

In situations when treatments really are useless or excessively burdensome, respect for physicians as moral agents would grant them the same consideration that patients receive.

Many physicians use this framework routinely and without public outcry. Surgeons, for example, must often assess patients for the suitability of invasive surgery. If they decide that a patient is not a "surgical candidate" because he or she is unlikely to survive or recover from the operation, their decision is usually accepted by their professional colleagues, their patients, and society at large. Yet, critical-care physicians who wish to make the same determination about the violence of rib-crushing CPR are denied that kind of discretion. Studies



Hippocrates

have clearly demonstrated that patients are more likely than doctors and nurses to have unrealistic expectations about the effectiveness of modern medicine and to minimize its harms. Studies also show that those who have experience inflicting the burdens of critical-care medicine on patients are themselves far more likely than the general public to decline aggressive treatment for certain conditions.

In the Gard and Evans court rulings, it became clear that the prudential weighing of benefits against burdens was at least one of the issues the courts had to address. In the Evans ruling, specifically, the court noted that the physicians' interpretation of the benefits and burdens of ongoing medical treatments appeared to comport with Catholic teaching on end-of-life care, even though this wasn't the criterion by which the courts were expected to determine what was in the child's best interest. Yes, the courts also mentioned the children's quality of life, but *only* within the context of how ongoing medical interventions were likely to affect it. The possibility that the infants might still be aware enough to experience pain and discomfort appeared to increase the court's concern about the burdens of continued treatment. Had the infants' brain damage been even more severe, such that one could be certain that they were unaware of the ways the treatment teams were manipulating their bodies, it might

ATLAS VAN DE GESCHIEDENIS DER GENEESKUNDE, AMSTERDAM: VAN LOOY, 1925

Patients sometimes overestimate a procedure's likelihood of success, having seen it portrayed on television as far more effective and far less gruesome than it is in real life.

have been harder to justify withholding treatment on futility grounds. Finally, the Evans court explicitly argued against a quality-of-life futility framework. Rather, it was the excessive burdens of treatment that determined the court's ruling.

Catholic end-of-life ethics needs to begin integrating the concept of futility insofar as it comports with the traditional moral framework. This will help dispel the misconception that the Catholic position favors unfettered decision-making authority for patients or their surrogates and rejects the moral agency of physicians. So, for example, a new directive in the USCCB's "Ethical and Religious Directions" might read as follows:

> Physicians do not have an obligation to provide medical treatments that are physiologically futile or so excessively burdensome when compared to the reasonably expected benefits that doing so would violate their professional duty to avoid doing harm. In the event of disagreement between physicians and patients or their surrogates about the futility of a treatment, transfer of the patient to another provider may be considered and time provided to ensure that the patient's due-process rights are not infringed.

New legislative proposals often follow controversial bioethical cases. During the height of the controversy over the Gard and Evans cases, a few commentators found parallels with another, much-less heralded case of a dying infant—that of the American Simon Crosier. All three of these cases involved disagreements between physicians and parents about whether to continue treatment; all three had to do with the question of futility. Such cases have been the impetus for new legislative efforts by the American Right to Life movement to give parents exclusive authority about end-of-life treatments for their children. These efforts, collectively referred to as "Simon's Law" legislation, are well-intentioned but misguided.

Simon Crosier was born in 2010 with Trisomy 18, a life-limiting genetic condition. He had a number of medical complications during the three months of his life, including a severe heart defect. According to his mother, as Simon's blood-oxygen levels began to drop, the medical team refused to intervene and told her that nothing could be done. After Simon's death, his mother reviewed his medical record and discovered that the child's physician had placed a "Do Not Resuscitate" order in the chart and ordered only comfort feeds without parental consent or even knowledge. Her anger led her to write a book about Simon's life and to advocate for legislation that would prevent such situations in the future.

Advocates point to the Simon Crosier case as an example of the slippery slope that would result from physicians ever having the unilateral authority to withhold or withdraw a life-sustaining medical intervention. Yet the behavior of the physician at the center of that case is reprehensible by both secular and Catholic bioethical standards. The difference between this case and those of Gard and Evans has to do with the former's clear violation of honesty, transparency, and due process. The standard protocol for addressing conflicts over futile care at many, if not most, major hospitals in the United States requires extensive due-process protections for patients and their families. Multiple opinions from other physicians are required, and external consultations are strongly recommended. If there is internal disagreement among the medical staff, the conflict is often resolved by transferring the patient to another physician. Ethics consultation and committee involvement is the norm, and these ought to include members of the community who can speak to local norms and values. If a conflict reaches the point where a hospital's medical staff collectively says they can no longer countenance practicing medicine that violates their fundamental oath to "do no harm," the possibility of transfer to another hospital is explored. Because these policies are invoked only when the situation with the patient is extraordinarily grim, and only after extensive conversations with the family, it is uncommon to find a hospital willing to accept the patient in order to provide a treatment withheld elsewhere or to continue an ongoing treatment indefinitely. But standard due-process requirements do give families an appropriate window of opportunity to find another provider, transfer to another hospital, or obtain a legal injunction.

When I am counseling physicians about such policies at the hospitals where I serve, I ask them to consider three questions. First, is the treatment in question so excessively burdensome that they wouldn't provide this treatment to anyone in the same condition? Second, is this treatment something you would object to any physician providing in this circumstance? Third, would you be willing to attest to a judge in court that doing what is requested of you is so egregiously harmful that it would require a court order to make you do it? Framing the situation in this way prevents claims of futility influenced by disability or quality-of-life bias, ensures that such claims are about avoiding bad medicine, and encourages physicians to err on the side of deferring to the patients and their families.

Nevertheless, there are situations in which patients or their surrogates refuse to accept the physicians' knowledge about the disease process, prognosis, and the benefits and harms of potential treatments. Sometimes this is because patients overestimate a procedure's likelihood of success, having seen it portrayed on television as far more effective and far less gruesome than it is in real life. This misunderstanding may persist even after patients or their families have been presented with the medical evidence. At other times, families are overwhelmed by their grief, or are in outright denial. In the hospitals where I work, the examples are abundant: the woman with irreversible end-stage metastatic breast cancer whose husband refused to answer the phone to discuss her code status; the elderly gentleman with a blood-clotting disorder and severe osteoporosis for whom CPR would have resulted only in numerous fractures and massive hemorrhaging.

Right-to-life activists have successfully lobbied Kansas, Missouri, Arizona, and South Dakota for passage of new legislation, using the Crosier case as a rallying cry. Efforts to ensure honesty, transparency, and due process are good. At the same time, care must be taken to ensure these efforts do not constrain the consciences of physicians and require them to do harm to patients at the end of their life. In Kansas, "Simon's Law," or House Bill 2307, bans hospitals from withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining technologies or from issuing a Do Not Resuscitate order for minors without parental consent in all cases. Efforts to pass similar laws are still underway in many other states. Notably, Texas efforts created a rift between some of the Texas Right to Life groups and the Texas Catholic bishops' conference, which recognized that a balance must be struck between patient autonomy and physician conscience.

Given the coordinated efforts of Right to Life groups across the country and their ties to the Catholic Church, it is necessary to begin a broader conversation about the incompatibility of such laws with church teaching. Such a conversation would help guide individual Catholics at the end of life, and support Catholic bishops in their oversight of Catholic hospitals. Even better, it would relieve the medical staff at Catholic hospitals from the immense moral distress that comes from violating our oath to do no harm.

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POETRY

INVITATION TO THE UNKNOWING

Sr. Lou Ella Hickman

inside the silence
wait...
a lotus floats
petals slowly open...
welcome its white flame
on the pond of your sacred darkness

SR. LOU ELLA HICKMAN'*s poems have appeared in numerous magazines and journals as well as three anthologies. She was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2017. Her first book of poetry entitled* she: robed and wordless *was published in 2015 (Press 53).*

American Paganism

David Albertson

It's not what the Religious Right thinks it is.

Claims of moral decline are a perennial feature of conservative rhetoric. But in recent years, pro-Trump Christians have emphasized a new reason to be afraid. The United States, they say, is devolving into such wanton "paganism" that the country may not survive. The true America awaits rescue by the Christian faithful, and in such an existential struggle, nearly any means are justified—even reelecting a morally abhorrent president.

Examples of this rhetoric are not in short supply, among pundits and even in more scholarly work. In an essay praising Donald Trump's "animal instinct" for "order" and "social cohesion," Sohrab Ahmari opposed an America of "traditional Christianity" to one of "libertine ways and paganized ideology." These are our only choices, he insisted. Between such incompatible enemies, there can be only "war and enmity," so true believers should be ready to sacrifice civility in the battles ahead to reconquer the public square. Rod Dreher has speculated that Trump, while unpalatable, could be a divine emissary holding back the horrors of Christian persecution, like the biblical figure of He Who Delays the Antichrist, an implicit nod to old pagan enemies. "If Christians like me vote for Trump in 2020," Dreher warns, "it is only because of his role as *katechon* in restraining what is far worse." Though in a calmer tone, Ross Douthat entertained similar ideas in his column "The Return of Paganism," wondering if the pantheist tendencies in American civil religion could morph into a neo-paganism hostile to Christian faith.

Border-patrol agents detain migrants near the U.S.-Mexico border.

JOHN MOORE / GETTY IMAGES NEWS

Douthat cites a recent book by law professor Steven D. Smith, *Pagans & Christians in the City: Culture Wars from the Tiber to the Potomac*. According to Smith, what we know as "secularism" is actually ancient paganism in modern guise. Since paganism is inherently anti-Christian, this means Christians should oppose both secular politics and secular universities at any cost. They are not fighting against a neutral arbiter, but against the wiles of pagan Rome redivivus, a strain of this-worldly sexualized spirituality nearly eradicated by Christianity, but now mutated and all the more lethal.

Smith is only the most recent Christian author to invoke the specter of paganism. R. R. Reno, the editor of *First Things*, wrote *Resurrecting the Idea of a Christian Society* on the eve of the 2016 election, apparently anticipating a Clinton victory. The book's title alludes to T. S. Eliot's 1938 essay on "The Idea of a Christian Society," in which Eliot condemns the rise of "modern paganism." Reno told his readers to view 2016 in light of 1938. "Would the West seek a Christian future or a pagan one?" he asked. "We face a similar decision today. Will we seek to live in accord with the idea of a Christian society, or will we accept the tutelage of a pagan society?" Yuval Levin called Reno's book a "call to arms against a postmodern paganism."

This charge of looming paganism exerts a twofold political function. First, it rationalizes Trumpism, casting our situation as a state of emergency that threatens the survival of U.S. Christians. Second, the sacrilege of pagan religion prevents Trump's supporters from indulging in political moderation by making that seem like a form of apostasy. It's probably not a coincidence that "paganism" is on the rise just as Christian conservatives decide whether to support the current admin-

istration in an election year. It is challenging to explain how Trump's policies are Christian. It is far easier to label his opponents as pagans, and thus align the president with Christianity by default. But there are fundamental problems with the conservative narrative of a resurgent paganism.

In the first place, the term "paganism" only works in this maneuver because it is vague and perspectival. It always has been, ever since Christians invented it. Ancient Christians stuck the name on those who continued the traditional rites of Greco-Roman religion rather than adopt the true faith. Indeed the largely urban Christians meant it as a mild pejorative for the rural country bumpkins, the *pagani*, who lived far from imperial centers and persisted in their benighted worship of the old gods. In our terms, the first "pagans" lived in flyover country and clung to their traditional religion.

Since "pagan" has come to mean "un-Christian," every invocation of "pagan" brings with it an implicit understanding of "Christian." The meaning of the former is parasitic on the latter. Misunderstanding the essence of paganism, therefore, also means misunderstanding the demands of Christianity, and vice versa.

More left-leaning Christians might well agree with Smith and Reno in one sense: there is indeed an ascendant paganism afoot in our country today. It threatens the social and moral fabric of American public life and contends directly against the voice of Christian truth. One can brook no compromise in resisting it. The difference comes in how that paganism is defined. The debate is not whether paganism is real, but where it lives, how it appears, and what it does. If conservatives have mistaken its location, they might be training their weapons in the wrong direction.

Much hangs, then, on accurately discerning the meaning of "modern paganism." Let us consider three proposals: Steven Smith's recent version, T. S. Eliot's original version, and another timely version from *First Things*.

Steven Smith suggests that secularism is not a neutral space, but conceals its own religious identity, which is essentially pagan. It venerates the sacred within the natural world, knows only the cycle of birth and death, and thus celebrates a libertine sexuality. As opposed to Abrahamic religions that affirm the "transcendent sacred," paganisms old and new prefer the "immanent sacred." Smith delves into the emergence of Christians in the Roman Empire and vividly evokes the oddity of Christianity in the ancient world, heeding the scholarship of Peter Brown, Jan Assmann, and Kyle Harper (but Edward Gibbon most of all). Smith then applies his ancient model to American constitutional law and finds it confirms conservative positions on religious freedom, public symbols, and sexual norms.

But there are serious problems with Smith's argument. Since the 1970s, scholars of religion have largely retired the vague categories formerly used to organize speculation about comparative religions—sacred and secular, immanent and transcendent, holy and profane, this-worldly and other-worldly. Major religious traditions are massive and multifarious in the ways they sustain rituals, ethics, and beliefs. Their communities cut across languages, continents, empires, and epochs, teeming with exceptions and discontinuities. The blunt tools applied by Smith are simply not up to the task of uncovering the essence of one religion, let alone two or three, and they are certainly not able to trace the notoriously complicated history of the "secular."

For the sake of argument, though, let us grant Smith his chosen terms, and even focus on his central claim, that Christianity can lead the way in challenging modern secularity, since it insists on the "transcendent sacred" in a way that secular paganism does not. Smith's proposal rests upon a fundamental analogy: paganism is to Christianity as immanence is to transcendence. Christians pray to the God beyond the world; pagans encounter divinity inside the weft of nature.

Even a cursory knowledge of Christianity is enough to refute this analogy. It is true that Judaism teaches the absolute transcendence of the one God, as do Islamic theologians today, and as did Neoplatonist pagan philosophers in antiquity who sought a divine One beyond every thought, word, and image. By contrast, orthodox Christians claim that God arrived and now eternally resides within the fabric of nature, as the Creator enters into creation in the body of Jesus Christ. To cite Smith's definition of "paganism," it is Christianity, in fact, that "refers to a religious orientation that locates the sacred within this world." The Christian belief in the Incarnation is nothing if not a belief in the "immanent sacred."

The new Christian movement distinguished itself from Greek philosophy, Roman cults, and Jewish faith alike by affirming an extensive and peculiar list of divine incursions into immanence: the Incarnation of God in the body of Jesus; Anne's immaculate conception of Mary; Mary's virginal conception and vaginal birth of the Son of God, making her

Theotokos; the real flesh of Jesus suffering on the cross, against the Gnostics (Tertullian); the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic bread and wine, also against the Gnostics; the Resurrection of the body after death; the bodily assumption of Mary; the martyrdom of the body as bloody birth into heaven (*Perpetua*) or as the grinding of flesh into bread (Ignatius of Antioch); the church birthed through the bleeding side wound of a dying Jesus; the church as maternal breast suckling the Christian with milk; the union of Christ and Christians as the exemplar of which sexual union is the image (Ephesians 5, Origen of Alexandria). Above all, the scandalous immanence that might have sounded pagan to Jesus's disciples: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (John 6). The enemy of these traditional Christian teachings is not sacred immanence, but rather a gnosticism that dematerializes and disembodies the real presence of God within creation.

The radically immanent sacred of Christians scandalized the Romans. As Ramsay MacMullen observes, Christians worshipping a new transcendent deity would have passed unremarked. But the Christian belief that Jesus was neither prophet nor sage but a fleshly God would have been mocked by pagan intellectuals as a risible error. The late New Testament scholar Larry Hurtado writes: "In the philosophical traditions, an ultimate and radically transcendent deity was often postulated, but you did not typically engage that transcendent deity directly.… But there was a still more unusual and, in the eyes of pagan sophisticates, outlandish Christian notion: the one, true, august God who transcended all things and had no need of anything, nevertheless, had deigned to create this world and, a still more remarkable notion, also now actively sought the redemption and reconciliation of individuals." For pagan intellectuals, Hurtado concludes, "all this was, quite simply, preposterous."

For instance, in his work *On the True Doctrine* (178 CE), the pagan philosopher Celsus is ready to accept that God exists, creates all things, and transcends nature. But in shades of Sam Harris or Richard Dawkins, Celsus laughs away the claim that God was incarnated in Jesus, or that the body could be resurrected. "I mean, what sort of body is it that could return to its original nature or become the same as it was before it rotted away?" he mocks. "And of course they have no reply for this one, and as in most cases where there is no reply they take cover by saying 'Nothing is impossible with God.' A brilliant answer indeed! But the fact is, God cannot do what is contrary to nature."

Christians were the most conspicuous defenders of divine immanence in the ancient world. It was pagans who derided Christians for violating the self-evident truths of divine transcendence.

Christian philosophers saw the divide similarly. Tertullian admits that pagan philosophers might even discern that God exists by their own lights. But they always miss that God descended into a virgin and was made flesh in her womb. Augustine reports that he learned from the pagan philosopher Plotinus that the Logos was transcendent—but only Christians taught him how the Logos embraced the human body in all of its weakness and vulnerability, and its awful exposure to the whims of imperial violence.

To put it bluntly: paganism cannot simply mean divine immanence. On the contrary, Christians were the most conspicuous defenders of that principle in the ancient world. It was pagans who derided Christians for violating the self-evident truths of divine transcendence.

A better starting point for defining "paganism" is T. S. Eliot's essay "The Idea of a Christian Society," written in the dark days of 1938, where he proposes that the greatest enemy of modern Christianity is "modern paganism." Reno and Smith alike summon Eliot as a sober authority in perilous times, but neither presents Eliot's own account of the term in question. So how did Eliot define paganism? It's important to stay as close as possible to his own words.

First, Eliot says paganism embraces an authoritarian politics that confuses religion and nationhood. The "distinguishing mark" of a Christian society, Eliot writes, is its productive "tension" between church and state, but pagan society seeks to "fuse" them. Pagan culture "de-Christianises" individuals gradually and unwittingly, as authoritarianism creeps in. Soon, he warns, one's hymns are no longer to God alone, but also to the dear leader.

Second, Eliot says that modern paganism incites ecological destruction. The Christian lives in harmony with nature; the pagan destroys public resources for private profit. "Unregulated industrialism" and "the exhaustion of natural resources," writes Eliot, lead to "the exploitation of the earth, on a vast scale." In a formulation that strikingly anticipates *Laudato si'*, he puts it succinctly: "A wrong attitude towards nature implies, somewhere, a wrong attitude towards God."

Third, modern paganism imposes a puritanical public morality. It promotes, in Eliot's words, "regimentation and conformity, without respect for the needs of the indi-

vidual soul" and "the puritanism of a hygienic morality in the interest of efficiency." According to Eliot, in fact, modern paganism will even attempt to *elevate* the status of Christian identity in society. But paganism embraces Christianity not because it's true, but because it consolidates the nation and discourages dissent. He notes that authoritarians have always celebrated public morality. They want, in a way, more morality, even if their priorities are haphazardly formulated. Eliot warns that such a moralistic Christianity is not only a perversion of the faith: "It is not enthusiasm, but dogma, that differentiates a Christian from a pagan society." Such versions of Christianity might even "engender nothing better than a disguised and peculiarly sanctimonious nationalism, accelerating our progress toward the paganism which we say we abhor."

The resemblances between the modern paganism feared by Eliot in 1938 and conservative politics in 2020 are uncanny. The "paganism" that future Christians will need to identify and resist, he warned, will appear as unrestrained capitalist greed; as authoritarianism seeking to weaken democratic norms; as callous environmental degradation; as a superficial Christian moralism seeking to fuse church and state; and as a petty "sanctimonious nationalism."

In the poignant final paragraph of his essay, Eliot confesses that the churning political surprises of the 1930s had left him shaken, not only because of the events themselves, but in the revelation of his own country's moral poverty. In the face of Britain's failure to mount an adequate response to modern pagan violence, Eliot felt a justified "humiliation" that demanded of him "personal contrition" along with "repentance, and amendment." He felt "deeply implicated and responsible" and began to question his country's frequent claims to moral authority. When Eliot enjoins his readers to fight against modern paganism, it is specifically because its brew of authoritarianism and capitalism were already beginning to charm Christian intellectuals who should know better. Eliot's final sentences prick the conscience today:

> We could not match conviction with conviction, we had no ideas with which we could either meet or oppose the ideas opposed to us. Was our society, which had always been so assured of its superiority and rectitude, so confident of its unexamined premises, assembled round anything more permanent than a congeries of banks, insurance companies and industries, and had it any beliefs more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends? Such thoughts as these formed the starting point, and must remain the excuse, for saying what I have to say.

The resemblances between the modern paganism feared by T. S. Eliot in 1938 and conservative politics in 2020 are uncanny.

But there was at least one other account of paganism in the pages of *First Things* as Trump campaigned for the presidency—this time from Matthew Schmitz, an editor at the magazine. Over the summer of 2016, Schmitz displayed an admirable prescience while Christian conservatives were still hesitating to endorse the eventual Republican nominee. The "faith taught by Christ," he wrote, "is a religion of losers. To the weak and humble, it offers a stripped and humiliated Lord.... In Trump, it [Christian faith] has curdled into pagan disdain."

Schmitz's analyses from April and August of 2016 really must be considered at length, given where they were published. Take this representative passage:

> At a campaign event in Iowa, Trump shocked the audience by saying that he had never asked God for forgiveness. All his other disturbing statements—his attacks on every vulnerable group—are made intelligible by this one.... Human frailty, dependency, and sinfulness cannot be acknowledged; they must be overcome. This opens up the possibility of great cruelty toward those who cannot wish themselves into being winners. A man who need not ask forgiveness need never forgive others. He does not realize his own weakness, and so he mocks and reviles every sign of weakness in his fellow men.

And here's another:

> In his contempt for losers, he [Trump] embodies one of the most unchristian ideals ever advanced in American politics. With a unique consistency and vehemence, he expresses his hatred of weakness. He ridicules the disabled, attacks women, and defends abortionists. This is the opposite of Christianity, which puts the weak first and exalts every loser.... Liberalism, much as I hate it, has preserved this Christian inheritance. The GOP before Trump, despite all its contempt for the 47 percent, was leavened by the influence of sincere Christians and so was never so sneering. Trump is an altogether more pagan figure.

By 2019, however, in the wake of the midterm battles over immigration and the mythic "caravan" of refugees at the southern border, Schmitz joined others to cheer on the "new nation-

alism" that Trump promoted at his rallies. Within a few months, Schmitz had decided that Christianity and liberalism could never be reconciled, since modern society—wait for it—had become paganized. "The Church," he now saw, "is at odds with an increasingly pagan culture."

If there was an ancient paganism of sacred immanence, it was soon outstripped by the more radical immanence of Christians in their claims of an Incarnation, a Resurrection, and above all the enduring food of the Eucharist. In every Mass the priest washes his hands in imitation of the pagan Pilate, but now as an act of humility and celebration. The Catholic repeats as her own the words of the pagan centurion—*Lord, I am not worthy*—but now as an intimate prayer on the threshold of Communion. That version of paganism was overtaken and dissolved from within by the Christian sacralization of the body.

But there is another paganism that has survived into the present, and has emerged so vividly in contemporary politics that even *First Things* in 2016 could not miss it. This is not the paganism of immanence, but the paganism of cruelty and violence. It mocks the vulnerable, reviles the weak, and gains strength through hatred. We don't have to look too far to discover the "postmodern paganism" threatening American Christianity today.

Last summer the Trump administration argued in court that more than two thousand migrant and refugee children should be separated from their parents, concentrated in crude detention camps with minimal supervision, and locked in chilled rooms with the lights left on all night. The administration has yet to condemn the petty cruelty of some camp guards and instead has mused that such violence might be politically useful. Hundreds of children as young as two are deliberately denied diapers, soap, and toothbrushes for months at a time to punish their parents. Community donations of the same are turned away. Young women are denied tampons. Young children are denied inexpensive flu vaccines, and if they contract a terminal cancer, they are deported without medical care. Chickenpox and shingles are common. Federal contractors win upwards of $700 per day for each imprisoned child. Seven children have died in custody to date, and many more have been hospitalized. Doctors worry they cannot serve in the camps without violating the Hippocratic oath. The camps themselves were continued from the Obama administration, but the withdrawal of basic necessities is Trump's innovation. What is this if not the very paganism conservatives decry?

The paganism we should fear is not secularism, sacred immanence, or pantheist naturalism. It is power celebrating its violence, perceiving the world empty of everything save the contest of will.

This modern paganism ultimately means the nihilistic exercise of power for its own sake, especially power over weak and vulnerable bodies. In its purest form, it is expressed as conspicuous cruelty, both to render one's power maximally visible and to increase that power by engendering fear. The cruelty is the point. This is the joyful paganism that Nietzsche sought to revive as the *Wille zur Macht*, retrieving from ancient Rome the glorious pleasure in cruelty that rewards the strong who exercise their strength. This is the reason Italian fascist Julius Evola hated Christianity for its compassion for the poor and weak.

We find this paganism exposed in the ancient world as well, in the Athenian mockery and massacre of the Melians in Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*, in Thrasymachus's authoritarian attacks on Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, or in Augustine's shrewd deconstruction of imperial power in *The City of God against the Pagans*. John Milbank calls this Nietzschean worldview an ontology of eternal violence opposed to an Augustinian counter-ontology of eternal peace. As Schmitz himself suggests, the perfect example of pagan disdain for vulnerability and conspicuous cruelty is the Roman practice of public crucifixion. Pagan is to Christian not as immanent is to transcendent, but as Rome is to the Crucified—a cruel empire to its tortured victims.

But modern paganism can also assume subtler forms, whenever the common good is reduced to ruthless economic competition, confirming Eliot's fears that we have no values more essential than our "belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends." The paganism we should fear is not secularism, sacred immanence, or pantheist naturalism. It is power celebrating its violence, perceiving the world empty of everything save the contest of wills, a nihilism ruled by the *libido dominandi*.

This paganism views moral responsibility as a fool's errand for the weak, since all that matters is to dominate or be dominated. It sacralizes the emperor as an agent of God, scorns truth, despises the weak, and tortures the vulnerable. And it cloaks its nihilism, to cite Eliot once again, in "a disguised and peculiarly sanctimonious nationalism, accelerating our progress toward the paganism which we say we abhor."

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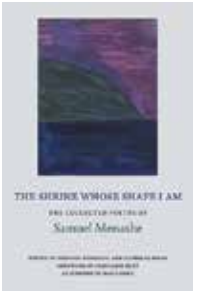
Taken by Storm

Stephanie Burt

The poetry of Samuel Menashe

Seen from one angle, Samuel Menashe's poems belong squarely in a tradition of verse construction that spans several thousand years. The poems—almost all of them startlingly short, compared to most poems by most of his peers—are self-contained epigrams, charms, wishes, prayers, descriptive one-shots, shapely units of quotable wisdom. They draw on tropes as old as civilization: Odysseus's "river / We cannot cross"; Jacob's angel, "flesh / Wrestling in the dark." They make sense when read for the first time, even to many readers unused to much modern poetry (though you can recognize them as modern poetry if you have read Dickinson or Creeley or Niedecker); they are the considered speech of the self to the self and to future passers-by, "serious, engravable," as another modern poet said.



THE SHRINE WHOSE SHAPE I AM
The Collected Poetry of Samuel Menashe
Audubon Terrace Press
$25 | 440 pp.

At right: photo of Samuel Menashe by Matt Valentine.

Seen from another angle, Menashe is unique: there will be no more poems of this kind. Menashe's poems—and these aspects did not change very much over fifty-odd years—spoke in English to his Jewish sensibility, to his sense of spiritual isolation, of living out of place and out of time. Most of his critics—following his own lead—have begun with that sense. And Menashe's way of being, thinking, and feeling Jewish was neither primarily cultural and historical (as it was in, say, Adrienne Rich) nor irreducibly, wonderfully bound up with ongoing interpretive disputes, with Mishnah and Gemara, responsa and argument (as in John Hollander: both Hollander and Rich, it is odd to recall, were four years younger than Menashe).

Instead, Jewishness in Menashe is a root in the heavens and a rock on the naked earth, an unmediated listening (the holiest prayer in Judaism, and one of the shortest, enjoins us first of all to listen). He did not transcribe God's words, but left space to hear them, and then to write down the weighty, interlocking sets of words his own soul could show. Not all Menashe's poems were epigram-short. Yet to come upon a longer one ("On the leafless winter vine," for example) is to find an anomaly. Menashe did not want to narrate, to construct a slow build, to set scenes; he had little patience for the kind of common talk, the low-intensity speech, that in longer poems provides frames for the gems, backgrounds so that figures stand out. Instead, his poems were all figure, sometimes even all holiness, or all regret for holiness denied; he took each moment within a poem as potentially a holy one, the only one. The holiest day in Judaism comes once a week; the nearly holy language of these poems is, like the Sabbath, respite from the world, set off from the world, even though its words are common, its deeds unexceptional, performed over and over, renewed each time.

And that holiness, that way of being set off (like the Sabbath) from regular language and regular work, becomes, in the poems, a matter of sound: of the sound Menashe makes when he says, of the God of the Book of Exodus, "the world was salted / When one hand made a sea sunder." Or, at slightly greater length, from the same early book, in a poem called "Cargo":

> I am made whole by my scars
> For whatever now displaces
> Follows all that once was
> And without loss stows
> Me into my own spaces

It is a graceful chiasmus, a gathering of phonemes around one metaphor, rarely equaled in English (one parallel might be Langston Hughes's "Cross"). But Menashe equals it many times: for example, in "To Open," whose almost punningly Objectivist title belies its spirit of delight: "Spokes slide / Upon a pole / Inside / The parasol."

He does not always perform so well with sound. Sometimes the poems sound unfinished: sometimes, many times, they sound too rough to work as poems in any ear but Menashe's own. More than anyone else besides Dickinson, Menashe shows that he either accepts, or refuses, the tradition of epigrammatic finish, of professionalized perfection, of immediate comprehension, that comes with other poets' very short poems. "We are left enough / Love for grief each time snow flies," for example, sounds over-sincere at first, even amateurish.

And yet the appearance of over-earnestness, the weighty sincerity, in such a line lets it do what turns out to be intricate work. How much love is enough? Do we love grief itself, or do we retain just enough love that it lets us grieve? Why does snow fly, rather than fall? (Answer: it flies when wind lifts it up, as if to reverse its fall; as if to reverse death, to resurrect.) "We are left enough / Love for grief": that's a lot to say. It is almost—almost—a poem in itself. A Menashe poem in itself.

Because he has had to be reintroduced over and over, in volumes whose contents overlapped, across decades, to audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, it has been difficult until the present volume to see how Menashe's verse developed or changed. But it did change. The false starts, unaccommodating kinds of poems, that appear in *The Many Named Beloved* do not show up in later volumes, and the poet gives us the chiasmatic, internally rhymed quatrain (a form I love) more often. He also writes more about landscapes, and more about grief.

Moreover: starting with *To Open* (1974) we begin to get, along with poems of solitude, poems of companionship, of devotion to others. The quatrain called "Solitude" would look for all the world like a goofy poem of romantic love were it not for the title. "Transplant" could scarcely be clearer in its speaker's devotion to somebody else's body: like the Greek heroes who feel things in their *thumoi*, he would "give / My liver," if needed, "For you to live." It is also a poem of anticipatory grief: Menashe cannot see other adults without remembering that they will leave him someday, that we are mortals too. He also grieves his parents, over and over: the thought of their absence tears a hole in his being, and to cover that hole, to feel less naked, he stitches together his characteristic internal rhymes.

When Menashe describes what he sees, we see it too. And he describes tersely, or else describes scenes of absence, sparseness, solitude: all-erasing snow, for example; a hermit's hut; the sun on the sea. "Landmark" depicts (Menashe often depicts) empty windows, figures for "the awe of death" (compare Tennyson's "Dark house, by which once more I stand"). Even a poem that begins with the Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry, that famously elaborated manuscript, concludes with its locus amoenus almost empty, "one of those hours / in early afternoon / where nothing happens / but time makes room."

But no description here is mere description. No object deserves to appear in a Menashe poem unless its description evokes the divine: "Every derelict stem / Engenders Jerusalem." That city flowers, here, one stem at a time: all its images mean a great deal, and the ones that seem melodramatic often enough unfold into something stranger and deeper. It's a pop-lyric cliché to say that rain represents heaven's tears, but Menashe says instead that rain on snow is "Adam's afterbirth"; "the windows weep" because they share his pain. All manner of poets describe their grief-saturated later lives as haunted houses; Menashe, on the other hand, in "The Host," is "haunted / Out of my house" by remembered spirits that suck marrow out of his bones.

Almost any image in Menashe could drive an entire poem, could become a self-portrait or an emblem: "Sleep / gives wood its grain / dreams knot the wood." Of course they would, and should. When his work has recognizable characters (often allegorical ones), his antagonists share the laconic disposition that characterizes its questers, its hermits, its prophets: in what could be almost any temperate urban "park at night," "armed trees frisk a windfall / Down paths that lampposts light." The trees frisk the wind in the way that police frisk a suspect; they may also play with it, run after it, chase their own falling leaves, and of course they can never catch up.

Sometimes Menashe does not describe at all—he is a man (and, specifically, a man: a twentieth-century male human, "the King's son") without a fitting landscape, alone amid gray streets with his thoughts and his words, a man alone in the city, where objects of unproblematic, traditional beauty are hard to find. Like poets before him, he took the discovery of beauty in the crowded city as a challenge, one his way of life would let him meet. He might be the last significant American writer to describe his own residence, unironically, as a "tenement": a book that appeared in 2000 contained a beautiful diptych entitled "Tenement Spring."

He also portrays himself alone in another sense: he lives and works in an apartment with bed, windows, and little else, with neither romantic partners, nor a child. He names himself Adam, repeatedly: an Adam without an Eve. At one point he wants to make out with a pine tree. And yet he speaks, in the poems he wrote after the early 1970s, to the long Western tradition of romantic and erotic poetry: "Clair de lune," for example, with its lovely echo of early Auden, or "Western Wind," with its admiring answers to the medieval lyric that now goes by the same name. There is courtship deferred, or turned into a tease, for example, "in a tug of war," and there is sacred parody, love displayed for God, displayed over a glass of milk, "Draining it dry / In praise of Him."

You can, if you try, read Menashe as a poet of careful, distant, loyal companionship. It has been easier, though—especially if you start with the poems first published before 1970, or after 2000—to read him as lonely, or lost. "I have not been found / Since my twentieth year." "Bearings" becomes a poem of urban self-isolation, a poem of despair, to set beside Frost's "Acquainted with the Night," or even Frost's "Desert Places": "How far can I go / To get where I am." An earlier poem concludes with the absent prophet, "the one / Who does

not come." A man alone as this version of Menashe is alone might compare himself to the Jewish people whose messiah, also, has not come. And yet "All will be found / One day."

I care deeply about Menashe's poems, I reread them for pleasure and recommend them to friends, for the ways that they work as poems: "emotional machines made of words" (as William Carlos Williams put it), arrangements of language and sound. Yet to dive all the way into them, or climb all the way to the top of their spare, shining structures, is to see how Menashe was the kind of poet whose poems are never just poems: they are ways for the solitary soul to communicate with, or aspire to, the sublime, the world beyond merely human communication, ways to speak with and to—though never for—the aniconic God. "Stone," Menashe reminds us, "cannot undo / Its own hardness." But God can split a rock, or get water, blood, nourishment, from a stone. As for the secular light of the well-made poem, the mere pleasures of sight and sound, "The disc / Of the Sun / Is Adored / In Babylon." This poet, these poems, set their figurative sights higher.

They also go lower. Menashe seems never to have left behind his experience as infantry in the Second World War; the sparest, most compact of the American poets to have emerged from that war, Menashe and George Oppen, also seem to have been the only significant poets who saw ground combat as members of the infantry. And it hurts: it hurts, or something hurts, "each vein," something whose sadness he cannot specify, in poems published forty years after the combat he saw.

Menashe's poems may point back to what "No one born / After the war / Remembers," and forward to the repetitive decrepitude of old age. They sound hurt, and make him sound experienced (even elderly) even when we know he wrote them young. He said he was "taken by storm / Every morning"; sometimes he sounds like someone who found it uncommonly hard to make tea, to ride the subway or get in a car, to get through the day. The poems, and their implied author, come off as almost monkish that way. One wants to know what kind of world, or nature, or city, or society, if any, this unworldly poet would have preferred, and where, if anywhere, he felt at home.

Some poets' virtues do not fit neat patterns; some poets appeal to various readers for various, even antithetical reasons, displaying talents and goals that do not fit one another very well, or even work at cross-purposes. With Menashe, though, all the virtues fit together. The poems, like prayers, remain in the memory; like prayers, they are short enough to be memorized. And like prayers, they point beyond this world, beyond the self—except when they are not like prayers at all, and point, with their brevity and their emphatic closure, to the closure in all human endeavor. As you approach the end of this collection—should you decide to read it straight through—you will pass many windows, many landscapes, but you will end at a narrow door, the door through which we all must pass. Its frame is the fallibility, the limits, and the fragility of the single human body, from birth to death, from toes to nose (does any poet in English say more about his own nose)? They insist, in their euphonies, on our limits. At the same time, they "rejoice" in a "Maker… / Whose promise is kept." They speak beyond the poet's single mortal body to many of us, in their depth, in their memorability, and to that other world some of us know through spiritual practice, through human intimacy, and through durable art.

STEPHANIE BURT *is a professor of English at Harvard University and the author of several books, including* Belmont: Poems *(Graywolf Press) and the forthcoming* After Callimachus: Poems *(Princeton University Press).* *This essay appears as the foreword to* The Shrine Whose Shape I Am: The Collected Poetry of Samuel Menashe *(Audubon Terrace Press). Used by permission.*

THREE POEMS BY SAMUEL MENASHE

Paradise: After Giovanni Di Paolo

Paradise is a grove
Where flower and fruit tree
Form oval petals and pears
And apples only fair...
Among these saunter saints
Who uphold one another
In sacred conversations
Shaping hands that come close
As the lilies at their knees
While Seraphim burn
With the moment's breeze

(From the August 8, 1958 issue of Commonweal*)*

Judgment Day

Stone towers float
Out of dense fog
Sudden as ghosts
Loud trumpets sound
Among empty houses
Running men collide
None has found
Where to hide

(From the February 1964 issue of Commonweal*)*

Voices

There is a world
When the gramophone makes music in a room
Lifted in green leaves.
Voices of the opera that Mozart wrote
Sing in the morning,
Chaste and passionate.

(From the September 23, 2011 issue of Commonweal*)*

An interview with Melissa Rogers

Rethinking Religious Liberty

John Gehring

Melissa Rogers was executive director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships under President Barack Obama. She is visiting professor at Wake Forest University's School of Divinity, and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Commonweal *contributor John Gehring spoke to Rogers about religious liberty, LGBTQ equality, the Trump administration, and her new book,* Faith in American Public Life.

JOHN GEHRING: Why did you want to write this book?

MELISSA ROGERS: A few reasons. The legal rules that apply to the role of religion in American public life have often been mischaracterized and misunderstood. I hope the book will help dispel some of those misunderstandings, which include the idea that the Supreme Court kicked religion out of the public square, or that public schools have to be religion-free zones. That is just not true.

I also wrote it as a call to action regarding certain threats to religious freedom and pluralism. The most serious and urgent threat is hostility and attacks against minorities in this country, including religious minorities. I hope more Americans will move from the sidelines to solidarity with individuals and groups being targeted.

JG: You start the book with Pope Francis's visit to the White House in 2015, and note that President Obama didn't want that visit just to be a photo-op, but to help inspire tangible policy. One way that happened, you write, was the Obama administration significantly increased the number of refugees the United States accepted. Why was that such an important victory?

MR: We face a global refugee crisis. Every nation has a moral obligation to do its part to address that crisis. President Obama believed the United States could and should do better. So we wanted to find a way for the nation to be both compassionate and secure. A lot of work happened in the administration to ensure we could welcome more refugees. We were able to do that with an eye toward Pope Francis's visit. And with those moves, I think we were able to exert moral leadership and make a significant contribution to the global refugee crisis.

When we participate in global refugee resettlement we not only help advance human rights, but also prevent crisis and conflicts around the world, and strengthen our diplomatic toolkit. It was also a very proud moment for the kind of partnerships the government has with faith-based humanitarian organizations. These organizations demanded we do more, and then once we said we would, they came right along and said, "We're going to help you do this." It illustrated how partnerships with religious and other civil-society communities can contribute powerfully to the common good.

Photo courtesy of Melissa Rogers.

JG: The Trump administration is doing everything it can to end refugee resettlement. The administration's Muslim ban specifically targeted a religious group. Attacks on synagogues and mosques have increased. You write that these types of challenges are "the most serious and urgent threat" to religious freedom today. Can you talk about that?

MR: Until President Trump took office, the United States was on track to reach President Obama's goals on refugee resettlement, which would have been the highest number of refugees admitted to the country since 1994. But refugee admissions have dropped dramatically. In fact, zero refugees were admitted to the United States in October 2019, and an evangelical refugee-resettlement organization reports that is the first time that's happened in thirty years. In 2017, we had the second highest number of religion-based hate crimes in the United States ever, after only 2001 in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks. My Muslim friends tell me hostility toward them increases during the election season. It's especially important for those of us who are not being targeted to hold our leaders accountable. There should be zero tolerance for fear-mongering, and an expectation that our leaders should be speaking out for religious liberty and security for all. We have government officials, including the person who has the bully pulpit, our president, engaging in fear-mongering on race, religion and ethnicity, and engaged in dehumanizing rhetoric and violent imagery.

JG: A major theme in your book is how the bedrock principle of religious liberty has become a deeply polarized, culture-war

issue. Not long ago, under the Clinton administration, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) passed with bipartisan support. Today, discussions about religious liberty and conscience trigger very intense and different reactions from people on the left and right. How did religious liberty become so explosive?

MR: There are multiple factors, but RFRA laws and similar laws at the state and local level have sometimes been seen less as positive bipartisan measures as they were when they were first adopted, and more as an effort to stall or thwart civil and human rights such as LGBTQ equality. At the same time, we've seen increased polarization on a number of issues, and that has weakened our charitable impulses toward others who see key issues differently. To some extent that has also weakened our ability to even understand what the other side is saying and to have relationships across political or ideological lines.

JG: You noted recently on Twitter that Attorney General William Barr, a Catholic who often speaks about religious liberty, also prosecuted Scott Warren for his faith-based efforts to aid migrants on the border, and that the Trump administration has also tried to take land from a Catholic diocese for the border wall despite the diocese's objections. Are these examples of hypocrisy or a different understanding of religious liberty?

MR: One thing that troubles me is that administration officials such as William Barr never mention claims like these [Scott Warren] when they are talking about religious liberty. They mention claims about contraception, abortion, and LGBTQ rights that they are concerned about, but to my knowledge they have not mentioned religious freedom claims that would cut against policies that they endorse. We haven't seen the administration make any effort to reconsider its positions in the face of strong religious objections. When the Obama administration's agencies came out with a rule on the contraception mandate (the first religious exemption from that mandate), I and others raised concerns because we thought that exemption was too narrow. And that's not because I have any objection to contraception. It was about the fact that some Catholic and even evangelical groups had objections to providing this as part of their healthcare plan. President Obama insisted that the policy be changed. The policy didn't ultimately satisfy all those who objected, but it was a genuine effort to listen. I have not seen any similar effort by the Trump administration.

JG: While you're critical of the Trump administration and how many on the right view religious-liberty issues, you also argue that sometimes liberals can get it wrong. You cite as an example language that the chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission used in a 2016 report, where he talked about religious freedom as merely a code word for discrimination, intolerance, and homophobia. In your view, how do some progressives fail to appreciate the importance of religious liberty and conscience rights?

MR: Government officials err when they assume a religious belief or expression is insincere or merely a cloak for hate. That is wrong. At times, government officials will tell people their religious beliefs need to change. That is wrong too. Government officials are, of course, free to advocate for policies that conflict with certain religious beliefs, and they may and sometimes must deny certain requests for religious exemptions, but it's emphatically not the place of the government to say that faith must change. It's also a mistake for government officials to give the impression that they are calling into question or maligning an entire First Amendment right. There is room for everyone to do better here.

JG: Douglas Laycock, a scholar of religious-liberty law, told me we've reached a stalemate in trying to strike a balance between respect for religious liberty and LGBTQ equality. In his reading, religious institutions and LGBTQ advocacy groups have both become "deeply intolerant and have no respect for the rights of the other side. Both sides are dug in." If that's true, how do we hold out hope for common ground?

MR: There is no question it has become more difficult to find common ground on many important questions. At the same time, I tend to agree with Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, who recently said that we can still often find common ground if we reframe the question or split off a smaller question. When I was in the Obama administration, we did that on some issues related to partnerships between government and faith-based organizations. We couldn't agree on some important issues like religious exemptions from certain civil-rights protections that apply to the use of taxpayer funds, but we looked at some other issues regarding protections for religious-liberty beneficiaries, and we found much more to agree about there. I agree it has become much harder, but we shouldn't give up hope of finding common ground.

JG: One of the thorniest religious-liberty issues in the Catholic context is the question of whether adoption agencies run by the church should be required to place children with same-sex couples. In several states, Catholic agencies that receive government funding have pulled out of the adoption business after being told that they have to abide by state equality laws and place children with same-sex couples. The Catholic agencies say they are simply practicing what is consistent with the teachings of their faith and shouldn't be penalized for that. Where do you come down on this question?

MR: First, when non-discrimination conditions require government grantees or contractors to serve beneficiaries and clients without regard to certain protected personal traits, my basic view is the government ought to apply those conditions uniformly. Second, so long as policies are neutral toward reli-

gion, and not targeting it and generally applicable, I don't believe that they penalize faith; they simply insist that those who choose to accept taxpayer money to carry out certain tasks on behalf of the state comply with certain rules. The government does not substantially burden religious exercise when it insists, for example, that organizations that choose to accept government grants or contracts serve clients in accordance with such non-discrimination principles.

Third, having said those things, I think we should keep exploring a range of ways for governmental and non-governmental entities to help children who need foster and adoptive parents. I continue to believe there is a lot of common ground here if we're willing to look for it and even think about how we can cooperate in this area in new ways.

JG: You're a Baptist, and before joining the Obama administration you worked for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. How does coming from a Baptist tradition and perspective impact how you view these issues?

MR: I definitely think about it both as a Baptist and as a lawyer. The Baptist tradition, as a theological matter, strongly supports religious freedom for all, including the First Amendment prohibition on the governmental promotion of faith, and protections for free religious exercise. Our belief is that commitments of a religious nature have to be made voluntarily and without coercion, especially coercion by the state. Baptists in this country were once a persecuted minority and that experience remains with us. Our tradition also teaches that governmental promotion of religion harms everybody's conscience, results in de-facto preferences for certain faiths, and undermines the faith that is favored.

JG: For all the complexities and tensions, your book makes a compelling case that religion has a vital role to play in public life. Encourage us in these difficult times and explain why we should continue to fight for that vision.

MR: We have a lot of polarization now, but every day we have people of different faiths and beliefs coming together on issues of shared concern, whether efforts to overcome poverty, seek racial justice, combat climate change, or welcome refugees. That work continues under the radar largely. It doesn't get much attention, but it changes lives for the better and it makes our country a stronger one. I feel comforted and encouraged by that, and I think there can be more progress made in the future when we deal with some of the threats we're facing on the national scene right now. This collaboration is due in part because of this remarkable system of religious freedom where people can come together from different faiths and beliefs and not just coexist but make common cause. To some extent, I think the threats we face, particularly because they are so bold and bald right now, have gotten our attention, and it may be making us appreciate something we might have taken for granted without these threats.

POETRY

STANZAS ON TIME AND GRIEF

Mark Kirby

*

Speedometer decades approach escape
velocity—this seventy business is gape
of a vacuum—quick sixty too, too fast
a minimum, that couldn't last.
And it gets quicker, time, getting to
the speed of light. And then black,
whimper of the bang way back,
an erstwhile sun night-absorbed and through.
***

The fleshy lilies dried up, turnt thin
and aged, like veined parchment skin,
two weeks of perfume burnt as they prepare
(flame-tongues the thickness of thin air,
what was time's spirit, fragrant, visible)
matter for time's magic act,
trick of disappearing fact,
subtraction from a past that's got too full.
***

MARK KIRBY, *retired after thirty-five years in cyberspace at the Social Security Administration, writes from his native Baltimore.*

RAND RICHARDS COOPER

Deepening the Riddle

'A Hidden Life'

Is there a contemporary director who can match Terrence Malick for enigmatic genius? A summa cum laude philosophy major at Harvard, then a Rhodes Scholar, Malick was a philosophy professor at MIT before changing course and enrolling in film school. His long career—the filmmaker is seventy-six—has featured a sparse filmography, an abiding unconcern for critical or popular acclaim, and a mid-career hiatus, during which he disappeared from public life while reportedly laboring on a masterwork, to be called *Q*, exploring the origins of life on earth from the Big Bang onward. His first, short film, the twelve-minute *Lanton Mills* (1969), is essentially kept under lock-and-key at his behest by the AFI Conservatory, his alma mater, and only available for scholars to see. Malick is the Thomas Pynchon or J. D. Salinger of directors, and the dreamily elliptical quality of his movies has only added to the luster.

In his academic years Malick was a translator of Heidegger—and the links to German Romanticism, Nazism, and *Heimat* that have complicated the philosopher's legacy could be said to form the deep background of *A Hidden Life*. Malick's new film takes up the real-life story of Franz Jägerstätter, a farmer from the mountain village of St. Radegund in Austria, on the German border, who declared himself a conscientious objector during World War II, refused to take the soldier's oath of induction—a pledge of loyalty to Führer and *Vaterland*—and was sentenced to death for the crime of *Wehrkraftzersetzung*, or "undermining military morale." Executed in 1943, Jägerstätter was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007; Malick covers the period between the onset of war and Jägerstätter's execution, charting the process of a quiet man's ethical awakening and his ostracism within his close-knit community.

Somber and rapturous, yet imbued with a flinty sense of human cruelty, *A Hidden Life* is lavish and spare in equal measure. A useful cinematic comparison is Michael Haneke's *The White Ribbon* (2009), which explored the stifling conformity and deeply authoritarian cast of village life among German-speaking peoples at the onset of the last century. In a sense, Malick has produced Haneke's film inside-out, with a large and crucial dimension of joy. Where Haneke shot *White Ribbon* in a severely minimalist black and white, conveying a sense of enclosure and focusing clinical attention on family pathologies, Malick uses rich colors and panoramic camera angles to evoke a kind of visual ecstasy emanating from the mountains. Indeed, the gorgeous surroundings play a role as important as the humans who live among them. At times I found myself expecting to see Julie Andrews pop over the hillside and burst into song.

Malick is enough of a film historian to know the ambiguous valence such images of alpine ecstasy hold in German iconography. In the silent-film era, the cult of high snowy peaks inspired a genre of "mountain films," many starring the Austrian alpinist Luis Trenker, including such works as 1924's *Der Berg des Schicksals* (*Mountain of Destiny*), or *The Holy Mountain* (1926)—which marked the debut of a young actress named Leni Riefenstahl. In retrospect the mountain-film genre is often seen as a cinematic harbinger of Nazi mythicism regarding heroism, whiteness, nature, and godly power.

In other words, the same images that convey both beauty and safety to the residents of St. Radegund, protected by their fortress-like mountains ("It seemed no trouble could reach our valley," Jägerstätter's wife, Franziska, says in voiceover; "we lived above the clouds") also portend the dark mythic energies that are about to overwhelm them. This tie-in is made explicit in the opening scenes of the film, which borrow the famed intro takes from Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, showing the view from Hitler's plane, descending through mist-flecked mountaintops, as he heads for the 1936 Nazi rally in Nuremburg. Later, Malick deploys footage of Hitler enthusiastically greeting guests on the viewing deck outside his beloved private home, Berghof, in the mountains of Bavaria. And in one chilling moment we watch the sunset over the mountains above St. Radegund, its perfect quiet marred by the faint cry of one of Hitler's shrieking speeches. Malick's visual mountain poetry, delivered through the lens of cinematographer Jörg Widmer, carries a dreadful ambivalence. Its serenity is haunted by chaos and evil.

At a full three hours, *A Hidden Life* is arguably too long; you could lop off a half-hour and it wouldn't suffer much. But tedium is less a quality of the film itself than a theme of the lives it depicts. Malick offers a documentary-like foregrounding of the burdens of daily village existence. Life in St. Radegund consists of endless labor. Scything, sowing, harvesting; milking cows and feeding hogs; making clothes on a loom; carting grain to the mill; baking bread: it never ceases, and at times exhaustion verges on despair, as when Franziska and her sister struggle, with an ancient enfeebled cow, to plow a muddy field. If you find yourself intermittently surprised to recall that this is the mid-twentieth century, that's because the depiction of rural life, run semi-communally and governed by

Valerie Pachner and August Diehl in *A Hidden Life*

nature and seasonality, places us amid timeless rhythms and routines.

To these laborious realities Malick adds a grace of family joy; Franz and Franziska interrupt their haying to toss straw at each other playfully or join their three little girls in a fond frolic. But their family's fate follows a downward arc, as the reality of war impinges on St. Radegund and the men of the village dutifully submit to conscription. Malick depicts this dutifulness as less a matter of Nazi conviction than anxious conformity (the *burgermeister*, for instance, worries about his reputation). But conformity has its dreary force, and as Jägerstätter makes clear his intention to be a *Verweigerer*—a refusenik—his fellow villagers subject him and his family to shunning and scorn. Jägerstätter remains resolute. "We're killing innocent people," he insists. "We're preying on the weak."

A few villagers quietly commiserate, but advise Jägerstätter to drop his resistance. How can he, one man, hope to make any difference? Nor does the church provide a moral or ethical foothold. The village priest, while sympathetic, warns of the consequences for Jägerstätter's family. "Your sacrifice would benefit no one," he says. An appointment with the bishop proves more disappointing still. "If our leaders are evil, what does one do?" Jägerstätter earnestly beseeches the man—only to be answered with a citation of Romans on the necessity of submitting to the authorities. "You have a duty to the Fatherland," the bishop intones. "The Church tells us so." Jägerstätter, reporting the conversation to his wife afterward, surmises that the bishop "probably was afraid that I am a spy." What other explanation could there be for why an exalted man of the church would not recommend Christ's love as moral guidance? Meanwhile, Fascist moral and ethical perversity is everywhere. "Conscience makes a man cowardly," one Nazi interrogator lectures Jägerstätter; "the anti-Christ confuses you, and turns your virtue into weakness."

The last third of the film relies on letters between Franz and Franziska—read in voice-overs that reverberate with tender poignancy—to chronicle Franz's months in prison, where he is subjected to casual sadism by guards while being repeatedly offered the chance to have his sentence reversed, if he will simply take the Hitler oath. He refuses, and remains largely silent about why. The silence seems to reflect decisions he himself can't entirely explain. "I have this feeling," he tells a sympathetic Nazi officer who presides over his trial, and who wants to let him off. "If God gives us free

will, we're responsible for what we do—and what we fail to do. I cannot do what I believe is wrong."

The drama around Jägerstätter raises the vexing question faced by generations of postwar Germans: How did a whole nation go so terribly astray? And how broadly culpable, how complicit in evil, was *Jedermann*, the German Everyman? Over the decades, an exculpatory set of arguments has held, somewhat contradictorily, that: 1) people acquiesced out of fear for their lives; 2) the overwhelming majority of Germans had no idea of the scope of Nazi atrocity; 3) in a society led astray by evil leaders it is the leaders who are to blame, and not the followers; and 4) Nazi evil effectively became normalized, and thus the paucity of German resistors and the huge preponderance of *Mitgeher*—literally, those who go along.

And yet, as any visitor to Berlin's remarkable German Resistance Memorial Center (Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand) will learn, there was a resistance, led in piecemeal fashion by scores of Germans—clergymen, writers, officers, left-leaning politicians and intellectuals, young students, and common citizens—many of whom, like Franz Jägerstätter, paid with their lives. Ineffectual at the time, the resistance has had an important legacy; its witness and the courageous sacrifices it entailed have proved crucial to establishing a kind of ex-post-facto moral compass, reminding Germans—rather in the way that the witness of passionate nineteenth-century abolitionists reminds Americans regarding slavery—that a point of moral sanity was in fact visible to some, and thus available to all.

Malick has explored war's horrors before, in *The Thin Red Line* (1998), his most acclaimed film. A single battlefield assault takes up at least half of that film, with soldier voice-overs creating a polyphony of dread and pain. Where *The Thin Red Line* sought to convey the confusion of war, *A Hidden Life* is all about clarity—specifically, the moral clarity informing Jägerstätter's decision to renounce his life, and all he loves, in order not to be complicit in Nazi evil.

Where does this resoluteness come from? What exactly is that "feeling" Jägerstätter struggles to describe? And why is it given to him, and no one else around him? Writing in the *New York Times*, A. O. Scott criticizes Malick's treatment of Jägerstätter's goodness, calling it "a quality the movie sometimes reduces to—or expresses in terms of—his good looks." In Scott's view, the performances of August Diehl and Valerie Pachner, as Franz and Franziska, "amount mainly to a series of radiant poses and anguished faces," and reveal the limitation of what he calls "this earnest, gorgeous, at times frustrating film."

The film leans heavily on image and mood, while shrinking dialogue to a minimum—as if to mirror the reality of things that can't be articulated as much as experienced.

The comment echoes a recurring criticism of Malick's moviemaking, having to do with what film scholar Lloyd Michaels terms the director's "extremities of beauty." Writing about 1978's *Days of Heaven* (though the comment applies to all Malick's movies), Michaels asks "whether the exquisite lighting, painterly compositions, dreamy dissolves, and fluid camera movements, combined with the epic grandeur and elegiac tone, sufficiently compensate for the thinness of the tale, the two-dimensionality of the characters, and the resulting emotional detachment of the audience."

It's a useful question. To recur to Scott's comment about radiant poses and anguished faces, it's worth recalling that beatific closeups in Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 classic, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, imprinted the radiant pose—and anguished face—of Maria Falconetti indelibly on the collective cinematic consciousness. But her character was presented as an ethereal being, all but entranced by spiritual rapture. In comparison, Jägerstätter seems like just another *Jedermann*. How is it that one *Jedermann* apprehends evil, and not the next? As told by Malick, Jägerstätter's story doesn't solve this moral riddle, but in fact only deepens it.

Is that a problem? In *The White Ribbon*, Michael Haneke investigated the question, What kind of childhood created Nazis? His answer hewed to a psycho-historical interpretation linking Nazi murderousness to the cruelty of an upbringing within a rigidly patriarchal society. Malick's own portrayal of rural village life might be said to pose the opposite question: What creates a martyr? Here the answer, perhaps necessarily, is more mysterious. Has Malick committed a sentimental simplification, or a moving tribute to the making of a saint? While *A Hidden Life* offers us the poetry of sainthood, some viewers might want more of the politics and psychology of it.

Malick isn't interested. Luminous, brimming with an elusive and poignant ecstasy, his film leans heavily on image and mood, while shrinking dialogue to a minimum—as if to mirror the reality of things, like faith itself, that in basic ways can't be articulated as much as experienced. The film speaks stirringly on behalf of sacrifice, and is itself a vindication. "Do you think your defiance will change the course of things?" a prison interrogator taunts Jägerstätter. "No one will ever know what happens to you in here."

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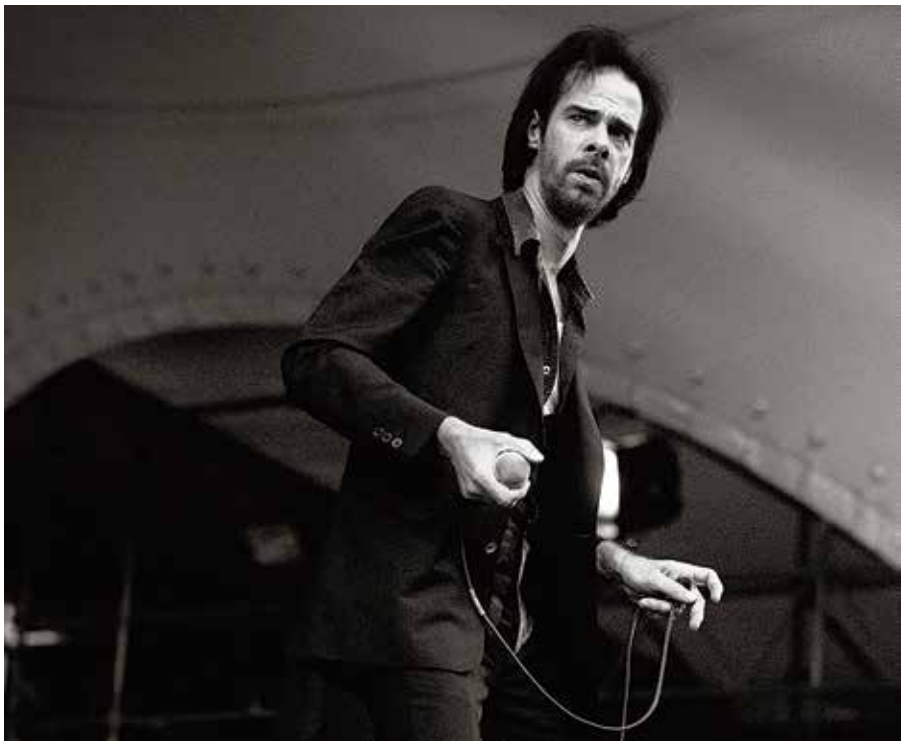
REGINA MUNCH

Lifeline

Nick Cave's 'Ghosteen'



Nick Cave performing in Germany, 2001

Over three decades, the Australian musician Nick Cave has turned out a genre-spanning body of work, from the snarling hellfire in the goth-punk of his early years to the piano ballads and gospel-inflected romps of the early 2000s, and then the ambient, ethereal soundscapes that have characterized his last three albums. Yet whatever the style, Cave's music takes on the most elemental aspects of human life—love, grief, sex, death, sin, redemption—plumbing the depths of our worst impulses and reaching up to explore our best. Cave says that his songs are expressions of a longing for love and healing, for an encounter with God. In the end, his songs are "all the same thing—lifelines thrown into the galaxies of the divine by a drowning man."

In July 2015, Cave's teenage son Arthur died suddenly in an accident while the singer and his band, the Bad Seeds, were recording the album *Skeleton Tree*. Cave quickly wrapped up work on the record and retreated from the spotlight, insisting on his family's privacy. Only after three years did Cave complete a new album: *Ghosteen*, released in October 2019. It seems to be the lifeline Cave tossed out amid his grief. He takes up his familiar preoccupations of love, loss, and death, but with a tenderness that makes it sound desperately personal. If writing these songs of yearning is, as Cave has written, "the light of God, deep down, blasting up through our wounds," Cave is tearing himself wide open to let it pour out.

Ghosteen is clearly his most personal exploration of death, but the probing of wounds is not new territory for Cave. His songs have always been dark, bloodstained and sometimes apocalyptic in their menace, yet limned with mercy for the broken, sidelined sinners he sings about. Cave's work is famous for its pervasive Christian imagery, and if generally unorthodox it nonetheless points to something true: the sin and perversion that can exist in the human heart, but also the plentiful grace of a broken world.

Take "The Mercy Seat" from the 1988 album *Tender Prey*, in which a convicted murderer is led to the electric chair. In his final moments he conflates the chair with the Ark of the Covenant, the manger, and the cross of Christ; he yearns for a time when there will be no more "weighing of the truth" and he will cease to be judged by the rule of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." He waits instead for the "ragged stranger" Christ, hanging in death with him. Or "God Is in the House," a piano ballad from 2001's *No More Shall We Part*. The narrator mocks a conventionally respectable Christian town where "there is no place for crime to hide." Instead, "At night we're on our knees / As quiet as a mouse / For God is in the house." The townspeople have deficient imaginations, and their concern for propriety makes them blind to the wounds of "the tipsy, the reeling, and the drop down pissed" with whom Jesus associated. God is in the house, but "I wish he would come out," Cave sings.

Many of Cave's older songs are similarly narrative in form, sounding almost like folktales. One of the best known, a duet with pop star Kylie Minogue, is "Where the Wild Roses Grow," which tells the story of a man pursuing a woman only to kill her because, as he sings, "all beauty must die." In "DIG!!! LAZARUS DIG!!!" a freshly resur-

rected Lazarus wanders today's world followed by paparazzi, unsure of what to do with his new life as he descends into sin and madness. "Larry grew increasingly neurotic and obscene / He never asked to be raised up from the tomb!.... He ended up like so many of them do / Back in the streets of New York City / In a soup queue, a dope fiend, a slave / Then prison, then the madhouse, then the grave / Oh poor Larry!"

Recent work from Cave has grown less rollicking, tending toward muted tones as synthesizer and strings supplant banging keyboard and ringing guitar and straightforward storytelling gives way to impressionistic imagery. But *Ghosteen* is the most otherworldly of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds's seventeen studio albums; you might not even call it rock anymore. The title refers to "a migrating spirit," Cave has said. The first eight songs are identified as the "children," and the final three are two "parent" songs split by a spoken-word track. Throughout, Cave's voice takes center stage, in a falsetto that he has rarely dared before, surrounded by sweet, drifting harmonies that often turn cloudy. There is almost no percussion on the album to keep the listener tethered; one floats, dreaming, remembering, and grieving Arthur's death along with Cave. Much of the "action" seems to be set in the fearsomely fecund forest depicted on the album's cover. Flaming horses run through the fields, galleon ships sail across the sky, children climb toward the sun. But then come everyday moments: watching traffic from a hotel room, listening to the radio at the kitchen table, waiting for a train, driving to Malibu.

The layering of such fantasies—hallucinations?—creates a disorientation that can seem to mimic grief. Cave said as much in the documentary *One More Time with Feeling* after the loss of his son. "To do a fractured narrative where time is actually compressed, events are stuck on top of other events—there's no particular logic to it, or a distressing kind of logic—makes it much more real, and true to the way I feel about things." With events stuck on top of each other, seeing and feeling too many things at once, it's hard to know if one is beginning to emerge from suffering or only just entering into it. But "peace will come in time," Cave sings on the first track of *Ghosteen*, "Spinning Song," trying to reassure himself as well as us.

The layering of fantasies—hallucinations?—in Cave's lyrics creates a disorientation that can seem to mimic grief.

In "Bright Horses," the sweepingly gorgeous second track, the narrator is at first taken by the image of the freely running animals of the title: "They are horses of love, their manes full of fire / They are parting the cities, those bright burning horses." But there quickly comes a turnabout of realization: "We are all so sick and tired of seeing things as they are / Horses are just horses and their manes aren't full of fire.... And the little white shape dancing at the end of the hall / Is just a wish that time can't dissolve at all." In "Sun Forest," the narrator watches children ascending a glorious spiral staircase into the bright sun. "Come on, everyone!" he exclaims, but just as quickly, he sinks into despair: "A man called Jesus, he promised he would leave us / With a word that would light up the night.... But the stars hang from threads and blink off one by one / And it isn't any fun...to be standing here alone."

The whole album feels like this: tentatively hopeful, upward-looking, but threatening to tumble down at any time. "Love's like that you know," he sings in "Ghosteen," one of the "parent" tracks. "It's like a tidal flow / And the past with its fierce undertow / Won't ever let us go." Images leap up unbidden, especially a dancing, "twirling" child, sometimes solid and real, and sometimes a wisp. "There is nothing wrong with loving something you can't hold in your hand," the narrator says. "There's nothing wrong with loving things that cannot even stand." The closing track, "Hollywood," echoes the opener and brings us back to where we began: "I'm just waiting now for peace to come."

Cave has done a lot while he's been waiting, putting himself and his wounds out into the open to draw closer to others, including his wife. "It turns out that being forced to grieve openly basically saved us," Cave said in an interview. After Arthur's death, he embarked on a solo tour simply called "Conversations with Nick Cave," live events in which attendees could ask Cave anything, and he promised to answer as honestly as possible. This grew into the Red Hand Files, an email newsletter in which Cave responds to questions that fans send in. Addressing a variety of topics—death, addiction, existential crises, the nature of art, God, #MeToo—Cave answers with sensitivity and generosity, entirely unironic about his need to give and receive love.

In one entry, Cave tells a story about a trip he and his wife took eight months after Arthur's accident. He describes breaking down in tears on seeing a cat that had been hit by a car: "At that moment something ruptured.... Life was too much. It was literally impossible to bear. My son was gone. I would never see him again." Seeing such suffering exterior to him, Cave writes, "The vision of the dying cat wrenched me from my own self-absorption and bitterness and isolation and loneliness and showed me that the world, in all its terrible wounded beauty, was in need of our urgent attention."

Cave has spent a long career attending to a wounded world, sifting through the worst of humanity to find a glimmer of grace. *Ghosteen* is a loving, and lovely, addition to that project.

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Is There an Alternative?

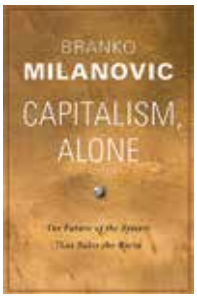
MATT MAZEWSKI

Not too long after I started graduate school, a right-leaning relative who had heard that I studied economics asked me what my area of focus was going to be. When I mentioned political economy as one of my interests, he suddenly appeared concerned. "See that's when I start to get nervous," he interrupted, "when people start talking about *political economy*." Puzzled, I wondered what I was missing. Were "political economists" the latest Fox News bugaboo, a menace akin to the threat once posed circa 2008 by "community organizers"?

I explained to my relative that the phrase can have different meanings. Adam Smith would have understood it as denoting a branch of moral philosophy, but modern economists use it to refer to the study of political institutions with the help of economic methodologies like game theory. This seemed to put him more at ease. "Oh, now I see," he said, "I thought you were talking about political *control* of the economy. You know, like when politicians try to run everything."

I was reminded of this conversation as I read Branko Milanovic's *Capitalism, Alone: The Future of the System that Rules the World*, because it occurred to me that its author may have coined just the term my relative was searching for: "political capitalism," Milanovic's label for one of what he sees as the two major variants of capitalism in existence today. Such a system is distinguished by three things: first, "a highly efficient and technocratically savvy bureaucracy…[that] has as its main duty to realize high economic growth"; second, the "arbitrary use of power"; and third, a private sector allowed "wide latitude, but never so wide and powerful as to be able to dictate its preferences to the state."

The irony is that my relative was almost certainly picturing the United States (at least under Democratic administrations) as an example of such a "political economy." But Milanovic, an economist at the City University of New York Graduate Center, believes that the archetypal example of political capitalism is in fact China; other notable specimens include Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Algeria, and Ethiopia. Officially or unofficially, almost all of these nations are one-party states in which the governing party is effectively exempt from the rule of law. Their enduring existence puts the lie to the once-common claim that democracy and capitalism logically require one another to survive.



CAPITALISM, ALONE
The Future of the System that Rules the World

BRANKO MILANOVIC
Harvard University Press
$29.95 | 304 pp.

The United States, by contrast, is home to what Milanovic calls "liberal meritocratic capitalism," which has two defining characteristics: first, a formal absence of "legal obstacles preventing individuals from achieving a given position in society," despite substantive obstacles generated by the intergenerational transmission of advantage and disadvantage through inheritances and the like; and, second, the use of taxation and free education to limit the formation of familial dynasties. (Milanovic also mentions a third variant of capitalism that he considers to be a mostly marginal phenomenon: "social-democratic capitalism," which features a more generous welfare state and a relatively stronger labor movement than its liberal meritocratic counterpart. Here he has in mind the Nordic countries or the United States and Western Europe during the decades after World War II.)

Milanovic argues that all varieties of capitalism share certain essential features—"production organized for profit using legally free wage labor and mostly privately owned capital, with decentralized coordination"—and that these features are here to stay. He sees no contradiction in observing that a system that "rules the world" nevertheless exists in quite different versions, since throughout history "the rise and apparent triumph of one system or religion is soon followed by some sort of schism between different variants of the same credo"—such as Eastern and Western Christianity, Sunni and Shia Islam, or Soviet and Chinese Communism. The question is whether multiple species of capitalism can coexist indefinitely, or whether one will come to dominate in the end.

In a way, Milanovic actually agrees with Margaret Thatcher's dictum that "there is no alternative" to capitalism now that state communism, its erstwhile rival for world domination, has been all but eradicated. One of the book's epigraphs is from Marx and Engels, who were more prescient on this point than they might have hoped: "[the bourgeoisie] compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production."

That said, Milanovic nevertheless has little patience for Francis Fukuyama–style theories that place us at "the terminus of socioeconomic formations invented by humankind." If a "liberal international order where all the key players [are] capitalist and globalist" really represents the "end of history," then how to account for the outbreak of World War I, which occurred against just such a backdrop? Likewise, how can the collapse of Communism be explained by "scientific socialists," who would view such an event as tantamount to modernity spontaneously reverting to feudalism? "The liberal paradigm has problems with 1914," he declares, "the Marxist paradigm with 1989." Capitalism, then, will surely still undergo "accidental" change even if, in substance, it remains the same forever.

Despite Milanovic's confident assertions at the outset that capitalism faces no truly lethal threats, his faith in its immortality seems to waver by the final chapter, and he concedes that it could evolve in directions that would take it beyond the boundaries of his original definition. In their 1986 book *Democracy and Capitalism*, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis imagine a society of "rentiers who lease or lend their capital to democratically organized companies" in order to illustrate how the standard formula whereby "capital hires labor" could someday be reversed. Milanovic acknowledges that such an economy would no longer be capitalist, because "wages" in the usual sense would no longer exist.

The policy agenda that he lays out for tackling inequality is also premised on the idea that contemporary capitalism, of the liberal democratic variety in particular, can be transformed into something so radically different from what it is today that it would arguably no longer qualify as capitalism. Here Milanovic's primary concern is with the distribution of capital ownership, since one of the major drivers of rising inequality is an increase in the "capital share," or the fraction of total income paid out in the form of interest, rents, and dividends. (The remainder, the "labor share," is the fraction of total income paid out in the form of wages, salaries, and bonuses.)

In principle, however, there is no reason why a rising capital share should necessarily increase inequality: if the ratio of capital income to labor income

PHOTO BY NASA ON UNSPLASH

were the same for all individuals, then an increase in the capital share would, all other things being equal, have no effect on inequality. This is because a "rising aggregate share of capital income [would] increase every individual income in the same proportion." It's only because there is a correlation between being rich and being "capital abundant"—or drawing a relatively larger share of one's income from capital—that a rising capital share leads to worsening inequality.

For a variety of reasons, including the difficulty of organizing labor unions when companies can easily ship jobs abroad, Milanovic believes it would be practically impossible for policymakers to drive up the labor share and compress the capital share. Instead, his recommendations focus on ways to distribute capital ownership more broadly. He wants to revise the tax code to make it more favorable to small investors, institute a wealth tax to fund capital grants for young adults, and encourage the adoption of employee stock-ownership plans (ESOPs), which effectively make workers co-owners of the companies that employ them. To critics who say that ESOPs are too risky because they aren't diversified investments, Milanovic quite rightly points out that most Americans today have few or no investments at all.

His other policy proposals, which are less related to spreading the ownership of capital and more to spreading opportunity, include public funding of elections and something he calls "citizenship light"—a guest-worker system that does not appear to differ very much from existing visa programs that tie migrant workers to a single employer.

The result of these policies would be to reduce inequality and boost intergenerational income mobility by nudging liberal meritocratic capitalism either toward what he calls "people's capitalism," in which everyone has "approximately equal *shares* of capital and labor income," or toward "egalitarian capitalism," in which everyone has "approximately equal *amounts* of both capital and labor income" and where "[l]ibertarianism, capitalism, and socialism come close to each other."

Yet once again, one could raise the question of whether such systems would really be "capitalist" by Milanovic's own definition. Egalitarian and people's capitalism both sound an awful lot like *distributism*, an economic philosophy first popularized by English Catholics like G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc in the early 1900s that advocated distributing productive capital as widely as possible. In the limit case, a distributist society would also be a society without wage labor (because everyone would be a small proprietor), and would therefore not be capitalist. Nor is it clear how even a rough equality of capital incomes could be guaranteed in real life without most capital being publicly owned—for instance, in the form of a social wealth fund in which all citizens hold equal shares.

These thought exercises lead to a further question: If it's possible for society to venture right up to the definitional boundaries that separate capitalism from other economic systems, what's to keep us from slipping over them entirely? Milanovic admits in one of the appendices that while "capitalism is stronger than ever…we do not know if this represents its overall peak, or if it is only a local peak, with further expansion of capitalist relations in the future. What we do know, however, is that nothing is forever." So much for there not being alternatives!

The fact that its thesis gets watered down by the end, however, actually makes *Capitalism, Alone* a more hopeful book than it initially seems to be. As it turns out, Milanovic is no Thatcherite. Even if he believes that the core elements of capitalism cannot be dislodged, he *does* believe there is room for significant change. By the rubric of this book, the "democratic socialism" of Bernie Sanders is technically still capitalism in an academic sense, but it nevertheless represents a meaningful "alternative" to the status quo.

Somewhat mysteriously, though, the hopefulness of the book's conclusion is tempered by a disturbing tone of indifference. Although Milanovic discusses how capitalism has led to increased "atomization" (detachment from community and even family life) and "commodification" (the extension of market logic into areas once beyond its reach, such as the reframing of "free time" as "time when you could be making money driving an Uber"), he is strangely evasive on the question of whether these are real problems. At one point he even says that his own roadmap to egalitarianism is worth following only "if it is found that such a move is desirable." He offers alternatives, but expresses no strong preference. If you like the capitalism you have, you can keep it.

In his introduction, Milanovic writes:

> Unconditional supporters of capitalism explain [its] success as resulting from capitalism's "naturalness," that is, the alleged fact that it perfectly reflects our innate selves—our desire to trade, to gain, to

> strive for better economic conditions and a more pleasant life. But I do not think that, beyond some primary functions, it is accurate to speak of innate desires as if they existed independently of the societies we live in. Many of these desires are the product of socialization within the societies where we live—and in this case within capitalist societies, which are the only ones that exist.

But by the end of his book, he seems to have changed his mind about this, warning that "discarding the competitive and acquisitive spirit that is hardwired into capitalism would lead to a decline in our incomes, increased poverty, deceleration or reversion of technological progress, and the loss of other advantages.... This may be, perhaps, one of the key features of the human condition: that we cannot improve our material way of life without giving full play to some of the most unpleasant traits of our nature."

Surely preferences are some complex mix of nature and nurture, but it is difficult to square the first observation with Milanovic's subsequent claims that commodification is a process "in which individuals participate freely" and that "they often find liberating and meaningful." To those who would ask, "Does the ability to…deliver pizza at any hour that suits you give meaning to your life?" he responds that "the ability to trade one's own personal space and time for profit is…seen both as a form of empowerment and as a step toward the ultimate objective of acquiring wealth. It therefore represents the triumph of capitalism." It is hard to tell who is doing the seeing here, let alone whether the reader is meant to take statements like these as *de*scriptive or *pre*scriptive.

Milanovic also displays a surprising nonchalance about the ways in which capitalist competition can encourage bad behavior, since this is just the price of modern life: "it is, of course, possible to impose strong ethical constraints on oneself, but only if one plans to drop out of society, or move to some tiny community outside the globalized and commercialized world." He similarly dismisses the possibility of any sort of *collective* effort to impose ethical constraints on society writ large, since "religions," which he identifies as the most promising bulwark against amorality and immorality, "today say relatively little about what constitutes correct economic behavior." In an endnote he awkwardly grants that "an exception may be the recent attempts by the Catholic Church under Pope Francis to reinforce ethical considerations in business"—as if Catholicism had not been engaged in moral reflection on economic life all along.

Capitalism, Alone is an extraordinarily valuable book for anyone who wants to gain an understanding of current topics in economic research and their bearing on policy debates, even if it does frequently lapse into the style of an academic literature review. (If you're the editor of an economics journal, maybe that's a feature and not a bug.) It will also be helpful for anyone pondering the various paths that capitalism's future evolution might follow, notwithstanding its author's hesitation to take a stand on which of these paths is the best one.

In any case, the danger of the path we're on now will be clear to any attentive reader. "The more economic and political power in liberal capitalism become united," Milanovic writes, "the more liberal capitalism becomes plutocratic and comes to resemble political capitalism." And since, ironically, "[t]he objective of political capitalism is to take politics out of people's minds, which can be more easily done when disenchantment and lack of interest…are high," the solution is not less politics but *more*—much as it would pain my relative to hear it. In the end, only a mass movement can right what's wrong with the system that rules the world.

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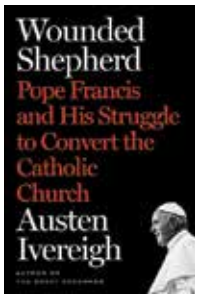
Conversion First

J. MATTHEW ASHLEY

Wounded Shepherd is the follow-up to Austen Ivereigh's 2013 biography of Pope Francis, *The Great Reformer*. The new book covers Francis's tumultuous first six years, and begins with the story of Francis telling Ivereigh, in June 2018, that he had only one criticism of what Ivereigh had written about him so far. "I braced myself," writes Ivereigh. "After a pause, [the pope] said, smiling, 'You're too kind to me.' The word in Spanish was *benévelo*, something like 'indulgent.' Relieved and charmed, I assured him I would be more critical in the future, and we both laughed." The title of Ivereigh's new book is no doubt indicative of this resolve, as it comes with Ivereigh's confession that *The Great Reformer* contributed to a "great man" myth, in which a superhero arises at a moment of crisis to save the world. It is a myth that provides convenient hooks on which to hang news stories and sound bites, but it does not do justice to the complexity of the past six years, and completely misses the mark when it comes to Francis's own self-understanding. The new book sets out to show both Francis's accomplishments and the wounds he has suffered along the way.

Ivereigh alternates between chapters that focus on particular challenges Francis has faced (Vatican finances, the clergy sex-abuse crisis, the environment, the synod on the family) and more reflective chapters that drill down to the deeper foundations of Francis's spirituality and approach to church leadership (with chapter titles like "A Sinner's Mission" and "Close and Concrete"). As in *The Great Reformer*, Ivereigh often explains current events at the Vatican by recalling an earlier episode or period in the pope's life. This leads to some fascinating insights. In the second chapter, which details one of Francis's initial duels with Cardinal Raymond Burke, Ivereigh looks back at the pope's youth and his years as the provincial of Argentina's Jesuits. Ivereigh suggests that Francis learned his skills as a "master strategist," as well as his ability to read people, not only from St. Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* but also from the master strategist in the Argentinian politics of the pope's youth: Juan Perón. Many of Perón's techniques—such as playing elites off against the common people, or allowing conflict to run its course until his opponents overreach themselves—can be seen in Francis's handling of the power struggle over the leadership of the Knights of Malta. Burke, who was the *patronus*, or chaplain, of the Knights, and his ally Matthew Festing, then the Grand Master of the Knights, did indeed overreach themselves, and Francis deftly outmaneuvered them, removing Festing from leadership in favor of someone more to his liking, while Burke sputtered impotently on the sidelines.

Ivereigh makes good use of his many contacts and acquaintances in Rome, and he knows that when Francis does not directly respond to a challenge from one of his opponents in the hierarchy or the media, he frequently responds in his early morning homilies in the Casa Santa Marta, where he lives. A case in point is Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò's open letter that called on Pope Francis to resign. Viganò alleged that when John Paul II named Theodore McCarrick as archbishop of Washington, D.C., there was already widespread knowledge, at the highest levels, of McCarrick's despicable manipulation and sexual abuse of seminarians. Viganò also accused Francis of lifting sanctions that Benedict XVI had imposed on McCarrick, an accusation later shown to be false. When confronted by journalists with Viganò's claims, Francis's first reaction was silence: "I will not say a single word



WOUNDED SHEPHERD
Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church

AUSTEN IVEREIGH
Henry Holt and Co.
$30 | 416 pp.

Pope Francis leads his general audience, January 24, 2018, in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican.

about this." Ivereigh interprets that silence in light of homilies Francis later gave at the Casa Santa Marta, in which he suggested that sometimes silence is the only evangelical response to particular situations—as Jesus showed at his trial before the Sanhedrin.

Ivereigh deals similarly with other pivotal episodes in Francis's papacy. He unpacks in great detail, but without exaggeration, the extent of resistance to Francis's program of reform from a small but vociferous and well-funded opposition, inside and outside the church. He also provides a trenchant analysis of the appointment of bishops and cardinals under Francis, which is where this pope diverges most from his two predecessors and also where his impact on the church will be greatest. While Ivereigh's coverage is not comprehensive (he has little to say, for instance, about Francis's ecumenical outreach or his attempts to overcome the impasse over the appointment of bishops in China), it is broad enough to substantiate Ivereigh's list of this pontificate's central characteristics. Francis, he asserts, is "the pope of proximity," who emphasizes dealing with people as persons, and in person, rather than treating them as instances of abstract categories ("divorced and remarried," "gay," "immigrants," etc.). In his governance Francis knows how to make decisive interventions, but he prefers to create and support processes that encourage the slow, often contentious work of consultation, deliberation, and discernment. He distrusts solutions to problems that set new policies or institute new structures without first pressing for conversion. And for him the need for conversion is greatest when it comes to corruption, one form of which is clericalism.

Francis understands corruption to be an attitude of assured self-reliance; an unwillingness to admit one's own sinfulness, frailty, and limitations; and a tendency to project them onto others. This spiritual sickness brings a sense of entitlement, an eagerness to demonize one's opponents, and an incapacity to exhibit empathy and mercy. It also requires constructing and maintaining an elaborate network of deception and gossip, of the type Francis has so relentlessly criticized in the Roman Curia. Corruption knows nothing of mercy, for oneself or for others, and this is why Francis is so insistent on rooting it out. At its deepest level, Ivereigh's book portrays the pope as a master spiritual director, leading the whole church (the clergy in particular) to open itself to the mercy of God and turn away from corruption.

Wounded Shepherd is a richly detailed and engaging portrait of Francis as pope, and it often succeeds in showing the deeper consis-

CNS / TONY GENTILE, REUTERS

tency behind what sometimes appear to be contradictory positions or decisions. But I'm not sure that Ivereigh kept his promise to be more critical than he was in his first book about Francis. It's true that he disavows his earlier description of Francis as "the great reformer," or the "gaucho cardinal." Yet, he replaces it with a portrait of "the great spiritual director," whose discernment of the needs of his directees is almost always "impeccable." And when Francis does misjudge—as he did, catastrophically, with the clerical sex-abuse scandal in Chile in 2018—Ivereigh chalks it up to misinformation, and then quickly goes on to describe the pope recovering so surely and decisively from his mistake that it becomes a happy fault.

There is so much to be grateful for in this papacy, as Ivereigh's book amply demonstrates. But one need not agree with Francis's rabid critics to recognize that both his leadership style and the priorities he instinctively embraces can sometimes hinder his ability to appreciate other perspectives or even lead him to jump to the wrong decision. His reaction to the reforms proposed by the U.S. bishops just over a year ago is a good example. Reeling over the Pennsylvania grand-jury report and the revelations about Theodore McCarrick, the U.S. bishops proposed reforms in November 2018 that would have allowed independent lay-review boards to receive complaints directly and to initiate investigations of a bishop. This proposal was shot down by the Vatican, and the bishops were urged instead to make a retreat in January 2019 and then wait for the February meeting of bishops in Rome. Ivereigh portrays the U.S. bishops' proposal as an inept ploy to manipulate Rome and get themselves off the hook, and also argues that they were only "cleaning the outside of the cup." It was, he argues, a policy "more reflective of a punitive American juridical and corporate culture than a Catholic one," and he worries about allowing "unaccountable lay persons" (a rather clericalist formulation, it seems to me) to have power to initiate an investigation of a bishop. He endorses Francis's insistence that true credibility would be restored only when the bishops showed evidence of genuine conversion, and he depicts the February 2019 meeting in Rome as a retreat with precisely that goal. Here, again, Francis figures as the master spiritual director.

This is a clear instance of Francis giving priority to the problem of corruption, in its spiritual dimension, over the need for institutional reform, and Ivereigh's agreement with the pope on this priority keeps him from considering any other explanation for the U.S. bishops' proposal. And it keeps him from noting that their proposal is roughly in line with what many lay Catholics want from the church at this moment. An institution can also gain credibility when it has the forthrightness to embrace structures of accountability that serve as checks and balances to those in power, structures that do not rely exclusively on their freedom from corruption. This is not necessarily a reflection of a "punitive juridical and corporate culture"; it can derive from a genuine desire to protect the powerless from abuses of clerical power. This wisdom about checks and balances is today being severely tested in our national politics, but it is still a wisdom that American Catholics can bring to the broader church. Ivereigh, who has little good to say about U.S. Catholicism in this book, does not recognize this, and his portrait of Francis leads the reader to wonder whether the pope does. Given the broader features of Ivereigh's portrait of the pope, however, one can still hope that, as individual bishops implement more robust lay-review boards in their own dioceses, and as Francis listens to them during their *ad limina* visits, he will once again enlarge his vision, as he has so often in the past.

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Is Everyone Female?

EVE TUSHNET

"Everyone is female, and everyone hates it." This is the thesis of Andrea Long Chu's performatively edgy, frequently hilarious chapbook, *Females*, which is both a work of queer theory and a satire on its excesses. It's feminist theory fueled by contradictions within feminism—and it's also, unintentionally, an indictment of contemporary Christianity.

To be "female," here, is to be subjected, "to be defined by self-negation," to scoop out your own desires and replace them with somebody else's, desiring only to be what *he* desires. "I am female," Chu writes, "And you, dear reader, are female, even—especially—if you are not a woman."

It's female to be catcalled. It's female to dress seductively. But it's at least as female to hand over your customer's order with a smile and the corporate-mandated phrase, "My pleasure." Chu writes, "femaleness, while it hurts only sometimes, is always bad for you." The femaleness of the human condition is "permanent, unchanging…ontological, not biological…the one and only structure of human consciousness…. Women hate being females as much as anybody else, but unlike everybody else, we find ourselves its select delegates."

This is a light book, cavalier and sometimes self-abasingly funny: "The manifesto is the refuge of the failed artist," Chu proclaims in this manifesto. (Is self-deprecating humor female?) But guts, skill, and one insight are not enough to sustain even such a short work. *Females*, like an '80s career woman's silhouette, is both slender and padded. The book's second half feels especially episodic and slack. Some of the digressions are searing; Chu offers the best and rawest description of the anger/self-righteousness/porn-addiction cycle I've found. But others show the limits of performative edginess: there *might* be an insightful way to link a white supremacist's murder of Heather Heyer to the tropes of "sissy porn," but you probably shouldn't look for it, and Chu definitely did not find it.

FEMALES
ANDREA LONG CHU
Verso
$12.95 | 112 pp.

Chu's joking-not-joking thesis carries the book, and it's as fascinating in what it doesn't explain as in what it does. What struck me about *Females* from the very beginning was Chu's inability (or unwillingness) to imagine what could be good about being female. The very first definition of "femaleness" lists pregnancy as an example of subjection, in which "the self is hollowed out, made into an incubator for an alien force." Don't people…sometimes *want* to be pregnant? Chu quotes Catharine MacKinnon—as approvingly as Chu quotes anybody—defining "the female gender stereotype" as "Vulnerability…passivity…receptivity…weakness…softness…incompetence…domesticity." Don't some of those sound like good things?

Chu does admit, with palpable delectation, "I don't really want to tell anyone what to do; I want to be *told*." Later on, she writes, "Everyone does their best to want power, because deep down, no one wants it at all." This makes even surrender of power just another kind of self-assertion. And it offers no guide for which desires might be best. Desire, in this book, is all-powerful; all people are addicts, helpless to do anything but go after what we want. Discussing the movie *Don Jon*, Chu describes a situation in which two people mutually seek to surrender to one another, and misidentifies them as both acting "male"—self-assertive—when it seems obvious that they're both acting "female." "Females" are defined by submission but because submission itself is always treated as a negative term, Chu never has to ask whether it matters whom we submit to.

Christians (of whom more presently) have sometimes found it consoling to remember that we're mortals, an identity group marked by its helplessness. We've often found it consoling to remember that we're creatures, an identity group defined by its relationship to another party's love. Without God's

animating desire even the atoms of our flesh could not spin.

Chu is a trans woman, and *Females* tells parts of the story of her own gender transition. Perhaps that story, paradoxically, helps explain the absence of any positive valuation of "femaleness." A discussion of how "gender is something other people have to *give* you" closes with the startling aphorisms:

> The truth is, you are not the central transit hub for meaning about yourself, and you probably don't have a right to be. You do not get to consent to yourself, even if you might deserve the chance. You do not get to consent to yourself—a definition of femaleness.

Andrea Long Chu

If your primary experience of creatureliness, of subjection to an unwilled given order, is the realization that your self-understanding is drastically misaligned with both your body and others' interpretations of your body, then "femaleness" might look less like humility and more like hopelessness.

Powerlessness devastates—but Chu remembers that power still corrupts. Each chapter begins with a quotation from an unpublished play by Valerie "SCUM Manifesto" Solanas. If a therapeutic culture has taught us to treat "self-care" as a form of political action, Solanas seems to treat contempt as a form of resistance. Chu wants to reclaim Solanas, just as we once reclaimed "queer": as a marginal and extreme figure, and *for that very reason* central to a consideration of freedom's promise. "This is the root of all political consciousness," Chu writes: "the dawning realization that one's desires are not one's own, that one has become a vehicle for someone else's ego; in short, that one is female, but wishes it were not so. Politics is, in its essence, anti-female." Politics is an attempt to reclaim the self, to assert one's own ego rather than somebody else's.

Feminism, as both the Catholics and the feminists will tell you, has been more successful at making women CEOs than at reshaping work to serve a woman's body. Feel free to get your degree, girl, just make sure you freeze your eggs! Abortion and contraception mean that women can enter the halls of power and compete with the big boys, as long as we're willing to make a few small physical adjustments. A feminism that's only about gaining power inevitably embraces the abuse of power: Solanas's heroine Bongi Perez becomes a catcalling caricature, and a woman can be Secretary of State as long as she's a lady hawk. "To be for women, imagined as full human beings, is always to be against females," Chu writes. But why does every increase in full humanity look so much like a surrender to the needs of state and capital—or to the tyranny of one's own appetites?

One of the delights of *Females* is Chu's trick of ending each tiny chapter with a sudden swerve, like the volta in a sonnet. *Females* has an implicit theology, and it's basically, "What if Nietzsche did *Genealogy of Morals* with St. Bernard of Clairvaux in the St. Anselm role?" Because there is one group of men, other than the consumers of "sissy porn," who have often depicted themselves as in essence "female": male Christian saints.

For these men the soul is appropriately allegorized as a woman because she is, in Chu's sense, "female." All human souls are the fiancée in the *Song of Songs*: seeking her betrothed, beaten by the watchmen, wandering and beautiful and beloved. Cistercian authors can describe Jesus, abbots, bishops, and apostles as mothers, and St. Bernard can insistently describe himself as "nursing" his monks, because they see motherhood as self-gift; and if gift is loss then the loss of self is to be praised. We feed others with our own substance or not at all.

Christians believe that Love died as a spectacle—exposed, displayed, objectified unto death. He prayed, "Not my will but yours be done." We believe that God came to us as a man, perhaps our most universal symbol of power, *so that* he could die broken and helpless, serving us and subject to our desires. And in this we must imitate him; which we don't. Perhaps the greatest indictment of Christianity is that it has induced so few men to become "female" in this sense. For this is the overturning at the heart of Christian ethics: that everyone should be "female," even—especially?—if you are not a woman.

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PHOTO BY KHOLOOD EID

Divided by a Common Language

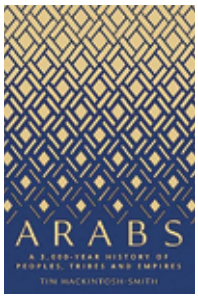
PATRICK RYAN

Western views of the Arab peoples have long been rife with misconceptions. In late nineteenth-century America, the term "street Arabs" was applied to the homeless children on city streets, whose plight was captured by the photographer and social reformer Jacob Riis. Such children were often pickpockets and petty thieves, and "street Arabs" hinted at the American view of Arabs themselves. During World War I, Colonel T. E. Lawrence—with help from the writer and broadcaster Lowell Thomas—popularized the struggle of the peninsular Arabs against the Ottomans, making both himself and the Arabs seem heroic. In the 1920s, the misspelled "Sheik of Araby" conjured images of sultry-eyed Rudolph Valentino or Jazz Age tap dancers entertaining corpulent sultans downing grapes amid a harem of beauties.

Few of these popular views of the Arabs had much relationship with reality. The discovery of petroleum in the Middle East did gradually lead outsiders to distinguish some Arabs from other Arabs—especially rich Arabs from poor ones. They have also come to recognize that Iranians, Turks, Kurds, and Armenians are not Arabs, any more than Irish, Scots, Welsh, Canadians, and Americans are English. In this regard the title of Tim Mackintosh-Smith's book holds the key to its significance. It is not only about "*the* Arabs," or the rise of Islam in the seventh century among some Arabs, or the current prominence of oil-rich Arab nations. Rather, the book attempts to encapsulate significant characteristics of a wide-ranging population united by a language—one of the few Semitic languages still currently in wide use.

Not all Arabs are Muslim, and not all of them understand each other when they speak; the many regional dialects of Arabic make an illiterate Arab farmer in Egypt unable to communicate easily with one in Syria. But both probably know that there is a language that unites them—and, at the same time, divides them. No one ordinarily speaks what is called *al-fuṣḥà*, the most elegant version of the language, but all educated Arabs recognize it as the best example of Arabic eloquence. The nationhood of the Arabs precedes the era of Muhammad in the development of Arabic oral literature, especially pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. As Mackintosh-Smith aptly remarks, however, "written Arabic is no one's mother-tongue: speakers of Arabic have to learn to read and write in a 'foreign' language."

After finishing a degree in Arabic at Oxford in his early twenties, Mackintosh-Smith decided to learn to speak the language like an Arab, rather than like an Oxford don. Since then he has authored three books about Ibn Battutah, the greatest Muslim traveler of the fourteenth century. Ibn Battutah is the "Tangerine" in the title of the first of these books, *Travels with a Tangerine* (like the hybridized orange fruit, he took his origins from Tangiers in Morocco). Mackintosh-Smith has lived for decades in Yemen, a place known in classical Roman times as *Arabia Felix* ("Happy Arabia"), distinguishing it from *Arabia Deserta* to the north. Far from *felix* today, Yemen has fallen apart for internal reasons made worse by a major military assault by its wealthy northern neighbors, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Both of these oil-rich plutocracies, despite their supposed Islamic piety, are starving Yemen into submission, and doing so with the active connivance of the Trump regime, the major arms supplier in the region. Mackintosh-Smith poignantly dedicates his book to the memory both of the unified Yemen that existed for the quarter century prior to 2014, and of a Yemeni youth of eighteen who died in the effort to save it.



ARABS
A Three-Thousand Year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires

TIM MACKINTOSH-SMITH
Yale University Press
$35 | 630 pp.

The book's introduction and first four chapters provide a nearly unparalleled understanding of the context for the rise of Islam in seventh-century Arabia—though the author generously acknowledges his debt to the late Philip Hitti and his *History of the Arabs*, first published in 1937. As Mackintosh-Smith explains, the difference between the majoritarian, Sunni version

Jan Jansson, *A Current and Correct Depiction of* Arabia Felix, Arabia Petraea, *and* Arabia Deserta, 1658

of Islam, and the minoritarian, Shiite version originally reflected differences between the traditions of north and central Arabia, on the one hand, and those of southern Arabia on the other. (Curiously, none of the four countries where Shiite tradition today holds majority status—Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Bahrain—is actually in southern Arabia.) Yemen's current problems are aggravated by one little-known Shiite subgroup, the Zaydis, usually designated in the press by a clan name, Houthis. The whole of the Arab world is now plunged into what Mackintosh-Smith calls "the Age of Disappointment." The collapse of Iraq, Syria, and Libya a decade or more ago has flooded Europe with an exodus of Arabs, sparking widespread xenophobia. The author sees an ancient motif acted out in this tragedy: "The sufferings of Isma'il, the Qur'anic child-migrant and legendary Arab progenitor, are relived by millions."

Mackintosh-Smith has a genius for recognizing parallels in the Islamic history of the Arabs. I was particularly struck by the connection he saw between the career of an early tenth-century Muslim mystic and martyr in Baghdad, al-Hallaj, and the fate dealt out to a Muslim reformer in twentieth-century Sudan, Mahmoud Muhammad Taha. Al-Hallaj championed the piety of the poor and insisted that close union with God was achievable by all, not just the scholarly hierarchy. Taha was executed in Khartoum by the dictatorial regime of Nimeiri in 1985 for heretically suggesting that some of the later, more political passages of the Qur'an, revealed to Muhammad while he was governor of Medina, were of less religious importance than the longer, more ecstatic portions communicated while he was still a persecuted prophet in Mecca. Mackintosh-Smith sees a parallel between the fate of Taha and the fate of al-Hallaj a millennium earlier, both of them accused of making God more accessible to mere mortals. "Shaykh or charlatan, martyr or mage, al-Hallaj undermined the Abbasid order.... [H]e would be regarded as equally subversive if he were alive in the Arab world today, when truth is still what it is instructed to be, and those who speak independently—like the Sudanese visionary Mahmoud Muhammad Taha—can still pay with their lives."

This extraordinarily learned and perceptive book reveals an author who is no casual British tourist, but an explorer of the greatest acuity, the Ibn Battutah of the twenty-first century. "We shall not cease from exploration," T. S. Eliot once wrote, "and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." Mackintosh-Smith has not ceased from exploration, and readers who now know about the Arab world—many for the first time—are the lucky beneficiaries of all that he has witnessed.

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No Longer Peripheral

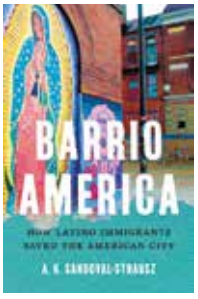
CÉSAR J. BALDELOMAR

There are currently 60 million Latinos living in the United States. They are the nation's largest "minority" group, and in 2018 accounted for 52 percent of the country's population growth. In a very real sense Latinos in America are also under attack. The August 2019 El Paso massacre was a brutal expression of the xenophobia stoked by President Trump, and of the policies of his administration, not altogether unforeseeable when Latino immigrants are referred to as "invaders" and "rapists" and subject—adults and young children alike—to detention in cages.

How to counter the false political narratives that stigmatize and dehumanize Latinos? Examining their contributions to American society—particularly over the past half century—would make for a good start. A. K. Sandoval-Strausz, professor of history and director of the Latinx Studies Program at Penn State, has done that, writing a tour-de-force historical account of the important role of Latinos in urban revitalization. *Barrio America: How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City* details the interrelated factors that led to decades of urban decay and then to the period of recovery that has followed.

Blending historical, sociological, and legal analysis, Sandoval-Strausz structures his book in three parts that unfold chronologically. "There Goes the Neighborhood" details the forces that led to urban decay in the 1950s. "Here Comes the Neighborhood" tracks the new waves of Mexican and Caribbean migration that first repopulated and then restabilized urban districts from 1965 to the mid-1980s. "The Seeds of the Future City" shows how immigrants from all over Latin America both expanded existing U.S. barrios and established new ones, thus helping to alleviate national economic and housing crises. His conclusion brings readers to the present, providing much-needed insight into how Latino immigrants are now helping sustain economically distressed rural areas through a mix of labor, purchasing power, and tenancies.

Sandoval-Strausz knows both the usefulness and the limitations of relying on statistics to illustrate how Latinos have reshaped urban neighborhoods throughout America. So he also draws on dozens of interviews, conducted over twenty years, with the very migrants who helped resurrect two such neighborhoods: the Little Village community area in Chicago and the Oak Cliff section of Dallas. These oral histories help humanize "the people who so dramatically transformed their neighborhoods and their lives," which in turn breathes life into what might otherwise have been a dry demographic study. *Barrio America* in fact reads like a well-researched novel, of interest to the scholar and accessible to the general reader, both of whom will want to keep turning the pages to see how the story ends.



BARRIO AMERICA
How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City

A. K. SANDOVAL-STRAUSZ
Basic Books
$32 | 416 pp.

Sandoval-Strausz's first chapters provide a solid historical account of the emergence of urban centers in the early 1920s and their demise following mass white flight to the suburbs in the 1950s. He begins by surveying the development of both Little Village (originally called South Lawndale) and Oak Cliff. European immigrants living in these two neighborhoods originally depended on industrial and military manufacturing jobs. But after the Second World War, these jobs evaporated, weakening the urban white working class. Only economically privileged whites managed to flee the city for the suburbs; working-class whites were left behind to eke out a living in their once-bustling communities.

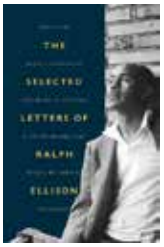
But soon their prevailing concern became the influx of black residents. These new arrivals were not welcome. Sandoval-Strausz describes the redlining and arbitrary loan practices that made it difficult for African Americans to purchase homes, and recounts how real-estate agents refused to show homes in white neighborhoods to black families. In Oak Cliff, white residents protested the construction of a housing development intended for black residents and terrorized black women by throwing fireworks at them. As these frictions mounted, white flight accelerated.

Until this point, the majority of Latino migrants to the United States had been Mexican. They often kept to themselves in *colonias*—areas on the peripheries of towns and cities closer to the fields and construction sites where the jobs were. The vast majority of pre-1950 Latino immigrants worked in agriculture and construction (especially cement-pouring), with many residing in the United States only for seasonal work. The *colonias* were therefore spaces in flux, more akin to work camps than actual neighborhoods. But as whites left urban areas, Latinos soon came in, and began to establish discernible neighborhoods. In the Dallas area of Oak Cliff, it was the barrio that eventually came to be known as Little Mexico—a separate and distinct neighborhood in a city that was becoming tri-racially segregated. In Chicago, it was a barrio known as the Near West Side, home to both Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, and hard by blocks of Italians, Greeks, Eastern-European Jews, and African Americans.

Yet Chicago's ethnic mixing was no guarantee of comfort and safety. Latinos still had to contend with subpar housing conditions, were routinely caricatured and defamed by local newspapers, and were often the targets of crime and violence by the white community. In one of Sandoval-Strausz's most compelling interviews, Little Village resident Guadalupe Lozano recounts how, despite her family's presence in Chicago for two generations, she experienced "a lot of discrimination" from her mostly white neighbors. The police were often called on her and her friends—disparaged as "dirty Mexicans"—simply for playing in public parks. When she was eight, a white man accosted her on the street and then kicked her, which today would be considered a clear case of assault and battery against a minor.

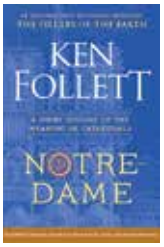
Sandoval-Strausz does not overlook the relative privilege that some Latinos (especially those with whiter skin) experienced in relation to blacks and other darker-skinned Latinos. For the most part, though, whites ranked Latinos somewhere between black and white, not quite one or the other. Oth-

BOOKS IN BRIEF



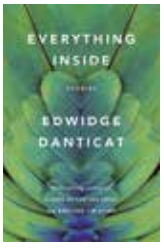
THE SELECTED LETTERS OF RALPH ELLISON
EDITED BY JOHN F. CALLAHAN & MARC C. CONNER
Random House
$50 | 1,072 pp.

Letters selected from a lifetime of correspondence shed fresh light on the insights and anxieties of the author of one of America's greatest novels. Readers can trace Ellison's intellectual, creative, and political development across six decades of exchanges with other writers, thinkers, and, poignantly, his wife Fanny. Masterfully edited, the volume rewards random browsing, but Ellison was an especially prolific and compelling correspondent following the 1952 publication of *Invisible Man*, even as hints of the pressure he'd face in producing a follow-up became evident. To his close friend Albert Murray—on being "flabbergasted" when asked to address a group of African American college students on "achieving peace through creative experiences"—Ellison writes: "I knew I wasn't going to tell them that creative experience brought peace, but only a fighting chance with the chaos of living."



NOTRE-DAME
KEN FOLLETT
Viking Press
$17 | 80 pp.

Notre-Dame: A Short History of the Meaning of Cathedrals is just what it sounds like. Following a preface about the 2019 fire, the pocket-sized volume chronologically traces the history of Notre-Dame's builders and architects; the setbacks of its century-long construction; the nineteenth-century renovation inspired by Victor Hugo's writing; and de Gaulle's procession to the cathedral after World War II. Follett, whose 1989 novel *The Pillars of the Earth* led him to research cathedrals, writes conversationally, with humor and optimism, emphasizing the quirks of personality and strength of community that enabled such a monumental project. The proceeds of the book will be donated to the French historical preservation charity La Fondation du Patrimoine.



EVERYTHING INSIDE
EDWIDGE DANTICAT
Alfred A. Knopf
$25.95 | 222 pp.

Set mostly in Haiti, or among Haitian immigrants in Florida, shared culture (food, weather, faith, language) unites Edwidge Danticat's new collection, *Everything Inside*. But each story is also precisely unique. A home health aid lends her ex-husband ransom money to free his kidnapped girlfriend. An art dealer meets with her lover for the first time after his family has been killed in an earthquake. An essayist flies to meet a childhood acquaintance, now the first lady of a Caribbean island, for a glamorous New Year's Eve ball. Danticat plays out these relationships and others—between employers and employees, college roommates, a woman with dementia and her daughter—perfectly. Though her characters find themselves in rare circumstances, somehow they always respond relatably: with nuanced guilt, grief, wisdom, and tenderness.

Little Village, Chicago

ers grouped Latinos according to their native languages. This lack of a clear classification presaged the current identity debates within Latino communities (i.e. Latinx, Latino/a, or Hispanic?).

At the heart of *Barrio America* is "Nineteen Sixty-Five," a pivotal chapter that analyzes a decisive year in U.S. immigration history. That's when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act, which abolished the xenophobic and restrictive National Origins Act of 1924. The 1924 law—enacted at the height of America's obsession with eugenics and coinciding with the reemergence of the KKK—set national-origin quotas designed to bar Jewish and Catholic Europeans, Asians, Africans, and others. Elite whites feared racial and ethnic mixing, with one congressman declaring that the act would preserve the United States as "the home of a great people," for the "English-speaking—a white race with great ideals, the Christian religion, one race, one country, and one destiny." Nearly a century before Donald Trump was making promises about keeping people out, a supporter of the act stated that he would even "build a wall of steel, a wall as high as Heaven," to keep out "inferior" races.

The passage of the 1965 act revealed that Latinos had finally arrived on the national political scene. Indeed, their clout had been growing for years, especially within the Democratic party: during John F. Kennedy's presidential run in 1960, "Viva Kennedy" became the very first Latino-focused campaign in U.S. history. And as Sandoval-Strausz notes, the Latino vote proved decisive in President Kennedy's narrow victory over Richard Nixon. Latinos were thus no longer peripheral. White politicians could hardly ignore their influence at the ballot, and began paying closer attention to their economic contributions, as both consumers and producers.

There were other pivotal moments in 1965: the collapse of the Mexican agricultural sector that year forced many Mexicans to seek economic opportunities in the United States; Fidel Castro's government expelled more than one million Cubans from the island, many of whom settled in Miami and New Jersey; and the American occupation of the Dominican Republic prompted a wave of Dominicans to flee to the northeastern and southeastern United States. All of these groups began to arrive en masse in the same urban centers that wealthy whites were simultaneously fleeing, resulting in the economic and cultural revitalization of areas like Oak Cliff and Little Village.

Barrio America's final two chapters highlight the ways Latino immigrants (both first and subsequent generations) further strengthened their neighborhoods. In part, their contributions were economic: they stimulated local economies (as consumers) and stabilized real-estate markets (by purchasing and renting apartments, homes, and stores). But they also established grassroots political organizations, thereby ensuring that their interests were represented locally, statewide, and nationally. Sandoval-Strausz concludes by underscoring the continued positive impact of Latinos on society, culture, and politics, in both urban and rural areas. Thanks to Latino immigration, the nation's population has remained stable despite the historically low birth rates among the U.S.-born. And undocumented Latinos contribute about $13 billion in taxes yearly—funds that they will not benefit from through Social Security retirement payouts or Medicare because of their "illegal" status.

Barrio America ably maps the journeys of Latino immigrants, forcefully making the case that it is they, and not their detractors, who have made (and indeed keep making) America great. In the words of Sandoval-Strausz, close attention to the past enables us to hear the future of America "in the words of a people who, despite so many years of being dispossessed, overworked, underpaid, and falsely accused, have been among the most optimistic of all Americans." If anti-Latino hostility in the United States is unlikely to abate anytime soon, neither is the indomitable spirit of U.S. Latinos. We'd do well to discover for ourselves the source of their strength.

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HEMIS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The Reasons for Our Rights

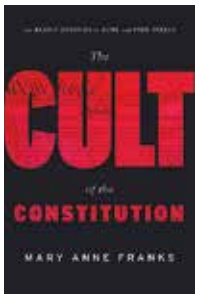
CHRIS HAMMER

The National Rifle Association and the American Civil Liberties Union seem to approach the political and legal issues of the day from opposite points on the ideological spectrum—the former is often considered to be an organization of the right and the latter one of the left. Mary Anne Franks's *The Cult of the Constitution*, however, proposes that the NRA and the ACLU are more similar than we might think: both organizations shape the political narrative of constitutional rights by adopting an absolutism that counters threats to gun rights and free speech by advocating for "more" guns or speech. More controversially, Franks claims that both organizations' advocacy advances a techno-libertarian individualism that protects white, male supremacy.

Second Amendment fundamentalism, what Franks terms "the cult of the gun," adheres to an uncompromising belief in an individual's right to use guns in self-defense. By conflating the possession and use of firearms with the constitutional right to do so, any proposal to promote gun use—such as relaxing restrictions on the open carry of guns or establishing stand-your-ground laws—"will be viewed as protecting the constitutional right to self-defense," while any attempt at regulating gun use or availability "will be viewed as attacking the constitutional right to self-defense." We have seen this phenomenon after mass shootings in Newtown, Orlando, Las Vegas, Parkland, El Paso, Dayton, Odessa, and far too many other places to name: calls for even moderate reforms, such as expanded registration and background checks, have been stifled by the absolutism of the NRA and its political allies.

First Amendment fundamentalism, what Franks terms "the cult of free speech," manifests its libertarianism in the "marketplace of ideas" metaphor that Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. coined. As Franks explains, under this justification for the freedom of speech, "when all ideas, even deeply offensive ideas, are allowed to freely circulate in the marketplace, the best ones will win out, and the truth will ultimately prevail." In other words, the answer to white-nationalist marches in Charlottesville is not suppression, but more speech.

On its face, because these interpretations of First and Second Amendment rights are framed in universal terms, they would seem not to advance one person's rights over another's. But using many contemporary examples, Franks shows that in practice, the focus on constitutionalizing all aspects of gun ownership and speech end up harming women and minorities. If it's true that, in the words of the NRA maxim, the antidote to a "bad guy with a gun" is "a good guy with a gun," how can one tell if someone carrying a gun in the exercise of open-carry laws is a bad guy or a good guy? Too frequently, a split-second judgment arises out of prejudice, whether overt or subconscious, with deadly results. Consider the 2016 death of Philando Castile in Minnesota. After being pulled over for a traffic stop, Castile notified police that he had a permit and a lawful weapon in the car he was driving. Almost immediately, he was shot to death by the police officer he notified. Although Castile followed the same gun laws that the NRA champions, Franks observes that the NRA said nothing in response to Castile's death.



THE CULT OF THE CONSTITUTION

MARY ANNE FRANKS
Stanford University Press
$26 | 272 pp.

Franks also illustrates how First Amendment absolutism harms women and minorities. She uses the example of nonconsensual pornography, or "revenge porn": the disclosure of sexually explicit images and video without the consent of the subject. ("Revenge" is a misnomer, as it can encompass other motives, such as extortion for profit.) These images and videos could have been obtained by hidden cameras or hacking, or given in confidence by a romantic partner. Given how easy it is for uploaded materials to spread in the internet age, many states have sought to regulate and punish those who post ill-gotten explicit images and videos. Yet despite the invasion of privacy and trauma that nonconsensual pornography imposes on its victims, the ACLU has maintained that it is free speech, and has opposed comprehensive legislation that would prohibit the nonconsensual distribution of sexually explicit images.

Franks deftly contrasts the ACLU's position on revenge porn with its position on other matters of privacy, such as protecting individuals' geolocation data or forbidding merchants to ask for Social Security information. But these additional nuances undermine

Franks's decision to single out the ACLU as an exemplar of First Amendment fundamentalism. Franks also illustrates how the NRA's move away from a focus on safety, training, and education, toward a Second Amendment fundamentalism, is relatively recent in its nearly century-and-a-half existence. (For instance, the NRA supported the Gun Control Act of 1968.) The comparisons between—and thus Franks's focus on—the two organizations are necessarily inexact.

Nevertheless, Franks's thoroughly egalitarian approach challenges readers to rethink the fundamentalisms we may espouse. Her introduction invokes the Golden Rule and Kant's categorical imperative in explaining that "a rule that applies only to others and not to ourselves is no rule at all, but merely a self-serving preference upon which no coherent moral system can be built." In applying this principle to constitutional rights and obligations, she observes that "the only rights any of us should have are the rights that all of us should have."

Franks claims that this principle—what she calls "constitutional reciprocity"—is illusory, and has been since the country's founding. This is not a new argument: more than a century ago the historian Charles Beard described the Constitution as essentially an economic document, drafted and ratified by those whose property ownership qualified them to vote on and gain from its establishment. More recent historical research, including that of Cornell University historian Edward Baptist in *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, examines how embedded slavery was in the development of capitalism and industry in the North.

While Franks uses contemporary examples to revise and critique the conventional wisdom about the First and Second Amendments, her critique—which aims to engage in a "constitutional accounting" that confronts how "constitutional rights and resources have overwhelmingly been allocated to the interests of white men"—does not explain how to accomplish the constitutional reciprocity that she seeks. Franks suggests that amending the Constitution is one method; she calls this possibility the Constitution's greatest virtue and "a flash of humility" by its drafters. But she does not suggest any specific amendments to the Constitution; her focus is on reframing the narrative to highlight "the groups who suffer the greatest deprivations of constitutional rights."

While such a corrective is certainly needed, it risks dividing. If the marketplace metaphor—whether of guns or speech—creates and reinforces imbalances of power, a more inclusive metaphor might be the public square. A communitarian public square is well rooted in our constitutional history and the Bill of Rights, and the rights of the Constitution were framed with a more communal vision of freedom in mind. Until recent Supreme Court decisions in *United States v. Heller* and *McDonald v. Chicago*, the predominant interpretation of the Second Amendment emphasized the communal aspect of "a well-regulated militia." James Madison, drafter of both the First and Second Amendments, understood free speech to constitute an integral part of self-government. He articulated this concept most forcefully in his "Report on the Virginia Resolutions," arguing that citizens can only engage in representative self-government by freely examining and discussing the merits and demerits of the issues of the day. Both of these constitutional rights contain communal aspects to advance collective freedom, not just individual license. Importantly, this communitarian vision of democracy does not seek freedom from the state or one's fellow citizens but instead ensures freedom so that everyone has a role in crafting the state.

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Language & Conversion

MELODY S. GEE

I say I grew up bilingual, but the truth is more about loss than duality. My earliest language was Mandarin, spoken by caregivers in the Taipei foster home where I awaited adoption for the first nine months of my life. When I arrived at my parents' home in California, Mandarin was replaced by my family's southern village dialect of Cantonese—my first language extinction. Like many first-generation children of immigrants, my parents' mother tongue carried me through age four, when I started school. English was introduced like an invasive species—devouring, crowding out, and multiplying through every television show and new friend. And yet, English did what it was supposed to do: provided access, made me less afraid. What do you call an invasive species that the ecosystem comes to depend on?

Even as language widened the gulf between us, my mom and I shared a linguistic intimacy: parallel ossification. Her English and my Cantonese grew bone-hard, losing the suppleness required to overcome recurring errors, blanks, or broken connections. With her, I now speak what Amy Tan calls a daughter's dialect, able to express only what a child can express to a mother: *hungry, tired, full, please*.

In high school, I began learning Spanish. The grammar clicked in me. I could mimic friends' accents, my tongue somehow agile in ways it no longer was with Cantonese. After four years of study, I started to describe myself as bilingual. A lesson in the first year haunted me: *Our words for things are arbitrary. Words come from us, not the thing itself.* The distance between me and my parents is an accretion of words. Yet words, and by extension our alienation, were randomly assigned. Words themselves did not contain the essence of *daughter* or *nui,* for that would make one word less true than the other. Words could not measure the distance between my parents asking in one language and my answering in another.

In 2015, my husband's teaching assignment brought our family to his university's Madrid campus for the spring semester. We arrived with our four-year-old and one-year-old, breathless before the city's beauty, its pace and height. Hapless exchanges in Spanish with the super and a pharmacist on our first day sank my confidence. For the entire semester, I was unable to relax, constantly defensive and over-prepared, never knowing if my vocabulary would get me through the task at hand. Easily overwhelmed, I pretended to understand far more than I did, rehearsing every possible interaction,

Rafael Forns y Romans, *Madrid,* 20th-century painting

then retreating into silence as often as I could. My oldest threw tantrums whenever I held a conversation for more than a few moments, as if not being able to understand her mother was frightening.

For most of our time in Madrid, I was slow, tangled, and ungrounded. When I finally saw pictures from that time, I realized that we had managed to buy groceries, eat out, hire sitters, hail taxis, enroll in ballet and music classes. In truth, we lived well, and people were extraordinarily generous and patient. Still I'd felt lost and inadequate, slightly unreal. My weariness came from inhabiting a slightly different version of myself, waiting for the real me to return once we landed back home.

When I found it meaningless to hear *I love you* in Spanish, I thought of all the ways my mom needed her mother tongue for a sense of grounding and reality. She counted and measured only in Cantonese. Any words of care, from *eat slowly* to *sleep early,* came out in Cantonese, as did words of anger. And so her care and her anger, her superstitions and stories, all drifted on her side of the gulf. All of my words for desire and the future remained on mine. Each of our languages of intimacy was the other's language of limitation. I wish I could say my empathy for my mom grew after living in Madrid. But my mind only raced ahead to our return to the states in May. For fifty years in her adopted country, my mom has held the desire for such relief.

On the cusp of my conversion to Catholicism, I heard what I can only describe as a murmuring. I felt like my newborn daughter, craning to follow my sound everywhere, and like her sister, exploding with her first words, eager almost to the point of desperation to exchange something with us. For her biological needs, my oldest still cried. But talking seemed to be for something more, without which she could not fully become part of the world. I saw in my girls how instinct drives language acquisition, how in learning to speak, they became more *themselves*. I'd been propelled first toward Mandarin, then Cantonese, and finally English. Now I could feel something reverberating

The word convert comes from the Latin com, *meaning "together," and* vertere, *meaning "turn." Rather than complete transformation, my becoming Catholic has been a series of turns—toward an ultimate concern, toward reconciliation, toward a source.*

in me like all those mother tongues. Not just a new set of ideas or beliefs to take up, but a desire to turn and follow whatever was speaking to me and learn to speak back.

The poet Pádraig Ó Tuama says that the first thing God does in the first chapter of Genesis is speak, thus making all words sacramental. I wondered which of my languages held the sacramental words—the one extinguished in infancy, the other lost one that cleaved me to family and culture, or the one with which I now make my way in the world and take in the Gospels? Language has always been transactional for me. With every English word I gained, a Cantonese one seemed to slip away. I carried new words like currency out into the world beyond my parents' house. The ones I brought back I hid like a thief. I know they watched me grow my stash with confusion, fear, and an unmistakable flicker of relief.

There was something instinctual about my conversion, but something of a non-native speaker's struggle for fluency as well. I grew up surrounded by second-language speakers, accustomed to the lilting Chinese tones in my family's English. I could predict exactly how my mom would ask one of our regular restaurant customers, "You want you same all the time order?" I watched her repeat the same ESL homework year after year, unable to wrangle her tongue or her memory, berating herself for lacking discipline and education. As my daughters learned to speak their mother tongue, they delightfully misapplied grammar rules like all children do: *The bad guy sworded the good guy. I jumped in this puddle because my shoes are waterable!* These early errors are evidence of innate grammar systems developing. My girls needed no correction to never again utter these phrases. They will not remember conjuring wholly new language from the depths of themselves, proving that one's mother tongue is not learned through imitation alone. But a second-language learner's errors, like my mom's inability to conjugate verbs, can be impossible to surmount.

Gaining a second language is not a simple act of acquisition. I learn *amor* and it changes how I understand *love*. But I also carry a primal dictionary of untranslatable Cantonese, like *hahm toi*, which means the particular smell of your home or the clothes you've been wearing. It is the word for the smell of you, and it connotes familiarity and intimacy, along with lazy hygiene and others' disgust. Two languages require two systems to coexist and undergo continuous comparison. On the one hand, this lends the world dimension and nuance. On the other, it requires endless shifting, balancing, and choosing just to make meaning. The work is like trying to build your raft while keeping afloat. And then there are all the words I didn't know I was missing. Like *sobremesa*, the unhurried conversation across a table cluttered with the meal's dishes. When describing a dinner party to my spiritual director, I was unable to articulate the buoyant warmth of people who made me feel entirely at ease with myself. She offered me *incarnation* and *consolation*. I looked back and inscribed these new words over other memories: my first pregnancy sonogram, discovering a new career after being laid off, the first time I walked across my sprawling college campus. Other times got labeled *desolation* or *acedia*, as my past submitted to a kind of translation.

It's sometimes impossible not to compare my life before and after conversion—what I've gained and what I've let go of, what's grown harder or easier. In becoming Catholic, I imagined conversion could mean complete transformation, which in many ways I had wanted: a fresh start, even a do-over. But I also knew better than to think I could take up one seamless self. The word *convert* comes from the Latin *com*, meaning "together," and *vertere*, meaning "turn." Rather than complete transformation, my becoming Catholic has been a series of turns—toward an ultimate concern, toward reconciliation, toward a source. And the language of faith toward which I turn, whether by instinct or effort, does not rewrite me by erasure but by expansion. It moves me, past and all, out and into everything.

As with Spanish and Cantonese, I've sometimes felt a struggle toward fluency in the language of faith, as if I am speaking a mangled version of Catholic haunted by errors and blunted pathways I am too old to develop. But then I think of my mom's English, created just as her new self was created: in this country and no other, under these circumstances and no others, for these reasons and for this life. Her English is not broken. It is both a string of errors and a thing unto itself. The idiolect of my new faith is, perhaps, such a thing too—a language of conversion that is not in conflict but negotiation, not evaluated for correctness but for expressions of becoming more myself. Every word carries an entire topography of experience and culture. Tectonic plates of past and present collide and reconfigure with each utterance. In these terms, fluency has always been ours, all of us language learners babbling and turning our heads, wanting to hear and be heard.

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Keynotes

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC

Immediate Past President/CEO, Catholic Health Association (Washington, DC)
Member, National Academy of Medicine

David Cayley

Award-winning journalist & host, CBC Radio One's "Ideas" (Toronto)
Author, *Ideas on the Nature of Science*

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