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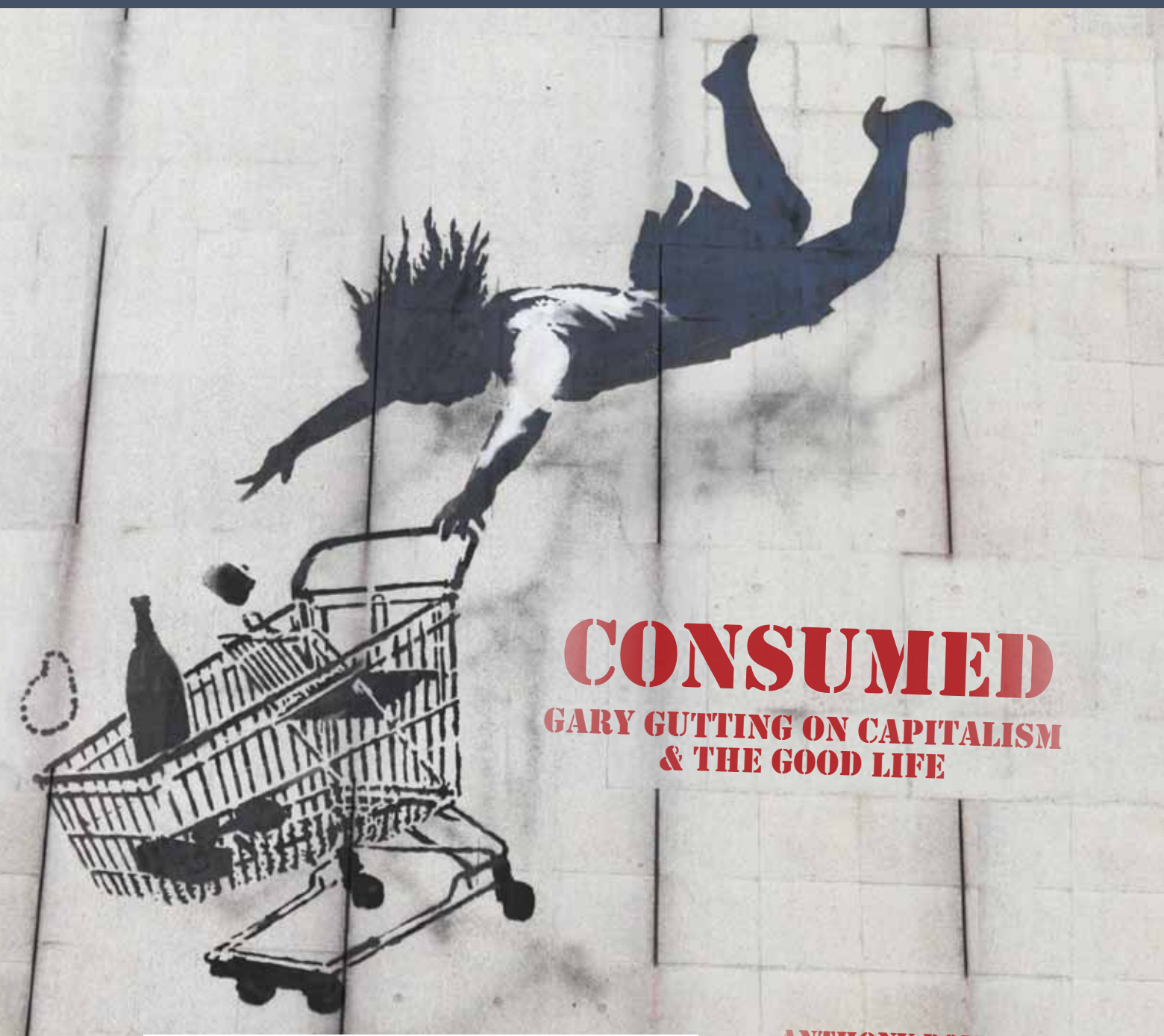
Commonweal

JANUARY 11, 2013



CONSUMED

GARY GUTTING ON CAPITALISM & THE GOOD LIFE

ANTHONY DOMESTICO ON DAVID JONES

PAUL MARIANI ON JOHN BERRYMAN

RAND RICHARDS COOPER ON 'LIFE OF PI'

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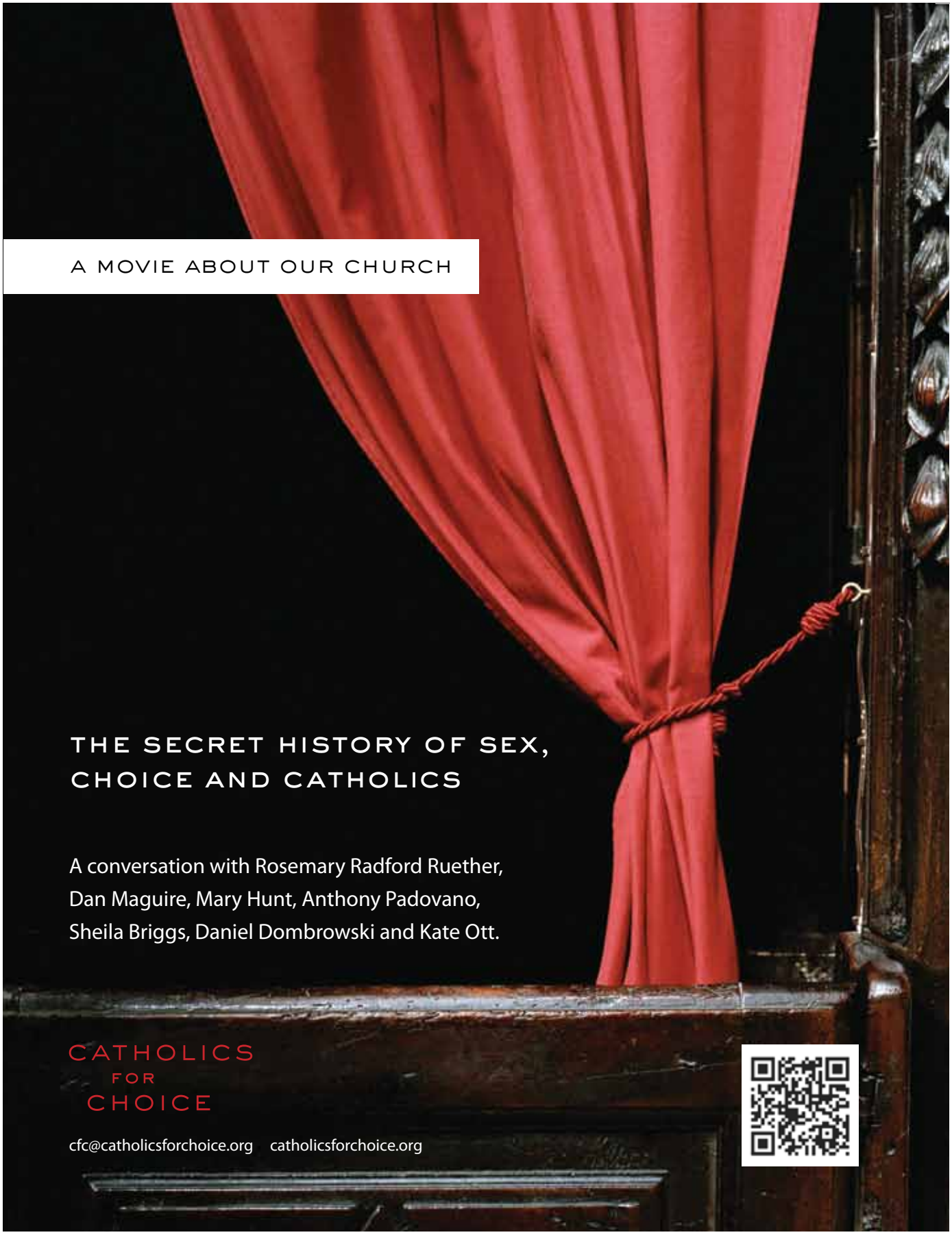
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LETTERS

Jazz & the liturgy

KIND OF BLUE

Having been very much involved in the performance of Mary Lou Williams's Mass in Rome in January 1969, I write to express my thanks to Ian Marcus Corbin for his excellent article "A Jazz Mass?" (December 7), and to add a few points from my memory of the occasion.

Not long after Mary Lou came to Rome and began pulling together singers and musicians from the students at the North American College, and various members of religious orders, I received a call from the Office of Worship in the Vatican asking me to help them. She was pushing to perform the Mass at a papal liturgy, and saw such an event as a validation both of jazz and of her role as a Catholic musician. She was, however, totally naïve about how Rome works.

At that time, Pope Paul VI was wrestling with the approval of the *Missa Normativa*. He had announced his approval in April 1968, but was still hesitating, sending back texts for revision. Complaints from bishops around the world about abuses had started to come in, which upset him even more. But when it came to music, he was tone-deaf. He lacked the musical tastes of Pius XII, John Paul II, or Benedict XVI. Pope Paul thought Gregorian chant and perhaps some polyphony were the only kinds of music appropriate to the liturgy.

But he was not without a sense of humor. About a year before Mary Lou arrived in Rome, Pope Paul, still worried about the *Missa Normativa*, decided to experience the new Mass himself in three forms: a very simple form with almost no singing, a form with everything sung, and then a mixed form with just the essentials sung. The three forms were celebrated over three evenings, and for each one the pope was among the congregation, about twenty-five of us. For the second Mass—the one with everything sung—students of the German College did the singing. Afterward, he invited a few of us into his study to discuss it. As we were sitting down, he turned to me and asked: "Father Abbot, what do two Italians do when they meet abroad?" "I don't know, Your Holiness," I replied. "They open a barbershop," he said. "What do two Greeks do when they meet abroad?" the pope asked. "I don't know, Your Holiness." "They open a restaurant," he said. "And what do two Germans do when they meet abroad?" "I don't know, Your Holiness." "They sing in four-part harmony."

When the possibility of performing Mary Lou's jazz Mass for the pope fell through, we searched for a suitable church. The Latin American College Chapel seemed best, because it was somewhat modern and had good acoustics. The Mass was to be celebrated on the first anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King Jr. When I visited the chapel for the rehearsal, I found TV cameras everywhere—along with four reporters from the major networks. The piano and the musicians were center stage and the altar almost hidden. But as the rehearsal went on, it became clear that the musicians were not up to the task. Mary Lou was wonderful, but she could not turn amateurs into professionals in an afternoon. The singing did not come naturally to the young men involved. Mary Lou's idea of a Mass was naturally that of the old traditional form—Lord Have Mercy, Glory to God, Holy, Holy, Holy, and Lamb of God, with a beautiful bluesy song for the Offertory and for Communion. But I could not have conceived of celebrating Mass under those conditions.

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Lose-Lose

Beware of any entitlement reform described by its advocates as "win-win." Such proposals are almost always too good to be true. Presented as nothing more or less than common sense, they often owe their whole appeal to common misconceptions.

The proposal to raise the age of eligibility for Medicare from sixty-five to sixty-seven, which has figured prominently in press coverage of the "fiscal cliff," is a good example. Who could object to such an obvious cost-saving measure? Don't people live longer now than they did in 1965 (the year Medicare began)? So why shouldn't they also continue working longer? As long as they're employed, they'll keep their employer-based health insurance, thereby saving the federal government billions of dollars. Everyone agrees we have to find spending cuts *somewhere*; this seems like an excellent place to start.

And so it might be if the older Americans who need Medicare the most really were living much longer lives, or if shrinking Medicare really saved the country—and not just the federal government—any money.

While life expectancy *at birth* has risen by almost nine years since 1965, life expectancy at the age of sixty-five—that is, the number of years one can expect to live after reaching that age—has risen less than five years. You might think that's still pretty good, especially since the proposal is to raise the age of eligibility by only a couple of years; the average beneficiary would still enjoy a longer period of coverage than was anticipated when the program was launched.

But once you dig deeper into the actuarial data, you discover an important distinction: While the top 50 percent of earners are living more than five years longer after retirement, the bottom 50 percent are living only about a year longer. Thus, if the age of Medicare eligibility were raised to sixty-seven, most blue-collar retirees would enjoy fewer years of coverage. What's more, in order to keep their health insurance until Medicare kicked in, many of these workers would have to keep doing jobs that become more difficult with age. As Paul Krugman nicely put it in the *New York Times*, "Why should janitors have to retire later because lawyers are living longer?" It seems like a lot to ask, even at a time of huge budget deficits. Until we decide that the national debt has become such an emergency that we can permit ourselves to raise taxes on the upper-middle class (not only the very rich), it will be hard to justify forcing grandparents to stay on an assembly line or at the wheel of a forklift just so they can see a doctor.

Not that it would even save the country much money. On the contrary: while the higher age of eligibility would save the *federal government* $5.7 billion in 2014, it would cost the U.S. economy a total of $11.4 billion. In other words, the whole country would end up spending twice as much more on health care for seniors as Washington would save. Why? According to a report by the Kaiser Family Foundation, sixty-five- and sixty-six-year-olds would pay $3.7 billion more in out-of-pocket costs, their employers would pay $4.5 billion more in insurance premiums, and state governments would have to pitch in another $700 million to help pay for the low-income seniors who would be shifted from Medicare to Medicaid. Finally, premiums would go up for the remaining Medicare beneficiaries, as well as for anyone who gets his or her insurance from the new exchanges authorized by the Affordable Care Act. This is because the average age of both groups would increase: the seniors who are the youngest—and therefore healthiest and least expensive—Medicare beneficiaries would become the oldest participants in the exchanges.

Better, then, to call this proposal "lose-lose." It could appeal to only two kinds of politician: those who don't understand what it would actually entail, and those who understand all too well but are finally less interested in cutting debt or lowering health-care costs than in depopulating a program they never much liked to begin with. After all, the fewer people covered by Medicare, the fewer voters there will be to resist the next effort to privatize it. Real common sense means saving Medicare, and maybe even expanding it one day, so that as many Americans as possible can enjoy its advantages over our exorbitant and inefficient system of private health insurance. ■

December 18, 2012

SHUSH

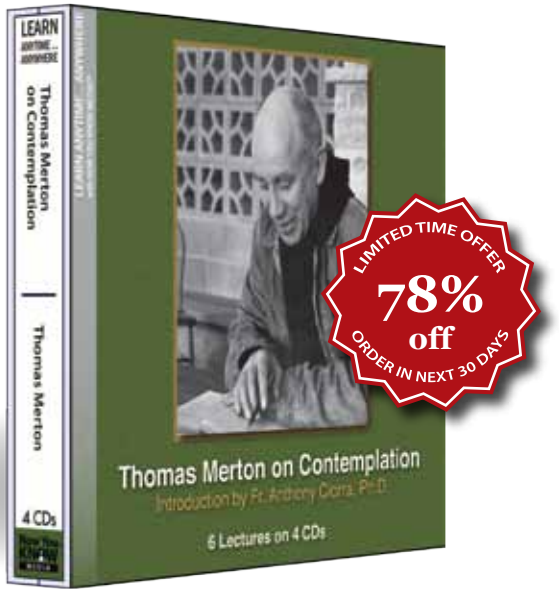
From Mollie Wilson O'Reilly's dotCommonweal post "Women Deacons? Best Not to Talk about It":

On December 6, the *National Catholic Reporter*'s Joshua J. McElwee wrote that William Ditewig, former USCCB staffer and co-author of *Women Deacons: Past, Present, Future*, had been denied permission to speak "to the [Philadelphia] archdiocese's deacons, [deacons'] wives, and deacon candidates" this coming March, based on the decision of the archdiocesan "speaker approval commission."

Just so we're clear: Whether it's possible for the Catholic Church to admit women to the diaconate remains an open question. In the December 21 *Commonweal*, Phyllis Zagano, one of Ditewig's *Women Deacons* co-authors, explains where the matter stands today ("It's Time"). "The conversation continues," she reports—even among bishops. Was the speaker approval commission in Philadelphia unaware of that? They wouldn't comment, but an archdiocesan spokesperson said it didn't matter: "[Kenneth] Gavin said that since the matter is still considered unanswered Ditewig's presence for the deacon event wasn't appropriate."

Nobody wants to risk running afoul of the orthodoxy police; easier to just preemptively cancel any speakers who might give you trouble, regardless of whether the objections are well founded. But this is the most ridiculous example I've heard of yet. This diocese is afraid to allow the former head of the USCCB office for the diaconate to speak to its deacons, because said deacon has demonstrated an awareness of and interest in scholarly study of…the diaconate?

When the mere thought of someone maybe provoking a discussion of the possibility of women's ordination is enough to freak everyone out, I can't help wondering why the people who are most dedicated to supporting the official line—that Rome lacks the authority to ordain women priests—don't act as if they *believe* it. Here's what they say: It's not sexism at all. It's not that the all-male hierarchy is unwilling to share any sort of authority with women. It's just that this particular role isn't open to women—our hands are tied! If that's true, and if the members of the speaker approval commission in Philly believe it's true, shouldn't we all be thrilled to discover other areas in which the sharing of authority with women might be possible? "We can't admit women to the priesthood," I keep waiting for conservative bishops and theologians to say, "but happily we can include them in the fullness of the church's life and worship in a variety of other ways. What a positive thing for our church." I keep waiting for more bishops and diocesan officials and self-appointed keepers of orthodoxy to say things like that. Why don't they, do you think? ■



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Jo McGowan

Shivved

THE GROWING THREAT OF FUNDAMENTALISM IN INDIA

A few years ago, my husband Ravi and I walked to our local police station at one in the morning to complain about blaring music from a *jaagran* being conducted a few blocks away. A *jaagran* is a Hindu all-night prayer service held at top volume (microphones are installed all along the road) and designed to drive out evil spirits. Keeping everyone else awake is part of the tradition, and if Dehradun were a village where everyone is Hindu, there might be a logic to it—like a town-wide cleanup drive. Where all agree that everyone benefits from an endeavor, presumably everyone should take part in it.

Dehradun, however, is a diverse community, with believers of many faiths and plenty of nonbelievers too. And, at least in principle, it is governed by secular laws—including one that bans excessive noise after ten o'clock at night. Hence our visit to the police station. All that had stopped us from going earlier was laziness and a faint hope that the noise would cease on its own. We never expected to be reprimanded by the police for complaining. "Are you a Sikh?" the officer in charge asked sharply. "A Muslim? How dare you complain about Hindus practicing their religion?"

Ravi didn't pause for a moment. "I am a Sikh and a Muslim and a Christian and a Hindu. I am also a citizen of this country and I have a right to sleep at night. Your job is to enforce the law."

The law did not get enforced that night and there was nothing we could do about it. Religious fundamentalism in India is a menace, and it is growing. The kind of hostility we encountered in the police station has become more and more common. And the intolerance of religious minorities is often fostered and encouraged by civic, religious, and political leaders like the policeman, who are willing to subordinate the law of the land to their sectarian loyalty.

Bal Thackeray, the most strident and unapologetic champion of the Hindu "cause," passed away last month at the age of eighty-six. According to Indian media reports, 1.5 million people turned out for his funeral. That day Mumbai came to an absolute standstill: shops, offices, and schools all closed—not so much out of respect as out of fear. The Shiv Sena (Shiva's Army), which Thackeray founded in the state of Maharashtra and led till the day of his death, has effective ways of getting people to show it respect, including lynching those who don't.

Thackeray formed the Shiv Sena in 1966 because he believed that native Maharashtrians were being discriminated against in favor of better-educated South Indians, Gujaratis, and Parsis. His hatred for outsiders was the one constant of his life, and it was for him to decide who belonged and who didn't. Muslims were next; Communists and trade unionists followed.

Thackeray was perversely proud of his divisive role in the country and fearless in his willingness to flout the law and incite mobs to violence. A government inquiry found him responsible for the 1992–93 riots against Muslims in Mumbai, yet no charges were ever brought against him. In 2002 and 2008, he openly exhorted Hindus to form suicide squads in order to attack Muslims, and many obeyed. Not only did the government fail to stop him; it lionized him. With the huge voting block he controlled, he was clearly too big to touch.

When Thackeray died, his body was wrapped in the Indian flag, and he was given a twenty-one-gun salute—an honor normally reserved for nation-builders and patriots. Film celebrities, media personalities, and national-level politicians vied for the VIP seats at his funeral, thereby seeming to endorse Thackeray's message: *Violence is good. If someone's presence bothers you, kill him.* Thackeray's intolerance, unchecked by any public authority, has worked its way into the Indian psyche; intolerance is an epidemic here and violence is the preferred solution to most problems. Road rage is rising, and honor killings (attacks on young people who marry against their families' wishes) are frequent.

On the day of Thackeray's funeral, a young woman used her Facebook page to ask whether the entire city of Mumbai should shut down in honor of a man who had done nothing but sow hatred and discontent. Another young woman "liked" her comment. Both of them were arrested the next day under section 505(2), which prohibits statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred, or ill-will between classes.

Both girls were quickly released. But one shouldn't take too much comfort from that fact. Bal Thackeray, who openly and brazenly urged Hindus to assault and destroy Muslims, was never even criticized, let alone arrested. And while the girls' cases were being processed, Shiv Sena activists took the opportunity to ransack and destroy a clinic belonging to an uncle of one of the girls. He is a medical doctor who takes care of any patient who walks through his door, regardless of his or her religion. Clearly not part of the Shiv Sena program.

A doctor who treats without discrimination or a bus driver who speeds through a mob bent on abducting his Muslim passengers—these are the people who give us hope. The problem is that there aren't enough of them. And, with the country's leadership actively discouraging such people, it is difficult to see how that will change any time soon. ■

E. J. Dionne Jr.

Both Good & Great

LEARNING TO LOVE DAVE BRUBECK

It was a conversation representative of the era: Somewhere around 1969 or 1970, my dear, conservative Uncle Ray asked his son and me why we liked music by Jimi Hendrix and the Doors but we never listened to Dave Brubeck.

Uncle Ray never budged an inch on politics, but he was not doctrinaire about music. Eventually, he came to like at least a few songs by the Doors. And it saddens me that I never got to tell him how much Brubeck's music would one day mean to me.

Brubeck, who died in December, one day short of his ninety-second birthday, wasn't my first love in jazz, yet I have come to see him as a genius whose music gets more interesting as it's heard again and again. I have a hunch that my own discovery of the power of jazz—my awakening came courtesy of Miles Davis in his *Kind of Blue* and *Seven Steps to Heaven* period—parallels the experience of so many who have come under its spell. It's the exceptional American music that we will keep coming back to.

Kind of Blue led inevitably to an engagement with Miles's brilliant collaborators: John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, and Tony Williams. They are among the architects of our distinctly American contribution to music. Yet that "distinctly American" idea points to something odd about the recent history of jazz that my uncle seemed to understand: For a long period into the mid-1970s, rock pushed American jazz far into the background. Jazz continued to win a wide following in Europe and Japan, but young Americans largely ignored it.

I didn't pay much attention to jazz until I was a grad student in Britain. My friend Paul Taylor (later an editor and columnist with Reuters) took me one cold, foggy night to a small pub on the North Sea in a village called Seahouses, near his hometown of Newcastle, to hear a jazz band led by one of his friends. I was entranced. Later, my high school friend Jack Risko introduced me to *Kind of Blue*, and to Bill Evans's work. I was hooked.

Dave Brubeck in concert, Hamburg, 1972

HEINRICH KLAFFS

At that time, American jazz musicians faced a kind of exile. The celebrated tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon—he became well known thanks to the 1986 film *Round Midnight*—left the United States in the early 1960s and spent some fifteen years in Europe, where he said he found more love for jazz and less racism. He returned to the United States in 1976. His session at New York's Village Vanguard was dubbed his "homecoming," and was released under that name as an album.

It was around then that jazz itself came home as Americans began to embrace it again. Contrary to some who contend that jazz is dying, I would insist that the past three decades or so have been dynamic and fertile. If you doubt this, consider the work of (among many others) Cyrus Chestnut, Roy Hargrove, and, of course, Wynton Marsalis and his family.

Through all this, there was Brubeck. The paradox is that the popularity he won with "Take Five," the tune everyone knows, and his 1959 *Time Out* album probably got in the way of the respect that he (along with Paul Desmond, his essential collaborator on the alto sax) deserved. Too often in the arts, the fact that someone is accessible is taken to mean that he isn't truly creative. This idea is very wrong, and it's especially mistaken in the case of Brubeck, an extraordinary innovator in rhythm and meter. His music is now so familiar that we forget how daring he was as a composer.

He also defied the romantic image of the troubled and distant artist. It's almost as if his being a generous soul, a loyal family guy, and a quietly and thoughtfully religious man—"Forty Days," one of his best pieces, was inspired by Jesus' wanderings in the desert—were held against him. Yet over the years, earthly redemption came his way. It turned out you could be both good and great.

"Art may not have the power to change the course of history, but it can provide a perspective on historical events that needs to be heard, even if it's seldom heeded," Brubeck said in a 2009 interview with *Commonweal* ("Great Art Survives," February 27, 2009). "After all the temporary influences that once directed the course of history have vanished, great art survives and continues to speak to each generation." Brubeck's music will keep speaking. ■

Richard Schiffman

In Defense of Organic Farming

LESS THAN A CURE-ALL, MORE THAN A FAD

In September, Stanford University's Center for Health Policy released a controversial report called *Are Organic Foods Safer or Healthier Than Conventional Alternatives?* The study—a meta-analysis of more than two hundred studies—concludes that there is "little evidence of health benefit from eating organic food." The researchers found that, according to vitamin and mineral content, organic products were no more nutritious than conventionally grown meats and vegetables.

The media offered a bewildering array of reactions. *New York Times* opinion columnist Roger Cohen disparaged the organic-food "fad," calling it an "elitist, pseudoscientific indulgence shot through with hype," and claiming organic food offered "no obvious health benefits" over cheaper, conventionally produced foods. The *Los Angeles Times*, on the other hand, published an editorial noting that the study largely ignored the ill effects of pesticides on conventionally grown produce, along with the hormones and antibiotic-resistant bacteria that taint factory-farmed meat and poultry. The study also failed to examine processed foods, the health effects of the chemical additives, dyes, preservatives, and genetically modified foods that are allowed in conventional products but not in those labeled "organic."

ELZA FUZA / ABR

But what most of the media responses to the Stanford analysis ignored is the most compelling argument of all for organic growing—the environmental impact of its opposite, the chemical-intensive agriculture that dominates the American landscape and much of the globe.

My own appreciation for organic agriculture dates to a conversation I had years ago with a cotton grower from the Central Valley of California who told me about his switch from conventional to organic growing. We talked about the benefits to the water, soil, and ecosystem of farming without toxic chemicals, but what struck me most was his sheer boyish enthusiasm for a line of work that in my urban arrogance I had envisioned as backbreaking, mindless, and numbingly routine.

Thanks to the switch to organics, he said, farming had become for him a labor of love—and also an intellectual challenge that required him to think out new approaches to controlling pests and maintaining soil fertility, rather than depending on standardized applications of toxic chemicals and petroleum-based fertilizers.

"When I started out farming," he told me, "it was like showing up at an assembly line day in and day out. You work with heavy machinery—combines, planters, sprayers and harvesters—and can spend an entire growing season without actually getting any dirt underneath your fingernails."

Going organic, on the other hand, had forced him to pay attention in a whole new way to what was actually happening on his land. "It is not like playing a pre-set score. It's more like jazz; you improvise, you respond to the world around you." Organic growers, he explained, are constantly innovating, trying out new locally adapted seed varieties, rotating crops, plowing back stalks and other organic residues, planting cover crops, and experimenting with a variety of natural approaches to controlling weeds and insect pests in response to changes in the weather, in insect populations, and in soil vitality.

Organic farming can be tougher to get right than conventional agriculture, he conceded. But precisely because it is far more "hands on," it also tends to be more rewarding. "It brought me back in touch with nature," the cotton farmer effused. "I rediscovered what farming is all about."

I remembered those words when I read about yet another study, this one conducted by McGill University in Montreal and the University of Minnesota, a statistical synthesis of sixty-six studies that compared organic with conventional agriculture. The conclusion, published in *Nature*: Organic is not as efficient as its rival—at least when judged according to yield per acre.

No surprise there. If all that matters is the sheer volume of food that can be produced on a given plot of land, then chemical-intensive farming will win. For big cash crops like corn, soybeans, and wheat, conventional agriculture produces over 25 percent more than organics per acre. Yet when it comes to certain fruits, legumes, and leafy vegetables, the yields of the two methods are essentially equal.

Nobody disputes the fact that modern agriculture is fabulously productive. A single acre of farmland in Iowa produces one hundred seventy bushels of corn. Yet even though industrial agriculture produces more "calories per acre," that doesn't mean it's more efficient than organic, if efficiency is judged by the full environmental costs. Farming machinery

and petroleum-based chemicals require huge amounts of fossil fuels. Industrial farming depletes the soil of nutrients, and uses water less efficiently than organic methods. Toxic pesticides and herbicides harm pollinators and pollute the groundwater. All those factors must be weighed when assessing the efficiency of our dominant agricultural system.

Still, can small-scale organic farming ever hope to meet the world's food needs? Development experts say that feeding the hungry is not simply a matter of growing more food, but of producing the right kinds of foods in the right places, and finding ways of getting it to those who need it.

That's where the current system is failing. A typical acre of Iowa farmland produces one hundred seventy bushels of corn. Most of that is fed to cattle. Yet meat production is highly inefficient. The ratio of fossil-fuel energy required to produce one unit of food energy is 35:1 for beef production, compared to 3:1 on average for all other agricultural products. The Brazilian rainforest and other areas of the global south are being cleared to grow soybeans to feed beef cattle in the United States. In many places thousands of small farmers are being forced out to make way for large-scale industrial agriculture. Farmers in developing nations cannot afford agro-chemicals, patented genetically modified seeds, and the latest farm equipment. For the rural poor, low-cost farming methods may be a better way to get food to their families and neighbors who need it. That's why in 2008 the UN and World Bank's "International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development" called for "food sovereignty," an approach favoring small-scale sustainable agriculture over the export-driven factory farming being pushed by large multinational corporations.

The question is not whether organic or conventional agriculture can better feed the world. Modern agriculture is here to stay. But it does need to change. Underground aquifers are drying out; bees and other pollinators are dying; the climate is getting hotter and drier in many places. Desertification is encroaching on huge swaths of Africa, China, and elsewhere. Arable land is declining worldwide.

This means that farmers need to learn to grow food more sustainably. The trend toward increasing the acreage devoted to meat production must be reversed. Neither organic nor conventional agriculture can do it alone. We have to develop an approach that combines the best in industrial production with organic and sustainable practices. Only then can we hope to feed the billions who will be born in the coming decades, and preserve the planet and its irreplaceable farmlands for generations to come. ■

Richard Schiffman *is an environmental journalist whose work has appeared in the* Washington Post, *the* Guardian, NPR, *the* New York Times, *Reuters and elsewhere. He is the author of two biographies, most recently* Sri Ramakrishna: A Prophet For the New Age, *and a widely published poet.*

Words in Action

The Sacramental Poetry of David Jones

Anthony Domestico

For the modernist poet and painter David Jones, the artist's life always seemed a natural fit. Born in Kent in 1895, he was raised to value beautiful words and images: his father was a printer's overseer, and his family, Jones wrote, "took the printed page and its illustration for granted." Jones himself started drawing at the age of five and enrolled in art school at fourteen. In 1922, after serving with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the First World War, he joined an artist guild formed by the sculptor Eric Gill and began experimenting with wood and copper engraving. Jones worked in several media—painting, engraving, and illustrating—wedding a postimpressionist aesthetic to an interest in ancient Welsh and Celtic myth. His art is all but impossible to categorize, but "modernist medievalism" might be a good start.

Precocious as a visual artist, Jones proved even more talented as a poet. In 1928, a decade after being discharged from military service due to trench fever, he began writing about his experience at the front. In 1937 this effort to give the horrors he witnessed at the Somme "a shape in words" yielded *In Parenthesis*—a brilliant poem/novel, formally challenging and dizzyingly allusive, that immediately claimed a place in the pantheon of modernist literature. T. S. Eliot declared it "a work of genius." W. B. Yeats sought out Jones at a party and dramatically bowed to him, saying, "I salute the author of *In Parenthesis*." Critic and poet Herbert Read claimed that the poem exhibited "the noble ardour of the *Chanson de Roland* and the rich cadences of the *Morte d'Arthur*." W. H. Auden was also an admirer.

Given this contemporary acclaim, how is it that David Jones is so little known today? His poetry is rarely taught, even at the college or graduate level; and then generally only within courses focused specifically on World War I literature, Catholic writing, or Welsh literature. (Jones's father was born in Wales, and his works make great use of medieval Welsh epics.) Most academic accounts of literary modernism mention Jones's achievement in passing, if at all, and even the most passionate lovers of twentieth-century verse have largely forgotten him. In 1961, Eliot predicted that *In Parenthesis* "will no doubt undergo the same sort of detective analysis and exegesis as the later work of James Joyce and the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound." His confidence has proved unwarranted.

I suspect that there are several reasons for Jones's neglect. First and most important is the densely allusive, gnarled, sometimes all but impenetrable nature of his verse. Rife with allusions to Welsh mythology, untranslated bits of Latin, ancient Celtic history, and military jargon, his work reads now like poetry, now like prose, and most often like some strange melding of the two. Such writing is not for the faint of heart: as one critic puts it, this is poetry "so clogged with footnotes as to defy all but the committed academic's patience." Second is the fact that Jones's most important works, *In Parenthesis* and his subsequent epic poem, *The Anathemata*, aren't just difficult, they're also *really long*. Unless you're willing to slog through two-hundred pages of supremely challenging poetry—and most people, including most academics, are not—then you're probably not going to read Jones.

Finally, though, I think Jones's neglect has a lot to do with something altogether different: the extent to which his work is shaped by his Roman Catholicism. Jones converted to Catholicism in 1921, and all his work reveals this religious commitment. *The Anathemata*, for instance, opens with a vision of a Catholic priest intoning the Prayer of Consecration ("ADSCRIPTAM, RATAM, RATIONABILEM") and lifting high the "efficacious sign" of the Eucharist. It ends with a triple vision of a priest consecrating the Eucharist ("He does what is done in many places"), Christ at the Last Supper ("recumbent at the garnished supper"), and Christ "riding the Axile Tree" at Calvary. Throughout the poem, Jones imagines Christ as an ancient Welsh hero who "girds himself" for battle on the Cross. Even the poem's title, *The Anathemata*, refers to "the things set apart" or "made other," which for Jones always refers to the two most important things that are made other: the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

Of course, other major literary figures of the day—Eliot and Auden, for instance—included religious themes in their works. Many read contemporary theology. The American poet Marianne Moore, for instance, recommended the theology of Karl Barth to Elizabeth Bishop, while Eliot solicited contributions to the *Criterion* from neo-Thomists like Jacques Maritain, Martin D'Arcy, and Etienne Gilson.

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David Jones in 1965 (photo by Mark Gerson)

The connections between interwar literature and theology ran deep: Auden became friends with Ursula and Reinhold Niebuhr after moving to the United States and wrote poems invoking the theology of Kierkegaard, Paul Tillich, and Charles Williams; Evelyn Waugh converted after D'Arcy convinced him of Catholicism's intellectual coherence; Jean Cocteau was a close friend of Maritain's.

But Jones's engagement with religion was of a different kind—more overt, more consistent, and more integral to his overall achievement. If you don't like the later, Anglo-Catholic Eliot, you still have "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land*; if you find the Auden who name-dropped Niebuhr and Tillich in his poetry somewhat stuffy, you can go back to "Lay your sleeping head, my love" or "Spain." Jones, on the other hand, is more like John Milton or Gerard Manley Hopkins: there is no separating the poet from the religion. It's no accident that, in a preface to *The Anathemata*, Jones lists as his major intellectual influences Maritain, D'Arcy, and the French Jesuit Maurice de la Taille. In fact, the ending of *The Anathamata*, in which the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Eucharist are seen as three parts of one sanctifying action, puts into poetry the theological argument of de la Taille's 1921 *Mysterium Fidei*. Without this theological context, the ending—and, indeed, much of the poem—is indecipherable.

In short, there are compelling reasons people don't read Jones. Yet he is well worth the effort, both because of the beauty of his verse and because of the light his work sheds on the relationship between literary modernism and Catholic sacramentalism. A good starting point is his 1955 essay "Art and Sacrament." The essay first appeared in a collection, *Catholic Approaches to Modern Dilemmas and Eternal Truths*, that sought to show how traditional faith could illuminate problems that seemed peculiar to modernity. (Representative essays included "Physics and Philosophy," "The Church and Sex," and "An Approach to Africa.") "Art and Sacrament" makes a bold claim: that the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist serves as an apt analogy for modernist conceptions of aesthetic representation. For Jones, modernism in all its forms, from the novels of James Joyce to the paintings of Pablo Picasso, displays a Catholic inheritance. In his view, both aesthetic modernism and Catholicism are invested in what he calls "re-presentation"—the ability of a symbol not just to point toward something else (the artwork's meaning or God's grace) but actually to *embody* this something else, to make it present once again.

Jones begins this argument by carefully distinguishing between two concepts in traditional Catholic theology: art and prudence. Citing Thomas Aquinas and Jacques Maritain, he writes that prudence is "the tutelary genius who presides

over the whole realm of faith, moral, religion, ethic; she is thought of as Holy Wisdom." Prudence is the faculty by which we seek to make our conduct conform to other, higher ends; it is "concerned with oughts and ought nots." Art, on the other hand, is concerned only with the end of the artwork itself, what Jones calls a "fitting together" of parts to form a unified whole. Art does not exist to serve a didactic function; questions of "ought and ought not" are simply irrelevant. (Of course, this doesn't mean that art has no moral implications, just that these moral implications are not art's *raison d'etre*.)

This contrast between prudence and art leads to Jones's second, related claim: that art is defined by its gratuitousness. Jones stresses again and again that art sets itself against what he calls the "merely utile." A warplane may possess striking beauty; but it is not, and never can be, a work of art, precisely because it exists *for* something else (in this case, war). Art, on the other hand, is an activity dedicated to creating something just for the sake of that something. This activity, Jones argues, uniquely defines humankind. Other creatures create beautiful objects—a spider's web, for instance—but they create them for use. If for Aristotle man is a political animal, then for Jones man is an artistic animal.

Finally, "Art and Sacrament" takes up an issue dear to modern literary and visual art: the problem of representation. Although modernism is notoriously difficult to pin down, one trait that connects figures as diverse as Eliot, Joyce, and Picasso is the intensity with which they questioned traditional modes of representation. Much of what we identify as distinctively modernist—the distorted chronology of a novel by Virginia Woolf, for instance, or the fractured perspectives of a painting by Picasso—were attempts to re-think how, and indeed if, art could represent anything outside itself. Jones picks up on this general argument, claiming that art should not be understood as mimetic. We won't find the meaning of a painting, for instance, by seeing if it looks like the tree outside our window. Rather, he argues, the artwork and the formal relations within it are itself the meaning. "A good painter must say, 'This is not a representation of a mountain, it is "mountain" under the form of paint.'" The critic Cleanth Brooks coined a famous literary concept, the "heresy of paraphrase," which says that we can't extract and rephrase a poem's meaning since the poem's very form *is* its meaning. Jones is making a similar argument: the painting doesn't refer to its subject; it "re-presents" it, enacting it formally and embodying it within the artwork itself.

So far, Jones's essay is pretty standard modernist fare; Ezra Pound said many similar things, though in a far less temperate tone. But then, in the most original and provocative move of his argument, Jones explicitly links this modernist understanding of representation to the Catholic idea of transubstantiation. Just as, for Picasso, a painting doesn't refer to a tree, but is the tree under the form of painting, so for the Catholic, the Eucharist doesn't refer to Christ, but rather is Christ, under the form of bread and wine. In both, form and substance, the symbol and its meaning, are one. In a 1967 letter, Jones elaborates on this link, asserting that his religious conversion

> had quite a lot to do with my seeing the sacraments of the church as fitting in perfectly with all human *poiesis*—nothing could be more "post-impressionist" [i.e., what we now call "modernist"] in *that sense* than what the church predicated of the Mass, where "sign" & "thing signified" are said to be one.

Consider what Jones is claiming here. It's not just that he feels some vague consonance between the aesthetic beliefs of modernism and the religious beliefs of the Catholic Church. Rather, he is implying that his conversion was in part a result of this consonance. For Jones, the Catholic Mass is the most perfect distillation of modernist ideas of representation. Or, more accurately, art is modernist insofar as it embodies this Catholic, eucharistic mode of representation.

Given this vision of art as a kind of sacramental representing, how does Jones go about making his own poetry sacramental? The first and most obvious way is by regularly featuring sacramental scenes. As I mentioned earlier, *The Anathemata* opens with a representation of the eucharistic celebration:

> We already and first of all discern him making this thing other.
> His groping syntax, if we attend, already shapes:
> ADSCRIPTAM, RATAM, RATIONABILEM...and by preapplication and for *them*, under modes and patterns altogether theirs, the holy and venerable hands lift up an efficacious sign.

The description of the priest's task in consecrating the Eucharist can also be read as a description of the poet's task in transmuting words into art. In both cases, language's "groping syntax" allows one thing to "become other," to be set apart or made sacred: words, by their formal arrangement, become verse; bread and wine, by their consecration, become signs of God's divine grace. This conflation of artist and priest recurs throughout the poem, and indeed throughout Jones's work. At one point, describing the origins of pottery in the age between the Paleolithic and Neolithic cultures, he writes:

> Searching where the kitchen midden tells of the decline
> which with the receding cold marked the recession of the
> Magdalenian splendours.
> Yet there he brights fragmented protomorphs
> where lies the rudimentary bowl.

The passage moves away from a decimated culture, symbolized by the refuse of the kitchen midden, and toward the unexpected, unexplainable aesthetic impulse itself, symbolized by the simple, beautiful bowl. Jones signals this cultural shift by a formal shift, from prose to verse. Just as a utilitar-

ian object becomes an artistic one through the process of "brighting," so Jones's language becomes more obviously "poetic" through formal line divisions. This act of brighting the "rudimentary bowl" leads Jones to a series of questions:

> How else
> *multifariam multisque modis*
> the splendour of forms yet to come?
>
> How the dish
> that holds no coward's food?
> How the *calix*
> without which
> how *the* re-calling?

Looking to Christian tradition, we can see the brighted bowl as a *figura* of the chalice: the bowl receives its ultimate meaning, its fulfillment, in the cup that symbolizes Christ's new covenant with humanity. A straight line runs from the homely, pre-Neolithic bowl to the magical cup that King Arthur must rescue from Hades ("the dish / that holds no coward's food") to the Eucharist itself.

How the dish? How the *calix*? We might read these questions not rhetorically, as they seem to suggest, but literally: How does one get, causally, from the "rudimentary bowl" to the sacred "*calix*"? What process initiates the transformation of the purely utilitarian (an unadorned bowl) into the beautiful, salvific cup? The answer, it appears, is the gratuitous process of brighting. Just as the brighted cup is a *figura* of the sacred *calix*, the act of brighting is a *figura* for the celebration of the sacraments: we can only grasp the full meaning of the proto-artist making the bowl "other" when we see the priest making the bread and wine of the Eucharist "other."

Yet in "Art and Sacrament" Jones wasn't simply saying that art is sacramental when it represents the sacraments; he was saying that art was sacramental when it "re-presents" *anything*—when it embodies the particular kind of re-presentation manifested in the Catholic Eucharist. To see exactly how Jones accomplishes this re-presentation in his own work, we need to look at how he deploys language in a sacramental manner even when the sacraments themselves are not being represented. We need to look at his style.

Jones is one of the most stylistically distinctive poets of the twentieth century; to read a page of his poetry is to know, almost immediately, who wrote it. His most distinctive formal trait is the frequency with which he forces words into new functions, taking, for instance, a noun and using it instead as verb or adjective. Consider a passage from *The Anathemata* describing an ancient ship as it sails past islands off the coast of Cornwall:

And did Morgana's fay-light
abb the warp of mist
that diaphanes the creeping ebb, or worse
the rapid flow
off Scylla's cisted West-site
screening her felspar'd war
with the skerry-mill?

Within a mere six lines, Jones coins two verbs ("abb" and "diaphanes") and one adjective ("felspar'd"); uses two other words in an uncommon manner ("worse" as a verb, and the noun "cist" as the participle "cisted"); and employs three hyphenated phrases—"fay-light," "West-site," and "skerry-mill"— in which two nouns create a single compound. Throughout Jones's work one finds nouns yoked together to form new compounds, or turned into participles, or both. *In Parenthesis* describes World War I's trenches this way: "Under-earth shorn-up, seeled and propt. Substantial matter guttered and dissolved, sprawled to glaucous insecurity. All sureness metamorphosed." Stripping his language of verbs of being—there is not an "is" or an "are" to be found—enables Jones not just to describe the devastation of the battlefield, but to enact it. The form of the language, its clipped and broken music, embodies the brokenness of the scene itself; the devastation of a war-torn landscape is made present again, through the poem's fragmented language and syntax.

Jones most frequently accomplishes this enactment by forcing nouns into past participles, a technique that he picked up from Gerard Manley Hopkins. In *The Anathemata*, for instance, a martyr is described as "tunicled"; hail is "cataracted"; breath is "clovered"; fabric is "fine-abb'd." Here—also from *The Anathemata*—is the poet's description of a ship's keel:

Planked or
boarded and above
or floored, from bilge to bilge.
Carlings or athwart her
horizontaled or an-end
tabernacled and stepped
or stanchioned and 'tween decks.

What is Jones accomplishing by so forcefully wrenching words into new functions? What is the effect of saying "Substantial matter guttered and dissolved" instead of "substantial matter *was* guttered and dissolved?" I would argue that it is precisely in this grammatical tic that we see Jones creating a poetry of re-presentation, moving away from predication and description—x *was like* y—toward enactment and action. Describing a ship as "tabernacled" rather than "like a tabernacle" is to turn a *thing* into an *action*. Describing a war not as "fought with felspar" but as "felspar'd" animates the mineral, transforming it from an inert object into a process. Jones's favorite theologian, Maurice de la Taille, described sacraments as "words in action," efficacious signs that actually make things happen in this world. In creating his strange participles—*tunicled*, *cataracted*, *tabernacled*—Jones was similarly hoping to create "words in action," words that, like the sacraments, described by enacting.

A different modernist, writing slightly earlier, also noted the connections between modernist representation and Catholic understandings of the Eucharist. In a 1914 essay on the Imagist poetry of Ezra Pound and H. D., the novelist and poet May Sinclair argued that, for these poets, the image is not "pure form. It is form *and* substance." She went on: "The image is not a substitute; it does not stand for anything but itself"; "in no case is the image a symbol of reality (the object); it is reality (the object) itself." After hinting at the sacramental valences of the image, Sinclair drew them into the open in her conclusion:

> For all poets, old and new, the poetic act is a sacramental act with its rubric and ritual. The Victorian poets are Protestant. For them the bread and wine are symbols of reality, the body and blood. They are given "in remembrance." The sacrament is incomplete. The Imagists are Catholic; they believe in transubstantiation. For them the bread and wine are the body and blood. They are given. The thing is done. *Ita missa est*.

While I wouldn't embrace Sinclair's easy division between Victorian and modernist, Protestant and Catholic, I agree that there is something sacramental about Imagism's notion of representation, just as there is something sacramental about modernist aesthetics more generally. David Jones knew this, and his poetry and prose are the best arguments that I know for the intertwining of religion and literature in the modernist period.

Writing in the *New York Review of Books*, W. H. Auden admitted that convincing others to read Jones could be a tough sell. "It is certainly true," Auden wrote,

> that no reader is going to be able to make Mr. Jones's "nowness" his own without taking a great deal of trouble and many rereadings of *Anathemata*, and, if he says: "I'm sorry, Mr. Jones is asking too much. I have neither the time nor the patience which he seems to expect me to bring to his poem," I do not know what argument one could use to convince him otherwise. I can only state my personal experience, namely, that I have found the time and trouble that I have taken with *Anathemata* infinitely rewarding.

Unlike Auden, I do find convincing arguments for reading Jones—arguments based on his literary-historical importance, his critical intelligence, and his formal inventiveness. But, in the end, Auden is right to say that the most convincing argument is personal witness. For me, reading Jones has been a delight and a pleasure. His work has enriched my sense of poetic possibility, of what language can achieve and how it can achieve it. Jones's poetry offers us the challenge of all great art—to open ourselves up to strangeness, to work through the difficulty so that we can hear the music. ■

Less, Please

Capitalism & the Good Life

Gary Gutting

Is capitalism an enemy of the good life? Marxists and other radicals think so. Toward the end of *How Much Is Enough?*, Robert and Edward Skidelsky (an economist father and his philosopher son) quote one such thinker:

> Working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition…so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery.

Readers of *Commonweal* will be more likely than most to recognize the firebrand cited as Leo XIII in *Rerum novarum*.

The Skidelskys' own rhetoric is usually more restrained. The sober line of thought that underlies their engaging, informative, and stimulating book goes roughly as follows. Under capitalism, businesses sell us goods and service that are essential for living well, and most of us get the money to buy these things by working for businesses or, less often, profiting from investments in them. We need capitalism because no other economic system can produce sufficient goods to meet our essential material needs such as food, shelter, clothes, and medical care. But these goods are not enough. A good life mainly depends on intangibles such as love, friendship, beauty, and virtue—things capitalism cannot produce and money cannot buy. Given a sufficient minimum of material goods, the good life does not depend on the world of commerce.

Graffito by the Spanish 'subvertising' group ConsumeHastaMorir

Nonetheless, for most of us, work takes up the bulk of our time and energy, leaving comparatively little for living a good life. Some see their work itself as a pursuit of beauty, truth, or virtue. But most find what they do valuable primarily as a means of earning money to buy material necessities. And capitalist society itself insists that a good life requires much more than a minimum of material goods. A truly good life, it urges, requires fine food, a large and well-furnished home, stylish clothing, and a steady diet of diverting and enriching experiences derived from sports, culture, and travel—all of which are expensive.

We all agree that there's a limit beyond which more material goods would make little difference to the goodness of our lives. But almost all of us think we are considerably below that limit. In general, then, capitalism works against the good life from two directions. It requires us to engage in work that makes little contribution to our living well, beyond supplying our material necessities, and it urges us to believe, falsely, that a good life is mainly a matter of accumulating material possessions. The Skidelskys sum it up this way: "The irony is that…now that we have achieved abundance [in advanced capitalist countries], the habits bred into us by capitalism have left us incapable of enjoying it properly."

Their view of capitalism is critical rather than revolutionary. They decry its tendency to sacrifice the human good to the goods of the market, but think we can curb this tendency and harness capitalism's productive power for our pursuit of the good life. For them, the core problem with capitalism is "economic insatiability"—the intrinsic drive for

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increasing production (and therefore profits) without limit. The limitless demand for more can even lead, as we have recently seen, to economic catastrophe. More important, capitalism is morally deficient because its drivers are the vices of "greed and acquisitiveness," which pile up "goods" that take us away from the good life.

The insatiability of capitalism exploits the corresponding insatiability of individual desires. No matter how much I possess, I find myself desiring more than I have. As I become rich enough to satisfy all my old desires, I develop new ones. Moreover, beyond a certain level of wealth, I begin to desire the best of everything, where the "best" (rare wines, exclusive resorts, the paintings of Old Masters) are in such limited supply that hardly anyone can afford them. And in addition to our spontaneous individual desires, we develop other desires simply because there are things others have that we don't. Capitalism's endless need to sell more and more is met by our need to buy more and more.

The Skidelskys argue that this destructive spiral is not inevitable. It has arisen only because we have moved away from a properly human ideal of a good life. Their positive project draws on the traditions of premodern thought for a viable contemporary account of what makes for a good life. Their discussion, perceptive if schematic, produces a plausible list of seven "basic goods": health, security, respect, personal freedom (which they refer to, somewhat oddly, as "personality"), harmony with nature, friendship, and leisure (not idleness but freedom from wage-labor for work that is satisfying in itself). Their list has the distinct merit of allowing for the wide range of current disagreement on moral questions such as sexuality and personal rights. The authors also propose, with appropriate tentativeness, a variety of measures to curb capitalism's "insatiability." These include a basic wage (or personal endowment) for everyone, consumption taxes to curb excessive consumption, and severe restrictions on advertising.

This positive project has, of course, no point unless we accept the basic thesis that capitalism is a threat to a good life, and some of the Skidelskys' most crucial pages try to defuse two major objections to this claim. One objection comes from utilitarian thinkers, the other from liberal political theorists. I will assess the Skidelskys' position by reflecting on these two objections.

The first objection centers on a concept many readers will have found oddly absent from our discussion so far: happiness. Most modern people agree with utilitarian moral theorists that happiness is what everyone desires—and should desire—most. The Skidelskys would have no problem with this view if "happiness" were, like Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, merely a synonym for living a good life. But nowadays happiness is seen as a matter of subjective states of satisfaction, not objectively good achievements. The point of utilitarian morality is to maximize subjective satisfaction for everyone: "the greatest happiness for the greatest number." To do this, we need to find out what makes people happy and then supply them with whatever that is.

Economists and psychologists step forward for the first task, deploying "happiness surveys" to determine how various factors (health, wealth, sex, families, sports, reading, television, etc.) affect happiness. Once we know what we need to be happy, capitalist enterprises are ready to deliver the goods. To achieve their goal of maximizing profit, businesses must provide as many consumers as possible with as much satisfaction as they can. The capitalist is the merchant of happiness.

The Skidelskys are deeply skeptical of happiness science. They note that one of its most robust results is the "Easterlin paradox" (named for the economist Richard Easterlin, who formulated it in 1974). The paradox is that, in industrially advanced countries, major improvements in living standards have no long-term effect on happiness. This, the Skidelskys say, leads to a destructive dilemma. If the paradox is correct, then efforts to bring about improvements in living standards are futile. If it is not correct, then our best methods for discovering what makes people happy are inadequate. In either case, the utilitarian project of maximizing happiness is stymied.

This is an intriguing line of argument, but at best it undermines only the *global* project of producing happiness by altering the entire economic climate. It may still be possible to make numerous local improvements through actions focused on specific situations. In any case, the Skidelskys have a deeper critique of the happiness project: that the "supreme good" of humankind cannot be merely a succession of enjoyable psychological states. "We cannot think that all our suffering and labor has as its end something as trivial as a buzz or a tingle."

Although the Skidelskys don't mention him, Robert Nozick made the same point in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* with his thought experiment of the Experience Machine. Suppose neuroscientists develop a machine that would allow you to have any subjective experiences you like—a great romantic love, writing a brilliant novel, saving your nation from destruction. You could even program an entire life filled with the most enjoyable experiences possible. But plugging into such a machine would not give you a good life, because you would never have actually done anything; you would have spent your days sitting in a laboratory enjoying a succession of feelings. The Skidelskys describe such illusory satisfactions as "the mirage of happiness." "If happiness is a mere private sensation, with no intrinsic connection to living well…why not admit up front that our concern is with the good life—and let happiness look after itself?"

Their critique, however, succeeds against only the naïve claim that a good life consists merely of a succession of felicific fizzes. They agree that pleasurable feelings produced by objective achievements contribute to the good life, referring, for example, to the "glad apprehension…that my daughter has got into university, that my country has been liberated."

But then why not admit that subjective pleasure in its own right is one of the essential components of a good life? Imagine the inverse of Nozick's Experience Machine: a device that does not interfere with my achieving great things in the real world but deactivates the pleasure centers of the brain so that I never enjoy anything I do. The result would be a far cry from anything we would regard as a good life. Nor is it enough to allow only the "glad apprehension" that something objectively good has occurred. Enjoying the taste of food helps make for a good life, even if I don't also feel satisfaction at having partaken of healthy nourishment.

The Skidelskys have at best shown that pleasurable feelings cannot be all there is to a good life, but pleasure may still have a major role; it may even deserve a place on their list of what makes for such a life. If this is so—and common sense along with most philosophy and psychology supports the idea—our account of the good life cannot discount the pleasures provided by the capitalist system of production.

But I presume the Skidelskys could accept these points as friendly amendments. There remains the second objection, which the Skidelskys themselves recognize as "the last, and deepest, objection to our project." This is the claim that their view rejects the fundamental insight of liberalism put forward by John Rawls, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum, among others. Here is the Skidelskys own deft statement of the objection:

> A liberal state…embodies no positive vision but only such principles as are necessary for people of different tastes and ideals to live together in harmony. To promote, as a matter of public policy, a positive idea of the good life is by definition illiberal, perhaps even totalitarian.

Their brief initial response to this objection is that it "rests on a thorough misconception of liberalism," which, throughout most of its history, has been "imbued with classical and Christian ideals of dignity, civility, and tolerance." They also cite, from the twentieth century, such "prototypical liberals as Keynes, Isaiah Berlin, and Lionel Trilling," who "took it for granted that upholding civilization was among the functions of the state." They note that Rawls in particular allows for a category of "primary goods," including "civic and political liberties, income and wealth, access to public office and 'the social bases of respect.'" These are necessary conditions for, as Rawls puts it, "forming a rational plan of life" and so must be desired by all rational agents, regardless of what basic goods they hope to achieve by carrying out their life plan. (Rawls presents his basic goods as resources everyone should have. Sen and Nussbaum maintain that beyond Rawls's resources, people also need the capabilities to make use of them.)

The Skidelskys rightly point out that contemporary liberals insist on *primary goods* rather than *basic goods* because they see autonomy—the right of people to choose their own conception of the good life—as an overarching value. Basic goods specify the content of a good life; the primary goods merely tell us what is needed to choose and work for any conception of a good life. The liberal emphasis on autonomy restricts government to promoting primary goods, while remaining neutral regarding basic goods and the various conceptions of the good life they specify.

The Skidelskys cite an example from Nussbaum that nicely focuses the difference between them. "A person who has opportunities for play," she says, "can always choose a workaholic life"—her point being that, as long as this choice is free and does not harm others, the state has no reason to oppose it. Such opposition would, in fact, be a paternalistic interference with personal autonomy. The Skidelskys disagree, arguing that "if the workaholic life is an impoverished one, as most people who have thought about the matter agree

it is, then its adoption over finer lives, whether freely chosen or not, is surely something to worry us." As to the charge of paternalism, they point out that all Western nations have laws limiting the use of drugs, pornography, and alcohol, and use taxation as an incentive to promote or discourage behaviors such as home ownership and energy conservation.

This is not a convincing response. For one thing, the fact that we deplore a behavior is not a reason for violating autonomy to discourage it. For another, allowing a paternalistic approach to some evils is consistent with refusing to put the power of the state behind a comprehensive view of the human good. (Also, as the Skidelskys note, an entirely rigorous liberalism would discourage only behavior that it sees as dangerous to others.) In any case, the Skidelskys agree that, precisely because "the good life is by any reasonable definition an autonomous or self-determined one, there is only so much that the state, as a coercive body, can do to promote it."

For a deeper grasp of what's at stake in the liberal objection, we need to return to the Skidelskys' starting point: the relation of capitalism to the good life. As proponents of a free society, they agree that in the end individuals must make their own choices about how to pursue a good life. They are also unwilling to reject capitalism as the engine of our economic system. The capitalist system claims to be the servant of free choice, producing whatever consumers desire, to the extent that they desire it. But the claim is disingenuous. The goal of capitalist enterprises is to maximize profit, and they are willing—and often well equipped—to form consumer desires and public policy to achieve this goal. Advertising, public relations, and lobbying are their most effective weapons.

How can we maintain capitalism as our means of economic production and yet not allow it to determine our conception of the good life? The Skidelskys' approach derives from Keynes's 1930 essay "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," where he predicted that by 2030 the capitalist system would be able to meet all our material needs with the average employee working only about fifteen hours a week. This, he thought, would allow ample leisure time for people to pursue the good life. Keynes was right about the productive power of capitalism but wrong about the decrease in work hours, which have fallen only 20 percent since 1930. Why did Keynes go wrong about the balance of work and leisure? Because, the Skidelskys say, "a free-market economy both gives employers the power to dictate hours and terms of work and inflames our innate tendency to competitive, status-driven consumption."

In response, they propose their anti-insatiability conception of a good life and, as we have seen, suggest various legislative measures—primarily a guaranteed basic income that does not require employment (to make it easier for people to work less), as well as consumption taxes and strong restrictions on advertising (to reduce excessive consumption). But in a democracy such a legislative approach requires the support of most citizens, and that would be available only if the Skidelskys' goal were already achieved. The essential liberal objection to the Skidelskys is that their proposals are utopian, given a population that overwhelmingly subscribes to the insatiability ethos of capitalism. The only people who would support their reforms are the small minority who have already renounced this ethos.

Let me suggest an alternative approach, one that is consistent with both the Skidelskys' appeal to traditional values and modern liberalism's emphasis on autonomy: a return to the weakened but still viable ideal of a liberal education.

We find enormous dissatisfaction with our educational system but there is still considerable respect for the idea that schooling should provide not so much vocational training as liberal learning. A liberal education forms citizens who have a broad understanding of the possibilities of human life as well as a critical ability to make informed choices among these possibilities. Such education will not necessarily inculcate the Skidelskys'—or any other—specific vision of the good life. But it will develop self-determining agents who can see through the blandishments of the market and insist that it provide what they have independently decided they need in order to lead a good life.

We cannot control the decisions of such agents, nor should we. They are free not only in the metaphysical sense of controlling their actions but also in the cultural sense of grasping, to some significant extent, the range of options available to them in their historical context. This latter freedom derives from access to our cultural history's enduring and ever-increasing legacy of literary, philosophical, political, religious, and scientific achievements. These achievements underlie the specific institutions and practices that define a person's world, but they also support radical critiques and alternatives to that world. Culture contains the seeds of revolution.

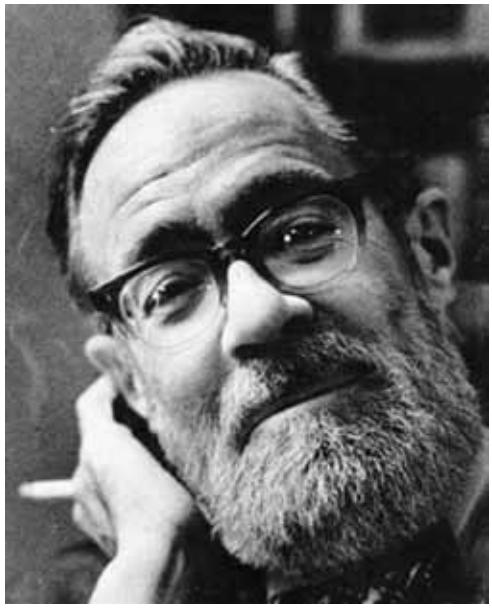
Here I am appealing to the same intellectual and moral heritage the Skidelskys draw on to formulate their conception of a good life. But they make the utopian (ultimately Platonic) mistake of thinking that we can transform our world by legislating values from above. Rather, the transformation must come from below, forged by the very people it is meant to benefit. The liberal education I advocate is not that of old-world hereditary elites, bringing their inherited wisdom to the masses. It is inspired by the new-world ideal of an education equally open to everyone, limited only by one's ability and persistence. There is a risk that free citizens educated in this way will not arrive at the truth we have in mind. They may, free and informed, choose the material illusions of capitalism. But, in a democracy, an ideal of the good life has no force unless the people's will sustains it. Liberally educated consumers—and voters—are our only hope of subordinating capitalism to a humane vision of the good life. ■

Broken Beauty

The Last Days of John Berryman

Paul Mariani

On the morning of January 7, 1972, John Berryman, bearded and stoop-shouldered, trudged across the campus of the University of Minnesota in gelid Minneapolis before halting on a cement pedestrian walkway above the Mississippi River. He balanced himself on the metal rail, much as his hero Hart Crane had balanced on the stern rail of the *S. S. Orizaba* forty years earlier. Then, like Crane, he waved goodbye to those around him, before pushing forward and plunging into the unforgiving void below. He was fifty-seven years old.



Berryman was in Alcoholics Anonymous and had been dry for eleven months. But shortly before that January day, he had started drinking again. Two days before his death he had scribbled out one last poem, explaining how he meant to escape yet one more disappointment—the lectures he had prepared for the class he was going to teach that semester had fallen far short of his own expectations, and he anticipated students

> dropping the course,
> the Administration hearing
> & offering me either a medical leave of absence
> or resignation—Kitticat, they can't fire me—

He had a better plan for keeping everyone off his back: a simple tilt forward and he could escape all that.

Berryman's troubles began early: with the death of his father, John Allyn, when Berryman was just eleven. At the time his family was living in an apartment down on Clearwater Island in Tampa Bay. His mother, Martha Smith, had begun carrying on an affair with a janitor, and his suicidal father had found accommodations elsewhere. There were arguments, scenes, and recriminations out in the hall beyond the boys' closed bedroom door. Then, early on the morning of June 26, 1926, his mother walked into their room to tell them that their father was dead. His body lay spread-eagle in the alley behind their apartment. Apparently he had shot himself in the chest. Afterward, Martha and the janitor, who was twenty years older, married and moved with her sons to Queens, New York. The janitor's name was John Berryman, and the boys were told that they would be taking his last name. Years later, Martha would tell the old man that it was time to move out, and after he did, she tried to reinvent herself, instructing her son John to tell his friends that she was not his mother but his older (and single) sister.

Later in his life, Berryman wondered if his mother and stepfather hadn't killed his father and left the gun near his body. No wonder he obsessed over *Hamlet*'s play within a play, in which the death of Hamlet's father is rehearsed on stage before his mother and her new husband, the usurper king. Berryman once went so far as to invite his mother to hear him lecture on *Hamlet* while he was teaching at Princeton, hoping it might draw her out, but, as usual, she coolly avoided *that* well-laid trap.

Berryman's obsession with the father he'd lost as a boy followed him all his life, before, during, and after he composed the more than four hundred poems in his brilliant *Dream Songs*. The second-to-last of the published collection begins this way:

> The marker slants, flowerless, day's almost done,
> I stand above my father's grave with rage.[...]
> I spit upon this dreadful banker's grave
> Who shot his heart out in a Florida dawn

Paul Mariani *is the University Professor of English at Boston College. His latest book of poems is* Epitaphs for the Journey, *Cascade. This article was adapted from an essay that will appear in* Not Less Than Everything: Catholic Writers on Heroes of Conscience, from Joan of Arc to Oscar Romero, *to be published by HarperOne next month.*

WITHOUT CONSIDERATION

I never imagined the bodies of
Dead Marines; the blood and dirt
Carefully wiped away, the wounds
Cleaned, sutured, before they were
Placed in caskets and escorted
For burial in Texas, Vermont, Missouri.
I never considered lying lifeless
In a casket, in Dress Blues,
A flag presented to my mother.

—Michael Miller

O ho alas alas
When will indifference come, I moan & rave

This brought to a tentative end what the first Song had begun. There, writing in the voice of his alter-ego Henry, Berryman described his early and prolonged reaction to his father's death:

Huffy Henry hid the day,
unappeasable Henry sulked.

The day his father died changed everything forever: from then on, nothing—nothing—ever "fell out as it might or ought."

As a boy in Oklahoma, and before his family moved to Florida, Berryman had served each morning at the early Mass with Fr. Boniface, the two of them up there by the small pre–Vatican II altar, intoning the Latin together—*Introibo ad altare Dei*—while elderly ladies knelt in the pews behind them. And he had been happy.

With the death of his father, his other Father, the one to whom he had prayed, also seemed to withdraw, receding into the shadows of literature. That Father, too, had seemed to abandon him, and so Berryman left the thought of him behind, making his way in life with whatever was at hand. Sex, adultery, booze, high-talk among his intellectual peers about the state of the world. He would read everything: the classics, the Bible (as literature), his worthy contemporaries. After living for a year in England, he spoke with a quasi-British accent for the rest of his days. He had heroes—Hopkins, Housman, Yeats, Eliot, Pound—and his company of literary pals—among them Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Delmore Schwartz, Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell and Adrienne Rich—though he would do his damnedest to outshine them all. He made elaborate lists of living poets just to see how he and they were faring with the passage of time.

"I am obliged to perform in complete darkness operations of great delicacy," Berryman wrote in one Dream Song. Many of these operations he'd performed on himself, reporting back what he had discovered about the human condition. Naturally, these were "operations of great delicacy" because they'd been performed in the shadow of death, and therefore of God. "Why did we come at all," Berryman asks in a Dream Song in his fifty-second year:

consonant to whose bidding? Perhaps God is a slob,
playful, vast, rough-hewn.

Perhaps God resembles one of the last etchings of Goya.[...]
Something disturbed,
ill-pleased, & with a touch of paranoia
who calls for this thud of love from his creatures-O.
Perhaps God ought to be curbed.

Then, three years later, there came another life-altering change. It happened when he was hospitalized for extreme intoxication in the late spring of 1970. He found himself in a locked ward at a Catholic hospital, St. Mary's. It was decided he was a danger to himself. He was informed by Jim Zosel, an Episcopal priest who was charged with looking after him and the others on the floor that, no, he could not take a taxi to campus so that he could teach his classes because every time he did, he cajoled the driver into stopping at a local bar afterward so he could refresh himself with half a dozen drinks before returning to the hospital to continue his treatment. But, since Berryman was teaching a course that included the Bible as literature that term, the priest volunteered to take over his class for him.

It was the discovery that someone could actually care enough about him to do such a thing that took Berryman by surprise—floored him in fact. And so his recovery began. He joined AA, acted as a sponsor to others, stayed off the booze "each damned day," and began attending weekly Mass, though he remained acutely critical of the shortcomings—stylistic and otherwise—of the young priest's homilies in these too-easy post–Vatican II days. At the time, Berryman had been assembling new poems in a post–Dream Song mode in an effort to remake himself—without much success. These poems were written in unrhymed quatrains that owed a great deal to the style of Emily Dickinson, as well as to the irreverent French *poète maudit* Tristan Corbière, who had died of consumption at twenty-nine—like Dickinson, an unknown figure at his death.

On the other hand, it had been a long time since Berryman himself was unknown. By the mid-'60s, he was in demand everywhere, having been showered with awards and prizes and rave notices in publications like *Time* and *Life*. Likewise, from his college days on, he had had his share of what he liked to call love. He meant to call the new volume he was finishing up then *Love & Fame*, and he was pleased—oh yes—with the part of it he'd already written.

And then came his new religious turn, which puzzled, amused, and disturbed the literary critics, as well as his fellow

poets. The volte-face began abruptly with the "Eleven Addresses to the Lord." If God was the "slob" he'd complained of earlier, the locked ward Berryman now found himself in was a nagging reminder of who the real slob really was. This new self-awareness in the face of recovery led in turn to a sense of overwhelming gratitude for having somehow been rescued. The first poem in the sequence begins:

> Master of beauty, craftsman of the snowflake,
> inimitable contriver,
> endower of Earth so gorgeous & different from the boring Moon,
> thank you for such as it is my gift.

A prayer of praise, then, followed by antiphons of thanksgiving—as with the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. But poem prayers with their own wry sense of humor: gallows humor, trench humor, perhaps, but funny and vulnerable. In the desert landscape of the moon's surface (recently photographed up close by astronauts who had walked on that surface), Berryman had seen an image of his own soul's desolate condition. Nothing for it, then, but to beg God to get him out of that hell: "You have come to my rescue again & again," he sang now, "in my impassible, sometimes despairing years."

Of course he still had questions. Given the human condition, he understood that he would always have questions. How did one love a God who was essentially unknowable? Did we live again after death? It didn't "seem likely / from either the scientific or the philosophical point of view." But who was he to say? One thing was clear: He was surer now than ever that "all things are possible to you." He also understood that he was now ready to move on with "gratitude & awe," hoping to "stand until death forever at attention / for any your least instruction or enlightenment."

"Eleven Addresses to the Lord" is the cry of a brilliant and broken man who had come to admit that he, too, was in need of consolation. He thought of the broken witnesses who had gone before him—of people like St. Polycarp, disciple of John the Evangelist, who had been given the choice by the Roman authorities to deny Christ or be burned alive. And now Berryman recalled the old man's astounding response:

> 'Eighty & six years have I been his servant,
> and he has done me no harm.
> How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?'

Berryman ended his remarkable sequence with yet another prayer, a plea this time, that God would make him too somehow acceptable at the end,

> in my degree, which then Thou wilt award.
> Cancer, senility, mania,
> I pray I may be ready with my witness.

And life went on much as before. In the winter of '71 Berryman was at work on his own version of the Divine Office. This sequence, titled "Opus Dei," opens his final, posthumous volume of poems, *Delusions, Etc.* At the beginning of this sequence, Berryman quotes Tolstoy's "The Devil." If the protagonist of that story, Berryman reminds us, "was mentally deranged, everyone is in the same case," for the most mentally deranged are those "who see in others indications of insanity they do not notice in themselves."

"With the human exhausted," the critic Helen Vendler has written, "Berryman solicited the divine." The religious poems he wrote near the end of his life, especially the ones in the "Opus Dei" sequence, were, Vendler insisted, simply no good. If Mr. Berryman had discovered a "newly simple heart" and new visions into the workings of his God,

> whatever temporary calm they gave his soul, [they] gave no new life to his poetry, and the last two poems, particularly ["Vespers" and "Compline"], are intolerable to read…. When he became the redeemed child of God, his shamefaced vocabulary drooped useless, and no poet can be expected to invent, all at once and at the end of his life, a convincing new stance, a new style in architecture along with his change of heart. Berryman's suicide threw all finally into question—Henry's sly resourcefulness as much as Berryman's abject faith. In the end, it seems, neither was enough to get through the day on, and even though a voice divine the storm allayed, a light propitious shone, this castaway could not avoid another rising of the gulf to overwhelm him.

Shamefaced. Abject. Vendler could not bear to see the old virtuoso brought low. But consider this: Writing as a broken man, Berryman had used all the resources still at his command, knowing that he could no longer take refuge in modernist irony. Or at least, knowing himself and his own old evasions too well, he was going to try his damndest not to. He had stuck to his old irony with others in the hospital who, like him, had hit rock bottom. But they, having heard it all before, had spotted at once the buzzing lies, false reconstructions, and obfuscations.

As he sweated over his final sequence, "gunfire & riot" were fanning "thro' new Detroit." Antiwar protesters were being tried, fined, and imprisoned. The world around him was in chaos, and so was he. He had made mistakes. His body was a wreck. But he would bear witness in this terrible time, in and all around him, as best he could. He hoped and prayed that Origen was right after all and that hell was either "empty / Or will be." Given human nature as he knew it, sin seemed inevitable, and, yes, humanity would suffer for it "now & later / but not forever, dear friends & brothers!"

It is mid-winter in Minneapolis as he sweats over these lines. At the moment, he understands, there are "no fair bells in this city," and, in truth, his house, with his wife and two daughters asleep, feels as cold as the darkest corner of his mind. Still, he must continue his conversation with the God who, he now knows, had never really abandoned him. And he prays that if somehow he should fall at last from some terrifying height, the same God he is speaking to will be there to hold him up. After all, he has fallen often before, into addiction and madness, and has somehow been caught. And so he waits out the dark nights of another winter, and another dark night for his soul. ■

Rand Richards Cooper

Survivors

'LIFE OF PI' & 'THE FLAT'

Often when the film adaptation of an acclaimed novel fails, it fails through excessive deference—a filmmaker overawed by the book and unable to reconceptualize it in a visual idiom. But things aren't that simple with *Life of Pi*, Ang Lee's screen version of the blockbuster Yann Martel novel chronicling the travails of a teenaged Indian boy who survives a shipwreck and seven months at sea. The novel itself was extraordinarily visual, conveying an explicit preoccupation with beauty and the natural world. It was the kind of book many dream of filming, but few dare. After all, how to make a movie two-thirds of which consists of a boy trapped in a boat with a Bengal tiger?

Thanks to the miracle of digital cinema, that tiger now exists, a creature of bristling magnificence and utterly believable ferocity, menacing the boy from the far end of a thirty-foot lifeboat. Claudio Miranda's sumptuous camerawork, deepened artfully by computer-graphic wizardry, creates scenes of astonishing beauty, right from the start—like an image of swimmers in a surreally pellucid Parisian pool anticipating a later shot of the boy at sea, with fish of all size passing beneath his lifeboat. Savagely beautiful sunsets and limpid moonrises, the magic of phosphorescent fish making the sea glow, the sudden and sublime appearance of a whale: *Life of Pi* is a visual feast from start to finish.

The story takes a bildungsroman and turns it into *Robinson Crusoe*. In the first section we see Pi—his nickname, via a roundabout tale, is short for "Piscine," French for "swimming pool"—growing up in Pondicherry, a part of South India colonized by the French, where his father owns a zoo. Pi (capably played as a child by Ayush Tandon, as a teen by Suraj Sharma, and as an adult by the genial Irrfan Khan) possesses a spiritual temperament—an instinct for reverence, a habit of wonder, and a stubborn resistance to the rationalist blandishments of his secular father. *Life of Pi* plays its young protagonist's spiritual bent comically, having him embrace not just one or two, but all three of the subcontinent's major religions, making him a Christian-baptized Hindu who practices Islam—or something like that. "Just find three *more* religions," his father quips, "and you will spend your entire life on holiday!"

In fact, he is soon to spend what seems like a lifetime—a hellish one—adrift on the Pacific. Deciding to move the Patel family to Canada, Pi's father books passage for them on a Japanese freighter, along with many of the zoo animals, which he intends to sell upon arrival. Somewhere east of the Philippines, the ship suffers a disastrous engine explosion amid a bad storm and sinks. Pi is the sole human survivor, having jumped into a lifeboat—along with, he discovers the next day, a zebra, a hyena, an orangutan, and the tiger. A tense drama of survival ensues, played out over endless weeks. Lee's movie is considerably less horrifying than the novel, in which the violent death battles of Pi's animal passengers are described in gory detail; the film averts its eyes from the worst of it, and lets us focus on the desperate ingenuity through which Pi, having realized that he must coexist with the tiger, figures out how to train him, and ultimately fashions a companionate relationship, albeit a volatile and alarming one.

Like the novel, the film uses a framing device in which the adult Pi tells his story to a writer who tracks him down in Canada, following the lead of a man in India who referred to "a story that will make you believe in God." That story shows Pi's youthful piety tested and ultimately deepened, rather than demolished, by his brutal trial at sea. "Even when God seemed to have abandoned me," the older Pi says, "he was actually watching." But how, exactly? *Life of Pi* connects its conception of spirituality with human imagination and specifically with the act of storytelling itself. The novel's coda, faithfully replicated in the movie, pulls off a sly metafictional—and metaphysical—trick. Days after finally coming ashore in Mexico and being rescued, Pi is questioned in the hospital by shipping company investigators who regard his story of surviving with a tiger as dubious in the extreme. Pressed to tell the truth, he offers up an alternate version in which his mother, a sailor, and the ship's cook land with him in the lifeboat, triggering a brutal struggle for survival from which he alone emerges alive, having witnessed horrors that include cannibalism and the murder of his mother.

Do we believe that this far more realistic story tells what really happened to Pi? Perhaps we do; yet it comes off as a paltry reduction of whatever it is that the boy has gone through—of whatever it was in his spirit, will, and imagination that empowered him to persist. "Which story do you prefer?" Pi asks the investigators. (In the movie this colloquy is transposed to his interview decades later with the writer.) "The one with the tiger," they answer. At a blow we understand that mere documentary truth must yield—indeed has already yielded—to storytelling; that poetry and the imagination constitute both the true expression of the soul's encounter with experience and, in situations of mortal hardship, a means of human survival.

Alas, appending a metafictional dis-

quisition to your novel works better than doing the same to your film. Is everything we've seen with the animals, the entire, richly detailed interaction with the tiger, to be understood as some kind of allegory, or as a fantasy born in direst horror? Film's images have a powerful way of insisting on their own reality; it is harder to "flip" a narrative you've been watching for two hours and come away satisfied. What deepens meaning in the novel comes off as both forced and oddly self-congratulatory in the film.

It is hard at any rate to see why this story would make you believe in God. What exactly is meant by the payoff line Pi delivers—"And so it goes with God"—after his interlocutors admit that they prefer the tiger story? Are we to understand that religion, that God himself, is no more than a saving fiction? That our human story is better if we include God? That God himself prefers stories that include him? Showcasing a poetic and easily accessible mysticism, and rife with arcane spiritual hints (e.g., the name of the sunken ship, *Tsimtsum*, is Hebrew for God's withdrawal from the world), *Life of Pi* is billed as a religious movie, but the nature of its religion is hazy in the extreme. "If you believe in everything," Pi's father cautions, "you will end up believing in nothing at all."

In *The Flat*, Israeli filmmaker Arnon Goldfinger digs into the past of his recently deceased ninety-eight-year-old grandmother, Gerda Tuchler, who left Germany before WWII and lived out her long life in the community of "Yekkes"—German Jews, only partly assimilated to Israeli life, whose profoundest attachment remained to German culture. Going through his grandmother's papers, Goldfinger finds letters that attest to her and her husband's friendship with an aristocrat and Nazi functionary, Baron von Mildenstein. In 1937, on a mission to scout locales where Germany might unload its Jews, Mildenstein and his wife visited Palestine—together with the Tuchlers, who were resettling there. When Goldfinger discovers that the friendship resumed after the war, he decides to dig into the story, eventually traveling to Germany to meet the Mildensteins' daughter.

The Flat has a casual, even cursory feel, but it gathers momentum almost despite itself. It illuminates the particular tragedy of German Jews, who clung to their Germanness even through the Holocaust, and captures the willful silence of the next generation of Jews and Germans alike. In this regard, Goldfinger's mother and the Mildenstein's daughter, both now nearing seventy, are mirror images of each other, their mutual reluctance to talk or even think about their parents' histories suggesting an inner life marred by avoidance and denial.

Far more haunting than *The Flat*'s trumped-up confrontation with the Mildenstein descendants in Germany are scenes that capture the Goldfinger children going through their grandmother's possessions. Youthful upper-middle-class Israelis, habitually casual and irreverent, they're impatient with the clutter and inclined to throw it all out. In one scene they play prankishly with a mink stole, wrapping it around each other's necks in mocking disbelief that anyone could have ever worn an animal. I found myself shuddering with a sense of sacrilege to see the relics of their grandparents' world—the German bourgeois world brought with them and maintained, under pressures of the most desperate paradox—made the object of lighthearted whimsy.

Well, it was a long, long time ago. Almost everyone who lived through it is dead; and those who remain, the grandchildren and great-nieces and nephews, are living happy lives in a world far removed from that time and place. *The Flat* is not a great documentary, but it has the great advantage of taking place at the moment when individual memories of the Fascist nightmare yield definitively to the collective memory of history. Those descendents plowing through old boxes—they laugh, and then they move on. ■

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

Second-Class Male

The End of Men
And the Rise of Women
Hanna Rosin
Riverhead, $27.95, 320 pp.

Fifty years of feminism have dramatically altered women's lives and their prospects for education and careers. No surprise, then, that the other half of the equation—men's lives—has shifted. We can see that gender roles aren't what they used to be. But how have they changed? In her new book *The End of Men: And the Rise of Women*, Hanna Rosin argues that women have managed the transition far more successfully than men. Women are on an upward trajectory economically and socially because they possess the social skills and temperaments required in a post-industrial economy. Men, on the other hand, lack those skills and temperaments, so they are falling by the wayside. Some are even forced to stay home and raise the children while their wives make big bucks (unless they don't).

The End of Men opens with an interview, which Rosin offers as an example of this shift in social arrangements. Bethany is a twenty-nine-year-old unmarried mother of a ten-year-old daughter. She runs a day-care center in her home and is studying for a nursing degree. She wouldn't mind getting married. But she holds Calvin, her child's father, at "arm's length," as Rosin puts it, allowing Bethany to "remain the queen of her castle…with one less mouth to feed." Calvin's succession of dead-end jobs has ruled him out as a breadwinner. That is Bethany's role, and she doesn't much want to share. The idea of "for better or for worse" has fallen prey to economic insecurity, but whether Bethany's situation is part of the broader trend of women's upward trajectory remains debatable.

Is marriage all that useful to women? Rosin thinks not, at least as an economic proposition. In the chapter "Hearts of Steel," she examines the prospects of a group of college women—current students and the recently graduated. They are deep into the hookup culture and have no intention of settling down with any one man. And why would they when they're likely to have salaries as good as or better than their hookups? Later, in a chapter called "Pharm Girls," she interviews another group of women who are taking over a profession once dominated by men: pharmacists. These women expect high salaries that will keep their spouses on a short leash—the men will stay home, raise the kids, and take care of domestic duties. In another chapter, Rosin expands her typology, interviewing women executives who have made it to the top, or near the top, by learning to manage their workplace bitchiness. Yes, there are workshops for that.

Rosin describes certain cultural trends that she claims are global. She covered some of them in a July 2010 article for the *Atlantic* ("The End of Men"). The piece was teased with copy heralding Rosin's discovery of an "unprecedented role reversal…and its vast cultural consequences." She carries that theme through all eight of the book's obviously padded and mind-numbing chapters. Each has the introductory punch of a feature magazine article, but together the chapters never add up to Rosin's sweeping claims about men, women, and gender roles.

Stringing together anecdotes, interviews, broad-spectrum opining, and random citations to "research studies," she detects world-altering changes. A breathless narrative conveys the sense of a weighty argument, but finally there is something woolly in the endless series of stories about women who invited her into their homes or offices to con-

sider the men in their lives. The most memorable is the unemployed guy who comes home from a day of fishing only to be ordered immediately to clean the fish by the ambitious woman studying pharmacy. Rosin's narrative—and Rosin herself—follows them to the basement where the woman continues to chew him out. Apparently this is a noteworthy event. But Rosin writes as though American pop culture hasn't been trading on the stereotypes of the overbearing wife and the henpecked husband for the past half-century. Does she think she's found something new? Or is she just interested in presenting a bestiary of post-feminist men and the women who may or may not put up with them?

The evidence she offers is a mix of statistics showing that today's women are more likely to graduate from college, to be employed outside the home, and to have higher salaries than their forbears. At the same time, fewer men are getting into college, let alone graduating (some aren't even finishing high school); some men (very few) are staying home to raise the kids while their wives or girlfriends work; and even when they do have a job, their salaries aren't as high as they used to be. These patterns have been emerging over the past forty years. But is this news? And what does it mean?

Conspicuously absent from Rosin's analysis are the larger economic trends that might help explain these lives. Good manufacturing jobs have disappeared, and with them middle-class incomes (largely earned by men). Then there is the nation's vast prison population, disproportionately full of young black and Latino men. Then there's race, ethnicity, and immigration. The distinctively American phenomenon of striving and assimilation that shapes the lives of so many young adults is missing from Rosin's account. A couple of African-American women make an appearance. They've earned degrees from a Kansas City community college, and are holding down jobs and raising their children. But that's it for minorities. Latinas and new immigrants are also absent (odd, given the fact that Rosin is herself an immigrant). Reading *The End of Men*, you'd hardly know that social and economic inequality was a major theme of the 2012 presidential campaign.

Most painful in this misbegotten effort is Rosin's condescending tone, evident throughout the book but crystallized in the acknowledgements. She is grateful she "married the right man." She and her husband are not like the slackers and shrews in her book. And, "with apologies for the title," she dedicates the book to her son. Other apologies seem in order, above all to the people who let her into their homes to inspect and judge their lives according to her preconceived ideas. ■

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, *a* Commonweal *columnist, was co-director of the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture from 2004 to 2012.*

Charles R. Morris

Not Easy Being Green

The Carbon Crunch

How We're Getting Climate Change Wrong—And How to Fix It

Dieter Helm

Yale University Press, $35, 273 pp.

Dieter Helm is an Oxford economist who has made a specialty of energy policy. A strong advocate for reducing emissions, he has been a participant at nearly all the international attempts to fashion responses to climate change. His book is scathing on the lack of progress, but his ire is directed as much at green politicians and advocates as at the Know-Nothings and deniers.

To begin with, Helm believes that climate-change scientists have damaged their case by pretending to more certainty than their models can support. The earth is clearly warming, a trend that correlates well with the increase of atmospheric carbon. But the earth has warmed and cooled dramatically in other eras, not always with visible carbon fluctuations. Since the sun is such a dynamic star, there is no simple way to separate out causes and effects. Helm believes that long-term climate outcomes caused by current trends could range from mildly disruptive to absolutely catastrophic, and that the chance of a truly awful outcome is high enough to warrant concerted action.

In Helm's view, virtually all emission reduction in the developed countries has been a sham. The Kyoto protocols focused on reducing the *production* of emissions, in which Europe, and now even the United States, appear to have made real progress. But those same countries have all the while been increasing their consumption of carbon products. Great Britain, for example, has exited most heavy industries like steel, in favor of low-carbon services like finance. But Britons haven't stopped using steel; they just buy it from China and India, whose plants are far more polluting. So nominal compliance with Kyoto has actually accelerated emission output.

Helm argues that the current concentration on solar and wind power as a long-term replacement for fossil fuels is sheer folly. Electricity is inherently difficult to store, and power leaks away during long-distance transport. Most wind farms are located in remote areas, or even offshore, so transmission costs alone make them an expensive alternative. More crushingly, wind is intermittent—most wind farms achieve only 20–30 percent production time. As long as the contribution of wind power is small, and one ignores the capital costs, it can be treated as a kind of free good, lowering the overall cost of a power system. But the economics change if it is intended to be a major contributor to the grid, for it will require an equivalent conventional backup and replacement system whenever the wind dies. Total system costs will necessarily be much higher. In northern countries, solar has many of the same disadvantages.

The Carbon Crunch is also skeptical of advocacy studies showing the great sums that could be saved from modest investments in efficiencies—reaping as much as 100 percent return on investment in some studies. If the savings are so great, Helm asks, why haven't entrepreneurs seized the opportunity to retrofit houses or offices for free in return for a chunk of the savings? And he thinks the European cap-and-trade system has been a fiasco that has benefited only the bankers who, as always, have been making a bundle on emission trading and derivatives.

Helm welcomes the advent of large new natural gas supplies as a transitional strategy, since natural gas is much cleaner than either coal or oil, but he doesn't see it as a long-term solution. His policy proposals are intelligent, but would be fearsomely difficult to legislate. His core proposal is a stiff carbon tax applied both to national carbon production and carbon-based imports. Since an effective tax would regularly need to be adjusted to market conditions, it would need to be managed by an appointed board, not by politicians. Helm would also scuttle most current wind and solar initiatives, and instead invest in a massive research effort to come up with new approaches. Initiatives might include very smart grids, far more efficient storage and transmission systems, and microbiological approaches to carbon absorption. Wasting money on ineffective current technologies while starving research on promising future technologies is, he thinks, simply dumb.

The Carbon Crunch is a scorched-earth book (no pun intended), aimed at provoking controversy. That objective, at least, Helm seems sure to achieve. ■

Charles R. Morris, *a* Commonweal *columnist, is the author of* The Dawn of Innovation: The First American Industrial Revolution *(PublicAffairs), among other books.*

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When I visited the vicariate for a final meeting before the jazz Mass was to be performed, the bishop of the region was waiting for me. It was decided that I celebrate a "quiet" Mass in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., with Mary Lou's Mass sung afterward as a concert. After I announced that decision—which I agreed with—most of the reporters lost interest. They wanted to make sure it hit the evening news in New York, and seemed satisfied with the bits they had already recorded. But Mary Lou was truly desolate.

The event made it clear that liturgical renewal would be highly culturally orientated, whether we liked it or not. A type of music that is an instrument of prayer for one congregation might not be for another. What's more, musicians would have to learn that there is a place in every culture for religiously inspired music, but only if it is of high quality, but not all such music is appropriate for liturgy. I'm afraid Mary Lou did not seem to understand that explanation, nor was she encouraged by it.

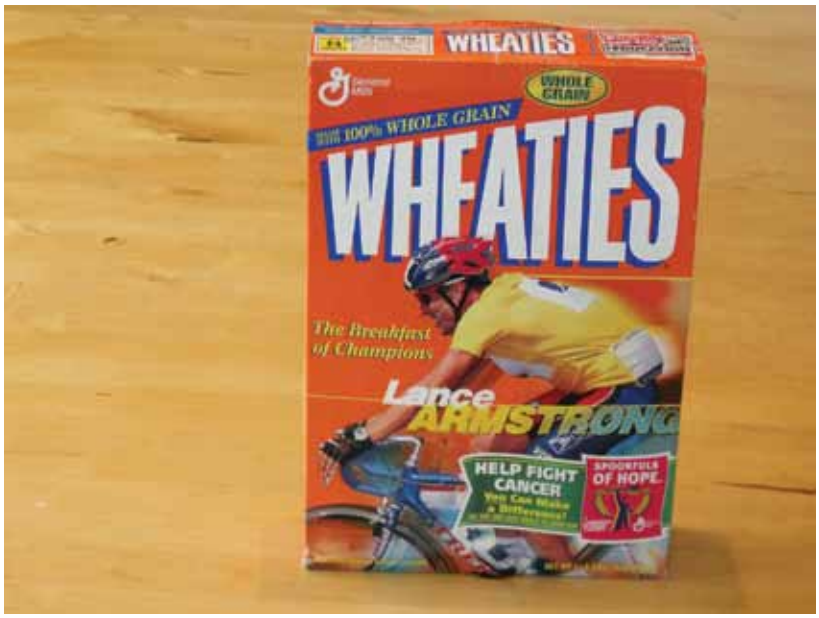
(MOST REV.) REMBERT G. WEAKLAND
Milwaukee, Wisc.
The writer is archbishop emeritus of Milwaukee.

DRUMMER BOYS

Ian Marcus Corbin's article about jazz in liturgical music brought back memories of one of the most amazing and beautiful Masses I've ever attended. Several years ago I was in central Haiti on a medical mission trip. One Sunday we went to Mass in a nearby town, and it happened to be the children's Mass for the Catholic school.

The church was filled with Haitian grade-schoolers. The children, who were perfectly behaved, sang the hymns beautifully, with the accompaniment of two eighth-grade boys playing bongo drums. How can bongo drums make beautiful music? Hard to say. But they did that day.

ART FLEMING
Pittsburgh, Pa.



Lanced

Timothy P. Schilling

Ah, 1999—those were the days. It was summertime and we were in Holland for our annual visit with my wife's family. Normally I didn't spend a lot of time with the Dutch paper, but on this day a story caught my eye. A young American cyclist had recovered from testicular cancer and surprised everyone by winning the Tour de France. The French were saying, "How is it possible? It's not possible." But I said, "Sure it's possible" (sotto voce: "for an American"). That was the beginning of a great love affair.

The next summer when we were in Holland, I made it a point to watch the Tour live on TV. That's a leisurely business of viewing castles from the air and waiting for breakaways by ambitious riders. Lance Armstrong won again, and I was hooked. He has the perfect name for a sports hero, no? In my mind I saw the arm on the baking soda box, but with a sword in place of the hammer.

I read his book, *It's Not About the Bike*, and that impressed me even more. His story wasn't just about sports, it was about life: surviving, overcoming odds, doing your best, and offering yourself in service to others. When a friend's sister was diagnosed with cancer, I passed the book on to her.

In 2001 we moved to Holland. From then on I was able to follow the Tour intensely. Cycling is huge in the Netherlands. All the races—the Giro, the Vuelta, the Tour of Flanders—are shown on the local channels, and the sundries stores are full of racing guides. When I was riding my own bike I couldn't stand to trail a slower rider. When I went to pass, I'd hear the voice of Mart Smeets, the Dutch commentator: "*En daar gaat ie*"—And there he goes! As the insinuations about doping piled up, Smeets remained a stalwart defender of Armstrong. In that regard he was like Charles Groenhuijsen, the America correspondent for Dutch broadcasting, who defended George W. Bush before, during, and after the invasion of Iraq and the failure to find those notorious weapons of mass destruction. Groenhuijsen's stubbornness was strangely reassuring. As an American living abroad, and even though I had serious doubts about what Bush was up to, I confess I was even more doubtful about all the badmouthing of America in Europe.

I didn't read *L.A. Confidentiel: Les secrets de Lance Armstrong*, the book published in France in 2004 that supposedly gave the inside scoop on his cheating. I assumed a lot of the accusations were motivated by jealousy. Hadn't Armstrong's blood always tested negative? And hadn't he always submitted readily? How could he have anything to hide?

Every year Armstrong's Livestrong Foundation put tens of millions of dollars toward improvement of the lives of cancer survivors. When the Livestrong wristbands came out, I had to get one. I wore it proudly. Way to go, Lance! Even Mart Smeets wore a Livestrong wristband while broadcasting the Tour. And every year, for seven years in a row, Armstrong donned the victorious yellow jersey as he pedaled triumphantly into Paris.

But of course, at some point even the truest of believers must come to grips with the fallibility of their heroes. More and more riders got busted and more and more of Armstrong's teammates confessed and turned on him. Not long ago, I watched closely as he answered questions in a long interview. They say touching your face means you're lying, but I know from experience (I cannot tell a lie, but I have been known to *dissimulate* on occasion) that it can also mean you feel awkward or embarrassed. At one point Armstrong scratched his nose. But he didn't pull his hand away. He just kept scratching there, up and around his eye, as though it really did itch. A tell? I don't know.

I still love Armstrong. I love him in spite of the bad things I now must concede he probably did. I've done bad things myself, and I haven't helped or inspired anywhere near as many people as Armstrong.

I still have a Wheaties box with his picture on it in the closet. I initially held onto it as a symbol of the invincibility of American sports heroes. I'm not sure what it is a symbol of now. Perhaps I'll keep it as a reminder of a lost faith. ■

Timothy P. Schilling *rides a three-speed in Utrecht.*

TIMOTHY P. SCHILLING

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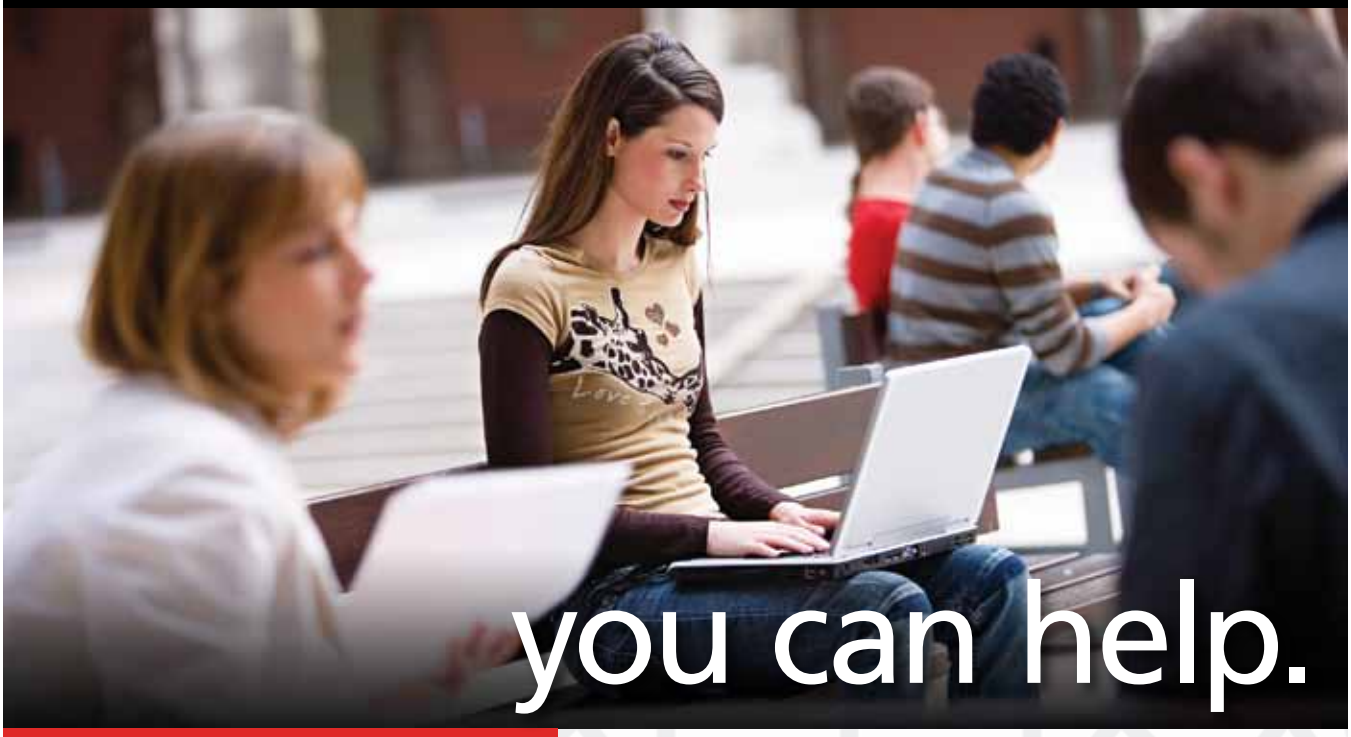

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