Religion, Politics, Culture

Commonweal

NOVEMBER 2019

Fall Books

Anthony Domestico on
Fanny Howe

Austen Ivereigh on
John Henry Newman

Catherine Addington on
Gabriel García Márquez

Paul Griffiths on
László Krasznahorkai

PLUS
An interview with
Ken Burns

0 74470 81397 2 16

Send Christmas cards that help end hunger

© DOUG PULLER/BREAD FOR THE WORLD

Ten cards and envelopes:
only $15 (includes shipping)

For details and to order:
visit bread.org/cards
or call 800-822-7323

© DOUG PULLER/BREAD FOR THE WORLD

© JOSEPH MOLIERI / BREAD FOR THE WORLD

breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

425 3rd Street SW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20024
bread.org 800-822-7323

XF19-CW2

Religion, Politics, Culture

Commonweal

NOVEMBER 2019 • VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 16

FALL BOOKS

Commonweal
FOUNDED IN 1924

Commonweal [ISSN 0010-3330], a review of religion, politics, and culture, is published monthly, except in July/August, when it is published as a double issue, by the Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. Email: editors@commonwealmagazine.org. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Commonweal*, P.O. Box 348, Congers, NY 10920-0348.

LETTERS

Divorce and remarriage in the early church

HALF THE STORY

I read David Bentley Hart's most recent contribution to *Commonweal* ("Divorce, Annulment & Communion," September) with a mixture of astonishment and dismay. Dismay because Hart, a writer with a real gift for derision, has in this article turned his sneer on the historic mainstream of Christian thought and practice. Astonishment because he has mischaracterized that history in a way unbefitting of a professional scholar.

In a word, Hart has told half the story. For instance, he can say that St. Paul "certainly didn't see [the married state] as encompassing some special sphere of sanctity" only by excluding from consideration the theology of the family in the *Haustafeln* (House-Tables) of Ephesians and Colossians. (To be fair, Hart explains in his translation of the New Testament that he does not consider these epistles to be authentic productions of Paul.) Less defensible is Hart's misreading of St. John Chrysostom. Hart cites one of Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis and marvels at "how unacquainted even a late-fourth-century theologian of the highest eminence was with any concept of 'holy' matrimony." Can he really be unaware of Chrysostom's extensive treatment of marriage and the family in his New Testament exegesis? That treatment was lately made the subject of an entry in St. Vladimir's Popular Patristics series, fittingly titled *St. John Chrysostom: On Marriage and Family Life* (2015). Can the Chrysostom Hart describes really be the same one who said, "Marriage is a type of the presence of Christ" (*Hom. Col.* 4:12–13)?

Hart's précis of the tradition is similarly one-sided. He gestures at a few patristic and conciliar data only to conclude that "neither East nor West, in the early centuries, promoted or practiced anything remotely as strict as modern Roman Catholic teaching prescribes." This is a gross oversimplification of a very complicated subject. It is true that the texts he mentions have been taken by some as tolerating or even approving of remarriage after divorce. But every single one of the texts he cites has been read by others as actually supporting modern Roman Catholic teaching. For instance, the eminent patrologist Henri Crouzel, SJ, in *L'Église primitive face au divorce : du premier au cinquième siècle* (1971) reveals the serious text-critical problems besetting Hart's citations from St. Epiphanius and the Synod of Arles (314). Your readers would never suspect these problems from Hart's article. In the end, Crouzel concludes that the only unambiguous approval of remarriage after divorce in the church's early centuries comes from Ambrosiaster. Many have differed with Crouzel on these points, but Hart has done a disservice to your readers in disregarding the debate.

What's more, he has totally excluded from view all texts running counter to his thesis. To mention just a few: the Synod of Elvira (c. 300), Canon 9: "If a believing woman has left her believing, adulterous husband and [wishes to] marry another, let her be forbidden to marry; if she does marry, she may not receive communion unless [the husband] she abandoned has previously departed this world" (the canon goes on to allow the woman the *viaticum* on her deathbed). Another example: Pope St. Innocent I (401–417) writes, "Whoever marries another man while her husband is still alive must be held to be an adulteress and must be granted no leave to do penance unless one of the men shall have died" (*Ep.* 2.13.15, PL 20.479). Innocent again: "Concerning those who, by means of a deed of separation, have contracted another marriage: it is manifest that they are adulterers on both sides" (*Ep.* 6.6.12, PL 20.500). These rulings of Pope Innocent are far from obscure; in both instances I've drawn the translation from the old *Catholic Encyclopedia* entry on "Divorce (in Moral Theology)." These sources alone suffice to explode Hart's sweeping claim that "the remarried as a class [were] not excluded from communion for life."

What will be the upshot of Hart's article? Those readers on their second

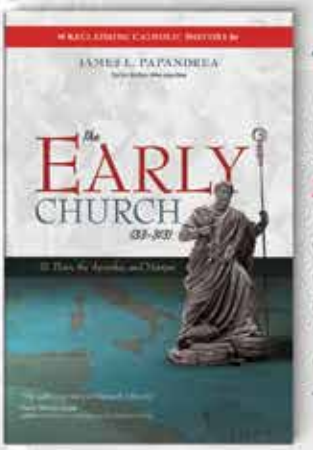
The Reclaiming
CATHOLIC HISTORY SERIES

EDITED BY MIKE AQUILINA

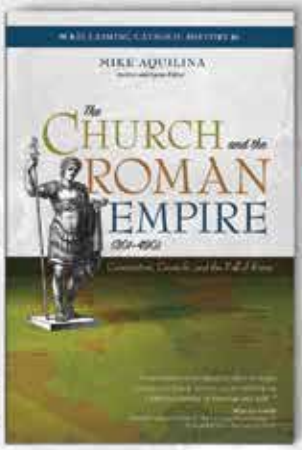
The history of the Catholic Church is often clouded by myth, misinformation, and missing pieces. Today there is a renewed interest in recovering the true history of the Church, correcting the record in the wake of centuries of half-truths and noble lies. Books in the Reclaiming Catholic History series, edited by Mike Aquilina and written by leading authors and historians, bring Church history to life, debunking the myths one era at a time.

Titles in the Series Include:

- *The Early Church* (Available Now)
- *The Church and the Roman Empire* (Available Now)
- *The Church and the Dark Ages*
- *The Church and the Middle Ages*
- *The Church and the Reformation*
- *The Church and the Age of Enlightenment*
- *The Church Facing the Modern Age*



The Early Church (33–313)
St. Peter, the Apostles, and Martyrs
JAMES L. PAPANDREA
In *The Early Church (33–313)*, Catholic historian and biblical expert James Papandrea dispels what he calls common "mythconceptions" about the early years of Christianity.
160 pages, $16.95



The Church and the Roman Empire (301–490)
Constantine, Councils, and the Fall of Rome
MIKE AQUILINA
In *The Church and the Roman Empire (301–490)*, popular Catholic author Mike Aquilina gives readers a vivid and engaging account of how Christianity developed and expanded as the Roman Empire declined.
192 pages, $17.95

"Every book is crystal clear, engaging, entertaining, and myth-busting. Be prepared to be surprised—and grateful for the wonders the Lord has done."
—Scott Hahn
Founder of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology

Look for these titles wherever books and eBooks are sold.
For more information, visit avemariapress.com.

AVE | Ave Maria Press
A Ministry of the United States Province of Holy Cross

Commonweal
FOUNDED IN 1924

PUBLISHER
Thomas Baker

BUSINESS MANAGER
James Hannan

DEVELOPMENT
Christa A. Kerber

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
Milton Javier Bravo

MARKETING COORDINATOR
Gabriella Wilke

ADVERTISING
Regan Pickett
commonwealads@gmail.com
(703) 346-8297

SUBSCRIPTIONS
commonwealmagazine.org/subscribe
(845) 267-3068

Commonweal articles are available at many libraries and research facilities via ProQuest and Opinion Archives. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional offices. Copyright 2019 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $6.95. Yearly print subscriptions, U.S., $65; Canada, $70; other parts of the world, $75. Special two-year rate: U.S., $108; Canada, $118; other parts of the world, $128. Add $45 for airmail.

LETTERS

or third marriages will find nothing there to trouble their consciences. Readers who already approve of remarriage will no doubt find it gratifying to discover that a scholar like Hart agrees with them. Undecided readers may well be deceived by Hart's historical prestidigitations into believing that the testimony of Scripture and Tradition is a settled matter in favor of remarriage. Will the average reader have the wherewithal to track down the text Hart mentions in Origen's *Commentary on Matthew* about some bishops permitting the divorced to remarry (it's 14.23), to find that Origen condemns the practice (three times!) as "contrary to the Scriptures"? I doubt it. Hart's glib dismissals serve more to hide the truth than to illuminate it.

Theodore G. Janiszewski
Rochester, N. Y.

DAVID BENTLEY HART REPLIES:

Theodore Janiszewski should read more carefully. For one thing, whatever sneering or dismissive tone he detected in my article is one he has imagined. For another, he should learn the difference between the "mainstream" of Christianity and "Western Catholic tradition." More to the point, none of his complaints are actually germane to what I said. In order:

Even if Ephesians and Colossians are authentically Pauline, the House-Tables have nothing to do with either a sacramental or a fully theological concept of matrimony. Nor do they negate Paul's attempts to discourage matrimony whenever possible. All my remarks on the New Testament were meant only to explain why early Christians did not all arrive at the same conclusions regarding the scriptural evidence.

Chrysostom and the fathers of the East are often very positive in their description of matrimony, much more so than their Western counterparts. And, yes, Chrysostom on more than one occasion, following Scripture, uses marriage as a *type* (that is, an image) of Christ's presence—as he does many things drawn from nature, such as fire, water, family, polis, wine, fruits, etc. I never said he disliked marriage. It is still clear from all his writings on the matter that he saw it as a natural institution, no different in kind for Christians than for pagans, and not sacramental in the sense we would recognize now.

Crouzel's book has been torn apart so often that its present scholarly status is nil. A pious work, but absurd. The documents are quite clear. The evidence is unambiguous. No good church historian regards Crouzel's argument as worthy of serious attention.

I never said that there were not Christian sources from antiquity that forbade divorce and remarriage. What I said was that there was no universal and consistent practice, and no single authoritative dogmatic of theological consensus on the matter. Hence the point of producing those canonical sources that permitted it.

I also never said Origen approved of divorce and remarriage. I said that he reports that many bishops in his time did allow it. Which is to make the same point as directly above.

If Janiszewski had bothered to read my concluding remarks with care, he would have seen that, far from celebrating the contradictions of the past or recommending any particular course of ecclesial action, I in fact somewhat lament the laxity of both East and West in this matter.

In a sense, the exaggerated response of many traditionalist Catholics to my really very tentative article is instructive. The sane response of anyone who sees current Catholic teaching as correct should be along the lines of: "Of course the historical evidence from the church's early centuries is diverse and contradictory, as with so many aspects of Christian doctrine. But the Holy Spirit has guided the development of church teaching to its present form and thus vindicated certain ancient bishops and theologians and scriptural exegetes while consigning others to the history of error." But traditionalist Catholics all too often—like their Orthodox counterparts—insist that their beliefs come wrapped in comforting fictions that every good historian knows to be false. And yet there is nothing in their doctrinal commitments that should require such fictions. A faith that demands dishonesty is, by definition, not faith.

Importing Censorship

Though "NBA" stands for "National Basketball Association," professional basketball is proudly, and very profitably, international. Unlike American football, for example, whose fan base is largely restricted to the United States, the NBA has followers and broadcasting contracts all over the world. In this country, the NBA also prides itself on its social consciousness. Rather than punishing players for political statements and gestures, as the National Football League has done, or carefully avoiding politics, as Major League Baseball generally does, the NBA has encouraged its players and coaches to speak out on controversial issues. Two of the league's most successful and respected coaches, Gregg Popovich and Steve Kerr, have distinguished themselves as vocal critics of President Trump. Several of the league's stars, including Lebron James, have spoken boldly in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

But now these two distinctive features of the NBA—its international reach and its commitment to free expression—suddenly appear to be at odds. There are still parts of the world where the price of doing business is keeping your mouth shut. In early October Daryl Morey, the general manager of the Houston Rockets, tweeted an image with the words "Fight For Freedom. Stand With Hong Kong." The Chinese government was outraged by this expression of solidarity with protestors. After being publicly rebuked by Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta, Morey deleted the offending tweet, which few people in mainland China could have seen (Twitter has been banned there since 2009). But it was already too late. The Chinese Basketball Association suspended all cooperation with the Rockets, one of the most popular NBA teams in China. Chinese broadcasters said they would no longer televise or stream Rockets games, and Chinese sponsors cut all ties with the team. According to the NBA's commissioner, Adam Silver, China even asked the league to fire Morey, though officials in Beijing deny this.

The NBA's response to China's attempted clampdown on foreign criticism has been uncertain. The league's initial statement on the matter, which described Morey's tweet as "regrettable," drew immediate criticism from American pundits and politicians left and right. But Silver soon issued a second statement promising that "the NBA will not put itself in a position of regulating what players, employees and team owners say or will not say.... We simply could not operate that way." Later he added, "The values of the NBA—the American values, we are an American business—travel with us wherever we go. And one of those values is free expression."

Perhaps. But in that case why have the league's players and coaches been so reserved when asked about events in China? Popovich and Kerr, both dependably outspoken about Trump's abuses of power, have hemmed and hawed about the protests in Hong Kong and China's violent repression of ethnic and religious minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang. Worse, Lebron James actually criticized Morey for signaling his support for the Hong Kong protesters. James said he thought Morey "wasn't educated on the situation at hand" and had failed to understand that "many people could have been harmed" by his tweet, "not only financially, but physically. Emotionally. Spiritually." This was, to put it as kindly as possible, both mealy-mouthed and mercenary. The King James version of social justice turns out to be highly selective, stopping at the water's edge or the bottom line.

But superstar athletes and their coaches are hardly unique in allowing themselves to be muzzled for commercial reasons. At the behest of Beijing, U.S.-based airlines have stopped referring to Taiwan as a separate country on their websites. Hollywood studios have made it clear to screenwriters and directors that unflattering portrayals of the Chinese government—or indeed of anything Chinese—are to be strictly avoided. The hotel chain Marriott recently fired a man for "liking" a tweet posted by supporters of Tibetan independence.

This is not how things were supposed to turn out. For decades we've been assured that trade with China would lead to more liberty there, not less liberty here. Capitalism was supposed to yield democracy wherever it was allowed to take root. We are now learning the hard way that this was always an illusion. The defense of human rights, including the freedom of speech, is not always lucrative; indeed, there is often a price to be paid for it. American businesses must be willing to pay that price whenever necessary, and without feeling too sorry for themselves. They are, after all, being asked only to accept less profit in a cause for which many people in China are paying with their lives.

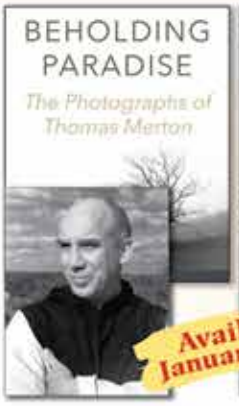
NEW FROM PAULIST PRESS

VATICAN MUSEUMS

100 Works Not to Be Missed

One hundred masterpieces that present the legacy of culture, history, and beauty that the Roman pontiffs have collected and guarded for centuries. An elegant book of exceptional quality to contemplate and savor.

978-0-8091-0661-5 $99.95 HC



BEHOLDING PARADISE

The Photographs of Thomas Merton

edited by Paul M. Pearson

Offers the only available overview of Thomas Merton's photographs while also providing a highly accessible introduction to Merton as a photographer.

978-0-8091-0625-7

$39.95 HC

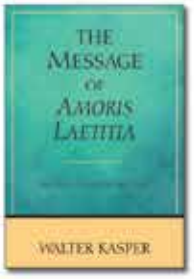
THE MESSAGE OF *AMORIS LAETITIA*

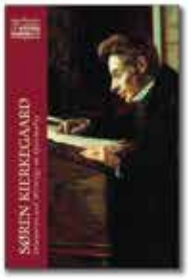
Finding Common Ground

Walter Kasper

Cardinal Kasper points out that *Amoris Laetitia* is a creative renewal of the tradition that picks up and carefully continues the work of the last pontificates. In the service of "The Joy of Love," Kasper constructively contributes to the discussion while taking in all points of view.

978-0-8091-5428-9 $17.95 PB





SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Discourses and Writings on Spirituality

Introduced and translated by Christopher B. Barnett

CLASSICS OF WESTERN SPIRITUALITY

The first volume of sources and commentary devoted exclusively to Kierkegaard's spirituality. Particular attention is given to his writings on God, creation, humanity, and Jesus Christ.

978-0-8091-0648-6 $49.95 PB

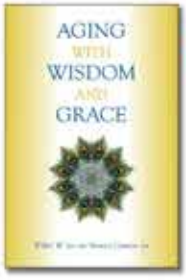
FRANCIS OF ASSISI

An Illustrated History of His Life and Legacy

Engelbert Grau, Raoul Manselli, and Serena Romano

A beautifully illustrated art book with chapters on St. Francis, the founding and influence of the Franciscan Order, and the frescos by Giotto, primarily those in Assisi and Florence.

978-0-8091-0660-8 $89.95 HC



AGING WITH WISDOM AND GRACE

Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au

Explores the contributions faith can make to optimal aging, providing a Christian perspective on such topics as: loss and diminishment, loneliness and suffering, death and dying, regrets and unhealed wounds, gratitude and generativity.

978-0-8091-5462-3 $17.95 PB

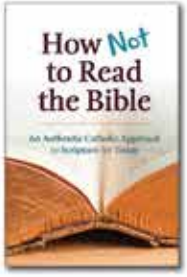
HOW *NOT* TO READ THE BIBLE

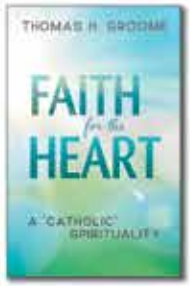
An Authentic Catholic Approach to Scripture for Today

Scott Lewis, SJ

Helps Christians approach the Bible with confidence to explore the richness of what scripture might tell them, avoiding incorrect, too literal, or out of context interpretations.

978-0-8091-5503-3 $16.95 PB





FAITH FOR THE HEART

A "Catholic" Spirituality

Thomas H. Groome

Invites the reader to enter more deeply into the rich treasury of the spiritual resources of the Church's faith, practice, and traditions. Drawing on multiple resources, from the scriptures to church documents and writings of holy men and women, Groome restores hope and draws those who have left back into community.

978-0-8091-5466-1 $21.95 PB

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

Three unlikely creatures, a fox, a porcupine, and a rabbit, follow the star to the nativity, where they realize the importance of cooperation and staying together.

978-0-8091-6788-3 $16.95

HC Ages 5-10.

The Housing Crisis for Teachers

As of today, public-school teachers in forty-nine of the fifty largest U.S. metropolitan areas cannot afford to live where they work. That's because they need to spend at least 30 percent of their gross income on housing, which according to U.S. government standards makes them "cost burdened." In other words, spending this much of their pay for a roof overhead makes it significantly more difficult to cover other living expenses, including food, clothing, and transportation. Nationwide, teachers on average have to spend 50 percent of their income on rent, putting them in the category of the "severely cost burdened." In some parts of the country, living where you teach is literally impossible. In San Jose, California, it would cost public-school teachers 108 percent of their gross income to rent a one-bedroom apartment; in San Francisco, it would cost them 104 percent. For teachers who own their homes, things are a little better—low-interest mortgages may help keep them on this side of the cost-burdened threshold—yet this also assumes the ability to come up with a 20 percent down payment, an increasingly tall order in much of the country, and not just for teachers.

Of course, we have long associated teaching with low salaries, which itself says a lot about what we think of teachers, the majority of whom are women. The average gap in compensation between public-school teachers and workers with similar levels of education and experience is at a new high—11.1 percent, according to the Economic Policy Institute. In real-dollar terms, teacher pay has eroded significantly over recent decades, but especially in Republican-led states, where years of tax cuts for high-income individuals and corporations have starved funding for public education. The red-state teacher strikes of 2018 helped draw attention to long-standing disparities and basic unfairness, but across the country the combination of persistently low pay and long hours continues to make teaching ever less appealing as a career.

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris has proposed a plan for raising teacher salaries nationally by 23 percent over ten years, at a total cost of $315 billion, to be financed by increasing the federal estate tax on the wealthiest 1 percent. Measures like these merit consideration, although some states are leery: they'd be on the hook for the increased cost of benefits, which are generally pegged to salary. A big program like Harris's—even if it could be implemented—might still not be enough to help teachers where the rent is highest. Meanwhile, some municipalities are issuing what might politely be called creative proposals; last year, for example, Florida's Miami-Dade district floated the idea of providing dorm-style quarters for teachers at the schools in which they teach. A number of cities want to construct low-cost housing developments for teachers and other public-school employees, yet in some places affordable-housing plans for teachers have actually met Nimby-like resistance from well-off homeowners concerned about the effect on their property values. It was Horace Mann who popularized the idea in America that public education is a public good. Public goods need and deserve public protection and support. Doesn't this mean, at a minimum, making sure that teachers earn enough to pay the rent?

—Dominic Preziosi

Making the Rich Pay

In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Ernest Hemingway takes a thinly veiled shot at his friend F. Scott Fitzgerald, here given the name Julian, and his rather starry-eyed view of the wealthy. "He remembered poor Julian and his romantic awe of them and how he had started a story once that began, 'The very rich are different from you and me,'" Hemingway wrote. "And how someone had said to Julian, Yes, they have more money."

I'm not sure Hemingway was right, exactly: having more money isn't the only difference. Studies show that the rich tend to be less empathetic and more selfish, their fortunes removing them from the hardships and anxieties of those of us living paycheck to paycheck. What's certain, however, is that just how much more money they have isn't determined by iron laws of economics or their own brilliance and virtue, but by public policy—especially the rates at which they're taxed. In today's grotesquely unequal America, it turns out that billionaires pay a lower tax rate than "you and me."

That's the infuriating conclusion of *The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Taxes and How to Make Them Pay*, a new book by Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, both professors at the University of California, Berkeley. According to the data they assembled, which was featured in recent articles in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ahead of the book's publication, the wealthiest four hundred households in the United States paid an effective tax rate of just 23 percent in 2018—lower than any other income group. The bottom half of U.S. households, for example, paid a 24.2 percent rate.

President Donald J. Trump celebrates the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 with Vice President Mike Pence, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, and former Speaker of the House Paul Ryan.

Saez and Zucman arrive at these numbers by looking beyond federal income taxes to calculate the *total* tax rates paid by Americans. They include all federal, state, and local taxes, and also factor in what they call "indirect taxes," like fees for motor vehicle licenses. The two economists chart what this total tax rate has been historically for different income groups—and show that it's plummeted for the ultra-rich since the mid-twentieth century. In 1950, the effective tax rate on the top four hundred households was 70 percent; in 1960, it was 56 percent; and as late as 1980, it was still 47 percent.

The richest four hundred households in the United States now have more wealth than the bottom 60 percent of Americans combined. While wages have stagnated for workers and millions labor under medical debt and crushing student loans, the rich keep getting richer. This is no accident—it's the deliberate result of policy choices. For decades, politicians have slashed income taxes for top earners, estate taxes, investment taxes, and corporate taxes, all while leaving the IRS underfunded and unable to match the armies of lawyers and accountants that help the rich stash away their money. The Republicans' "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act," a giveaway to the 1 percent and corporations passed in 2017, only made the situation worse, bringing us to what Saez and Zucman describe today.

If all this induces despair, it's not meant to—just the opposite, in fact. "Many people have the view that nothing can be done," Zucman told the *New York Times*. "Our case is, 'No, that's wrong. Look at history.'" He's right. It doesn't have to be this way. We can decide to make the rich pay more in taxes, as we've done in the past, and build a more just and equitable society. There are even those running for high office who have plans to do just that. If the struggle to take back our country from those plundering it won't be won in a single election, we can at least start by rejecting the politicians cowering in awe of the very rich—and turn to those promising to stand up to the greed of millionaires and billionaires and deliver big structural change.

—Matthew Sitman

Cruelty at the Border

The first time I saw it was from the window of a bus. The rusted steel wall cuts into the side of a mountain before descending into a valley, where it winds along the course of the Rio Grande between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. It's one of the most militarized sites along the U.S.-Mexico border, where the Department of Homeland Security, under orders from the Trump administration, is refusing to admit refugees and asylum-seekers from Mexico and Central America. The result is that thousands of migrants are now camping along the bases of Juárez's three international bridges, enduring squalid conditions as they wait to hear back from U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Speaking before a group of about 325 activists, academics, journalists, students, and members of religious communities from more than seventy organizations, Msgr. Arturo Bañuelas, of the Diocese of El Paso, bluntly denounced President Trump's border wall as "a monument to white supremacy." Not only is the wall absolutely unnecessary for border security (there's been a fence there for decades); it's also

The Office for Mission and Ministry at

Villanova University

announces the 2019 presentation of the

Civitas Dei Medal

John W. O'Malley, SJ, PhD

University Professor in the Department of Theology, Georgetown University

November 13 | Driscoll Auditorium | Villanova University

Father John O'Malley is one of the most important scholars in Church history. He has committed more than 60 years to groundbreaking scholarship, especially in the area of Church councils held between the 16th and 20th centuries.

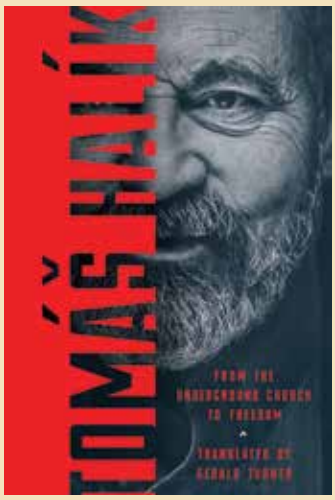
In his seminal work *City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*), St. Augustine articulates a distinctive commitment to intellectual engagement between the Church and the world. With the Civitas Dei Medal, Villanova University recognizes Catholics who, through their work, have made exemplary contributions to the Catholic intellectual tradition.

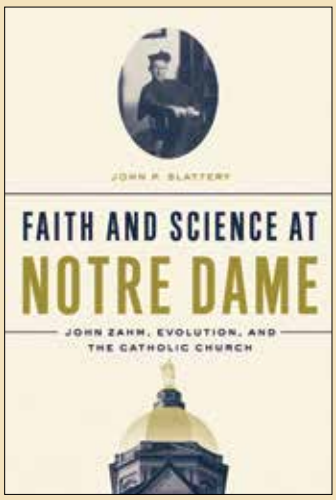
VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

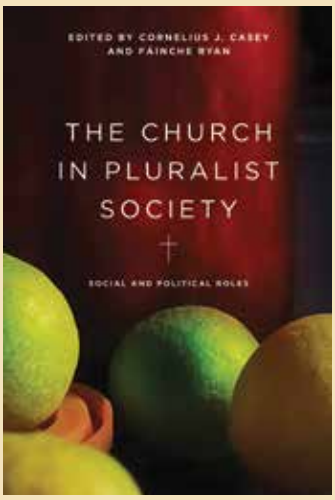
mission.villanova.edu

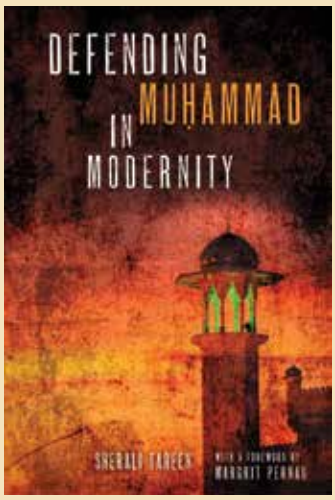
— Read, Learn, Grow in Faith —

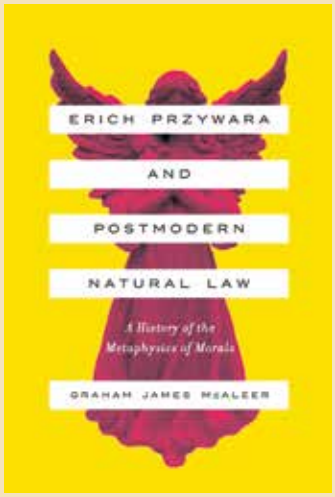
FALL TITLES FROM NOTRE DAME PRESS

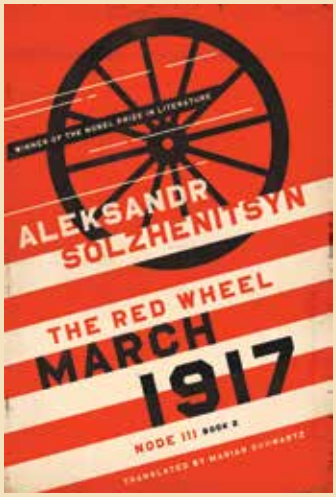


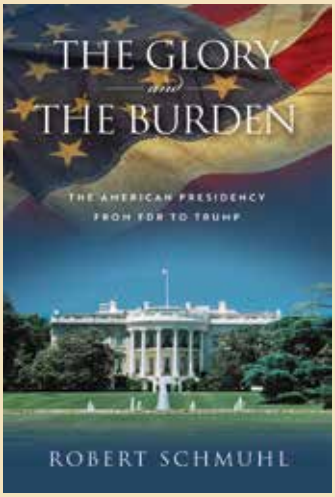


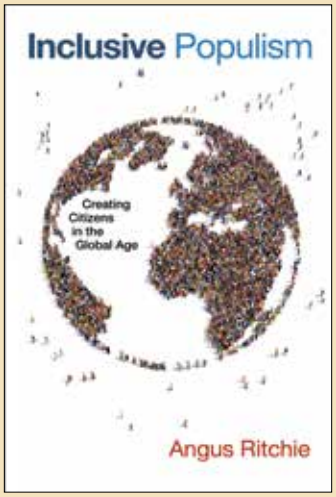




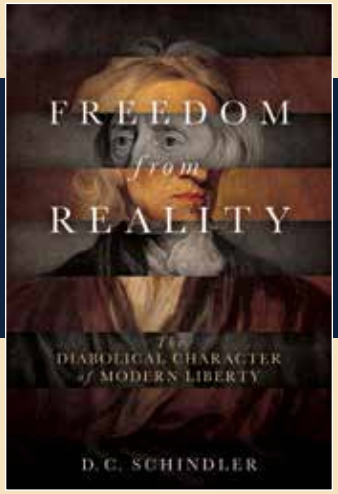


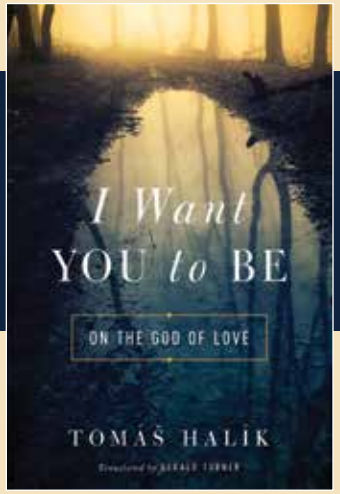






NEW IN PAPERBACK





AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME | NOTRE DAME PRESS

NOTRE DAME, INDIANA 46556 · UNDPRESS.ND.EDU

Participants in the *Jornada por la Justicia* teach-in cross the Sante Fe Bridge from El Paso, Texas to Juárez, Mexico on October 12, 2019, as part of a non-violent, binational border action.

CNS PHOTO / JESUS ROSALES

a colossal waste of taxpayer money. As Hope Border Institute's Dylan Corbett has pointed out, the millions of dollars already spent by the federal government on a small portion of replacement fencing in New Mexico would be enough to double the annual salary of every Guatemalan coffee farmer, improving their standard of living and avoiding forced migration.

But in the face of recent legal victories by its opponents—including El Paso County itself—the administration has doubled down on its "Remain in Mexico" and "metering" policies, twin anti-immigrant strategies that have effectively halted the entry of *all* asylum-seekers along the southern border.

I witnessed such cruelty firsthand as I crossed over the Santa Fe Bridge from El Paso to Juárez in a nonviolent, binational border action organized by the Latinx Catholic Leadership Coalition, the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership, and Hope Border Institute. About half of the 325 demonstrators remained in El Paso to perform a "Jericho Walk," recalling the story from the Book of Joshua in which God reduces Jericho's walls to rubble. The rest walked into Juárez with rosaries, flowers, and holy water, visiting with migrants and then returning to bless the bridge, reclaiming it as both a symbol of fellowship and a centuries-old path of migration. A smaller delegation, which I joined, stayed behind in the migrant camps. There we met a group of Mexican families from the increasingly violent southern states of Oaxaca and Michoacán.

Organized in advance by other migrants and Catholic legal-aid workers, with bags packed and documents in hand, the families were prepared to cross into the United States to request immediate asylum. Our role was to simply accompany them in order to make sure their request was processed as the law requires it to be. After a tense standoff lasting about thirty minutes, it was. Amid a haze of razor wire, concrete barricades, and armored vehicles, armed CBP agents finally allowed all fifteen migrants to cross. It was a moment of relief, even hope. But the migrants we accompanied that day are still confined to a cold jail cell at the border, and they have only about a 30 percent chance of securing permanent asylum.

One activist I met calls the U.S. passport a *tapete mágico*, or "magic carpet," because it grants its possessor the freedom to float back and forth across the border in peace. Since my time in El Paso, I've come to see my own passport in a different way: it's not just a document that exempts me from the trauma suffered by migrants, but also one that implicates me in my government's racist cruelty.

—Griffin Oleynick

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS

Truth & Consequences

If Trump is impeached, will he be removed from office?

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's slow walk to an "impeachment inquiry" rested on the astute calculation that, given enough time, Donald Trump would overreach. And he did. His effort to pressure Ukraine's newly elected president, Volodymyr Zelensky, into digging up dirt on former Vice President Joe Biden is certainly a misdemeanor. If it can be demonstrated from text messages and transcripts that Trump was withholding military aid to the beleaguered country until they agreed to investigate Biden, that would surely count as a high crime.

Pelosi's measured pace brought along enough hesitant House Democrats to add weight to her announcement that the House Intelligence Committee would open an impeachment inquiry. The president, she said, had betrayed his oath of office, our national security, and the integrity of U.S. elections. He "must be held accountable—no one is above the law." The White House's refusal to cooperate with the House's impeachment inquiry may add obstruction of justice to the list of impeachable offenses.

But will the inquiry actually end in impeachment? And would an impeachment actually lead to removal from office? If the evidence of a two-year investigation by Robert Mueller did not bring a House investigation together, what hope is there that a dodgy phone call to the president of Ukraine will rid us of our turbulent president? There he sits in the White House, larger than life, crazier than ever. What assurances have we that we will be rid of him soon, or even after the next election?

For some of the same reasons he was elected, he could be reelected. Rafts of polling, analysis, commentary, and news reports lay out multiple, sometimes contradictory explanations for Trump's 2016 win: a deeply polarized electorate, white working-class resentment, misogyny, racism, liberal condescension, the Electoral College, etc. All of these problems remain. Add to them Trump's claims of a "deep state" trying to undo the results of the 2016 election—a conspiracy he is selling to his base in the 2020 campaign.

As of the middle of October, 42 percent of Americans say they approve of him. They may be joined next November by Republicans and Independents who do not approve of Trump himself, but who do approve of his tax cuts, deregulation, and willingness to play hardball with the Democrats. Then there's the 58 percent who don't approve of Trump *or* his policies, yet can't seem to get enough of him. Left, right, and center, the whole country

CNS PHOTO / JONATHAN ERNST, REUTERS

Then–House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., gestures as President Donald Trump delivers his first State of the Union address, January 30, 2018.

seems to be mesmerized by his attacks on Biden and Pelosi, the Democrats, the Squad, the poor, the hungry, the huddled masses, and our allies. What would the front pages of the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* be without Trump's transgressive behavior? What could Anderson Cooper, Rachel Maddow, Chris Wallace, or Sean Hannity talk about if not Trump's serial outrages? How would Stephen Colbert shape his witty, often edgy, monologues without a daily dose of Trump's tweets?

Americans have long delighted in bad boys. We relish watching people acting out and getting away with it, even as we tisk-tisk and shudder. This infatuation is perfectly described by Richard Levak, who was a consulting psychologist to *The Apprentice*, the reality-TV show that made Trump famous and convinced some Americans and many journalists that he was a tycoon and a money-making genius. In a recent *New Yorker* profile, Levak observes: "What made Trump so magnetic as a reality-television star was his impulse to transgress…and it is the same quality that has made a captive audience of the world. That somebody can become that successful while also being that emotionally undisciplined—it's so macabre that you have to watch it…. And you keep waiting for the comeuppance. But it doesn't come."

Nancy Pelosi, Adam Schiff, and the House Democrats are now responsible for delivering Act One of that comeuppance. But it is Mitch McConnell and the Senate Republicans who are on call for Act Two, voting on whether to remove Trump from office. Even the unraveling of this presidency—over Ukraine, the Kurds, betrayal of our allies, Trump's still-to-be-seen financial records, obstruction of justice, and several other transgressions—may not cause Republicans to revoke their deal with the devil. If they stand by Trump in spite of everything, Act Three will play on November 3, 2020, when Americans will have a chance to turn off the Government Reality Show and bring back a real government.

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI

Italy's New Odd Couple

Can the Five Star Movement and the Democratic Party stave off Matteo Salvini?

This past summer the term *governo balneare*, "beach-time government," took on a whole new meaning in Italian politics. In the twentieth century, *governo balneare* meant a government formed hastily to get through the summer, often with the same coalition of parties. Such a government was supposed to be transitional—a temporary truce between rivals. But this summer Italy's government was brought down by seaside speeches delivered by a man in his swimsuit. The man was Italy's interior minister, Matteo Salvini, the leader of the League and the de facto strongman of the coalition government formed after the March 2018 elections.

The crisis was timed by Salvini in order to force early elections. Salvini's plan backfired, however, when the prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, unexpectedly stood up to him. Until then, Conte had been little more than a figurehead, quietly enabling the League's policies, especially those having to do with migration and Italy's relationship with the European Union. But in a spectacular showdown in Parliament, Conte accused Salvini, who was sitting right next to him, of being disloyal, having a poor work ethic, and lacking respect for Italy's democratic institutions. Salvini found his path toward new elections blocked by two other Catholics, each very different from the other: Prime Minister Conte, a devotee of Padre Pio, and President Sergio Mattarella, a Vatican II Catholic and a Christian Democrat.

After a few weeks of negotiations between mid-August and early September, the collapse of the League–Five Star Movement coalition government led to a new governing coalition between the populist Five Star Movement and the center-left Democratic Party. Conte remained prime minister. It is still not clear if this is the beginning of Conte's moral and political redemption. Educated at the Catholic-run Villa Nazareth College in Rome, Conte has until now been a moral windsock, eager to please whoever supports his place in government. What's certain is that Conte's description of Salvini in Parliament was quite accurate. In Salvini's last months as interior minister, he demonstrated a degree of hubris Italians had not seen before—not even when Berlusconi was prime minister. Salvini brandished rosaries at his political rallies, promised that he would soon have "full powers" to run Italy, and bragged, like an aspiring caudillo, about his cozy relationship with the police and security forces.

Now, two parties that have spent most of the past six years insulting each other suddenly find themselves together in a coalition whose main purpose is to exclude the League from government and to postpone new elections, which would probably lead to major gains for Salvini, thanks to his anti-immigration and anti-EU stances. This new government may have the same prime minister as the previous one, but its plans are very different.

It remains to be seen how long this new coalition will be able to function. Both the Five Star Movement and the Christian Democrats are themselves

Pope Francis meets with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte at the Vatican.

coalitions made up of different political cultures. Just a few days after the Democratic Party came back to power, its last prime minister, Matteo Renzi, left to launch a new party. The Five Star Movement, meanwhile, has two very different camps: a right-wing, technocratic culture on one side and a leftist, big-government populism on the other. The only thing the two camps have had in common is their opposition to the political establishment; and while both have prominent representatives, neither has a credible leader. Five Star's elected representatives in Parliament and in local administration have proved, almost without exception, to be disastrous. The Five Star mayor of Rome, Virginia Raggi, has turned Italy's capital city into a health hazard for many of its inhabitants: uncollected trash, wild boars roaming the suburbs, decades-old city buses catching fire in the middle of Rome.

The new government's most immediate task is to reorient its international alliances. For now at least, Italy has returned to its normal relations with the European Union—striking a deal with Brussels about the redistribution of migrants arriving in Italy—but that leaves open the question of how Rome will approach Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and other world leaders with important ties to Italy. In the meantime, though, Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán, has turned away from Salvini and allied himself with the neo-Fascist party Fratelli d'Italia.

Italy's new government could turn out to be only a temporary stay against the League's xenophobic policies and authoritarian temptations. But whatever the next elections may bring, the new coalition has already succeeded in dispelling the fear that Salvini, as minister of the interior, could continue in his *liaison dangereuse* with Italian security forces. It has also brought an end to the international quarantine in which Italy found itself during the short-lived government of the League–Five Star coalition. Last February, for example, France recalled its ambassador in Rome, something that had not happened since 1940.

Catholics in Italy, as in many other Western countries, are divided when it comes to immigration policy, but the Italian bishops have made sure to avoid any show of partisanship. Indeed, they have almost made a point of being absent from the political debate, except for their sporadic protests against Salvini's cynical display of religious objects for electoral purposes. But other important voices in Italian Catholicism have not been so silent. Among the more vocal elements of the Italian church have been ecclesial movements involved with social issues and migration (especially the Community of Sant'Egidio); Catholic newspapers and magazines, which have taken a much stronger line against Salvini than secular media organizations; and the Jesuits, who have tried to give voice to the non-rightist members of the Five Star Movement and have been openly critical of Salvini and the League. In the latest issue of the Vatican-vetted magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the political columnist Francesco Occhetta, SJ, gave a cautious but clear blessing to the new government. After the recent funeral of Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, Pope Francis took time to meet with Prime Minister Conte and gave him a rosary. This rare signal of favor suggests that many in the Vatican and among the Italian bishops see the new government as a bulwark against Salvini's ethnonationalism.

The formation of Italy's new government was followed almost immediately by a ruling from Italy's supreme court that decriminalized doctor-assisted suicide while not quite legalizing euthanasia. This promises to be one of the most divisive issues in Parliament, which has for a long time refused to legislate on end-of-life issues and left the courts to deal with them. The same Catholic voices that have been hailed by progressives for their courage in opposing Salvini's war on migrants could soon find themselves opposing the progressive push for laws permitting euthanasia. As this summer reminded us, in Italian politics coalitions are constantly shifting. Today's ally may be tomorrow's adversary.

CNS PHOTO / REUTERS, VIA VATICAN MEDIA

XAVIER

30 West 16th Street • New York, NY 10011-6302

REMEMBERING THE JESUIT MARTYRS OF EL SALVADOR AND THEIR COMPANIONS

November 14, 2019

Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J.


Amando López, S.J.


Joaquín López y López, S.J.


Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J.


Segundo Montes, S.J.


Juan Ramón Moreno, S.J.


Celina Ramos


Elba Ramos

ARTWORK COURTESY OF MARY PIMMEL-FREEMAN

Teach-In, 3:45-6:45 p.m.
Xavier High School

Registration • 3:45 p.m.
Opening Session • 4:15 p.m.

All are welcome. Register at xavierhs.org/teachin19.

The Teach-In will explore the legacy of the martyrs, the plight of immigrants and refugees, and care for our common home.

Memorial Mass, 7 p.m.
Church of St. Francis Xavier

Principal Concelebrant:
John Cecero, S.J.
Provincial, USA Northeast Province of the Society of Jesus

Homilist:
Matt Malone, S.J.
President and Editor-in-Chief, America Media

NICHOLAS FRANKOVICH

Benefit of the Doubt?

Brett Kavanaugh & clerical sex abuse

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh takes his ceremonial oath during his public swearing-in, October 8, 2018.

CNS PHOTO / JIM BOURG, REUTERS

Two national news stories about sexual abuse coincided late last year. On August 14, 2018, the grand jury investigating abuse by Catholic clergy in Pennsylvania released their report, documenting hundreds of cases and rekindling public indignation at the long history of crimes and cover-ups committed by priests and bishops. Meanwhile, in July, Christine Blasey Ford told her congresswoman in California that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her thirty-six years earlier, when they were in high school. By mid-September, Ford's allegation, which had been forwarded to the FBI, was blazing across the media landscape, where it dominated the headlines for the next three weeks. The controversy continues to smolder a year later.

Public reaction to the first story remains markedly different from public reaction to the second. Any allegation against a priest or bishop tends to elicit swift and near-universal denunciation of the accused, on the assumption that any skepticism would only compound the wrong done to the putative survivor. Ford, by contrast, has been met with almost as much suspicion as sympathy. True, more Americans believe her than Kavanaugh, according to polls conducted shortly after their Senate testimonies; in explaining why they find her account credible, some women cite their own experience. At the same time, however, Kavanaugh benefits from an army of media advocates who defend his innocence with vigor, picking apart the case brought by Ford and, in effect, putting her on trial, accusing her of lying and defaming Kavanaugh or, at best, of being confused about the identity of her assailant.

His defenders, her opponents, begin with the legal principle that the burden of proof lies with the plaintiff. Although Ford v. Kavanaugh was not a court trial, it assumed the form of one, so the inclination to consider him innocent until proven guilty was not irrational. It meant, however, that Ford was presumed to be dishonest, or honest but mistaken. Few of us these days would presume that of anyone filing an accusation of sexual abuse by a priest. Behold the double standard.

Someone who alleges that he was abused by a priest is probably telling the truth, according to the bulk of available statistical data. In the first John Jay report (2004), we read that of 5,681 cases investigated by dioceses and religious orders, only 1.5 percent stemmed from allegations that in the end were deemed to be false. Granted, that figure does not reflect the thousands of allegations that were filed but never investigated or that church officials investigated but never pursued to definitive conclusions. It is, though, in line with research findings that less than 10 percent of all rape allegations are false. (The exact figure varies from study to study.) Then again, the social scientists who examine the question often work from records of criminal-justice systems and have no way of knowing how many false accusations were among those that were filed and investigated but never prosecuted.

No honest observer can claim to know the truth with perfect certitude—no one, that is, except the putative victims and abusers, as one might suppose. But even they may be subject to unreliable memories, especially when the crime or misconduct is alleged to have been committed decades earlier. The possibility of false-memory syndrome is never fully absent. It was invoked often in Kavanaugh's defense. If you maintain that Ford testified in good faith but got the identity of her assailant wrong, you can defend him without vilifying her. In turn, some of Ford's supporters attributed a version of false-memory syndrome to Kavanaugh, suggesting

that he was a heavy drinker who might have been prone to blacking out and then waking up without recollection of anything he had done the night before.

She said, he said—the grimly intimate nature of sexual coercion means that third-party eyewitnesses are rare. Most states and the federal government require no corroborating evidence for a conviction of sexual assault. Even so, the prosecutor usually produces at least some circumstantial evidence that jurors can construe as corroborating if they are so inclined. The legal standard in criminal court is usually proof beyond a reasonable doubt. And what is that? In the end, whatever the jurors say it is.

Legal standards of evidence are more subjective than we often pretend. In civil cases we speak of a "preponderance of the evidence," for example, as if the credibility and significance of the different elements of conflicting testimonies and putatively relevant facts can be put on scales, one of which will hang visibly lower than the other. It's never that simple in practice. One judge or juror may deem the bearing that a piece of circumstantial evidence has on a case to be greater than his peers do. Or he may judge certain testimony to be less credible than they do but still more likely to be true than untrue. The binary nature of a verdict—guilty or not guilty—can never conform to the limits of our knowledge or to the necessarily probabilistic shape of our reasoning.

Frederick Thieman, a former U.S. attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania, is a veteran of the review board for the Pittsburgh diocese. Asked by the *Pittsburgh Catholic* about the grand-jury report, he noted the fragility of many of the cases that came before him on the board. They were "extremely difficult in the sense that there were oftentimes complicated factual situations," he said. "Cases were often many years old and people's memories were understandably not as precise as they might have been." He thought that, even without a statute of limitations, not many of them "would have made it into the courtroom. Certainly not a criminal court. Quite likely not even a civil court."

You might therefore conclude that survivors are more likely to be believed—and to find satisfaction—before a diocesan review board than in a court of law. Jason Berry is quick to remind me, though, of the history of mendacious bishops concealing files and obstructing justice. He thinks that diocesan review boards have been largely ineffectual, "created as part of a damage-control strategy," and that cases are best adjudicated in the legal system, beyond the church's reach.

In the past year, eighteen states and the District of Columbia have extended the statute of limitations for sex-abuse cases. The changes will enable untold numbers of survivors to file lawsuits. More states are poised to follow. For years, survivors and their advocates have campaigned for such reform. They seem confident that prosecutors will be able to persuade juries, who, after years of church scandals and, more recently, the #MeToo movement, may be more predisposed to believe the accuser than to presume the innocence of the accused.

The church's deplorable record on sexual abuse has provoked condemnation from both the left and the right. Catholics on the right who think like a prosecutor in this matter tend to situate the scandals in the context of the sexual revolution that swept through the culture in the 1960s and that, in their view, corrupted a critical mass of the hierarchy. The same Catholics often do an about-face when discussing allegations of sexual abuse outside the church. Staving off what they regard as dangerous excesses of "Believe women" activism, they adopt the mentality of a defense attorney, affirming the need to uphold the principle that an accused man is innocent until proven guilty. They emphasize holes in the accuser's testimony while ignoring or minimizing facts that might weaken the defendant's case.

When Sen. Chuck Grassley tried to cast doubt on Ford's account by asking why she had waited so long to come forward, either he had not learned from the church scandals or he calculated that much of his intended audience hadn't. When the FBI curtailed its investigation, Ford's supporters protested, but Kavanaugh's were unfazed. You would think that anyone believing that truth was on his side, and looking to dispel all reasonable doubt, would favor the collection of more evidence. When the most widely distributed version of the grand-jury report released by the attorney general of Pennsylvania was shown to be missing more than four hundred pages of responses from priests and bishops who disputed the accusations against them, few people raised any objection. Most of us are not much interested in counterarguments and counter-evidence that could complicate the consensus that the Catholic Church is guilty of all that it has been accused of, and more.

If in the Kavanaugh matter we demand a high standard of evidence and then conclude that the accuser failed to meet it, we should be equally skeptical of those who bring accusations against Catholic priests. But perhaps in the latter case we shouldn't give so much wiggle room to the accused. If we don't, we shouldn't in the Kavanaugh case either. When we presume that the accused is innocent, we thereby presume that the accuser is wrong, perhaps lying. We lay that burden on the morale of a survivor and call it the burden of proof. If in courts of law and in the court of public opinion we have quietly begun to presume instead that someone who claims to have been sexually abused is telling the truth, our doing so is not unreasonable. Neither, of course, is it unproblematic. In any event, we should examine what we're doing and be consistent. If we decide that the accuser in a sex-abuse case deserves the benefit of the doubt, we should apply that principle equally, when the accused is a federal judge no less than when he's a Catholic priest. Beware of double standards.

NICHOLAS FRANKOVICH *is an editor at* National Review.

SLAVICA JAKELIĆ

Nationalism without Idolatry

How Christians can purify their civic attachments

Pope Leo XIII

While Francis's papacy so far has emphasized a pastoral approach to moral and political questions, there is one issue the pope has addressed principally as a critic, and that is nationalism. Francis's pronouncements on the perils of nationalist politics have highlighted his concern about divisiveness and conflict, his worry about the future of Europe, and his alarm over how the global rise of nationalism weakens multilateralism and generates distrust in international institutions. In all these critiques, the pope has focused on the exclusionary and marginalizing effects of the recent nationalist turn. Thus, when he decried nationalisms that "impose and pursue individual national interests" to the detriment of humanity's common destiny, he did so not only because such nationalisms threaten our planet, but also because they produce a "mindset of violence and indifference" toward the most vulnerable groups, refugees and migrants.

Francis's rejection of nationalism is particularly meaningful at a moment in which the political rhetoric and practices shaping American public life legitimize it in its most exclusionary forms—including dangerous expressions of white nationalism. The pope's words resonate with all American Catholics who view an "America First" preoccupation with U.S. power and interests as inimical to the pursuit of a better, more just society. But in a time haunted by violent kinds of nationalism and intolerance, it is important to probe the potential of more inclusive and more capacious narratives of national belonging. These narratives could provide a forceful response to the claims of selfish nationalism and more importantly, could do so by enabling the sense of solidarity with others both within and beyond national borders. The resources for framing such positive national narratives also lie in Catholic intellectual traditions.

The very idea of positive national narratives would seem to counter the warnings of many theologians who believe that Christians should eschew all nationalisms, not only because of their dark histories, but for deeper moral and theological reasons. The American Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh, admonishing Christians not to succumb to the nation-state as the definitive and inevitable framework of civic participation, argues persuasively that states aren't natural creations but merely historical ones. Christians,

Cavanaugh stresses, should recognize all the ways in which nationalism colonizes their imagination, reducing human personhood and identity to loyalty to the nation-state and inculcating a willingness to die and to kill for it.

To respond to the claims that nation-states make—claims that, Cavanaugh believes, obscure the identity of Christians as "members of a different body, the body of Christ"—Christians must break through the entrapments of national projects, and instead seek communities in which to form attachments to each other and construct new sites of political engagements. Only by rejecting the nation-state as the sole political model and national community as the exclusive domain of identity, Cavanaugh insists, can Christians enact their faith and fulfill their civic role; only then can they demonstrate why the ideals of common good are irreducible to one's allegiance to a state that, as the "unitary whole," seeks to replace the church.

Cavanaugh's theological critique of nationalist projects as signs of "the twilight of gods" and "the age-old sin of idolatry" finds much evidence in history. Anyone familiar with the stories of predominantly Catholic countries—Spain and Ireland, Argentina and Poland—understands the grave dangers of close bonds between the church and modern nation-states, and the lasting negative implications of such bonds for the church's character and the vibrancy of Catholic faith. And anyone who (like this author) experienced and studied violent conflicts such as those in Bosnia and Croatia knows all too well how successfully nationalist politicians co-opt Catholic symbols and traditions to justify exclusion and domination, and how quickly Catholic clergy can adopt the mantle of nationalist ideologues to formulate theologies of nationhood and legitimize violence against other national and religious groups.

The American historical perspective on the proximity between nationalism and Catholicism further illuminates Cavanaugh's fears. Here, nationalism emerges as a problem for Catholicism not only through its corruptive effect on the commitment to universality or through the danger of Constantinianism. As my American Catholic colleagues regularly remind me, slogans such as "God, Country, Notre Dame" at the entrance of the University of Notre Dame's basilica are more than mere symbols of Catholic immigrants' eagerness to build America. They are warnings that all political projects of nationhood contain a powerful drive to exclude the minority religious group—once Catholics and Jews, today Muslims—coercing them to prove their loyalty and to relinquish at least some parts of their religious attachments in the name of belonging to "one nation."

In distinguishing between obedience and love, state and country, Leo XIII points out that the Christian response to the modern world should not be a matter of rejecting it a priori, but of thoughtfully and responsibly engaging it.

And so the reasons for distrusting nationalism and for separating Catholicism from it are significant, both theologically and historically. Yet Catholic intellectual and social traditions remind us that there exists more than one way to address the relationship between Catholic and national identities. These traditions suggest that, alongside the necessity of resistance to the power of nation-states, there is also ethical potential in Christians' attachment to their country—the potential that arises from their careful discernment of responsibilities both within and beyond the bounds of a given nation.

One resource for constructive views in this regard is the encyclical *Sapientiae christianae*. Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical at the end of the nineteenth century, a time when national movements in Europe were frequently accompanied by belligerent anticlericalism, and when nation-states often consolidated their power by diminishing the powers of the Catholic Church. Yet even though these immediate political developments shape the backdrop of Leo's statement, his encyclical manages to transcend its historical location and propose a more subtle approach to questions of Catholic faith, civic responsibility, and national identity. It does so by alerting us to the difference between civil obedience and a sense of belonging, while underscoring that all forms of citizenship Christians accept in this world must be bound by awareness of their place in the world to come.

Leo XIII's thoughts on "Christians as citizens" highlight the discerning way he writes about allegiance to the state and attachment to country. To the "laws of the State," Leo explains, one owes obedience, yet only when these laws are in accord with the laws of God. If state laws are "at variance with the divine law," if they contradict the freedom of the church and one's religious observance, then "to resist becomes a positive duty, to obey, a crime." These observations on the limits of civic obedience could serve to ground arguments such as those proposed by Cavanaugh; in Leo's own time, they could also justify the church's worldly claims to social and political power, claims that more often than not produced the institutional and spiritual corruption of Catholicism. But just as significant as Leo's focus on the limits of Christian

compliance with the state is his attentiveness to the reality of Christians' love for their country. He declares that we are "bound…to love dearly" the country in which "we had birth, and in which we were brought up," and "whence we have received the means of enjoyment this mortal life affords." This love is "natural," he asserts: it is a type of affection that proceeds from "the same eternal principle" as does one's love for the church. "God Himself," Leo declares, is their "Author and originating Cause."

For anyone opposed to nationalism as a matter of theological and moral principle, or focused on the immediate context in which Leo's encyclical was written, it is easy to emphasize—as some American Catholic interpreters do—its instruction that Christians must discern when to resist the powers of worldly political communities and the institutions that embody them. Yet Leo assesses the role of Christians not only as citizens of the state, but also as individuals constituted by—and enacting—love for their country. In distinguishing between obedience and love, state and country, and calling for the evaluation of such dispositions *within* the postulates of faith, Leo points out that the Christian response to the modern world should not be a matter of rejecting it a priori, but of thoughtfully and responsibly engaging it. He reminds us, to paraphrase here the contemporary German social thinker Hans Joas, that religious traditions do nothing on their own, but become alive only when they are interpreted and enacted in particular times, in the individual and social lives of those who inhabit them.

Read through this lens, Leo's encyclical becomes instructive for our challenging moment in two ways. First, it suggests that obedience to the state and attachment to one's country cannot be conflated. The former obligates Christians to duty within the civic order; the latter concerns what Leo calls "natural" affections that unite individuals into a society, affections that compel them to act in order to better their country. In this sense, Christians can disobey the state precisely out of love for their country. Second, and most important, the encyclical unambiguously posits that obedience to the state and one's attachment to country are curbed by the Christian love for God's law. Yes, there is in Leo's considerations a direct link between one's love for God's law and one's love for the church. There is also a definite assertion of the sovereignty of the church, as when the encyclical demands the unity of Catholics, even when their opinions differ, to defend the church against the rising power of modern states.

But if Leo's *Sapientiae christianae* raises the same questions today as it did when it was written—when should Christians obey the state, and how can they bring their attachments to their country into accord with the laws of God?—the responsibility to answer those questions at the beginning of the twenty-first century, more than half a century after the Second Vatican Council, resides neither with the national councils of bishops, nor with Catholic theologians. The responsibility resides in the conscience of each individual Catholic believer, and within her multiple communities of attachments. As a consequence, the results of thoughtful discernment about faith, civic duties, and attachment to one's country cannot be the same for everyone. For some, as Cavanaugh advocates, the answer will be the creation of religious and political communities as local and counter-communities. For others, however, that response will be, as with John Paul II, the "love of" one's "motherland [as] the measure of human nobility" *against* "narrow nationalism or chauvinism;" and, as with Leo XIII, it will be one's love for the country always *within* the greater Christian moral order of charity.

The second group of responses recognizes that passionate attachment to one's national community does not necessarily obscure one's faith, but rather can embody it; it suggests that instead of erecting walls, Christians who love their country can be the ones building bridges to other nations—and ought to be. Even Pope Francis understands this possibility: when observing on one occasion pilgrims waving their national flags, he took it as "a prophetic sign" that Catholics' national pride can assist in shaping positively "the encounter between peoples." Here, the plurality of national attachments emerges as both a gift and a responsibility. And Christians' bonds with those with whom they share identity—language, culture, political institutions, and traditions—do not preclude coming together in a sense of solidarity with those who are different, within or beyond the borders of their own nation.

If there is one reason why Leo's nineteenth-century encyclical should be read in our moment—a moment in which we are pushed relentlessly toward "either/or" positions—it is the fact that the document does not give one simple answer. Rather, it opens the door for a nuanced deliberation of civic duties and worldly loves through the lens of one's faith commitments. From the point of view of the Catholic commitment to universality, it is clear that such deliberation must reject the sacralization of *any* nation. But even more important, a deliberative approach to the relationship between Catholic and national commitments carries the idea that Christians must frequently reexamine the injustices entailed in the boundaries of their national community—from racism and sexism to the kinds of religious and ideological intolerance that ostracize and exclude. Simply put, to remain truly Christian in the love of country, Christians must retain honesty about their nation's past, and a hopeful modesty about its present and its future.

SLAVICA JAKELIĆ *is the author of* Collectivistic Religions *(Routledge) and is currently working on two books,* Chastening Religious and Secular Humanisms *and* Ethical Nationalisms. *She teaches at Valparaiso University's Honors College and is a Senior Fellow of the Religion and Its Publics project at the University of Virginia.*

MAX FOLEY-KEENE

Equality Isn't Cheap

What the American left can learn from the Nordic model

From the "welfare-reform" efforts of the 1990s to the strictly income-dependent benefits of the Affordable Care Act, means-testing has dominated the past several decades of center-left policy discussion in the United States. According to this conventional wisdom, mostly associated with the Democratic Leadership Council, targeting social benefits to low-income individuals was a fiscal and moral necessity. Means-tested programs—such as food stamps, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families—were preferable because they're relatively cheap and give benefits only to those who "truly need them."

But the influence of means-testing may be starting to wane. The surge of support for Bernie Sanders in his 2016 run against Hillary Clinton showed that many young voters had an appetite for bolder, more ambitious policies. And for a number of 2020 presidential candidates, "universal" has become a buzzword: Elizabeth Warren wants universal childcare, Kamala Harris calls for universal pre-k, and, of course, Sanders continues to champion a universal, single-payer health-insurance program. It's debatable whether or not all these policies are genuinely universal, but there's no disputing that such appeals have become newly prominent in the platforms of high-level Democratic office seekers.

There are good reasons to back such universal programs. All social policy, as the noted welfare-state scholar Gøsta Esping-Andersen argues, either reinforces or removes class stratifications. A welfare regime based on means-testing and income targeting does the former; it necessarily divides those who receive benefits from those who don't. That leads non-recipients to grumble about having to subsidize an underclass of moochers, while recipients are subject to dehumanizing stigma. Such programs tend to be socially divisive and politically unstable. In contrast, universal programs promise to transcend existing economic cleavages and create broad social solidarity, because everyone benefits; this solidarity, in turn, helps protect universal programs from political attack.

Many politicians and analysts in the United States insisting on the necessity of universal programs make arguments along these lines. They also hold up the Nordic welfare states as models, proof that such programs are more than just progressive fantasies. It's obvious why: Sweden, Finland, and Norway have been enviably successful in attacking poverty and inequality. But a careful look at these nations delivers mixed news to universalists: truly egalitarian social policy requires a great deal more than just slapping the word "universal" on your latest white paper. Rather, the best welfare states in the world go well beyond universalism, creating programs of such quality that the private market for social goods is barely allowed to exist. Doing welfare policy like a Norwegian or a Finn or a Swede requires a boatload of money, a sophisticated understanding of political economy, and a politics that is explicitly antagonistic toward "market solutions" to social problems.

Those familiar with arguments about the Nordic welfare states might expect a disclaimer: these countries are small and ethnically homogeneous, and thus nothing like the heterogeneous, fractious United States, with its ethnic and racial tensions. Ultimately, those differences don't prohibit useful comparisons. Broad social cohesion in the Nordics didn't appear out of thin air; deep political cleavages were overcome through the arduous work of coalition building. Social-democratic parties representing highly organized labor movements managed, with considerable political ingenuity, to forge alliances with agricultural interests and then middle-class professionals. To claim that Nordic egalitarianism is innate is simply ahistorical: equality and social cohesion in these countries are distinctly *political* phenomena. Arguments based on the size of the Nordics are even less persuasive. The United States, the richest nation in the history of the world, has far more resources with which to create generous welfare programs than did, say, early-twentieth-century Finland. Doing so is a matter of political will, not just demographics or geography.

The most elegant description of the logic behind Nordic social policy is laid out in a classic 1998 paper by the Swedish academics Walter Korpi and Joakim Palme (the son of iconic Swedish prime minister Olof Palme). In the article "The Paradox of Redistribution and Strategies of Equality," Korpi and Palme study social-insurance institutions and how different policy strategies produce different levels of poverty and inequality. While the paper focuses on social insurance—such as unemployment insurance or old-age pensions—the logic behind such programs is also applicable to welfare services like health care.

The two authors are skeptical of welfare programs based on a strategy of targeting, in which only those who demonstrate need are eligible to receive benefits. Programs that explicitly target the poor are, in reality, quite

unsuccessful at reducing poverty. This is primarily for reasons of political economy: the constituency for such programs is both small and traditionally powerless, so targeted benefits are vulnerable to right-wing attack. Programs for the poor are, as the saying goes, usually poor programs.

But Korpi and Palme are also, perhaps surprisingly, unimpressed by social-insurance programs that follow what they call the "basic-security" model. These programs, inspired by the post-war Beveridge plan (the basis for a sweeping set of social-insurance institutions, as well as the U.K.'s National Health Service) give the same benefit to everyone. They are undoubtedly universal, and yet countries with basic-security programs have significantly higher poverty and inequality than the Nordic countries. Why?

The best welfare systems in the world are based not just on a preference for universalism over means-testing, but also on a preference for state provision of social benefits over market provision of social benefits. Markets, of course, are just one among many ways of setting prices; the targeted use of markets could even be preserved in a democratic-socialist economy. But when it comes to basic necessities—health care, education, pensions—markets cannot be allowed to persist. Indeed, the architects of the Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian welfare states recognized that when markets are involved in delivering social benefits, inequality will be higher than if an egalitarian-minded state crowds out private sources. When these basic necessities are allocated solely on an individual's success in the labor market, existing inequalities only compound. It's no wonder that Esping-Andersen's survey of European social democracy is entitled "Politics Against Markets."

The basic-security model fails because, despite being universal, it does not crowd out the private sector. Middle-class families will find that most flat-rate benefits aren't high enough to meet their standards, so they will turn to the market for additional benefits. Disparities grow between those who have the resources to purchase private pensions, for example, and those who do not. Flat-rate universal benefits merely "establish a base" upon which the market stratification continues to persist, with all its inherent inequalities. The fact that a program is universal doesn't tell you anything about the *quality* of that program. A social-insurance benefit can be flat-rate but meager; public daycare centers can be available to all but poorly run.

Nordic social policy, on the other hand, aims to provide cash transfers and welfare services that satisfy exacting middle-class standards. This, the reasoning goes, is the only way to get the market out of the business of social-good provision. Korpi and Palme describe the Nordic welfare states as "encompassing" because state benefits come to swallow the market for social goods. In the Nordic welfare world, there's only one game in town.

In the realm of welfare services—

BLIPIX / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

If you want low poverty and inequality, you have to spend a lot of money. The key to the Nordic model is crowding out the market for social goods by meeting middle-class standards—and meeting middle-class standards isn't cheap.

elder care, childcare, health care—creating encompassing institutions is fairly straightforward: the state offers high-quality services to everyone. Middle-class households won't explore private alternatives because their high standards are met by the government; their satisfaction with excellent public services encourages political loyalty to the welfare state. Meanwhile, working-class and poor folks will have access to far-better services than what they could pay for out of pocket. Gustav Möller, a major architect of the Swedish welfare state, explained the encompassing approach succinctly: "Only the best is good enough for the people."

Encompassing social-insurance institutions, on the other hand, might be objectionable to Americans on the left, as they may allocate more resources to those in the professional classes than those less well-off. Most of the Nordic countries have elected to create pension programs that include everyone but give higher benefits to those who earned more money while they were working. This will be off-putting at first glance to any egalitarian. And yet such programs exist at the core of the most equal welfare states in the world because, while these programs produce unequal outcomes, those outcomes are *less unequal* than what would result if private alternatives were permitted to seep into welfare provision. In the Nordics, avoiding welfare retrenchment requires middle-class buy-in, as middle-class voters face a high tax burden and have a pesky habit of deciding elections.

In 1950s Sweden, for example, social-democratic leaders recognized a concerning demographic trend: the industrial working class, their political base, was shrinking rapidly, and the middle class was ascendant. The existing government pension—a flat "People's Pension," in line with the basic-security model—was insufficient to meet the standards of this growing middle class. And so the social democrats made a brilliant political play: on top of the "People's Pension" they created a supplementary pension scaled to a worker's career earnings. It was a brazen attempt to preserve the party's relevance—and it worked. In the post-reform pension arrangement, the interests of the working-class base and the growing middle class came together, strengthening both the program and the party that championed it.

By bringing all citizens together into big-tent welfare programs, and by ensuring that the middle class doesn't pursue private alternatives, Nordic social democrats encourage broad social solidarity through cross-class alliances. The encompassing model works in two critical ways: by getting the market out of social provision, and by creating broad political coalitions to ensure programs can withstand unfriendly governments.

The welfare state in the United States looks nothing like the Nordic model, of course. But Americans who hope to emulate Northern Europe should learn two lessons, one related to budget priorities and another related to political strategy.

First, Nordic social policy reveals that there are no shortcuts to egalitarianism; if you want low poverty and inequality, you have to spend a lot of money. The key to the Nordic model is crowding out the market through meeting middle-class standards—and meeting middle-class standards isn't cheap. Throughout the comparative research on Western welfare states, one variable predicts egalitarian outcomes better than any other: public welfare spending. In 2017, Matt Bruenig, the founder of the People's Policy Project, calculated that if the United States were to meet Swedish levels of public social expenditure, it would have to increase its welfare budget by around $15 trillion over the next ten years. Meeting Finnish levels means a $22 trillion increase. What kind of welfare state reduces poverty and inequality? A really big one.

A left that learns from the Nordic experience would also make serious attempts to win over middle-class voters. Many leftists will surely be wary of calls to appeal to white-collar professionals, and with good reason: in recent decades, social-democratic outreach to the middle class has taken the form of neoliberalism and the Third Way. But winning over these voters doesn't have to mean cutting taxes. Building a resilient welfare state requires building a highly organized base in the labor movement; this task must be a priority of the American left. But it also means forming coalitions in which the interests of the working and middle classes converge.

These efforts are based on both a normative premise and a strategic premise: that encompassing social programs are for everyone, and that a generous welfare state cannot withstand intense opposition from those whose tax dollars are required to sustain it. Such notions take us toward a politics that recognizes the satisfaction of social needs as a communal responsibility, that builds broad solidarity around preserving public goods, and that doesn't fret over spending some cash.

MAX FOLEY-KEENE *is a student, writer, and former* Commonweal *intern. He lives in Maryland.*

AUSTEN IVEREIGH

St. John Henry Newman

A man of his time, a saint for ours

To meet Ignatius Harrison, the Oratorian tasked with promoting the canonization cause of John Henry Newman, is to catch a little glimpse of the saint himself. Fr. Harrison lives with other Oratorians in the house Newman designed and built in Birmingham, England, and follows his prayer life as closely as possible. He is portly and jowly where Newman was beak-nosed and spindly, yet Fr. Harrison's black cassock with its crumpled white collar is identical, as are his shyness and exquisite Englishness, and that soft Victorian way of speaking that belongs to the age before television.

At the Vatican press office the astonished indignation of our waiting scrum of reporters and camera crews on being told Harrison wouldn't give TV interviews was priceless. When the *Tablet*'s Christopher Lamb and I sat down with Harrison, he was still shaking his head at all the "fuss," worrying that our taking of his photo was "vanity."

But then he began speaking in perfectly modulated, TV-friendly soundbites. Harrison is not only soaked in Newman's thinking but also has the saint's forthrightness and clarity and bold openness to new things. Newman, he tells us, would have been delighted by the way the church has developed since his time. "His main ideas, that seemed to some in Rome at the time dangerously liberal, have now become embedded in the mind of the church and seem to most of us quite normal and normative," he points out, citing as examples his insistence on the divine origin of human conscience, his insistence on the protagonism of the laity, and above all his "carefully elaborated" understanding of the true development of Christian doctrine, the way doctrine becomes more true to itself as it grows in response to new times and challenges.

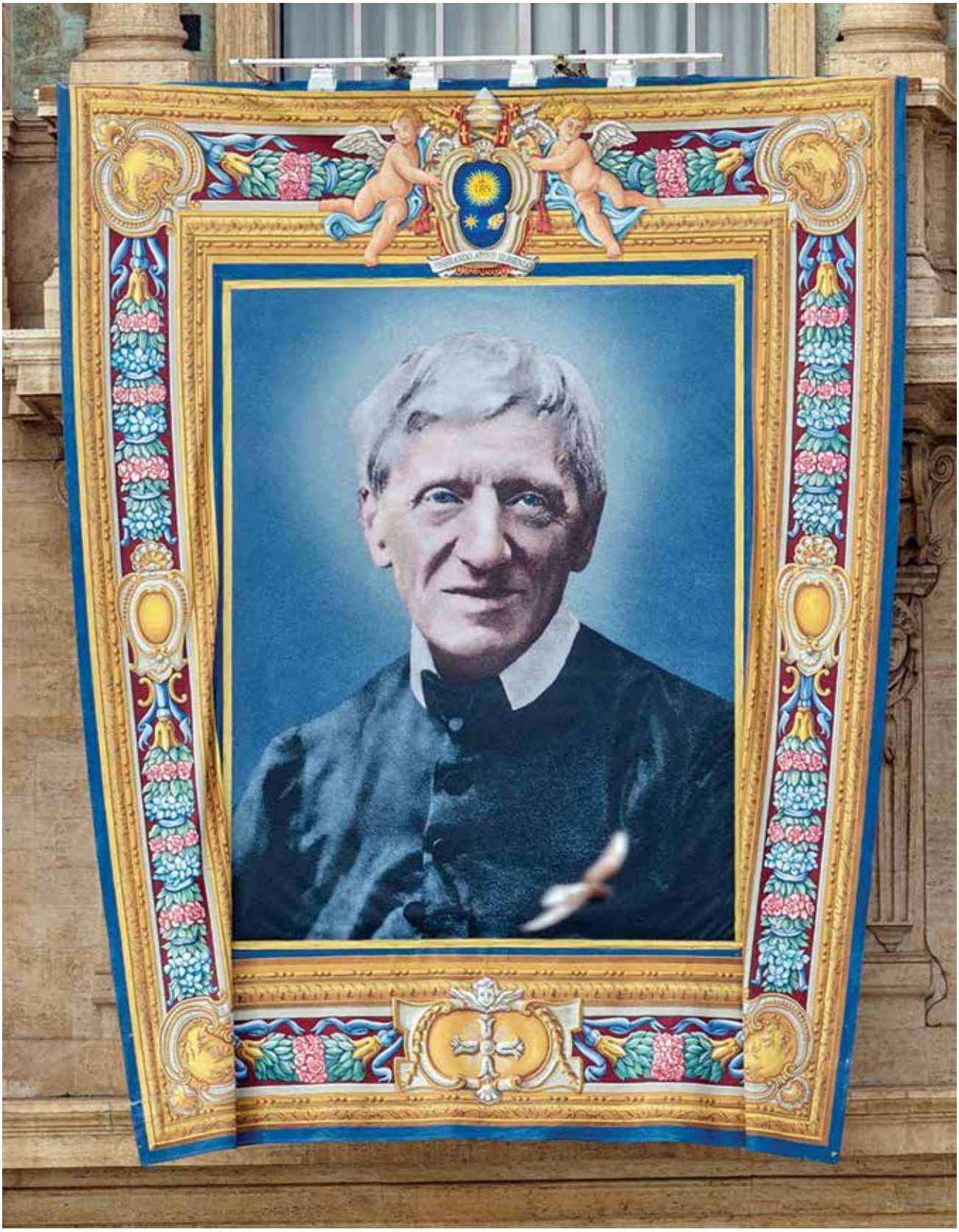
Asked about Pope Francis and the synod on Amazonia, Harrison refuses the role of curmudgeon. "It seems to me—not that I have any prophetic insight—this is going to be even more important in the future than it was to Newman when he was writing, because the church is exploring, as we know, the peripheries, looking at possibilities and opportunities that we really hadn't considered before," he says.

He would certainly not be in the opposition camp. "I think John Henry Newman would say, fine, now let's look at that in the light of the church's tradition, and in the light of our belief that the Holy Spirit guides the church in every age and at every moment."

Newman's mind was so refined and supple that he can sometimes seem like a helicopter that never lands. Thus, his zinger quote in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*—"I shall drink to the Pope, if you please, still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards"—has long been brandished to justify Catholic dissent, whether by liberals annoyed at John Paul II twenty years ago or nowadays by rad-trad opponents of Pope Francis's magisterium. But Newman saw conscience as an "aboriginal Vicar of Christ," one that leads eventually to submission to a dogmatic and institutional Christianity.

So while conscience is the "first principle," it "does not repose on itself," as he puts it in *Grammar of Assent*, but "dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions." It searches restlessly, one might say, until it comes to rest in submission to the papal magisterium, "like coming into port after a rough sea," as he famously described his conversion in the *Apologia*.

The great Jesuit Erich Przywara said that for Newman the "principle of conscience" and "the principle of dogma" turned out to be "one living principle: the dawning and consummate manifestation of the One God—from the beginnings of His appearance in conscience, through to the fullness of His appearance in an authoritatively infallible Church." And yet—you can't talk about Newman without these qualifiers—he was no ultramontane, and was wary of papal autocracy. His opposition to the declaration of infallibility came from his accurate prediction that weaponizing the papacy in the nineteenth-century equivalent of the culture wars would end up feeding the false polarization of faith and freedom.



A banner of Blessed John Henry Newman hung on the facade of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, October 10, 2019. Newman was among the five people canonized by Pope Francis on October 13.

CNS PHOTO / JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES

He was prophetic, too, in deploring long pontificates. "It is not good for a Pope to live 20 years," he said of Pius IX. "It is an anomaly and bears no good fruit; he becomes a God, and has no one to contradict him, does not know facts, and does cruel things without meaning it." (During the twenty-six-year papacy of John Paul II, Benedict XVI reached the same conclusion.)

It is almost a cliché to say Newman resists easy categorization. "It would be very imprudent to label him either a traditionalist or a progressive, a liberal or a conservative, because his whole life was a humble pursuit of truth led by the kindly light of the Holy Spirit at every step," says Father Harrison. That makes Newman, as others have often said, the patron saint of the post-modern searcher, who has to pick up every rock to see what is underneath it before she will rest on it. But Newman is very *un*postmodern in believing that along the road there will be the Rock, and that meeting it is not a matter of coldly weighing up arguments and options.

Indeed, the distrustful self-withholding of the postmodern self is the very opposite of Newman's turbulent love affair with Truth. His journey, recounted in his *Apologia*, is essentially a story of passionate conversions, each one revealing more of the Rock, as he boldly sets out to live faithfully in the tension of opposites.

So while Newman was no liberal in the common sense of the word, his was a deeply liberal frame of mind. His *Idea of a University*—the best book in the English language on the nature and purpose of university education—draws from the assumption that, as Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin put it in a recent lecture at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome, "faith is more than intellectual assent.... It always contains an element of continuous searching and seeking, and therefore an element of risk."

That is why, as Harrison told us in his interview, Newman "would have been a Remainer" in the Brexit debate. "He would say: 'Why would England want to cut itself off, spiritually speaking, from Christian Europe, from Christian, Western civilisation?'" Harrison adds: "I think he would opt for anything that would contribute to a closer spiritual unity between different countries and different nationalities."

He understood that truth lies outside and beyond us, yet beckons to us through our consciences, and that the end of all our strivings is not an idea but a person.

When I put that quote to Archbishop Martin after his lecture on Newman's ultimately failed attempt at creating a Catholic university in Dublin, the audience burst into laughter at the idea that England's first saint in three hundred years had a view on Brexit. But the archbishop agreed with Fr. Harrison. "The idea of a university as a place of universal learning can only come from a person who has a broad understanding of relationships and culture and of our common history," the archbishop said.

Prince Charles, who is representing the Queen at the canonization, says much the same thing. Newman, he has written in the *Tablet*, could "advocate without accusation, could disagree without disrespect and, perhaps most of all, could see differences as places of encounter rather than exclusion." That makes him especially relevant at a time of "grievous assaults by the forces of intolerance on communities and individuals, including many Catholics, because of their beliefs," the Prince adds.

Could this now be St. John Henry Newman's role in the church, and the world—as one who teaches us how to seek with rigor and honesty in a post-truth era?

Like Pope Francis, Newman was relaxed about theological conflict and disagreement, says Fr. Harrison. "He says this is our lot, this is how it has always been, but what matters above all is seeking God." He is happy that Newman is declared a saint now, for it means "he no longer belongs to us exclusively. He's the saint for the universal church and for people of goodwill."

As Matthew D'Ancona explains "post-truth" in a recent book of that title, it is essentially an emotional phenomenon. "It concerns our own attitude to truth, rather than truth itself." The epistemology of post-truth urges us to choose sides rather than weigh evidence. In a post-truth world, we construct narratives that feed our grievances or offer to protect us from what we fear, and the facts are arranged to suit the narrative. It is no longer enough to drive out lies with well-chosen facts, for there is no longer a distinction between opinion and facts. Nor can there be any hope to dislodge the emotional apprehension of truth by reverting to the cold science of reason. The means of correcting post-truth have to match the prevailing culture.

Who better to restore our relationship with truth than St. John Henry Newman? He understood that truth lies outside and beyond us, yet beckons to us through our consciences, and that the end of all our strivings is not an idea but a person, who is reached not firstly through reason but "through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description," as he wrote in *Grammar of Assent*. Newman shows us that by embracing what often appears to the mind as contradictions and opposites and trusting in the kindly light to lead us, we will eventually come into port. That's what makes him, in a post-truth time, the saint our age badly needs.

AUSTEN IVEREIGH *is a Fellow of Contemporary Church History at Campion Hall, Oxford, and a frequent contributor to* Commonweal. *His book* Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church *will be published on November 5 by Henry Holt.*

WE BELIEVE IN A FAITH THAT DOES JUSTICE

National in-person and digital programs, resources, and campaigns from the Ignatian Solidarity Network educate, mobilize, and form lifelong contemplative advocates committed to justice, peace, and the care of our common home.

WILL YOU JOIN US?

LEARN MORE AND JOIN OUR WORK:
ignatiansolidarity.net

IGNATIAN SOLIDARITY NETWORK

Saying the Unsayable

Anthony Domestico

Fanny Howe's poetry of bewilderment

Every year or so, we're gravely informed of the death of Catholic literature: how there aren't any Catholic writers anymore, or how the ones we have aren't as good as the ones we used to have, or how the community they form isn't as coherent as it used to be. A slight variation of this doom-and-gloom view asserts not so much that there aren't great Catholic writers today as that the literary world, especially in its most sophisticated precincts, is reflexively suspicious of Catholicism. Want to alienate your MFA cohort, or cause the mixers and minglers at a Brooklyn party to sidle away in embarrassment? Start talking about the Eucharist.

To which I'd reply: What about Fanny Howe? Howe is an experimental writer's experimental writer: more than a dozen books of poetry, each of which seeks to undo and remake formal possibilities; a series of lovely, bewildering novels from small presses; the 2009 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. Among young writers, she's revered by the coolest of the cool: Katie Ford, Jericho Brown, Ilya Kaminsky, Kaveh Akbar. Among the more established, she's received blurbs from John Ashbery, Jorie Graham, and Robert Creeley. You don't get more credentialed than that. Yet Howe, who converted in the 1970s, is also a Catholic writer's Catholic writer.

I recently got together with the poet for coffee at the Harvard Art Museums in Harvard Square. (Howe, who has lived an itinerant's life, has resided in a nearby Cambridge neighborhood for the past three years, though she told me she's getting restless.) We began by talking about Thomas Aquinas: she recently recommended reading him to a friend going through a dark night of the soul and, during our time together, she made an impish joke involving Aquinas's "all is straw" declaration and an iced latte. (You had to be there.) Then we moved on to Simone Weil, whom Howe admires both for the "quality of carpentry" in her prose and for her "physical ties to history and labor and politics." We ended, after discussing apophatic theology and what makes for a good parish and much else, by chatting about the time she recently spent at Glenstal Abbey in Ireland.

Howe is interested, she told me, in "the watery area between poetry and theology. I want to move that water around." We talked a lot about silence—how the great theologians, even the most prolific ones like Aquinas, move toward it. Great poets, she suggested, do the same. Both kinds of writers, if they're honest, end at a point where silence is the best response to the vision they've been seeking.

Silence and endings are much on Howe's mind these days. She is seventy-nine, slight but still spry, with a kind, angular face and sharp blue eyes. She has a puckish sense of humor: her friend, the philosopher Richard Kearney, described her to

The seventy-nine-year-old poet and novelist Fanny Howe says that her latest collection, *Love and I*, will be her final book. She's working on "ending things, putting things away."

PHOTO BY
LYNN CHRISTOFFERS

me as a "comic mystic, or a mystic comic." The coffee shop I originally suggested was closed for the day. On our walk to the Fogg, she told me, in a voice that still recalls the 1950s Cambridge milieu in which she grew up, about her recent trip to Belfast and how much she'd loved *Milkman*, Anna Burns's Booker Prize–winning novel about the Troubles.

Howe's latest collection of poetry, *Love and I*, is by my accounting her seventh book in the past ten years. (Howe is so productive, and writes in so many different forms, that it's hard to keep track of her oeuvre. Some publicity materials claim she's published more than thirty books; others estimate forty-plus.) Howe remains as strong a poet as ever. Looking at our historical and spiritual darkness,

she finds the divine in the broken and overlooked, the marginalized and vulnerable: children, women, refugees, the poor. One poem in *Love and I* begins, "Night philosophy becomes theology: / We've not seen such darkness for centuries." Another ends, "Once Cupid shot an arrow dipped in the ink of a pansy onto the eyelid of a sleeping child. // From then on the child saw cirrus colors at dawn—dawn." In Howe's mystic vision, we're always shuttling between darkness and dawn. It's within that liminal space, that place of uncertainty and confusion, that God can be found: "A burnt offering is the only one / That love has pity for. // Not rare or well done. // But burned, burned, burned."

In *The Wedding Dress*, a 2003 book that is part poetic manifesto, part spiritual biography, Howe declares that her guiding ethos, the word she'd write Emerson-style on the lintels of her door-post, is "bewilderment." By this she means many things. As a poetic value, bewilderment suggests an acceptance of linguistic instability, a cultivation of the dream-like and fragmented over the orderly. As a spiritual tenet, it signals an embrace of the *via negativa*. As a political philosophy, it indicates "devot[ion] to the little and the weak," a refusal to accept the social and economic world as it is. More generally, bewilderment for Howe means a poetics and a theology of openness, of incompletion and continual revision. (A concrete example of this: I received a review copy of *Love and I* from Graywolf Press in the spring. Changes from the review copy tend to be cosmetic in nature: a typo caught here, a sentence smoothed out there. The final version of *Love and I*, by contrast, has a new epigraph, a new first poem, a new final poem, and new and reshuffled poems throughout. It's less a revision than a rewriting.)

For decades it's been a sure bet that every two years or so a new book from Fanny Howe would appear, and that this new book would bewilder and unsettle. But now, Howe told me, she's through: "I really don't have anything more to write. Done. Gone." Her friends have told her that the mood will pass, but she doesn't think so. *Love and I*, she asserts, will be her last book: "I feel like I'm working on ending things. Putting things away." She's putting away her pen (she writes longhand and her arthritis is painful), and she's no longer returning to the writers—Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, Michel de Certeau, Giorgio Agamben—she loves. Instead, she has decided that, from now on, she'll just read "whatever comes by chance": a reading suggestion from a friend, a poet sending her a manuscript in the mail. In the end, to live a life of radical openness is to put things away. True bewilderment, like true theology, ends in silence.

Howe is a literary biographer's dream. Born in Buffalo in 1940 and raised in Cambridge, with later years spent in San Diego, New York, and Connecticut, her life has been rich with incident. Take this, from *The Winter Sun: Notes on Vocation*, one of Howe's books of nonfiction:

> In 1958 I was shipped off to Paris having failed to get into any college, unlike my friends at school. My father needed to find me somewhere to go. My only strength was French. So I was sent to continue to learn French at a school in Sèvres. But I jumped over the wall one night and fled the school and made my way into Paris, where I had a good time with mother's childhood and lifelong friend Samuel Beckett from Dublin, who took me around with him for a few days.

After traipsing around Paris with family friend Beckett—Howe "noted down what he said in [her] diary because he did seem to know things"—she came back to the states and enrolled at Stanford. She dropped out, enrolled again, dropped out again, three times in total; she never graduated. After marrying a microbiologist, she moved to Berkeley, writing pulp fiction to support herself. (She published these pulps, *West Coast Nurse* and *Vietnam Nurse* among them, under the pen name Della Field. "That nurse fiction was practical, proletarian," she has said, "and while everyone laughed, and still does, over the schlock I was writing then, I was never ashamed of it.") She and the microbiologist eventually divorced. In 1965, she was a go-go dancer at a bar in the East Village. As I said, it's a life rich with incident.

A few years later, now living in Boston, Howe married Carl Senna, a radical black poet and activist with whom she had three children. Senna's mother was Catholic, and Howe began attending Mass with her. She also read Simone Weil and got into liberation theology. Eventually, she converted. Howe's religious sense is idiosyncratic, resistant to hierarchy and doctrinal rigidity. As Richard Kearney put it to me, "There's something Protestant about her Catholicism. She's a loner." Yet Howe remains publicly, committedly Catholic. As she has said, despite its many failures, "the church has done tons of practical good for the poor, has managed to accept the maddest among us, [and] has a huge margin for visions."

Howe and Senna separated within a few years ("the ugliest divorce in Boston history," a family friend called it), and she raised her biracial children in Boston during the busing crisis. "Louise

Howe's sense of the poet's vocation shades into the theological. What are apophatic writers like St. John of the Cross or Simone Weil doing but seeking new grammatical structures to say the unsayable?

Day Hicks and the vociferous Boston Irish were like the dogs and hoses in the South," she writes in *The Wedding Dress*. "No difference." It was a difficult time, but it led Howe to find solidarity with other women and to recognize the church as a place where the despised and broken can be, must be, loved: "This is why I keep moving," she writes, "and only stop for the Eucharist in a church where there are sick, vomiting, maimed, screaming, destroyed, violent, useless, happy, pious, fraudulent, hypocritical, lying, thieving, hating, drunk, rich, poverty-stricken people."

One of Howe's children is the superb novelist Danzy Senna, who is married to the equally brilliant novelist Percival Everett. Indeed, Howe's family tree reads like a *Who's Who* of American culture. Her older sister, Susan, is one of the most important Anglophone poets of the past seventy-five years. Her other sister, Helen, is a sculptor and painter. Howe's parents were similarly accomplished. Her father, Mark DeWolfe Howe, was a Harvard law professor, scholar of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and civil-rights activist from a sterling Boston family. (He has Quincys on his mother's side, a family that includes Boston mayors and Harvard presidents among their ranks.) Howe's mother, the Irish-born Mary Manning, was a novelist and actress who helped found the Poets Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There, she adapted *Finnegans Wake* for the stage and rubbed shoulders with Richard Wilbur, Sylvia Plath, John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, and many others.

In some ways, Howe's childhood was idyllic: "I grew up in a house full of books with parents who loved the imagination," she told me. Her father preferred Dickens; her mother was partial to Yeats. But this time was also painful. Her mother drank. Her father withdrew to his office. In one startling aside from *The Winter Sun*, Howe writes, "For decades my mother pretended my sister Susan was the child of another, an Irish man whom she liked better than my father, but none of us knew if either man was ever aware of this." "I'm very caught up in the problems of children in this world," she told me, and the experience of children, their joys and their bewilderments, stands at the center of everything she has written.

As an adult, Howe has moved around a lot: "Some who never feel loved keep traveling," she writes in *Love and I*. She's worked as a night secretary and as a teacher at many different institutions; she's written books and made short films; she's lived in communal homes and city apartments and regularly spent time as a guest at Glenstal Abbey. She is a blueblood vagabond.

But anyone can have an interesting life. Not many can transmute an interesting life, with its memories and visions, into great art. Part of what makes Howe so remarkable is her versatility, the fact that her mystical sensibility and formal artistry appear in such varied forms. She's perhaps best known as a poet: two of her collections, *Selected Poems* (2000) and *On the Ground* (2004), have been shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize; *Second Childhood* (2014) was a finalist for the National Book Award. But her fiction is just as accomplished. *Indivisible* (2000) is a masterpiece of the religious imagination, a strange, fierce novel about the strange, fierce nature of faith and doubt. ("I don't know who God is, godding inside of me," Howe's narrator muses, perplexedly and perfectly.) *Indivisible* has been championed by other writers. The poet Christian Wiman describes it as one of his essential books, while the novelist Darcey Steinke simply declares, "I'd gladly carry it, like a Bible, high over my head." But Howe's earlier novels are excellent, too. *The Deep North* is a great race novel; *Nod* is a great family novel; *Saving History* is a great (and very weird) political novel.

Like Howe's poems, these novels—fragmentary and essayistic, drifting dreamlike for stretches before condensing into parabolic shapeliness—can be difficult to get a handle on. Howe believes in the importance of plot: "It has to have a cause and effect embedded in it," she told me, "otherwise it's not a novel." But she never presents the cause-and-effect of plot straight. Chronology is always slanted, times and actions bleeding into one another. In *Love and I*, she writes, "What if you think of time as a long and everlasting plain, / You can pass across it any which way you turn." All of her writing approaches time in this way. Verb tenses often shift without notice. "I still believed my love is standing here," she writes in a small, beautiful moment in *Love and I*.

Indeed, one of the threads connecting Howe's writing across genres is the strangeness of time: its strangeness as experienced and its strangeness as written. In *The Wedding Dress*, she puts the problem precisely. Syntax is linear, always moving (in English) from left to right. You read one word, then the next, then the next. "There is no way," she writes, "to express actions occurring simultaneously without repeating all the words twice or piling the letters on top of one another." (Interestingly, Howe's sister, Susan, performs exactly this kind of typographical experimentation in her poems.)

Yet, if language moves in one direction, our own experience of time is something altogether different: "Time is not a progression but something more warped and refractive." We remember and we anticipate and we attend; we move backward and forward and stay still. (Augustine knew this well.) It's the task of the poet, Howe suggests, to bend language toward time's more refracted, mystical nature: "The dream of coming on new grammatical structures, a new alphabet, even a new way of reading, goes on—almost as a way to create a new human. One who could fly and jump at the same moment." Again, Howe's sense of the poet's vocation shades into the theological. What are apophatic writers like St. John of the Cross or Simone Weil doing but seeking new grammatical structures to say the unsayable?

Saying the unsayable has been Howe's task since she started as a poet, and it continues in *Love and I*. Sometimes this takes the form of speaking political and social truths about America we'd rather not hear: the women and children living in poverty, the refugees uncared for and demonized. Richard Kearney told me that Howe experiences "a great sense of savage indignation at the world's injustices," and the poems in *Love and I* register this righteous anger. In "The First Church," the speaker has a nightmarish vision of our world at its most unloving: "One boy naps face up on a bench. / A gold badge shines above his head, // Another lies on the floor at Juvenile Hall. / The kids wish a crocus would grow on the linoleum."

In Howe's poetic theology, though, these children, abandoned and vulnerable, are truly the children of God: "They pierce the veils / Of material / To see the other side. // They're practicing transcendence." Few contemporary poets more consistently practice transcendence or more convincingly bring us to the numinous—this despite the fact that Howe's language is often spare. An airplane window can become a portal into the mystical: "Now the wing is whitening, its patches quiver / On the steel and fragment into petals that are either living or not." So can the astonishments of childhood experience: "A dirty girl had her own sunbeam that stayed by her side"; "When I was a girl there was an orange pearl / That turned the butter yellow / With four strokes of a spoon." In "Night Philosophy," she writes, "I remember a child who licked up the mist on the windowpane to see eternity."

This image echoes the opening of William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence": "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour." *Love and I* opens with words borrowed from another Blake poem: "Love that never told can be." This is a perfect choice for Howe: elliptical in form (in *Love and I* and in Blake, the line ends without a period), the quote speaks of a love that exceeds articulation, that can exist only by refusing articulation. Love *can* be, it suggests, but only if it's never spoken. As the previous line in Blake's poem exhorts, "Never seek to tell thy love." Yet isn't that precisely our task, whether we're poet or believer or lover or parent: to tell, to make shared and shareable, our love? *Love and I* proceeds to explore this bind in almost every one of its poems.

Howe told me that writing a collection is like "landing on a branch for a minute, looking around, then moving onto the next branch." In *Love and I*, the tree is love and its branches are the many forms love takes. She wanted, she told me, to think about "Christian love, certainly, but really love in all of the traditions. I just decided I would tackle my actual relationship to love as if it were a compass or a clock, moving around and taking different positions."

Often, what is loved in these poems is abstract. The first poem, "Allegories," opens, "I love so many of them / But they are only half a decade / Away from being disproved." The referent, the "them" the speaker loves, is unclear; it could be allegories, or it could be anything on the verge of being disproven and disappearing. At other times, what or who is loved is specifically named: a certain feeling (a passenger on a plane "loved the shadow and being away from shouting girls at school"), a certain type ("Many mothers I loved / Walked the underworld / To find their children / Sleeping under a ramp"), a certain person: "On a side street (on my sheets) / one I loved passed / as a shadow. / Maddish, reddish, his fist / clenched for a fight."

Howe's verse rarely rhymes or scans, but it's often deeply musical, playing upon internal rhyme (maddish/reddish) and assonance (mothers/loved). And the music that Howe makes is often haunting. It speaks of love fading or love gone, love fatal or love impossible. Howe has always been drawn to fairy tale and romance, and isn't that one of the lessons that these tales teach—the unreasonableness of love? In one of the new book's best poems, "Destinations," Howe describes the link between love and absence:

It's typical of Howe's writing that this book, perhaps her last, ends by braiding together state violence and blessedness. After all, politics and religion have never been separable for her.

LOVE AND I

FANNY HOWE
Graywolf Press, $16,
96 pp.

In a faraway land
And a hotel I never visited.
There were ninety-nine hells
In a ghost book half-erased.

Like this I was in love with a non-entity.
This was the hardest part assigned to me.
During my brief tenure I loved loving best
One who didn't exist.

There's a way of reading this passage as despairing. What worth was my love if the one I loved didn't exist? But there's also a way of reading it affirmatively, even theologically. Love here is imagined as a discipline, a part we are assigned, and it's a discipline that harrows and blesses at the same time.

Thinking back to Aquinas, God isn't a being among others; he is being itself, the very condition for existence. To use Howe's language, God is a "non-entity," "One who [doesn't] exist" in our ordinary sense of the verb "exist." Loving not just things and creatures but that which exceeds and enables and sustains these things and creatures is difficult ("the hardest part") and it's intense: "I loved loving best." As Howe writes at the end of this long poem, a life stripped of love and its sufferings might sound desirable: "to be clear / Would be wonderful. / A sigh without ghostly gasps / That accompany passion." But it's those ghostly gasps, these desires that both stretch beyond and lead back to this world, that move us toward our real destination.

Love and I closes with a vision that recalls a landscape Howe has loved since her first childhood visit with her mother and sister to Ireland in 1947.

From meadow to meadow
Eternal grass.
My shepherd of the flock
Stay close.

(I can't breathe.)

Wherever
You go twice is blessed.

Howe gives us a scene of pastoral beauty and then places in its midst the panicked final words of Eric Garner. (In an earlier poem, she writes, also italicized and in parentheses, also set off as its own stanza, "*(Hands up! Don't Shoot!)*.")

It's typical of Howe's writing that this book, perhaps her last, ends by braiding together state violence and blessedness. After all, politics and religion have never been separable for her. Howe came to the church decades ago because of its solidarity with the racially and economically marginalized. Today, she worships at St. Peter's on Concord Avenue in Cambridge. She feels comfortable there, she told me, because it's friendly to liberation theology. (She'll sometimes go to St. Paul's in Harvard Square if the boys' choir is singing, though she has more than once walked out due to "reactionary" homilies.)

Every summer for the past twenty-or-so years, for anywhere from ten days to a month, Howe has gone to stay at Glenstal Abbey in Limerick. She started off teaching a creative-writing course to monks and nuns in order to "pay her way," she jokingly told me. Her students' writing was remarkable, she says: smart and brave, "never mentioning Jesus or God," focused instead on personal memory. The class became too popular, attracting those from outside the abbey; Howe stopped teaching it years ago. But she still travels to Glenstal every year, and it feels, as much as any place ever has, like her home. "Someone asked me this summer," she explained, "do you ever talk with the monks about death?" She chuckled. "I'd never thought of that. And then I realized you don't have to talk about anything because four times a day they're singing Gregorian chant. Everything is covered in those glorious half-hour occasions."

To read Fanny Howe's work is to enter a space where the sacred and profane, the mystical and the mundane, vibrate against one another. For Howe, the monastery is a similar space. So too is the cinema. (She goes to a movie almost every day—Iranian films, Russian films, especially Italian films, which were "mother's milk to me," she says.) So too is the public garden onto which her Cambridge apartment opens. She's found herself spending less time reading, and even less time writing. She simply wants to remain open to the world around her. "It's weird how it really is nature and earth that come back as the only things we like," she reflected. "You start out like that as a child and you end up like that. You just want to look at the trees."

ANTHONY DOMESTICO *is associate professor of literature at Purchase College, and a frequent contributor to* Commonweal. *His book* Poetry and Theology in the Modernist Period *is available from Johns Hopkins University Press.*

From "The First Church" by Fanny Howe

One dawn I crawled out of the gutter
Into the public: just a woman in tears.

A group of children was snoozing nearby.
Don't wake us up!
They cried as if they were half-alive.

I kneeled on my rug and swatted the air.
Sandwiches and small canteens were spilled nearby.

Flies delivering maggots gathered around
I hate buzzing sounds I said to the kids.
Shut up, a little boy cried, I'm dreaming.

* * *

Neon clothes hangers brighten the laundromat.

One boy naps face up on a bench.
A gold badge shines above his head,

Another lies on the floor at Juvenile Hall.
The kids wish a crocus would grow on the linoleum.

Children need a rest, their minds are swimming in junk and fists,
They want the water of the unconscious.
It would mean childhood more or less.

Look at them sprawled where George Washington stood,
Their backpacks like skunks curled in the shade.

* * *

So we all fell asleep that afternoon
Like drunks on a picnic.

Nobody jerked us from our confusion.
Not pilgrims or immigrants or angels from another field.

Sun on closed lids inspires illusions.

When I was a girl there was an orange pearl
That turned the butter yellow
With four strokes of a wooden spoon.

She laid out a patch of grass
As an offering to the inevitable.
Woven of vetch, pinks, a gentian and a daisy
It showed her family loafing.
And had a brown dog watching.

(My friend before dying gave me a flower
That never needed water.)
She always needed water.

The shrub was still there by the back door
Of the house and all the trees were present.
This is the past I can give you
As you fly ascendant by

But most importantly please visit her
And soothe those you created now in agony.

* * *

A lot of boys and girls were forced from home.

They're at rest at last.
They were transported by wood on the sea.

Look at them!

I wish I could see a day when we
Had our own acre and shared the guitar
But I'm only hoping so don't make me swear.

They walked the mote.
Brown grasses pansies roses white clematis and hellebore.
Glad to live below and have mercy and no power

They would crawl backwards rather than climb up to the tower.

* * *

We were near the First Church of Christ
At the hour the city hall
Creaks with adolescent tramps:

Boys and girls you can pity
Mercilessly. Pimples
And rings in their tongues and noses.

They snore and shake and flip
From psychosis back into religion.

One was glad God stayed in outer space.

Another one wanted God in the ground but breathing.

One was hopeful that God moved around handing things out.

What do we mean by 'religion'?

The Paradox of Pluralism

Jack Miles

Gods here?
Who can know?
Not I.
Yet I sigh
and tears flow
tear on tear.

—Saigyō Hōshi (1118–1190)
on visiting the Grand Shrine at Ise.

The United States of America practices many religions, and *pluralism* in American usage is a term that aims to turn the arguably neutral fact of plural religions into an American value: plural*ism*. If an American favors pluralism, in other words, then he or she thinks it good rather than bad that America practices many religions and would regret rather than applaud the replacement of the nation's many religions by some one religion, even his or her own.

Do Americans in fact favor pluralism? Many

CNS PHOTO / L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

Pope John Paul II attends an interreligious peace meeting in Assisi, Italy, October 27, 1986. Pictured from left: Metropolitan Filaret of the Russian Orthodox Church; Bishop Gabriel of Palmyra, representing the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch; Orthodox Archbishop Methodios; Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie, spiritual head of the worldwide Anglican Communion; Pope John Paul II; the Dalai Lama; Venerable Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia; Venerable Eui-Hyun Seo of Korea; and Venerable Etai Yamada of Japan.

surely do, if no doubt to a somewhat varying degree. Nonetheless, nearly ten years ago, when newly appointed as the general editor of the American reference work later to be published as *The Norton Anthology of World Religions,* I chose to assume that American pluralism enjoyed the support of at least a comfortable majority. A majority of Americans, I chose to assume, would welcome a work taking the multiplicity of American religion as not just as a bare fact but also, on balance, as a good thing in our moment of cultural globalization.

I haven't abandoned that assumption. Yet now that my general introduction to the *NAWR* is being published as a slender, separate book titled *Religion As We Know It: An Origin Story*, the moment is at hand to reveal how a nagging, complicating background thought both challenged that first assumption in a surprising way and further shaped the work that W. W. Norton & Company eventually published.

At the time when Norton approached me about undertaking this work, I had been involved in the study of religion for several decades and had taken

part in innumerable public discussions of the subject. What nagged at me was something that had occurred repeatedly in those discussions. Time and again, I had heard someone rise to say that one religion or another "is not a religion in the usual sense of the word" or "not a religion in the mainstream sense of the word." An alternate formulation would sometimes be "is not a religion, it's a way of life." Still another would be, "is not a religion, it's just a part of being *x*," where *x* would be a national identifier. Finally, a frequent formulation would be simply "is not a religion in your sense of the word," with the referent of "your" left quite vague. Whom did the speaker have in mind?

A given speaker might go on to make a perfectly plausible case for why Hopi folk belief and ritual or Shinto or Daoism or some form of Hinduism or even Judaism was misconstrued when taken to be a religion in the usual sense of the word. But who owned that usual sense? Where had it come from? And did it not claim at least enough continuing validity or relevance to bring people of diverse religions together for discussion and debate?

That question did have to be asked, for why assemble people from various religions to talk of any one religion when that religion is then declared not to be a religion in the first place? And what happens to the notion of pluralism if, in fact, there does not exist a plurality of different religions but only a plurality of miscellaneous activities, all of which people have for some perverse reason been *calling* religions? And, by the way, who are these presumptuous people? Where and how did they receive or invent their usual sense of the word? And how has their sense of the word acquired such widespread acceptance that speakers still find it necessary to formally dissociate from it? American culture, by the term *pluralism,* has clearly embraced the threefold notion that there are, yes, many different religions; that they are all somehow comparable to one another; and, crucially, that they are all more or less welcome in the United States. Has this embrace been somehow a huge cultural mistake?

Finally, I had to wonder, when speakers dissociated themselves from the term "religion," did the dissociation actually work? It often seemed to me that speakers who repudiated the applicability of the word "religion" to their particular non-religion would later circle back and use the word in spite of themselves in the very sense that they had repudiated. However objectionable, had the word in the usual sense become somehow unavoidable or indispensable?

Early in my introduction to *The Norton Anthology of World Religions,* the reader encounters the following deliberately casual and unchallenging sentence:

> What is religion? The word exists in the English language, and people have some commonsense notion of what it refers to. Most understand it as one kind of human activity standing alongside other kinds, such as business, politics, warfare, art, law, sport, or science.

My decision for the organization of *The Norton Anthology of World Religions* was that we would begin with this "commonsense notion" rather than with a theoretically ambitious definition of religion—an academic definition that I would then be required to impose on my six associate editors, each of whom was far more learned than I about one of the six traditions anthologized. My decision was, first, to acknowledge that various competing academic theories of religion define the word quite differently; second, to note that no theory, no definition, had acquired universal acceptance; but then, third and at length, to proceed to give this very commonsense notion, however academically objectionable it might be, as plausible a history as I could manage, stretching back to its very beginning and forward, at the very end, to the twentieth-first century. The result was an origin story.

What makes the everyday American understanding of religion objectionable when extended to cultures very different from the American or European can be traced to the phrase "one kind of human activity alongside other kinds." This ostensibly innocuous phrase has an explosive, disruptive potential because it asserts that religion stands indeed *alongside* the other activities mentioned—in other words, that it is *separable* from and *distinguishable* from them. But this is just the assertion that turns out to be objectionable when applied to "religions" that are practiced in a way or in a context that makes them indistinguishable and inseparable from business, politics, warfare, law, and so forth down a familiar list of human activities, not to speak of such larger background realities as language, calendar, marriage, diet, and nationality.

Over the years, those speakers whom I had found most clarifying and instructive, though they may have puzzled me at the time, were those who adopted a stance of disputatious protest against either Christian missionary activity or related Western colonialism and continuing cultural hegemony. Such would be my experience when I would hear an Indian speaker say, "What you people call Hinduism is for me just part of being Indian"; or

when I would hear a Jewish speaker say, "Judaism is not a religion, Judaism is a way of life." Hopi religion exists only in the Western Hemisphere, but I once heard a student of that religion say, and with good reason, "The Hopi do not have a religion in the Western sense of the word."

Western in that sentence referred not to geography but to culture—namely, to the European culture that started to spread around the world with the great Spanish and Portuguese explorers of the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and went on, through later colonialism and the spread of Western ideas of all kinds, to dominate much of the world. This culture, Western culture, has long approached religion in a way profoundly shaped by Christian assumptions, and Christianity had indeed, and very early on, introduced a separation of what it chose to regard as religiously significant from the rest of its adherents' worldly lives. This being the case, the story of how just that artificial separation was made for the first time and then how the habit of making it spread to Europe and outward from Europe—through both missionary activity and secular Western colonialism—becomes the origin story of "religion as we know it." To say that it spread is not to say that it was always welcome, but neither is it to deny that it was often enough borrowed or—its Christian origin quite forgotten—simply taken for granted. Cultures, after all, do borrow from one another and, over time, assimilate and indigenize what has been borrowed. Western coinages like *Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism,* and so forth do undeniably squeeze large, complex social and historical realities into the frame of religion as we know it, but at this late date, thanks to globalization and international migration, the option of simply retiring or retracting such terms scarcely exists. The affected populations themselves now have ownership rights and would exercise them.

The "origin story" of *Religion As We Know It* is told largely in a long section titled "How Christian Europe Learned to Compare Religions," just as it originally was told in a section by the same title in the general introduction to *The Norton Anthology of World Religions.* Early in that section, I wrote:

> Through most of world history, in most parts of the world, what we are accustomed to call religion, ethnicity, and culture have been inextricable parts of a single whole. How did Christianity begin to become an exception to this general rule? On the one hand, it appropriated a set of Jewish religious ideas—including monotheism, revelation, covenant, scripture, sin, repentance, forgiveness, salvation, prophecy, messianism, and apocalypticism—without adopting the rest of the Jewish way of life. On the other hand, it universalized these Jewish religious ideas, creating a new social entity, the church, through which non-Jews could be initiated into an enlarged version of the ancestral Jewish covenant with God.

Religion, culture, and ethnicity are often found in a fusion so seamless and taken for granted that its practitioners scarcely even have a name for it.

With hindsight, I would now like to refine or extend this claim in three regards.

First, the Jews who founded Christianity began most clearly to abstract the mentioned set of "religious ideas" from the rest of the Jewish way of life *in the process* of admitting non-Jews to their revised and enlarged sense of the Jewish covenant with God. Jews who became Christian simply by recognizing Jesus as the Jewish Messiah did not at that moment or by that action cease living as Jews. But then, by the same token, Egyptians or Armenians or Macedonians who later embraced a set of dynamic Jewish ideas as part of accepting Jesus as the Jewish Messiah were not required by that act to become Jews or to cease living in other regards as Egyptians or Armenians or Macedonians. Yet the embrace by so many non-Jews of these originally Jewish ideas almost certainly had the effect over time of severing those ideas not just from the rest of the Jews' way of life but also from the rest of *anyone's* way of life. To be sure, an almost equally powerful tendency toward reintegration would repeatedly bring about the fusion of Christian identity with the way of life of one nation or another, even one empire or another. Nonetheless a consequential severing took place in principle and could reassert itself at any time.

Second, the act of abstracting Jewish *religious* ideas from the rest of a rich and complex Jewish way of life had the tacit effect of defining the rest of that way of life as somehow *not* religious. For centuries, Jews had distinguished their own true, native worship from the false, alien worship of all others. But now there arose a distinction not between the Jewish God as the one true or "living" God and other purported gods but between the religiously consequential or essential parts of the Jewish way of life itself and the rest of that way of life, now taken to be not wrong but only religiously inconsequential or nonessential. This distinction when first made did not amount to a full-fledged distinction between the religious and the secular, but it laid the egg from which that immensely influential later distinction would hatch.

Before that point would be reached, Medieval Europe would for centuries incarnate the same key distinction by dividing the personnel of Christendom into the "religious" (monks and nuns) and the "laity" (everyone else: all those engaged in "worldly" pursuits). The Protestant

Reformation would challenge this distinction, honoring once worldly pursuits as no less holy in principle than formally religious pursuits and the laity, who engaged in such worldly pursuits, as no less holy in principle than the clergy. The Protestant challenge had, to be sure, lasting consequences. However, the "Great Secularization" of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would paradoxically revive and embrace the prior distinction while gradually elevating secular pursuits *above* religious ones. Secularization has been a profoundly transformative cultural process, and yet the transformation has necessarily reinforced the originally Christian notion of religion as *separable* from the range of other pursuits whose autonomy secularization has so insisted on.

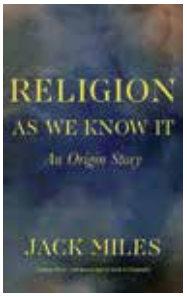
Third, the early-modern study of world religions beyond the West was at first essentially the study of those religions naïvely taken as exotic versions of a reality whose domestic version was Christianity. That is, it was the uncritical study of the non-Christian religions of the world as if they all routinely understood themselves to be, like Christianity, separate domains open for adoption by any sincerely interested party. By this assumption, the religions of South and East Asia and the indigenous religions of Africa and the Americas were misconstrued rather as Christendom had long since misconstrued Judaism, Greco-Roman polytheism, and—to a degree—even Islam. In more recent centuries, more sophisticated students of religion have quite successfully challenged this naïve assumption. Thanks to a substantial academic literature, a more integralist understanding has taken hold which posits that religion, culture, and ethnicity are de facto often found in a fusion so seamless and taken for granted that its practitioners scarcely even have a name for it.

Yet the now solidly established Western assumption that law, politics, art, science, and so forth are inherently autonomous activities, independent of, and by all means to be kept separate from, the increasingly sequestered realm of religion, has remained influential far beyond the geographical West. Autonomy from religion for all these activities—a derivatively Christian notion whose ancestry is now rarely remembered—has been a crucial element in the rise of *modernity*. And the encounter with modernity has in turn occasioned a crisis in the histories of all six of the major living, international traditions that Norton anthologizes—beginning, of course, with Christianity itself. In this way, the West—and behind it Christianity, and behind Christianity, Judaism—has been both a disruptive and a formative force in cultures once untouched by the notion of religion as "we" (of the West) know it.

Now, to say that religion is a separate domain is not, when all is said and done, to say all that much about it. If this notion, now so much a part of American common sense about religion, arose somehow two thousand years ago in the abstraction of a set of Jewish religious ideas from the rest of the Jewish way of life, how did those Jewish ideas arise in the first place? What was their source? And if other, contemporaneous or earlier or, for that matter, much later societies developed other, different semi-religious or quasi-religious or equivalently religious ideas, did they all spring from the same source? What is the origin story behind these origin stories, and how far back in human evolution must we go to find it? Was religion an adaptive or maladaptive behavior for prehistoric *Homo sapiens*? Is its taproot individual or social? If social, can it be regarded as a human social analogue to some of the extravagant, sometimes maladaptive but nonetheless durable animal mating rituals described in Richard O. Prum's *The Evolution of Beauty*? Has religion, like the peacock's tail and like art in all its wasteful madness, been a part of how societies survive, thrive, and reproduce themselves over time?

Questions like these can so very easily be multiplied. They are entirely legitimate and even deeply engaging. To ask them, however, is to ask about religion not as we know it but rather as we might now proceed to *study* it. It is to admit that we do not fully understand religion any more than we fully understand such other deep-rooted, universally attested human behaviors as language, art, and play. *The Norton Anthology of World Religions* acknowledges the existence and importance of theories of religion that attempt to answer these questions but does not explore the answers themselves. The goal of the introduction, now published separately, is simply to trace religion "as we know it" to its origin, then to follow the story of its growth and its spread, and, finally, to acknowledge how this powerful but undoubtedly limited way of knowing has both enabled comparison and distorted it down to our own day. The resulting origin story has some of the interest that all origin stories have. It matters most, however, because its darker consequences linger longer the more they are ignored.

JACK MILES, *a frequent* Commonweal *contributor, is professor emeritus of English & religious studies at the University of California, Irvine. This article is adapted from his forthcoming book,* Religion as We Know It: An Origin Story, *which will be published by W. W. Norton this month.*



RELIGION AS WE KNOW IT
An Origin Story

JACK MILES
W. W. Norton, $14.95, 128 pp.

CONVERSATION STARTER SERIES

A discussion guide for Commonweal Local Communities

Complete series ($25) and individual topics ($5) are available for download.

Visit **cwlmag.org/css**

START A CONVERSATION with the 2019–2020 CSS!

The **Conversation Starter Series** (or CSS) is a discussion guide ideal for starting a conversation in your parish, classroom, book club, or Commonweal Local Community.

Each year, *Commonweal*'s editors select topics for this series that are timely, relevant, and sometimes difficult to help communities foster thoughtful dialogue on a decidedly local level.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

1. *Nationalism*
2. *Clericalism*
3. *Reproductive Technology*
4. *Big Business*
5. *The Church in China*
6. *Gun Violence*
7. *Millennial Spirituality*
8. *Faith in Film & TV*

The ethics of harm reduction & the Church of Safe Injection

Start with Safe

Bernard G. Prusak

Jesse Harvey describes himself as "in recovery." He has been involuntarily committed five times for substance-abuse disorders—principally addictions to methamphetamine, alcohol, and tranquilizers. He has also used opioids, though he is not addicted to them. He tried to commit suicide before his third involuntary commitment. The treatment facility in Pennsylvania summarily discharged him onto the street with no follow-up plan. Just recently, Harvey relapsed again, was arrested, and checked himself into another treatment program.

The road to recovery is rocky and long. Harvey, who is twenty-seven and lives in Portland, Maine, claims the reason he's not dead is that he's had access to sterile syringes and needles and fentanyl testing strips. In 2016, after his fifth involuntary commitment, Harvey founded the nonprofit Journey House, which now oversees four recovery houses in Maine. He became a state-certified recovery coach. He also began distributing, out of the back of his car, sterile syringes and needles, tourniquets, alcohol swabs, fentanyl testing strips, biohazard disposal bins, and the opioid "antagonist" naloxone. It is illegal to distribute syringes in Maine unless one does it under the auspices of a needle-exchange program certified by the state's Centers for Disease Control. There are only six such programs. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Maine had 360 overdose deaths in 2017, which came to a rate of 29.9 deaths per 100,000 people—well above the national average. Harvey operated his uncertified needle exchange as part of another nonprofit he founded in 2018, the Church of Safe Injection (CoSI), which has a board comprised of clergy, physicians, nurses, counselors, people in recovery, and people who use drugs. The police in Portland decided to turn a blind eye when Harvey made his distributions there, but the police in Lewiston threatened him, albeit politely, with arrest.

CoSI is dedicated to what Harvey calls "the harm-reduction gospel" and has as its foundational belief that, as he put it in an interview with me, "people who use drugs don't deserve to die, especially when we have decades of evidence-based solutions." As its name suggests, CoSI advocates for safe-injection sites, also known as supervised injection facilities, as one of those solutions, along with needle exchanges. Fundamentally, safe-injection sites, of which there are around a hundred worldwide, aim to keep people who use drugs alive in the hope that they might eventually seek treatment. CoSI, which currently has twenty chapters across nine states, does not itself operate a safe-injection site—they are illegal under U.S. federal law—but one of Harvey's aims for the organization is "to leverage our collective First Amendment right to gain protection against counterproductive drug laws." He has sought legal advice and has a letter to the Drug Enforcement Administration ready to go. According to Harvey, the U.S. government's "war on drugs" is "oriented toward killing drug users." Stigmatized as addicts or junkies, they are cast aside as human trash whose lives are not worth saving. Harvey knows this from experience.

Jesse Harvey, the founder of the Church of Safe Injection, gives out naloxone to anyone in need of it outside his parked car near Kennedy Park in Lewiston, Maine.

BRIANNA SOUKUP / PORTLAND PRESS HERALD VIA GETTY IMAGES

Harvey is a provocateur. Though soft-spoken, he's not averse to publicity—he and CoSI have been the subject of stories by NBC, NPR, and Huffpost—and he acknowledges that he is drawn to guerilla-theater tactics. He likes to cite Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and he calls naloxone CoSI's sacrament. Harvey is also, however, morally serious. Commenting on Matthew 5:10 (with an eye to Luke 10), he wrote me that he is "sure we will be judged not by how many politicians and bureaucrats we mollycoddled or placated, but by how many times we did the right thing when we had the opportunity to, when we acted as the Good Samaritan when nobody else would." He cites, among his inspirations, Dorothy Day. He hadn't known of the Berrigan brothers when we first spoke, but later wrote me to express amazement and admiration that Daniel Berrigan had been arrested for civil disobedience at least 250 times. (I should add here that Harvey is a 2014 *summa cum laude* graduate of King's College, where I teach, though he was never my student and I did not meet him until 2019. It also should be noted that, after his recent relapse, Harvey is trying to focus more on his own recovery program.)

A branch of Catholic Charities in the diocese of Albany, New York, has been operating a needle-exchange program called Project Safe Point since 2010, so harm reduction is not unknown in Catholic health care. Nevertheless, such programs remain both rare and controversial—there are fewer than two hundred of them in the whole country. This is partly because they may not be supported with federal funds. One of Project Safe Point's directors told me that their program was launched in anticipation of the second wave of opioid addiction, when deaths from abuse of prescription drugs were compounded by deaths from abuse of heroin. Predictably, Project Safe Point generated a blizzard of commentary when it was announced a decade ago, as did the 1999 announcement of a safe-injection site that the Sisters of Charity planned to run at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, Australia. That plan had to be abandoned after the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith warned the Sisters of Charity that operating a safe-injection site was "extremely proximate material cooperation in the grave evil of drug abuse."

And there lies the heart of the controversy over both needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites. Do such harm-reduction strategies enable and even encourage drug abuse? When I asked Jesse Harvey whether he has any qualms about his work, he told me that he did find it hard to read the NPR story about CoSI. There a man is characterized as "conflicted about whether getting these supplies makes it easier for him to use drugs." Harvey quickly added that "the science demonstrates" that people don't use drugs, or use more drugs, *because* of needle-exchange programs. Still, he acknowledged that it's difficult to keep the science in mind "when you're handing someone a needle."

Pope Francis has famously likened the Roman Catholic Church to "a field hospital after battle." He added, "It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else." Over the past year, the church in the United States has itself become one of the walking wounded, especially here in Penn-

sylvania. In the wake of this latest *annus horribilis*, it hardly needs repeating that the church's moral authority has been deeply compromised. But the church would not be the body of Christ in history if it turned in on itself and gave up on its healing mission. How, then, should Catholics think about needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites? Should Catholics join CoSI, and others, in advocating for and seeking to implement such harm-reduction strategies? Meeting Jesse Harvey raised those questions for me.

Before one assesses the arguments about needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites, it helps to know some basic facts. First, there are the facts about the opioid crisis itself. Is there a family that has not been affected? According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), more than 700,000 Americans died from a drug overdose between 1999 and 2017; nearly 400,000 died from overdosing on opioids. The number of deaths from opioids increased dramatically from 1999 to 2017. In 2017, around 68 percent of the 70,200 drug-overdose deaths involved opioids. That's an average of 130 deaths caused by opioid overdoses per day. In 2017, drug overdose was, incredibly, the leading cause of death for people under the age of fifty-five. A recent study commissioned by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene observed that "someone dies from a drug overdose in New York City every seven hours, and more people died from overdose in New York City in 2017 than from suicide, homicide, and motor vehicle accidents combined." And these are just the numbers for overdose deaths; they do not indicate the full extent of the damage—the lives ruined, families devastated, communities broken by opioid abuse. It's estimated more than 650,000 Americans are addicted.

The CDC distinguishes three waves in the rise of opioid deaths. The first began in the 1990s with increased prescription of opioids like Purdue Pharma's OxyContin; the second began in 2010, with rapid increase in the abuse of heroin; and the third began in 2013, with the circulation of deadly synthetic opioids like fentanyl. The New York City study attributes that city's dramatic increase in overdose deaths since 2014 to fentanyl. As for the causes of the crisis, the moral theologian Joel Shuman—a colleague of mine at King's College who spent the last academic year working at Duke University on a project related to the opioid crisis—has argued that several factors must be taken into account. To begin with, since the early 1980s, there has been a trend within the medical professions toward elevating the relief of pain as a goal no less important than the treatment of disease. U.S. residents, Shuman reports, consume 80 percent of the world's manufactured analgesics, while constituting only 5 percent of the global population. Treating the relief of pain as an end of medicine is not problematic in itself, and, as Shuman observes, under the medical paternalism of old "patients *were* frequently denied a voice in their care [and] their suffering *was* frequently ignored." But consider the social and economic context for this change in the understanding of medical practice. In the consumer capitalism of late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century America, the patient has come to be treated more and more like a customer, with "patient-satisfaction scores" determining how much hospitals get reimbursed and doctors get paid. At the same time, health-insurance companies have tried to save money by pushing cheap and addictive opioids instead of more costly, less addictive alternatives, while pharmaceutical companies continued to market opioids aggressively after evidence of their addictiveness became conclusive. Finally, there is the disaster of the war on drugs, which casts addiction as a crime rather than a disease.

Needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites might seem like counterintuitive ways to counter opioid addiction. They begin to make sense only when it's understood what opioid addiction does to a person. By definition, addiction involves compulsion, compromising a person's capacity to make voluntary choices. Opioids flood the body with feelings of euphoria, while suppressing pain. It is no wonder, then, that people with a history of mental illness, trauma, or abuse are at high risk of addiction to this category of drugs. Chronic use of opioids changes the chemistry of the brain, affecting the expression of genes involved in neurotransmission. Users gradually develop greater tolerance of the drug, so that they need more of it in order to get high and to escape debilitating symptoms of withdrawal, including muscle cramping, diarrhea, and anxiety. This makes it all but impossible for some people addicted to opioids to give them up all at once: they need to keeping taking the drug just to function. Unsurprisingly, after the over-prescription of drugs like OxyContin was finally slowed by regulation, the number of heroin overdoses began to spike. When fentanyl hit the streets, people began dying in yet greater numbers.

The rationale for needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites is that some people will inject opioids—heroin or synthetics like fentanyl—no matter how much others plead with them not to do so, or how much those who are addicted hate what they're doing, or how likely they are to get arrested, or to overdose. Given that people are intent on injecting opioids despite these considerable risks, it might seem there's a case to be made that providing sterile syringes and needles, and perhaps even legally sanctioned, medically supervised places to inject drugs, is justifiable under the longstanding principle of the lesser evil. Studies have found that people are more likely to share syringes and needles when they fear arrest for carrying drug paraphernalia, and sharing syringes and needles leads to significant risk of contracting HIV, hepatitis B and C, and bacterial infections. As it happens, the diocese of Albany invoked the principle of lesser evil in explaining its decision to establish Project Safe Point. In the commentary that followed, the Jesuit moral theologian James Bretzke, who teaches at Boston College, noted that the diocese was drawing

The injection room at Insite, North America's first legal supervised injection site, is operated by Vancouver Coastal Health.

here on the thinking of Thomas Aquinas and went on to say, "When you cannot reasonably expect a person to avoid the moral evil itself, you can counsel them at least to lessen or mitigate the potential damage of their action and can even help them in doing that."

This is where the controversy starts. While Bretzke can cite authorities like Aquinas and even recent popes like Paul VI and Benedict XVI in support of the claim that it's morally permissible to *counsel* and *tolerate* the lesser of two evils when a person is intent on doing evil no matter what, the claim that is morally permissible to *help* a person do the lesser evil remains controversial within the Catholic tradition, as Bretzke well knows. Here we cross over into the ethics of cooperation in evil, which introduces a notoriously difficult set of considerations.

A person cooperates with another when she knowingly and freely facilitates the other's intended action. For example, imagine that the flight instructors of the 9/11 terrorists had known what the men intended to do and freely agreed to provide the necessary instruction. In that case, the flight instructors would have cooperated—impermissibly—in evil. But there are many shades of cooperation, and some of them may be morally permissible. I take the following example from the philosopher Thomas Cavanaugh at the University of San Francisco: A hardware-store owner whose store is by the sea stocks and sells a kind of spray paint that boaters use because it adheres well in a marine environment. The spray paint is also favored, however, by graffitists, who use it to vandalize property. The hardware-store owner suspects—if she is honest with herself, she even knows—that some of her customers buy the paint with the intention of using it for graffiti. She doesn't stock and sell the spray paint with the intent of cooperating with the graffitists; she disapproves of what they do and wishes there were some reliable way to recognize them before they purchased her paint, but she judges, perhaps correctly, that the good the spray paint does for her other customers justifies the harm it enables the graffitists to do. Of course, if that harm were truly great, she might have to reconsider that judgment. And if she were unwilling to reconsider it, there would be reason to wonder whether she didn't in some sense share the graffitists' intent after all.

Cooperation is always blameworthy when the cooperator shares the principal actor's wrongful intention. This is called formal cooperation: in such cases, the cooperator's will is shaped or *informed* by the very same object that the principal actor has in mind. Had the flight instructors of the 9/11 terrorists known what the men intended to do and freely agreed to help, they would have been formally cooperating in evil, and we would have been justified in holding them accountable for what happened. By contrast, the case of the hardware-store owner, as I told it, is an example of what is called *material* cooperation. In such cases, the cooperator does not share the wrongful intention of the principal actor,

but nonetheless contributes materially to the action, here by supplying something that makes the action possible.

Material cooperation may be permissible or impermissible depending on a number of factors. One has to do with the nature of the harm the principal actor intends: the greater the harm, the harder it is to justify material cooperation. If the graffitists were, say, white supremacists who painted words or symbols designed to intimidate minorities and foment violence against them, the hardware-store owner might reach a different conclusion about whether making spray paint available to boaters justified the risk of its being used by graffitists.

Another factor has to do with whether the cooperation is "remote" or "proximate." Material cooperation is proximate rather than remote when what the cooperator does provides a probable instrument of wrongful use for the principal actor. As the philosopher David Oderberg has remarked, the question here is about "how close the cooperator is, *causally speaking*, to the primary act itself." The closer the cooperator's action is in the causal chain that leads to the principal's action, the harder it is to justify the cooperation. A final factor has to do with whether the material cooperation is "immediate, " as opposed to "mediate" or "non-immediate." It is immediate when the cooperator's action overlaps with the principal's action.

Take the following two cases. If I were to agree to drive the getaway car in a bank robbery, I would be formally cooperating in evil. But imagine I "drove with Uber," as the company puts it, to make a little extra money. Imagine further that I got a call to pick up someone who was escaping from a crime scene, but that I discovered that he was escaping only after he was in the car and we were on our way. There is nothing wrong, in itself, with providing livery service, but what I am doing in this case overlaps with the criminal's escape. What's more, it is necessary to his escape, and the more a particular act of cooperation is necessary for the principal action to come to pass, the harder it will be to justify. In this case, the justification for proceeding had better be awfully great: a lot of money wouldn't do; a threat to my life probably would. Moreover, if I did agree to proceed on the condition of being paid a lot of money, that would make me a formal cooperator, since it could hardly be denied, in the circumstances, that I had come to share the criminal's intention of escaping. (I wouldn't get paid otherwise!) By contrast, my proceeding lest the criminal kill me would be an instance of immediate material cooperation under duress. For, in that case, it would not make sense to say that my intention was to help the criminal escape. I would be greatly relieved if the police caught him and saved me!

It is worth pointing out that there is nothing theological about the ethics of cooperation, though it was first developed by Roman Catholic moral theologians who looked back to Aquinas and beyond him to Aristotle. The difficult issues in the ethics of cooperation are philosophical in nature: they are about the meaning of basic concepts we use to try to make sense of ourselves and our world.

The diocese of Albany invoked "the principles of permissible cooperation in evil" when it explained its decision to establish Project Safe Point. The controversy that followed centered on the right understanding of the ethics of cooperation. The controversy over the plan to establish a "supervised injecting room" at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney also centered on the ethics of cooperation. Recall that the CDF warned the Sisters of Charity that operating such a facility would constitute "extremely proximate material cooperation in the grave evil of drug abuse."

Edward Peters, a professor of canon law at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, judged Project Safe Point to be formal cooperation in evil, on the grounds that supplying syringes and needles to people who inject opioids is done with the intent that those people use that equipment to abuse drugs. In a position paper on cooperation prepared in 2013, the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia likewise judged needle-exchange programs to be formal cooperation in evil, on the somewhat subtler grounds that it is "impossible to separate [the] intention for [drug users'] good health from the intention that harmful drugs be injected." Six years later, in 2019, one of the ethicists at the Bioethics Center judged safe-injection sites to be instances of immediate moral cooperation in evil, on the grounds that acts of purchasing and providing sterile equipment to people who inject opioids are of a piece with the act of using the drugs. In 1999, an Australian physician, Joseph Santamaria, made the same argument in the journal *Bioethics Research Notes*. He even claimed that a Catholic hospital's operating a safe-injection site would be "similar in kind to providing abortion facilities for an abortionist so that women may have their abortions in a clinically safe environment and in the hope that some women may be deterred from having the abortion or from having further abortions in the future."

On the other side of the question, the moral theologian Germain Grisez, professor emeritus at Mount Saint Mary's University in Maryland, was characterized in a 2010 news article on Project Safe Point as holding that "supplying addicts with clean syringes is not necessarily wrong if the intention is to limit the spread of disease." Grisez went on to claim, though, that the Catholic Church should focus its resources on combating addiction, apparently not realizing that one of the aims of harm-reduction strategies like needle exchange programs is, as Project Safe Point explains on its website, "to develop non-judgmental, meaningful relationships with people who use drugs" and "through these relationships…provide a vital link to the resources people need or want." Similarly, in 1999, Gerald Gleeson, an ethicist at the Plunkett Centre for Ethics at Australian Catholic University, claimed that "nothing in the establishment of [a supervised injecting room] *must imply* that those who operate it are in the business of endorsing drug taking as such." To the contrary, "those responsible for the room can simply be intending that help be available should a person's life be endangered, and that rehabilitation be encouraged." In 2017, several ethicists

working in Catholic health care in the United States agreed with that judgment in an article published in the Catholic Health Association's *Health Care Ethics USA*. There is no reason operators of a safe-injection site could not intend simply to "limit the risk of infection, prevent possible overdoses, eliminate hazardous street waste…. and create an environment" conducive to trust and encouraging of rehabilitation. Providing sterile injection equipment and medical supervision certainly facilitates drug abuse, but it counts, according to these ethicists, as non-immediate material cooperation, which they judge to be morally permissible in the circumstances.

Who is right? To answer this question, we have to consider one more distinction. Traditionally, philosophers have distinguished between effects of action that are intended and effects that, though brought about voluntarily, are not intended but merely foreseen. Let's return to the example of the Uber driver threatened with death. Does the Uber driver intend to help the criminal escape? It would be strange to say so, even though his driving the car as the criminal directs him to does have the effect of helping the criminal escape. The important point is that helping the criminal escape isn't what the driver intends. His intention in driving the car as the criminal directs him to is to save his own life, and keeping the criminal satisfied by helping him escape is the means to that end. So helping the criminal escape, though it is undeniably something that the driver does, falls outside his intention. He is not a formal cooperator in evil.

And neither, for the same reason, is the operator of a needle-exchange program or safe-injection site, as long as the operation isn't corrupt. Drug abuse isn't one of the ends of these programs; their ends are to reduce infections, save lives, build relationships with the marginalized, and encourage rehabilitation. It is undeniable that one foreseeable effect of both needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites is to facilitate the use of drugs. But, carefully considered, that effect falls outside the programs' intention.

Is providing sterile equipment and a medically supervised space so close to the act of abusing drugs that it should be considered immediate material cooperation? I doubt whether the answer to that question matters morally. What seems much more important is how "close" the people who use needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites are to doing significant harm to themselves—harm these operations exist to reduce. Much as the threat of death in the Uber example mitigates the driver's blameworthiness, the risk that those addicted to drugs will overdose or contract a life-threatening infection renders permissible an action that would otherwise be immoral. No morally upstanding person would countenance distributing syringes, needles, and the like to people beginning to experiment with drugs. That would simply encourage drug abuse. But the circumstances in which needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites operate are radically different. Replace the gun at the head of the driver with an infected needle, or a syringe loaded with a lethal dose of fentanyl. Supplying a clean needle and providing medical supervision may or may not be "of a piece" with the injection of drugs, but no one can reasonably claim that these things are done in order to facilitate drug abuse—or done without a very strong reason.

Providing sterile equipment and a medically supervised space does appear to be proximate cooperation, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith claims. There is no way around the fact that giving someone a syringe and a needle is quite close in the causal chain to that person's injecting drugs. Likewise, there is no way around the fact that providing someone a legally sanctioned, medically supervised space in which to inject drugs is causally close to his or her doing so. But, again, this doesn't seem to matter morally in the circumstances. The point to keep in mind is that the people who use needle-exchange programs and safe-injection sites are intent on abusing drugs no matter what. They are in the grip of addiction, with little power to resist. That is the unfortunate reality to which harm-reduction strategies respond. They are acts of charity toward people whose freedom of will has been severely compromised. Part of the grave evil of drug abuse, to use the Vatican's language, is that it destroys persons as persons: they become more acted upon than agents themselves.

Safe-injection sites are under consideration or in the works in a number of U.S. cities, including Philadelphia, New York, Seattle, and San Francisco, but they still face opposition from the federal and state governments. Even proponents recognize that, as the New York City study states, there is a critical need for "meaningful community engagement and education" to win over skeptics. Scientific studies of both needle-exchange programs and Vancouver's safe-injection site, which has been operating since 2003, provide evidence that these harm-reduction strategies save lives, decrease infections, and increase the number of people who end up getting treatment. Health-care professionals have already been won over. In 1997, the American Medical Association called on Congress to revoke the ban on using federal funds to support needle exchanges; in 2017, it called for pilot safe-injection sites. Law enforcement officials and politicians have been slower to come around.

There are still a number of practical matters to consider, such as ensuring that harm-reduction programs don't draw away funds for prevention and rehabilitation, or overburden communities that already host multiple social services. Nevertheless, I've come to the conclusion that there is no reason, in principle, to oppose these programs. To the contrary, they are precisely what love of neighbor enjoins in the circumstances. The Catholic Church—meaning lay people as well as the hierarchy—should support initiatives like Project Safe Point and deploy what moral authority we still have to support the basic strategy, if not always the tactics, of activists like Jesse Harvey.

BERNARD G. PRUSAK *is professor of philosophy and director of the McGowan Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. His books include* Catholic Moral Philosophy in Practice and Theory: An Introduction, *published by Paulist Press in 2016.*

An interview with Ken Burns

Emotional Archaeology

Cole Stangler

Ken Burns's new documentary, Country Music, *premiered on PBS on September 15. Over the course of eight episodes spanning more than sixteen hours, the film traces the long and complex development of the genre—from the early days of "hillbilly music" in the 1920s and 1930s, through the development of the polished Nashville Sound of the 1960s, up to the emergence of the roots-oriented artists of the 1980s and 1990s. A monumental project that took eight years to complete,* Country Music *is based on 175 hours of interviews with musical legends like Loretta Lynn, Kris Kristofferson, and Merle Haggard, among many others.*

Burns is an award-winning documentarian, known for his iconic films like The Civil War, Jazz, Baseball, The Roosevelts, *and* Vietnam. *He spoke with Cole Stangler about* Country Music, *the art of storytelling, American history, and the current political moment. This conversation has been edited for clarity and length.*

COLE STANGLER: Thanks so much for taking the time to do this. I just finished the documentary over the weekend.

KEN BURNS: Thanks. I appreciate you watching the whole thing.

CS: Of course! I couldn't possibly interview you without watching the whole thing.

KB: You'd be surprised by how many people say: "Oh I watched a little bit of the first episode and then skipped to the end." And it's like, come on.

CS: No, it's important to watch or read things before you interview people about them. To start then, how did you come across this topic? Why country music?

KB: Well, it's been a topic of interest to me from the nineties and beyond. But it hadn't really dropped down into my heart. And I had a friend in late 2010 who said, "What about country music?" And the fireworks went off. I kind of got down on my knees and proposed *Country Music* then. Eight and a half years later, this is what we've got.

At the end of the day, I'm a storyteller. I happen to work in American history. I've always said, since my very first film forty years ago, that I was uninterested in excavating the dry dates and facts and events of the past, as if there was some quiz awaiting you. The last time I checked, that's called homework. There is no quiz. But I am interested in an emotional archaeology. Not sentimentality or nostalgia, but an emotional archaeology. And I can't think of a film I've worked on that has more powerful and more universal human emotions than this project.

CS: So obviously, as you mentioned, your films are dealing with American history, grappling with themes that are very American. By taking on a project like this, that implies there's something important about country music's connection to

Johnny Cash in a recording studio in 1965

MOVIESTORE COLLECTION LTD. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Isn't it interesting that when you say country music, more often than not, you get a superficial response: "Oh, this is good old boys and pick-up trucks and hound dogs and six packs of beer"? And I don't mean to say that isn't a part of it, but it is a tiny, insignificant part.

American identity, or to something about the United States. What's behind it? You're not just telling a story about the genre of music; this is revealing something else.

KB: First, I think we have to realize that commerce and convenience categorize almost everything to its detriment so that we end up with a kind of isolated or siloed sense of something. It's always one-dimensional and kind of superficial and what our deep-dive documentaries permit us to do, I hope, is liberate these topics from that imprisonment and remind people of the interconnectedness of all the subjects we've tackled.

Mark Twain is supposed to have said: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes." And whenever we finish a project, we're always surprised by how much it rhymes. But the emphasis is, when we *finish* a project. Because we're not interested in putting up neon signs that say: "Hey, isn't this so much like today?" Whether it's the *Vietnam War* or *Country Music* or *The Roosevelts* or *The Civil War* or anything that we've done. But it always is about today because perhaps Ecclesiastes is absolutely right—there's nothing new under the sun.

You begin to see recurring themes about freedom, and the great tension inherent around it in the American story. That is to say, the tension between our collective freedom—what we need—and a personal freedom—what I want. And they're often very much in opposition or in conflict with one another.

Race is, of course, a central theme in America, which is dealt with in almost every film I've done. You don't necessarily go out looking for it, but it's nearly always there. Also, we have gender issues, we have geographical tensions, we have creative ones, we have business ones. All of those rear their heads in various ways throughout the films that we've done, and none more so, I believe, than in *Country Music*.

The conventional wisdom suggests that country music is merely this white, conservative force. In fact, it is like all other forms of music, American music, connected to each other. Particularly when you consider, say, the top five people in the pantheon of early country-music stars: A. P. Carter and the Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, and Johnny Cash. Four out of those five all had an African-American mentor, a specific person they referred to—Lesley Riddle in the case of A. P. Carter, Arnold Schultz in the case of Bill Monroe, Rufus "Tee Tot" Payne in the case of Hank Williams, and Gus Cannon in the case of Johnny Cash. The only person left out is Jimmie Rodgers, whose entire influence is from the blues and from listening to the black train crews in southern Mississippi work the track.

Then you think about the two seminal instruments of country music: the fiddle clearly comes from Europe and the British Isles, but the banjo comes from Africa. So this is a hugely complex alloy, this music called country music. It isn't one thing and it never has been. The big bang of country music's creation is supposed to be in Bristol, Tennessee, in the summer of 1927, when Ralph Peer records in different sessions first the Carter Family, and then, a week later, Jimmie Rodgers. Jimmie Rodgers, who represents the rogue, the scamp, the Saturday night of country music and all of American music and culture, and the Carter Family which represents Sunday morning, home and values and family and church and all that. And then, it went off almost in this big huge spree, acquiring cowboy music and Western swing and the Bakersfield Sound, and then the smoother Nashville Sound, and the even smoother Countrypolitan. And string band music itself was evolving into lots of different subgenres, including the most spectacular thing—not dissimilar from bebop's contribution to jazz—which is bluegrass. It begins an alloy and it ends up an even stronger alloy.

Isn't it interesting that when you say country music, more often than not, you get a superficial response: "Oh, this is good old boys and pick-up trucks and hound dogs and six packs of beer"? And I don't mean to say that isn't a part of it, but it is a tiny, insignificant part of country music. It's dealing with two big themes, two four-letter words, that we'd rather not deal with: love and loss. And I'm interested in those two things.

CS: I think one of the things you really hit on there, among other points, is this idea of the interconnectedness of the kind of music that the film is digging into. That was one of the things that really spoke to me, and one of the things that really comes across in the series, is how intimately tied country music, as a genre, what's known as country music today and what we call country music, is to these other forms of music.

KB: Well, I tried to describe that. I think this a fairly imprecise analogy, but it's kind of like a molecule. American music is a complex molecule in which country music is forever bonded and connected to the blues, to jazz, to rhythm-and--blues, to folk, to pop, and even to classical, and all of those other forms are themselves connected. I mean, all you have to do is look at the musical roots.

Look at Bob Dylan and what he did. Look at The Beatles. You've got Paul McCartney drawn, of course, to the ballads of Marty Robbins. You've got George Harrison listening to the blues of Jimmie Rodgers, and the jazz-influenced guitar playing of Chet Atkins. And you've got the heartache of Hank Williams fusing John Lennon's early influence. And you've got Gene Autry, the singing cowboy, as the primary musical force in Ringo Starr's life, or at least, his decision to choose music. That's just one band.

And it goes both ways. When Ray Charles is given creative control of an album for the first time, what does he choose? To the surprise of his own people, *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, in which he plays Hank Williams. He knocks out of the park Hank Williams's "Hey Good Lookin," but also sings the number-one song of the summer of 1962, "I Can't Stop Lovin' You," which is Don Gibson's country song.

You realize that there are no borders. You think that station is only being listened to by white people, or that other station is only being listened to by black people—that just isn't true. If you look at the birth of rock-and-roll, which occurs arguably in 1954 in Memphis, with Sun Records and Sam Philips, you've got two white boys, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash, who've been listening to gospel—both black and white—to hillbilly music, and to rhythm-and-blues. They bring all that together and the explosion, the fusion that takes place, is rock-and-roll.

And yet, as I keep saying, commerce and convenience, particularly in a time when we're overwhelmed with information, suggest that these easy, simplistic categorizations are helpful, when in fact, all they do is imprison these forms into their own rigid groups, while the artists just don't recognize these boundaries. Bob Dylan is clearly the biggest example of that.

CS: This film comes in, I think, at sixteen hours long. Like your other films, a very long project. A simple question: Why make movies that are so long? Is that something you're thinking about as you're telling the story? Presumably it changes the audience?

KB: It takes sixteen hours and twenty minutes. I suggest that any book that you've got on your shelf will probably take you that long to read. Complex stories require some time. All meaning accrues in duration. The work that you're proudest of, the relationships you care about the most, have benefitted from your sustained attention.

I was told by the critics of *The Civil War*, *Baseball,* and *Jazz* that no one would look at them, because we're in the MTV generation of quick-cutting two-and-a-half minute music videos, and what am I doing lingering on a single photograph for thirty seconds. And yet, you know, *The Civil War* is still the highest-rated program in PBS history. And then after that, it was no longer MTV for *World War II* and *The National Parks*, it was the fact that no one would watch these long-form things because of YouTube. But the stuff that has meaning, the stuff that you seek out, particularly now with this tsunami wave of information breaking over our heads, we're not only starved for meaning—which accrues in duration—but we're starved for curation.

Jimmie Rodgers

We don't say: "Okay, we're starting off at sixteen-and-a-half hours or eighteen hours for *Vietnam*." You think "well, maybe it'll be this" and you listen to the material in it, and it tells you what it means, and what was going to be six episodes of *Country* turned into seven before we got off the paper. Then it turned into eight in the early days of editing. *Vietnam* started off as seven and then it was very quickly on paper going to be eight, and then we realized the material we had warranted nine and ten. You figure out how you move the goalposts: How do you make sure that each episode has its own integrity in addition to fitting into the whole?

But this is not an additive process. I think of this more as subtractive. We collected a thousand hours of footage, 175 hours of interviews from 101 people, 20 of whom have died, 41 of whom are in the Country Music Hall of Fame. We looked at 100,000 photographs, we used 3,400 of them in our final film. And from tens of thousands of pieces of music we listened to, we have 584 music cues. All of it is reductive. All of it is kind of a distillation process.

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Loretta Lynn

CS: When we're thinking about the kinds of ideas that people have about country music, these kinds of categories that people put it into, the kinds of clichés about it, there's this notion—and this was true for myself, growing up, when I was younger—this idea that country music, politically, is right-wing music. It was after 9/11 with the Toby Keith pro-Iraq War songs and you certainly have artists that are right-leaning, but you also have people on the other side of the political spectrum, Steve Earle, Willie Nelson, among many others.

KB: Woody Guthrie, The Dixie Chicks.

CS: Of course!

KB: And people who realize all these things don't matter. I mean, if Toby Keith can play, he can play. And what, does he not experience heartache because he's right-wing as opposed to somebody who might be more sympathetic to your or my particular views? No, that's one of the "us" and "them" things. And this is a more modern manifestation anyway. Our film ends before 9/11.

CS: Sure, I mean, to take another example then—and this is more complicated—but the Merle Haggard song "Okie from Muskogee" which, I would actually say, is maybe less explicitly political than the Toby Keith song is, because as you mention in the film as well, it's a very nuanced song. And it's not exactly…

KB: It got appropriated by the counter-counterculture. And he then fell into the trap for a while, but that doesn't represent Merle Haggard's extraordinary career or contributions to it. It's one sort of story within a much more interesting and complex story and that's what we do.

The binary attempts, which are the products of our computer age and our journalistic age, the attempts to set up or to accentuate a simple, binary conflict don't hold a candle to what he represents or to what art represents. As Wynton Marsalis says in the film, we all have an ethnic heritage, but we have a human heritage that's much more important. Art tells the tale of us coming together, and that's all I'm interested in.

In my *Jazz* series, Wynton said something that's stuck with me for more than twenty-five years. He said: "Some-

times a thing and the opposite of a thing are true at the same time." I mean, that's what art is able to actually understand in a way that our sort of normal day-to-day binary responses can't do.

To me, that's the key to it all. There's the reconciliation. There's the redemption that Roseanne Cash says that her dad Johnny was seeking every night on stage. The ability to hold, as she put it, two contradictory things at once. He could be against the war in Vietnam and go support the troops, right? He could be for this and against whatever. He worked out all of that stuff, as she said, on the stage, which is, I think, a beautiful description of the artist's dilemma—the necessity to hold opposing views without making it the simple good guy, bad guy thing that we do, the binary, the red state–blue state, young-old, rich-poor, gay-straight, male-female, left-right, whatever it is.

CS: So this film ends in 1996 and covers Johnny Cash's death in 2003. You're making films about things that have already happened…

KB: That's what history is.

CS: Of course, but as a filmmaker who's chronicled these really important themes and moments in American history, and stories, you know, are you ever thinking about today? When you look at the political context today, and you look at Donald Trump…

KB: No, not when we're making them. I used to start my stump speech about the Vietnam War film, which came out two years ago (I was promoting it in the summer of 2017, you know where we were then and what we'd been through): "What if I told you I spent ten-and-a-half years—that's how long *Vietnam* took—working on a film about mass demonstrations taking place all across the country against the current administration; about a White House in disarray, obsessed with leaks; about a president who's certain the media was making up stories about him; about huge document drops of stolen, classified material into the public sphere that destabilized the political conversation; about asymmetrical warfare that confounded the mighty might of the U.S. military; and about accusations that a political party reached out to a foreign power during the time of a national election to influence that election?" You would say, you've been making a film about the last year and a half. When in fact, all of those things were true about *Vietnam* when I began the film in December of 2006. We locked the picture, meaning no more editorial changes, in December 2015, a month before the Iowa caucuses out of which Donald Trump was not supposed to emerge.

My business is to keep my head down—it took eight-and-a-half years for *Country Music*, because this is a Russian novel of a story over many generations—but I know I will not be able to convince anyone with regards to the startling feminist, or proto-feminist dimensions to *Country Music* that we didn't do this post–MeToo movement. We were done with this thing by the time the MeToo movement came out. And yet in episode after episode, you have women dealing with groping executives or unhappy marriages, or Loretta Lynn singing, well before anyone in rock or folk did, "don't come home a-drinkin' with lovin' on your mind." Which is a startling thing to say in the mid-sixties.

CS: I guess then, if you want to continue on that logic, the implication is what's going on today—Donald Trump and the Trump administration—is that a continuation of some of the trends we've seen before, like nativism, or is it something new?

KB: Everything is new and everything is also the same. There's nothing new under the sun. There are new manifestations of old things, which have been manifesting in the United States since the very beginning.

It is interesting that this came after Barack Obama. I've dealt with race in almost all my films, and I've been so vilified by critics for creating a race-based lens through which I see things. I don't. I just investigate and race is there. My friends would say, "Will you shut up about race?" When Barack Obama was inaugurated on January 20, 2009, they said, "Now, will you stop talking about race? We're post-racial." And I held up the *Onion* whose headline that day was "Black Man Given Worst Job in Nation." And I said: "Just watch what happens." And to their credit, those friends who were exasperated with me have come back and apologized.

One of the last comments in our *Civil War* series that came out nearly thirty years ago is [the historian] Barbara Fields, who says "the Civil War is still going on, it's still being fought and regrettably, it could still be lost." And that thing went viral when Charlottesville happened. How does an old film with squeaky violins that's supposed to be an apology for the Old South begin with an episode on the reality of slavery and end with Barbara Fields talking about that? If that's not how it always is, and I'm sorry to say, how it probably always will be?

We have greed and we have generosity. They coexist not between people and between eras, but sometimes within the same person. And those kinds of psychological divisions: look at *The Roosevelts* series or look at Hank Williams—"I got a Hot Rod Ford and a two-dollar bill and I know a place right over the hill," from "Hey Good Lookin," some of the greatest haiku poetry ever. About falling in love, he also writes "Hear that lonesome whippoorwill / He sounds too blue to fly / The midnight train is whining low / I'm so lonesome I could cry." I mean, when you take the art of music—which is the only art form that's invisible, as Wynton Marsalis says in this film—and you add it to poetry, the distillation of our language, the purest distillation of language, watch out.

COLE STANGLER *is a Paris-based journalist. A writer and producer at France 24 English, his work has also been published in the* Nation, Jacobin, *the* Guardian, *and the* Atlantic.

RAND RICHARDS COOPER

Different Drums

'Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice' & 'Judy'

Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice documents the career of a singer who burst onto the popular music scene at an early age and remained a dominant figure for decades. Now in her mid-seventies, Ronstadt has Parkinson's disease; she narrates this engaging retrospective, and while her speaking voice sounds upbeat and steady, she can no longer confidently sing, and ceased performing in 2009. The documentary combines footage of her performances over the years with interviews of fellow musicians, including Jackson Browne, Emmylou Harris, Dolly Parton, Bonnie Raitt, Ry Cooder, and Don Henley (who with Glenn Frey played in Ronstadt's backup band before forming the Eagles).

There are big gaps in the story; we learn little about Ronstadt's romantic life, for instance, beyond her already well-chronicled relationship with Jerry Brown. What filmmakers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman have created, as their title suggests, is the biography of a voice, and of a musical sensibility and drive, rooted in family background, that propelled a singularly energetic and varied career. The film begins with Ronstadt's childhood outside Tucson, in a close-knit family of German origin that had lived for a couple of generations in Mexico. It was a music-loving family, and the isolation of life in rural Arizona was relieved by listening to (and singing) all sorts of music, from opera to Mexican ballads to Broadway standards.

In 1964, at the age of eighteen, Ronstadt moved to Los Angeles, where she joined the exploding folk-rock scene (the movie makes an excellent companion piece to *Echo in the Canyon*, featuring many of the same places and faces). With Bobby Kimmel and Kenny Edwards she formed the Stone Poneys, quickly becoming known for her mini-skirted, barefooted performances at The Troubadour and other clubs. In 1967 the group did a cover of the Mike Nesmith song "Different Drum," turning it into a hit on their second album.

COURTESY OF GREENWICH ENTERTAINMENT

Linda Ronstadt in *Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice*

The Poneys originally performed it to a slow-paced, minimal accompaniment that Ronstadt far preferred to the highly orchestrated, up-tempo version the record company released (she was wrong, as she admits fifty years later, with a laugh), and the difference in the two versions nicely glosses the era's transition from folk to rock, the song's mellow folky mournfulness (which echoed the original 1965 rendition by the Greenbriar Boys) transmogrified into pop exuberance.

After "Different Drum," music execs clamored for Ronstadt. Leaving the group to go out on her own, she proceeded to become the first female mega pop star, racking up five platinum records and no fewer than ten Grammys, and was the first singer ever to be No. 1 on country, pop, and R&B lists simultaneously. Though hugely successful, Ronstadt spurned the personal craziness and decadence of the rock-star lifestyle; making music always remained the whole of it. Her brashness as a performer notwithstanding, she was in fact modest, and prone to persistent doubts about her ability as a singer. (Her manager, Peter Asher, recalls that if Ronstadt saw two people in the front row of a concert whispering to one another, she worried they were saying she wasn't good enough.) Yet once she started singing, those doubts disappeared, vaporized by her voice with its vaulting range, its flexible but always recognizable timbre, its intermittent adornments of vibrato, and its ability to imbue a pop lyric with fierce longing. She was the kind of powerful singer who filled the air and commanded the room.

A rewarding turn in Ronstadt's career, and in the movie, comes at the peak of her fame, when she decided to drastically change her tune and explore interests outside the range of pop music—unexpected efforts that followed the lines of her parents' musical passions. She made three albums of songbook standards with Nelson Riddle, the famed bandleader she grew up listening to. She appeared in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* in New York's Shakespeare Festival. And in 1987 she released *Canciones de mi Padre*, a collection of traditional Mexican songs of her childhood, which became the all-time top-selling Spanish-language album in the United States. As Ry Cooder comments, these quixotic undertakings were brave moves for a pop singer to make. "Her career from then on," Cooder observes, "was music companies telling her she couldn't do it, then her doing it anyway, and the music companies jumping on board just as it took off." You have to love Ronstadt's sheer enthusiasm for music. As the singer herself says, many of her choices "didn't fit anywhere but my heart." We even see her singing with the Muppets on *Sesame Street*.

Almost in passing, the film captures a quiet feminism, reminding us that Ronstadt rose to prominence in a male-dominated profession in which casual misogyny and the crass exploitation of women were rampant. Her collaborations with Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris reverberate with shared pride and pleasure in their accomplishment: strong voices, strong women. And comments Ronstadt offered as a young singer—interviewed on the beach in front of her Malibu home by an even younger Cameron Crowe—include penetrating insights into both the strutting misogyny and the heedless self-destruction of the male rock-star persona. In a later scene, asked on a TV talk show about her willingness to perform in apartheid South Africa, she bristles, then launches into a notably astute analysis of the moral shortcomings of other nations, including the United States.

The Ronstadt who emerges from *The Sound of My Voice* is not merely a supreme pop diva, but a fearless experimenter and a passionate lover of music. Though she eventually ran into health trouble (a closing and poignant scene shows a faltering attempt to sing in her living room with a musician nephew), she emerges as one of the least troubled pop stars ever, and confronts her setbacks with settled serenity. The film is worth watching merely for its parade of hits—"You're No Good," "When Will I Be Loved," "Blue Bayou," "Love is a Rose," "It's So Easy," "Heat Wave," "Desperado," "Poor Poor Pitiful Me"—many of which originated with other groups, and several of which I had forgotten. But for me the high point of the film is seeing Ronstadt sing one of her Mexican ballads, performing with a full orchestra, in a wildly kitschy mariachi outfit. As she belts the song out with fierce, delighted passion, nimbly mastering the complicated Spanish lyrics, you realize you are in the presence not only of a supremely gifted singer, but an irrepressible human being.

Near the beginning of *Judy*, famed studio head Louis B. Mayer lays down to a young Judy Garland the iron laws of becoming a film star, coldly detailing the rigors and sacrifices she will have to submit to. Does she imagine she wants to be *normal*, he asks sarcastically, like millions of other Midwestern girls? "You aren't like them," Mayer says, "because you were born with a voice."

And so it is a kind of tease that for the first forty minutes of this film, there is no singing at all; when Garland (Renée Zellweger) finally launches into the thirties jazz standard "By Myself," it comes as an interesting kind of relief. Zellweger does her own singing, and performs creditably. Most of the time she doesn't sound much like Garland at all—more nasal, less powerful, and lacking both the wistful tremolo and that special, inner amplification, almost like a sound half swallowed into the chest, that lent Garland's voice its powerful quality of fantasy. Still, at least twice—in a soft and sadly playful rendition of "Get Happy" at the piano with a gay man she has befriended, and in the closing performance of "Over the Rainbow"—Zellweger finds a chord of likeness, catching a hint of the special throb Garland lent to the songs she sang, and of a voice that James Mason, her co-star in *A Star Is Born*, once said could "wring tears out of hearts of rock."

Based on a play and directed by British theater director Rupert Goold, *Judy*

Renée Zellweger in *Judy*

focuses on a tumultuous five-week singing engagement Garland undertook at London's Talk of the Town nightclub in early 1969, in a desperate attempt to revive her career and dig herself out of chronic debt. Goold adds flashbacks to Garland's experiences as a child star, which seem to have consisted mostly in being bullied by Mayer (he once referred to her as "my little hunchback"), fielding relentless pressure about her looks and weight, and being force-fed diet pills and barbiturates by a Nurse Ratchet–like minder. Garland's adult life was a dreary tapestry of substance abuse, alcoholism, multiple marriages, suicide attempts, repeated stays in treatment facilities, and drunken appearances onstage before heckling audiences. She became an avatar of the dangers of child fame, and *Judy* seems determined that we grasp the cause-and-effect of damage. This is the kind of film where a scene with a child being treated harshly segues to the adult, decades later, popping pills. Get it?

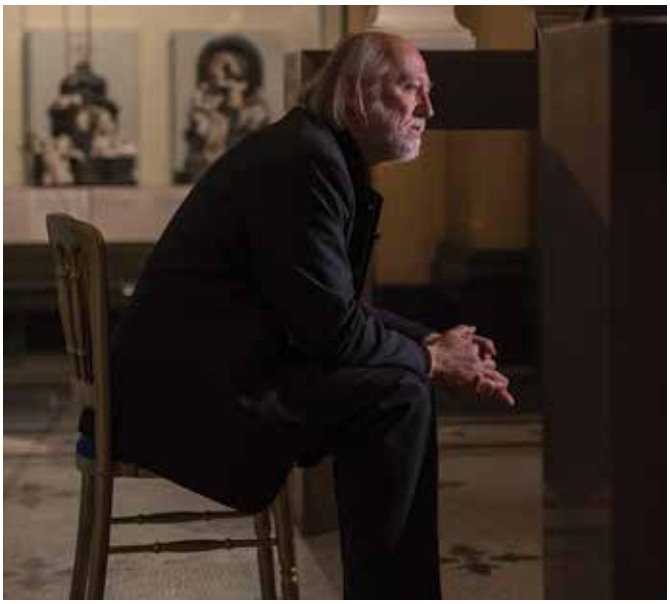
However obvious, the film is nonetheless moving, and Zellweger's performance conveys the toll of punishingly sleepless nights; we see the herky-jerky tics of a person harrowed and even addled by life traumas and the drugs and alcohol taken to medicate against them. Though the arc of *Judy* moves toward pity and sentimentality (in one scene, when Garland is unable to continue a song, the audience joins in to help), it nonetheless delivers an authentic ache of psychic pain, and includes some touching moments, especially when Garland spends an impromptu evening with two fans, a gay male couple who worship her. The couple has faced legal persecution for obscenity, and the scene gently depicts the way they and Judy find consolation in each other's company (even as it documents the appeal Garland has held for gay men).

Garland died just a few months after her London engagement ended. She was only forty-seven. In a eulogy at her funeral, *Wizard of Oz* co-star Ray Bolger observed that "she just plain wore out." One can't help noting the contrast with Linda Ronstadt, a person who, no matter what befalls her, seems as if she'll *never* wear out. Taken together, these two films about supremely gifted singers explore how fate deals out both the plot of one's life and the temperament with which we negotiate it. They also testify to the incalculable value of a happy childhood. Possessing one, Ronstadt in midlife ventured forth exuberantly to recapture the music of her youth, attaining a wholeness that confers serenity amid the travails of illness. Lacking one, Garland suffered endless calamity even amid success, sabotaging the promise of her youth in a desperate attempt to escape it.

RAND RICHARDS COOPER *is a contributing editor to* Commonweal.

The Way Life Comes at Us

PAUL J. GRIFFITHS



WENN RIGHTS LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

László Krasznahorkai is a Hungarian writer born in 1954. His first novel, *Satantango*, published in 1985, established his reputation as a novelist with a uniquely idiosyncratic voice, a melancholic passion for sin and the apocalypse, and a compassionate interest in the minute details of both the human and the nonhuman world. He began to be translated into English in the late 1990s, and since then has received many prizes and awards, including, in 2015, the Man Booker International Prize. *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming* is his latest novel, and Krasznahorkai has said it's his last. First published in Hungarian in 2016, it is the end of a cycle that began with *Satantango* and includes *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989) and *War and War* (1999). These four, Krasznahorkai says, constitute his one book. He's written many others, in many genres; but these four are the things to read first if you want to know him, feel him—and it does feel like something to read him: you know at once who it is you're reading, and if you read enough of him the world you live in will begin to seem like the one he writes about, in rather the same way that once you've read *Bleak House* every fog participates in that novel's fogs. Each of these four books, however, can be read independently, and there's a case to be made for starting with this latest one: it's arguably the best.

The exile returns, bringing trouble. That's one of the basic literary plots, and among the oldest, with Homer's *Odyssey* as the paradigm for the West. *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming* is a distinguished and fascinating instance. Except that it's not one exile but two, the hometown to which they return isn't merely troubled but destroyed, and it's never entirely clear what their return has to do with the trouble. Are they its cause? Does it pursue them? Or has it nothing to do with them, occurring upon their return by happenstance, the town—and the world—gathering momentum toward their end?

BARON WENCKHEIM'S HOMECOMING

LÁSZLÓ KRASZNAHORKAI
TRANSLATED BY
OTTILIE MULZET
New Directions, $29.95,
576 pp.

László Krasznahorkai at the Victoria & Albert Museum, 2015

The exiles are troubled men. The first is the Professor, never named, as many of the characters aren't. He's spent his life studying moss, and has become famous for it. But he's become disillusioned with his fame and his career, turned his resources into cash, abandoned all the appurtenances of academic life, and come home to live alone in a jerry-built shack at the edge of town, constructed on wasteland largely out of abandoned piles of something called, delightfully, Hungarocell—a kind of styrofoam, it seems, or perhaps sheetrock. He hopes to see no one (he worries about windows and would prefer his shack without them) and think nothing (he practices "thought-immunization"). None of it works out.

The second is the Baron, who is given a name: he's the Wenckheim of the title, with Béla as his first name. He belongs to the Hungarian branch of an Austrian aristocratic family, and has lived in Buenos Aires for most of his life, idling and gambling, amassing, in the end, such vast debts that imprisonment or worse threatens. His family, after deliberation, pays his debts on condition that he return to Hungary, live a quiet life, give up gambling, and provide the family no more bad publicity. He agrees to this, or at least he does it—he says little, seeming as concerned to immunize himself from speech as the Professor is to immunize himself from thought. His wealthy and shadowy family buy him new clothes, custom-tailored from Savile Row, give him some traveling money, and send him to his hometown, where, it seems, he intends to find a lost love from his adolescence who still lives there.

The town the exiles return to isn't

named in the book but is presumably based on Gyula, close to the border between Hungary and Romania. That's where Krasznahorkai is from. The town is said in the book to be between Sarkad and Békéscsaba on the railway, which is also true of Gyula. It's a medium-sized town, big enough for a TV station and a hospital and a newspaper, but nothing like a metropolis. It's described in circumstantial detail with street names and building names and detailed depictions of how to get from one place to another, with times and distances.

Its likeness to the actual Gyula is beyond my competence to assess, and that isn't, in any case, important for the book. It's a town of the mythic imagination as much as a real place in Viktor Orbán's Hungary. It's bleak: nothing works well, the trains haven't run on time for a while, gasoline and diesel are hard to get, there are beggars on the streets, the weather is bad, there's not enough money for repairs of public facilities, local politics is corrupt, and so on. And it's a place parochial enough to offer the returning Professor honorary citizenship, and to welcome the returning Baron as a savior because the locals have the wrong idea that his return means an injection of capital into the town—he'll build hotels and schools, they think, when in fact he has only a few hundred euros to his name.

The damage caused by the exiles' return begins with small, local events. The Professor's abandoned adult daughter confronts him; a motorcycle gang gets involved; there's shooting and murder and flight. The Baron's civic welcome goes badly wrong; the reunion with the lost love goes worse (he at first doesn't recognize her, thinking she'll look as she did when she was twenty); he finds the town the same in externals and yet disturbingly not the same; and much accidental and deliberate violence ensues. Things escalate quickly. What's set in motion by, or at least accompanies, the exiles' return ends in apocalypse: things fall apart, and the town—perhaps also the world—is consumed by fire. By the end, almost everyone is dead and almost everything destroyed.

That sounds grim, and it is. But Krasznahorkai's apocalypse is also funny. Among its culminating events is the invasion of the town by a fleet of fuel trucks that give no fuel: they occupy every street and then, as suddenly as they came, they're gone. It's surrealistically absurd, as is a good deal of the book. Krasznahorkai effectively holds together comedy and tragedy in a way that the zombie apocalypses so beloved of contemporary American literature and television and film don't attempt. His apocalypse is serious and tragic, yes, but also absurd and funny, which makes it all the more horrifying. His apocalypse, in this and in earlier novels, is appropriate to creatures like us, who are also absurd and yet capable of tragedy. It isn't something that merely happens to us; it's the proper culmination of what we are. Krasznahorkai's world falls apart along man-made fault lines.

Krasznahorkai has always been flamboyant in matters of literary technique, and that's still true here. This book opens with a warning, not to readers but to the book's characters, that they'd better do what they've no choice but to do, which is follow the score their impresario has provided for them. The impresario doesn't even need to be saying this, he acknowledges, because he already knows everything, which includes everything the players might say or do. But, nevertheless, the players must tell him, and only him, everything. This demand, coupled with the claim to omniscience, might make him seem like the almighty, but he says he isn't—no, he's the impresario, and he's contracted them for this one performance, with no joy and no solace for him or any of them. He is only waiting for it to be over, and five hundred or so pages later it is. This nine-page warning isn't exactly part of the book's text; it comes before the table of contents, and even before the title and copyright page. But the conceit of the musical impresario doesn't end with the warning: the chapter titles all begin with a meaningless syllable or syllables that together make something like a tune: "TRRR… TRUM…DUM…RUM…"—and so on, until we're told "*da capo al fine*": from the beginning to the end. The book's last seven pages are headed "Sheet Music Library" and contain a list not just of the *dramatis personae* but also of what one might call the *dramatis res*—the things of importance for the story, as well as the people.

One could read all this to mean that the author-of-this-text, László Krasznahorkai, is the warning's impresario, and the people and things of the story of course dance to his tune because that's the only tune there is or can be in the book. Or perhaps the framing device is meant to prompt the reader to think deeply about the extent of human freedom. Or perhaps it's just an overflow of Krasznahorkai's energy, of which he seems to have plenty, that found its way onto the page and stayed there because, for him, everything does. (In this respect, Krasznahorkai is like Melville, who is among his exemplars, as is evident in his hard-to-classify 2017 book *The Manhattan Project*.) This is the reading I prefer, perhaps because it's a way of not having to think too much about what strikes me as an annoying efflorescence of technique such as John Barth or John Fowles might have been proud of in 1979, but which is surely passé by now. In any case, the book works perfectly well without these excrescences, and would have been better without them. But I'll return to the sheet-music library, which may encapsulate something of importance to the book.

The glory of Krasznahorkai's writing doesn't lie in plot or metafictional games. It's in the sentences, which are long, always hundreds of words and sometimes a thousand or two, rhythmically mesmerizing once you get used to them, and capable, mysteriously, of depicting character, place, and event in something very much like the way that life happens—not linearly but rather as a flood, excessive in every way until constrained and narrativized. Novels typically do the constraining with

short sentences (Hemingway, Greene): they atomize and then connect, performing the literary magic of breaking complex wholes without obvious joints into sharply delineated events that seem incapable of further dissection, and then stringing these beads together on a plot-thread that forces the reader to follow it. Not Krasznahorkai. His sentences begin in the middle of some stream of events, and show you that stream gathering force, eddying, swirling, hitting a rapid, overspilling the banks, and then calming into a reflective pool with hungry fish eyeing you from the depths. As I read, I usually had no sense of where a sentence was headed even hundreds of words into it. I wanted to read more, not with the desire to find the next bead on the string but rather with the anxiety and exhilaration of a barely competent rider clinging to a galloping horse, not knowing whether the next turn brings a ditch or a tranquil, jonquil-studded plain. That is like being alive.

The effect is wonderful and troubling and technically dazzling. There have been adepts of the long sentence before Krasznahorkai, certainly. I think of the Portuguese writer José Saramago and the Spanish writer Javier Marías, for example. But they are more delicate and mannered than Krasznahorkai, as well as less musical. He is often brutal and discordant (I thought of Shostakovich's symphonies as I read), and always ambitious to show everything there is to be seen in the radically excessive and often incoherent lives by which we're all inundated. And perhaps it's that ambition that lies at Krasznahorkai's heart: he's after everything—life as lived—and he needs a literary instrument that will permit him to show it. Hence the sentences that are excessive in the same way as the life that comes to us. Krasznahorkai alchemically transmutes what we are into prose. He exemplifies David Foster Wallace's dictum that fiction's about what it is to be a fucking human being. Again, it's Melville who comes to mind as the best analogue—the Melville of *Moby-Dick* and "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and *Billy Budd*, at least: he too was in the transmutation game, and with the same level of ambition.

But the sentence isn't Krasznahorkai's only instrument. There's also what he does with points of view. There are dozens of these: the Baron and the Professor of course, but also the Professor's daughter, the motorcycle-gang leader who's at first his friend and then his foe, the Baron's family, his old flame, the town's mayor and police chief and librarian…and very many more minor characters. The world is shown as it shows itself to each of them, in long, musical sentences in which direct, reported, and free indirect speech are stirred together and spiced with internal monologue and thickly circumstantial descriptions of action and place. The boundaries among these different kinds of prose aren't marked or separated. They flow seamlessly into and out of one another. But the shifts from one point of view to another are sudden and vertiginous. At one moment you're living the world as the Professor or the librarian, and the next, with no indication other than a paragraph-break and what the words of the new sentence carry, you're living it as Marika or the mayor. It's a cinematic technique. The camera moves down the street, behind the eyes and in the mind of a character, and then, suddenly, it's moving in a different direction, inside someone else. When a shift occurs, it can be a few sentences before you realize whose point of view you're with now. The indications are always there, and they're always enough, but they're never of the editorial-explicit kind. There's no "and then the Baron thought" or "and so it seemed to the Leader," and the transitions are never flagged. You were there, and now you're somewhere and someone else. This demands something of the reader: attention, mostly. It's an effort I was happy and, after a few pages, eager to make.

Krasznahorkai is at once a compassionate and merciless writer. His people are, variously, violent, stupid, ignorant, manipulative, angry, mendacious, and envious. They are also eager, puzzled, loving, regretful, frightened, hopeful, and intimate with the nonhuman world in which they find themselves. In short, they are human beings, and it's a great strength of Krasznahorkai's work that he doesn't use his characters to give readers moral lessons. No: he shows them to you. And I suspect he loves his Baron, as well as the man with the prosthetic leg in the espresso bar, Marika as the obscure object of desire with her own occluded hopes, the woman who photographs children, and all the objects and artifacts (especially the trains: trains are an important part of this book) of the town. And yet Krasznahorkai kills almost all of them in an apocalyptic conflagration. That too, of course, is life. Pascal's aphorism, that the last act is bloody no matter how fine the play, could serve as an epigraph for Krasznahorkai's work—though Krasznahorkai extends it to the nonhuman, animate and inanimate, as well. The saving grace, if there is one, of the annoying framing device—the impresario with his score and materials—is that the sheet-music library at the book's end, in which the impresario's materials are listed, mentions more nonhumans than humans: plastic bags, the cooled-off ashes in the ditch in the Thorn Bush, the willow trees on the banks of the River Körös, and so on. This is a world, a world made by us and given to us, one that exceeds any pragmatic needs or purposes. To read Krasznahorkai is to be shown the world with us in it, as we are.

Krasznahorkai has been quoted as saying, "An artist has only one task—to continue a ritual. And ritual is a pure technique." From a Catholic point of view, this makes writing a liturgical act, and reading too. *Baron Wenckheim* is high liturgy, beautiful technique, in which I'm grateful to have participated as a reader. And *Baron*, like liturgy, is a loop whose end is its beginning: *Da capo, al fine*.

PAUL J. GRIFFITHS, *a longtime contributor to* Commonweal, *is the author of several books, including* Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar, *and, most recently,* Christian Flesh *(Stanford University Press)*.

From Squeeze to Stranglehold

JOSEPH A. MCCARTIN

No writer is better equipped than Steven Greenhouse to assess how both American workers and the American labor movement are doing in the early twenty-first century. For more than twenty years, he criss-crossed the nation, covering workers and unions for the *New York Times*, proving himself a worthy successor to A. H. Raskin and William Serrin, who set the standard for labor journalism in their times. Like those predecessors, Greenhouse reported on union politics, organizing campaigns, conventions, and picket lines. But he also ventured beyond the conventional confines of his beat to chronicle the travails of everyday workers, from office cubicles to factory farms, from warehouses to slaughterhouses, describing the creative new forms of worker organizing he encountered outside traditional unions.

Freed from the quotidian demands of beat coverage by a retirement buyout, Greenhouse has spent the past five years freelancing important labor stories and stepping back to write his new book, *Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor*. He opens with a string of disturbing vignettes that illustrate workers' current struggles, including rampant wage and hour violations, deteriorating workplace-safety enforcement, unpredictable scheduling practices, stagnant wages, retirement insecurity, lack of paid sick or vacation days, and abusive management. These are not the kinds of stories we should expect to read with unemployment at a fifty-year low, yet they're all too common in an economy in which power has shifted decisively toward employers and inequality continues to grow. They make clear that, as Greenhouse puts it, "something is fundamentally broken in the way many American employers treat their workers."

Beaten Down, Worked Up can be seen as a sequel to Greenhouse's 2008 book, *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker*. In that previous effort, he chronicled the rise of "lean and mean" management, the proliferation of outsourcing, the uncertainty that globalization has wrought on working-class lives, and the crumbling anachronism that is U.S. labor law. It all amounted to a prescient warning about the unsustainable erosion of the structures that gave security to workers' lives. "Workers' concerns have retreated from the nation's consciousness," he cautioned, and "if we don't address those concerns, we do so at the workers' peril—and our own."

BEATEN DOWN, WORKED UP
The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor

STEVEN GREENHOUSE
Knopf, $27.95, 416 pp.

Much has changed for the worse for U.S. workers since Greenhouse sent *The Big Squeeze* to press. Six months after it was published, financial markets that had relied on over-leveraged workers to continue buying homes and consuming goods suddenly collapsed, plunging the nation into the Great Recession. The iPhone was just hitting the market then, and neither Uber nor the concept of the "platform economy" yet existed. Amazon was still primarily a money-losing bookseller. Union activists still hoped that Change to Win (CtW), the labor federation founded after the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and allied unions broke away from the AFL-CIO in 2005, would jump-start new organizing efforts at large employers like Walmart. And many believed that the election of a Democratic president in 2008 would clear the way for the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), making it easier to join unions.

Beaten Down, Worked Up takes account of the way the "squeeze" Greenhouse described has turned into something closer to a stranglehold over the past decade. Scott Walker won the Wisconsin governorship in 2010 and promptly signed legislation stripping most of his state's public employees of the right to bargain, ushering in an era of GOP assaults on public-sector unions. The gig economy transformed the way millions work. And unions now confront both a Supreme Court especially hostile to worker rights and a Labor Department run by a Scalia. Influenced by such developments, Greenhouse now takes a harder line on management than he did in *The Big Squeeze*. In 2008, he counseled unions to "relinquish the view that the employer is always wrong whenever it wants to cut costs or expand a worker's responsibilities," and urged them to "cooperate (wisely) with management to help ensure that survival of

the corporate operations and union members' jobs." It's understandable that such advice is absent from Greenhouse's new book. Recent years have shown that even when unions accede to cost-cutting, they get little in return, as the example of General Motors shows. After spending more than $10 billion on recent stock buybacks that enriched shareholders (and executives), GM shuttered three plants and precipitated a prolonged strike by claiming it could not afford to eliminate a two-tier wage it had forced on the United Auto Workers during the Great Recession. Tellingly, rather than calling for labor-management cooperation, this book closes with a chapter outlining "How Workers Can Regain Their Power."

If Greenhouse is less inclined to trust employers' good faith, he is also less sweeping in his prescriptions for labor. In *The Big Squeeze*, he urged bold movement-wide action, calling for the AFL-CIO and CtW to require their constituent unions to spend at least 25 percent of their budgets on organizing new workers or face expulsion from their respective labor federation. In *Beaten Down, Worked Up*, he eschews such movement-wide remedies to highlight hopeful initiatives such as SEIU's Fight for $15, which has raised wages for millions of low-wage workers, and the #RedforEd movement, whose rank-and-file teachers often challenged their cautious union leaders. He also celebrates creative organizing models that have emerged outside the union movement, such as the Florida-based Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which has won significant improvements for tomato pickers, or Coworker.org, an online petition platform through which workers have pressured employers to address workplace grievances without the benefit of a union.

Greenhouse knows the obstacles to bold experimentation that unions face. Having covered the labor movement for decades, he is attentive to one of its age-old paradoxes: "Many union officials have little incentive to organize." Organizing is expensive under a legal system that advantages management at every turn, and union leaders tend to be more responsive to the needs of the dues-paying members who elect them than to the hopes of yet-to-be-organized workers. Shifting money from servicing members' contracts to organizing new members can be politically risky for union leaders. Consider SEIU's Fight for $15. While it has helped shape the national conversation and raised the pay of millions (at the cost of millions of dollars in dues money), it has yet to unionize a single fast-food establishment. A union president less determined to defend the working poor than Mary Kay Henry—who credits Catholic social teaching as one of her inspirations—would likely never have carried on that fight so long. Even so, SEIU has been forced to cut back the resources it devotes to the campaign.

Amid so many challenges, Greenhouse takes care to underscore another significant initiative that has emerged within the traditional union movement: the efforts of public-sector workers—especially teachers—to reframe union struggles as fights to advance the common good. He singles out the pioneering work of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers under its former president Mary Cathryn Ricker, who now serves as Minnesota's commissioner of education. As they grappled with recession-induced austerity in 2009, Ricker and her colleagues began building alliances with parents in an effort to improve St. Paul's schools, and in subsequent years increasingly involved community allies in determining the priorities of the union's bargaining campaigns. Chicago teachers took that same approach in an attention-grabbing 2012 strike that demanded "The Schools Chicago's Children Deserve." Both the #RedforEd walkouts of 2018 and the 2019 Los Angeles teachers' strike followed similar strategies. In all these cases, unions fought not only for their members, but for the preservation and improvement of the public institutions in which they worked. They chal-

Arizona teacher's strike, April 26, 2018

lenged austerity politics, tax giveaways, privatization, and even the corporate forces making it harder for private-sector workers to make a living. As part of their contract negotiations, St. Paul teachers demanded their school district cease doing business with banks that would foreclose on homes, a significant cause of students being displaced during the school year. In 2014, a number of these union pioneers and their community allies convened at Georgetown University and formed a network called Bargaining for the Common Good, which continues to grow.

As both the Fight for $15 and the struggles of public-sector workers illustrate, all efforts to improve the lot of workers, challenge corporate dominance, or arrest growing inequality must inevitably confront the realm of politics and public policy. That lesson is reinforced by *Beaten Down, Worked Up*'s historical chapters.

To give labor's current troubles context, Greenhouse revisits the early twentieth century, when conditions in many ways resembled those we confront today: a weakened and marginalized labor movement excluded from the fastest growing parts of the economy; political parties hostage to corporate interests; courts biased against workers' self-organization and collective action; and raging inequality. He follows the rise of the labor movement from the militant strikes of Lower East Side garment workers, to the creation of the industrial unions of the 1930s, to the organization of sanitation workers and other civil servants in the 1960s. He also limns labor's decline, from the disastrous 1981 air traffic controllers' strike to *Janus v. AFSCME*, the 2018 Supreme Court decision that struck a blow at public-sector union finances. Tracing the long arc of labor history allows him to center the decisive role that politics and public policy have played in determining both the success of organizing efforts and the quality of workers' lives.

Greenhouse's recognition of the determinative power of political institutions over workers' lives shapes his conclusion. While he closes with a long list of possible mechanisms for restoring workers' power, including laws allowing for sectoral bargaining and wage-setting boards, he notes that none of these is possible without reviving a truly democratic politics. "If we hope to create a more favorable environment for workers," he writes, we "will first need to overhaul our campaign finance system." The labor movement, in turn, must become "an outspoken leader in the fight for true democracy."

These words hark back to the early twentieth century, when the labor movement shrewdly framed its cause as a fight for "industrial democracy." Political democracy could not be preserved or extended in an economy dominated by powerful corporations, unionists rightly argued at the time, unless workers won some measure of democracy in the workplace. Sure enough, when millions did win a degree of industrial democracy through the Wagner Act and union contracts, political democracy also expanded. It is no coincidence that the diminution of workers' voice in their workplaces has been accompanied by an erosion of the quality of our democracy itself.

Today's workers face steep challenges to gaining a greater democratic voice, both at work and in politics. The economy has been reshaped by global competition and the emergence of mammoth new monopolies, and the power to determine working conditions has often migrated away from direct employers and become lodged in financial markets and diffuse supply chains; indeed, the very categories of "employer" and "employee" are becoming contested. It is increasingly clear that unions and their allies need to adapt collective bargaining to these current realities if workers are to gain a democratic voice over their working conditions. *Beaten Down, Worked Up* is a timely reminder that the very future of American democracy depends in significant measure on whether or not that project succeeds.

JOSEPH A. MCCARTIN *is Executive Director of the Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor at Georgetown University, where he teaches history. His most recent book is* Labor in America: A History *(Wiley) co-written with Melvyn Dubofsky.*

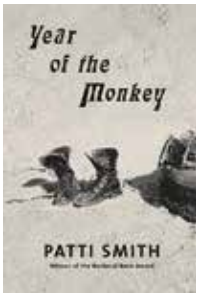
She Can Do Anything

SHARON MESMER

2016 was a fabulous year.

I'm using "fabulous" in the archaic sense of "known through fable." *Fabula*, the Latinate root, suggests the storied situations, monsters, magical animals, and objects of folklore. Often, in fables, someone puts a curse on someone else, and the one who lifts the curse is the one who can spy the treasure in detritus, the boon in rough-hewn, hidden things. In *Year of the Monkey*, Patti Smith—poet, award-winning memoirist, rock icon—is that curse-lifter, the boon-provider, descrying a sea of possibilities in 2016's bellicose actors, its swift and seemingly irrevocable changes.

The book unfolds over the course of twelve months like a long, chaptered prose poem. Its main touchstone—there are a few—is the death, on July 26, 2016, of Smith's friend of four decades, Sandy Pearlman. Pearlman was, among many things, the founder, manager, co-producer, and songwriter of the band Blue Öyster Cult, as well as an early influence on Smith. When *Year of the Monkey* opens, on January 1, 2016, Smith is staying at the Dream Motel in Santa Cruz, desperate for a coffee that never materializes (coffee is another touchstone, as is the Dream Motel's sign which, per fabulist mode, speaks to her throughout the book). Her band had played a run of shows at the Fillmore in San Francisco, culminating with a New Year's Eve concert. Pearlman was supposed to meet her there, then return with her to Santa Cruz. But on New Year's Day, two days after her sixty-ninth birthday, Smith and another longtime confrere Lenny Kaye find themselves in Pearlman's Marin County hospital room, where he was taken after having a cerebral hemorrhage on the eve of their first show.



YEAR OF THE MONKEY

PATTI SMITH

Knopf, $24.95, 192 pp.

Pearlman's absence and eventual departure is not the only loss Smith meditates upon. Their friendship connects her to former paramour Sam Shepard who, in 2016, was already suffering the amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) that would take his life on July 27 the following year:

> [Pearlman's] suggestion that I should front a rock band seemed pretty far-fetched. At the time, I was seeing Sam Shepard and I told him what Sandy had said. He didn't find it extreme at all. He looked me in the eye and told me I could do anything. We were all young then, and that was the general idea. That we could do anything.

That "anything" has been a motif in Smith's work from her earliest verse collections (*Seventh Heaven*, in 1972, and *Wītt*, in 1973), through her song lyrics to her memoirs. Her imagination has never brooked limitation. Contained in her poems are multitudes and wonders: a glass box in which a boy holds a storm captive, a little girl with a desert in her cheek, Jeanne d'Arc fantasizing about sex with her captors, the "last metallic moments" of the TV show *Dragnet*, the Queen of Sheba's daughter bathing with a leper. In *Year of the Monkey*, even as life becomes more attenuated by death and uncertainty, there is still hope, sourced in imagination. In the epilogue, Smith writes:

> A lot of rough things happened, begetting things even more terrible…. [T]he ravaging of Puerto Rico. The massacre of schoolchildren. The disparaging words and actions against our immigrants…. Sam is dead. My brother is dead. My mother is dead. My father is dead. My husband is dead….Yet I still keep thinking that something wonderful is about to happen.

That kind of hope has always come from Smith's unwavering faith—expressed in all her work—in the power of art to teach and heal, to give value to suffering. In the chapter "The Mystic Lamb," Smith tells of traveling, just after her seventieth birthday, to visit Shepard in a town near Santa Ana, car-

rying with her a small, illustrated book on the Ghent Altarpiece:

> The magnificent polyptych was painted on oak in the fifteenth century by the Flemish brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck. The whole of the altarpiece was committed with such supple eloquence that it was venerated by all who beheld it and believed by many to be a conduit to the Holy Spirit.... Once I touched the surface of the exterior panel and was filled with awe, not in the religious sense, but for the artists who realized it, sensing their turbulent spirits and their majestic concentrative calm.

For Smith, turbulence of spirit is the mark of a great artist. It is also related to hope and faith because, ultimately, it leads to charity, the ability to join one's suffering with that of others to communicate value, to provide the boon. In the chapter "The Holy See," which begins with the Day of the Dead and takes us through the election to Christmas and the author's seventieth birthday on December 31, Smith drops in the incredible statement, "Our quiet rage gives us wings, the possibility to negotiate the gears winding backwards, uniting all time." Reading that, I was reminded that Smith has always known the artus point where darkness becomes light. In "Sister Morphine," which appeared in her 1978 poetry collection *Babel*, she wrote:

> only by dwelling in the pit can you create
> to be delivered is to be raised.
> the creator is delivered
> determined he rises
> thus it is that pain gives man wings

And in "Babelogue," from her album *Easter*: "Those who have suffered understand suffering and thereby extend their hand."

While *Year of the Monkey* advances chronologically, with time stamps ("Back home, in the center of February..." or "On the first day of spring I shook out the featherbed..."), *kairos* time always gently interpolates *chronos*. In "A Circle of Quiet," the second volume of *The Crosswicks Journals*, Madeleine l'Engle reminds us that "the Greeks were

wiser than we are. They had two words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. *Kairos* is not measurable. *Kairos* is ontological. In *kairos* we are, we are fully in *isness*..."

Every moment in *Year of the Monkey* is *kairos*. Smith observes, "Marcus Aurelius asks us to note the passing of time with open eyes." This, for me, is the underpinning of her year-long reportage: to act in accordance with her own imperative, to "submit and observe and take notice" (also from "Sister Morphine"). It's what poets have always done best.

There's a Russian fable called "The Tale of the Little Goat Shedding On One Side." A peasant takes pity on a mangy goat and sets it up in his shed. The ungrateful (but magical) animal runs from the shed to the house and locks everybody out. The peasant's pet rabbit inveigles a rooster and a wolf to force the goat to unlock the door, but the goat refuses each, bellowing, "If I come out, I'll break all your ribs." A bee volunteers to fly in through a window and sting the goat. The ruminant finally runs out, the rabbit enters, eats, drinks, and lies down to sleep. "And when he awakens," the fable concludes, in the black-humorous fashion of Russian folk stories, "the real tale will begin."

I have the uncomfortable feeling that the real tale has only just begun. If something still more fabulous lies ahead, Smith is the guide—the artist, the boon-provider—we'll need.

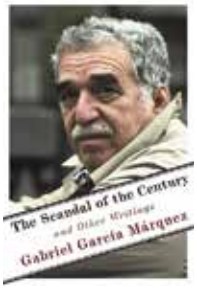
SHARON MESMER's *essays and interviews have appeared in the* New York Times, New York Magazine/The Cut, *and the* Paris Review. *Her most recent poetry collection is* Greetings from My Girlie Leisure Place *(Bloof Books). She teaches creative writing at New York University and the New School.*

Unmagical Realism

CATHERINE ADDINGTON

Describing the impossibility of inventing a dictator whose cruel quirks could outdo twentieth-century precedent, Gabriel García Márquez simply shrugged: "Latin American and Caribbean writers have to admit, hands on hearts, that reality is a better writer than we are." In that same 1981 column for the Spanish newspaper *El País*, he also framed the aesthetic of magical realism for which he is so famous as an accommodation to literary tastes trained on Europe, unprepared for the "disproportionate reality" of Latin America. Someone who thinks the Danube is long cannot imagine the enormity of the Amazon, he figured, and someone who thinks a "storm" means rain and thunder cannot imagine the full force of a hurricane. Literature is not for augmenting reality, then, but imitating it—which occasionally requires exaggeration.

This column, "Something Else on Literature and Reality," is one of many of García Márquez's musings on life and literature found in a recent anthology focused on his nonfiction, *The Scandal of the Century and Other Writings*. Selected by García Márquez's former editor, Cristóbal Pera, and translated in witty, rhythmic prose by Anne McLean, the collection's fifty pieces range from his early gig as a humor columnist in 1950 to the height of his literary career in 1984. Drawing exclusively from work that García Márquez published in periodicals, the book surveys an eclectic mix of genres, including investigative journalism, opinion pieces, literary commentary, and even a few stray short stories. Pera explains that he chose texts that "contain a latent narrative tension between journalism and literature" in order to "provide readers of his fiction a sample of his writings for the newspapers and magazines for whom he worked a great part of his life." The relationship between journalism and fiction was a symbiotic one for García Márquez: he may have seen his journalism as an apprenticeship for his fiction, but he also used his literary fame to fund the journalistic enterprises that occupied the final stage of his career. From the limited-run zine he ran as a twenty-four-year-old (*Comprimido*, or "Cheat Sheet") to the leftist biweekly magazine he cofounded (*Alternativa*) to the pro-democracy monthly he saved from bankruptcy with his Nobel Prize money (*El Cambio*), García Márquez had a lifelong commitment to supporting a free press that ultimately culminated in his creation of a foundation for emerging Latin American journalists in 1994. His role as a publisher and editor was so important to him that, as he famously said, "I do not want to be remembered for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, nor for the Nobel Prize, but for the newspapers."

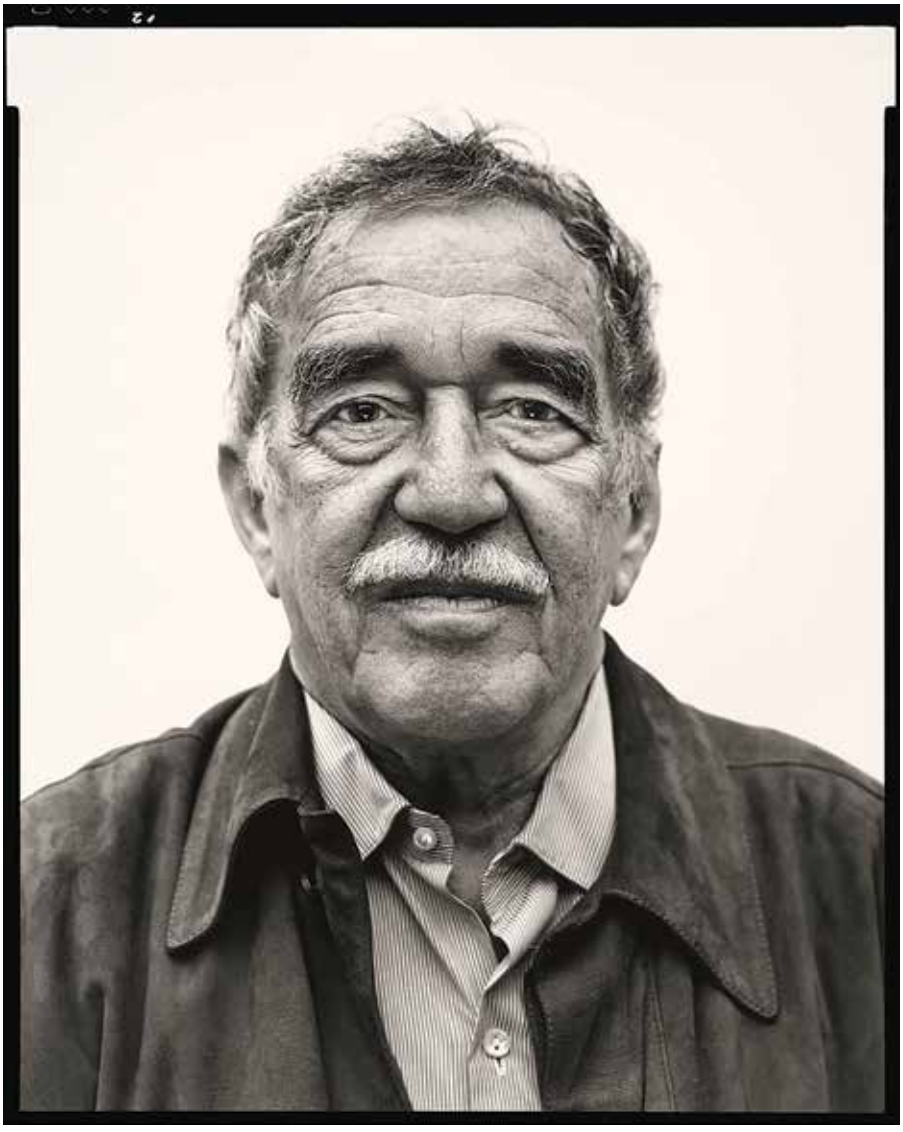


THE SCANDAL OF THE CENTURY AND OTHER WRITINGS

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ, TRANSLATED BY ANNE MCLEAN, EDITED BY CRISTÓBAL PERA
Knopf, $27.95, 336 pp.

Perhaps fortunately for García Márquez, the unflattering portrait painted by the literary commentary included in the anthology will make readers want to stick to his great novel. While two lovely fragments from the universe of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* first published in newspapers are included ("A Man Arrives in the Rain" and "The House of the Buendías"), neither provides substantial insight into his writing process. Instead, the collection dwells on his catalogue of literary influences, from *Moby-Dick* and *Oedipus Rex* to Faulkner and Hemingway, which is mainly interesting as proof that one cannot trust an author to analyze his own writing. The qualities he praises in others—tight plot structure, economy of expression—are the polar opposite of his own meandering, labyrinthine works. From there, his musings on literature devolve into the predictable rants of mid-century male literary genius: he jeers at "the interpretative mania" taking place in classrooms across the globe where his work is now being taught, which "eventually ends up being a new form of fiction." He asserts that each era "does not have as many essential books as teachers who enjoy terrorizing their pupils claim, and you can speak of all of them in a single afternoon." Surprisingly gratified by the appearance of fabricated quotes and forged autographs that lessened his publicity workload, he nonetheless complains that his alter ego "is the one who enjoys the fame, but I am the one who gets screwed by living it." And wondering why he puts himself through it all, he demurs, "You're a writer in the very same way you might be Jewish or black." Hand on heart, reality has provided a better stereotype of successful male authorship here than any satirist might.

García Márquez's fatal flaw, as ever, is his abundant male chauvinism. In his fiction, it's pervasive and inescapable: inert matriarchs, enchanting prostitutes, and young girls constantly raped, killed, or killing themselves, rarely shown in



possession of any interior life. In his nonfiction, it's simply crass. Amused by the friendly rivalry between Venezuelan and Cuban student revolutionaries in the late 1950s, he laughs at the "triumphalist package" of women's underpants they exchanged in the mail, figuring military triumph as sexual domination. Later, disappointed with "the commercial rigor of the Europeans" in the sex trade, he reminisces about Caribbean brothels, full of "lovely untamed mulatas who sold themselves more for the fiesta than for the money." Most unapologetically, in 1982 he published "Sleeping Beauty on the Airplane," a column nominally about Japanese literature that nevertheless mainly entailed fantasizing about a stranger who sat next to him on a recent flight. Minutely describing the woman's "aura of oriental antiquity," he informs the reader that he has "always believed that there is nothing more beautiful in nature than a beautiful woman." Seeing the "plain band on her left hand," he consoles himself with her youth, assuming "that it wasn't a wedding ring but just that of a happy and ephemeral engagement." This goes on for paragraphs before he makes a tenuous connection to Yasunari Kawabata's 1961 novella *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, thus justifying the inches of newspaper he devoted to documenting his lust. García Márquez was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature the following month.

For those who can persevere through these disappointing insights into García Márquez the literary figure, the anthology soars when it shows off his portfolio of actual journalism, which peaks with his work in his late twenties at the Bogotá daily *El Espectador*. In a playful profile of Colombia's office of unclaimed letters (or, as he calls it, "the cemetery of lost letters"), he solemnly interviews the only three people in the country with legal authorization to open others' correspondence, and documents the curiosities in the archive of unclaimed objects. It is tempting to seek out the seeds of magical realism between the piece's poetic, ambiguous headings ("BROAD AND ALIEN IS THE WORLD"), but the aesthetic is closer to pure whimsy. Such a bizarre, loving tribute to a bureaucratic island would be more at home on Atlas Obscura than in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. It's almost twee. And for sheer delight, it beats out all his novels.

Meanwhile, though the editor's note is somewhat apologetic about García Márquez's reputation as a propagandist for Fidel Castro, the few Cuban pieces included are relatively mild in their politics. (Despite his sympathies, García Márquez was fond of reminding his readers that, as he had been racially profiled and mistakenly jailed in Paris, the Algerian Revolution was "the only one for which I've actually been imprisoned.") The most emphatically anti-imperialist selection is his portrait of the first year of life on the island after the United States imposed a trade embargo, tellingly titled "The Cubans Face the Blockade." "From the point of view of production," he wrote, "Cuba soon found that it was not actually a distinct country but rather a commercial peninsula of the United States." In his telling, the impact of the shortages was slow but intense, leading to ever-greater creativity in pitiful menu substitutions until armed shopkeepers end up fighting off robbers. While inevitably ideological, his fondness for the people's perseverance remains the focus of his dispatches from Cuba:

That was the first Christmas of the revolution celebrated without suckling pig and turrón, and the first time toys were rationed. However, and thanks precisely to rationing, it was also the first Christmas in the history of Cuba when every single child, with no distinction whatsoever, had at least one toy.

There are dozens of such intriguing clips from García Márquez's time as a foreign correspondent, but the story for which the collection is named is the one that really merits the price of admission. Right from its title, "The Scandal of the Century: In Death Wilma Montesi Walks the Earth" nails manic tabloid storytelling and refuses to let the reader go. Published in installments from Rome, the story covers the murder of a young ingénue—or was she?—and it has everything. Twists and turns include postmenstrual fainting spells, Jesuit conscience, drug traffickers, unscrupulous reporters, a pornography studio, and the son of the Minister of Foreign Relations. Each installment ends with a summary of soon-to-be-relevant evidence, called "The Reader Should Remember," transformed most satisfyingly at last into "The Reader Should Know." It's a classic scandal (young woman's murder, its dastardly cover-up) that García Márquez expertly complicates, one testimony at a time, until readers are left with nothing but the taste of good old Italian corruption in their mouths. The story is compelling precisely because we think we already know it. Like García Márquez's tabloid readers, we too are inundated with true-crime narratives. His experimental form and dogged humor make this account genuinely innovative in a genre that could not be more done to death. When I finished reading it, my first thought was "I hope there's a podcast."

That's the scandal, really. Not just that García Márquez, like so many men before him and since, had such a way with words about dead women, but that we have such an appetite for them.

CATHERINE ADDINGTON *(@caddington11) is pursuing a PhD in Spanish literature at the University of Virginia.*

Adventures in Learning

JOSHUA P. HOCHSCHILD

THE RISK OF EDUCATION
Discovering Our Ultimate Destiny

LUIGI GIUSSANI
TRANSLATED BY MARIANGELA SULLIVAN
McGill-Queen's University Press, $17.95, 112 pp.

Information transfer and skill-building can be reduced to bloodless method, and "critical thinking" is often little more than cowardly and corrosive skepticism, but education as personal formation draws on a sense of dignity and honor. "Liberal education is the counterpoison to mass culture," Leo Strauss said in 1959, daring his listeners to stand apart. The challenging pedagogy of Plato's *Republic* can't begin before beastly Thrasymachus is humiliated, and Aristotle's opening survey of opinions about happiness dismisses pleasure-seeking with a sneer, not an argument. Certain ideas and behaviors are beneath us. Do you have what it takes to rise above?

If the inculcation of worthy values and virtues starts by pushing against shameful ones, what happens when such acts of discrimination are stigmatized, when untrained democratic souls misinterpret the honorable service of superior judgment as the tyranny of arbitrary power? C. S. Lewis's 1943 lectures on "the abolition of man" tease out the dangerous implications of modern philosophies—so pervasive as to infect grammar-school books—that neuter the crucial, judgment-making, spirited part of the soul, the "chest" that integrates and dignifies head and belly.

The mid-twentieth century, which experienced dehumanizing ideas and events across the globe, seems to have been especially fertile ground for reflection on the nature of education: in addition to Lewis and Strauss, this period produced now-classic reflections on education by Dorothy Sayers, Simon Weil, T. S. Eliot, Hannah Arendt, Mortimer Adler, and various "Great Books" champions. Germany had Josef Pieper, France had Jacques Maritain—and in Italy there was Luigi Giussani.

Giussani's experience as a student and teacher made him especially attuned to the rhetorical challenge of helping

young people mature in faith and reason. Born in 1922, Giussani was not yet eleven when he entered seminary. His Christian vocation was formed through his adolescence, and he continued working with youth for much of his life. Ordained a priest in 1945 at age twenty-two, he began teaching that same year in the minor seminary he had attended. In 1954, at age thirty-two, he started teaching religion at a classical high school in Milan.

During thirteen years as a high-school teacher, Giussani helped grow a youth branch of the political movement Catholic Action. He left the Milan *liceo* in 1967; after the political upheaval of 1968, what had been known as "Student Youth" forged an independent identity as "Comunione e Liberazione" (Communion and Liberation, or CL), now a worldwide ecclesial movement. (Giussani and his work were loved by Pope John Paul II; and upon Giussani's death in 2005, he was eulogized by the man who, seven weeks later, would be named Pope Benedict XVI.)

Giussani had other theological works to his credit by 1977, when he published "The Risk of Education." His reflections on the conditions of teaching adolescents had been maturing for years, his influence guaranteed an audience, and the topic, so close to his heart, made this destined to be regarded as a signature work. Still, it is hard to believe that this text, taken on its own, would otherwise have gotten much attention. It is not so much a book as a loosely structured meditation, prefaced by some autobiographical context ("Introductory Thoughts"), and with only three very lopsided chapters (the first more than twice as long as the other two combined).

Publishers don't seem to know what to do with it. A 1995 Italian edition added an additional author's Introduction (rebranded as a "Preface" in the new translation under review). It also appended five additional "chapters" of "Clarifications" (together not as long as the original "Chapter 1"), which were included in the previous 2001 English translation by Rosanna M. Giammanco Frongia. But these were omitted from a 2010 Italian edition, and from the current translation (which also includes no information about the history of the text). Some future critical edition will no doubt try to make sense of the various repackagings of what is, at its heart, essentially a long essay.

Giussani's argument is straightforward. Education is an "introduction into reality," specifically introducing the student into "total reality" or "the total meaning of reality." This requires students to learn in and through the context of a "tradition," which is a "hypothesis" about the total meaning of reality. Such a tradition can be presented only by authorities worthy of loyalty: persons who embody the tradition, and can therefore propose it to the student with integrity. The aim is to help young people avoid the twin errors of thoughtless conformity and irresponsible rebellion, to learn the mature perspective of appropriating and consistently applying a coherent, meaningful vision of the cosmos. To do this, students must have opportunities to engage—to test and apply in their own lives and relationships—a compellingly offered tradition. When successful, such education is friendship-making, binding student and teacher into a common experience of the world.

As with other classic proposals for education (in addition to some of those already mentioned, John Henry Newman in the nineteenth century, and Alasdair MacIntyre in the twenty-first), the specifically Christian element here is real but mostly implicit—and even philosophically contingent. The effective proposal of truths of faith presumes minds already seeking truths that are absolute, universal, and personal. Reason's crucial combination of ambition and humility is certainly fostered by the ambiance of faith, but it is a natural human power, in principle separate from, and preliminary to, theological conviction.

What stands out to a reader of Giussani today is not so much the logic of the argument as its rhetorical mode. With keen attention to the psychology of youth, Giussani isn't even tempted to instrumentalize education (the utilitarian trap of learning for the sake of career or power or pleasure), nor to articulate an overly intellectualist vision (seeking "truth for its own sake"). Instead he appeals directly to the restless heart, or what Sayers described as the distinguishing interest of "the poetic" stage. For Giussani, education is above all an *adventure*. It is this perspective that gives him the key word of his title, "risk." Education is not safe. There are stakes—ultimate stakes: about how we should live, and for what we will die. Education implicates the "drama of freedom," drawing out the "vital energy" of young people, for whom education is ultimately about "victory of good over evil."

Hence the key pedagogical virtue Giussani stresses is not wisdom but courage. From the students, the requisite courage comes almost naturally; young people are constitutionally ready to venture out into the greater significance of life. Giussani quotes Seneca on "how zealous neophytes are with regard to their first impulses toward the highest ideals, provided that some one does his part in exhorting them and in kindling their ardor."

Courage is also required on behalf of teachers, and in two ways. Teachers must have the courage of their convictions, proposing a clear tradition to their students. And teachers must push students to test that tradition, granting them freedom to do so, for only then can students actively learn to participate in and share that tradition.

Again, an emphasis on courage, critical engagement, and the testing of tradition is not unique to Giussani. What is distinctive is how he communicates these ideas with language appropriate to the argument. Giussani seeks to enact and embody the very rhetorical resources required of an effective educator: a tone that is gently encouraging, sometimes dramatic, and full of imaginative possibility.

Giussani's rhetorical appeal seems especially suited to his original language. The cadence and tone of Italian

energize even mundane expression; and the language sings not only for love and anger, but for whatever calls forth worth, pride, and nobility. This, together with the usual translation challenges, makes an English version of Giussani's reflections almost as difficult as rendering a poem or libretto. (It also means that those influenced by Giussani and his movement can seem to speak their own language).

This new translation improves on some awkwardnesses in the older one, but elegant and natural English versions of Giussani's voice remain elusive. Giussani describes how pressing dialectical questions can lead to an *appassionata e attenta avventura di ricerca*. It is technically accurate but clumsy to render this as "a passionate and careful adventure of inquiry." (The previous translation had "a passionate and attentive quest for answers"). The sense is conveyed, but it feels like a translation. (Would it be better to take poetic liberties with a looser translation: "an intent and impassioned journey of discovery"?)

A crucial paragraph ends by saying of sound education that "it is a time that is open to invasion by the power of the eternal, and that comes to be indefatigably fertilized by it." The older translation construes this as "a time that allows itself to be invaded by the power of eternity and to be continuously enriched by it." One does not have to look at the Italian to sense the intention and imagine a more natural English version: "a time that submits to being pierced by the power of eternity, and is made fruitful by it."

But there are other difficulties of translation that are harder to finesse, no matter what poetic liberties one is willing to take. The English word "meaning," for example, just doesn't have the weight of Giussani's *senso* and *significato*. Or again, Giussani speaks often of *valori*, and uses the associated verb *valorizzare*. The Italian words could evoke English "valor," but their English translations—"values" and "appreciate"—feel trite, and certainly don't hold the tension between reason and emotion. They suggest either economic calcula-

POETRY

AUTUMN, STARTING FROM *LITTLEMORE*

Mark Kirby

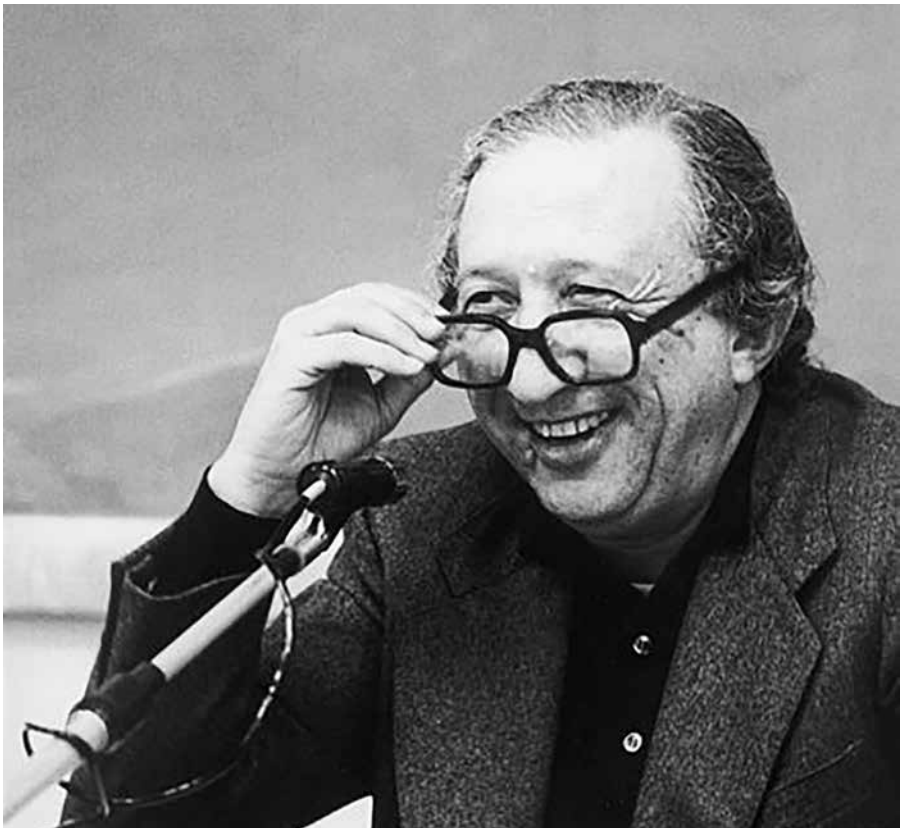
Before the fire before the coming darkness, the feast:
the donning & shedding of vestments:
the happy funeral of autumn,
the wine-gold sun liquid in the hollow,
each evening walk a sharing of the cup,
a stroll in Galilee where the beauty is
in summing up, in gathering

of the year's new past. And the farewell light,
so easy to construe the fable written in it
of a noble death, assumption easy as falling
asleep for a quick nap with dusk.
And with the trees relieved
of their burden of color, what was

hidden as sin, you see, you see
the lay of the land,
as survivors

see us in time, naked
as winter trees, what held us upright.

MARK KIRBY *(DOB: 6.15.1947), retired after thirty-five years in cyberspace at the Social Security Administration, writes from his native Baltimore. Poetry is a constant, through writing and reading groups, and sporadic submissions and publication. Now more time for: morning espresso and poetry, noon Mass, then necessities like memorizing St. Mark.*



Luigi Giussani

tion, or the very emotivism Giussani's argument is intended to avoid.

What lessons does Giussani hold for educators today? This edition includes a twenty-page foreword by Stanley Hauerwas, which turns out to be a lightly revised conference paper from 2003 (published the same year in *Communio* and reprinted in Hauerwas's 2007 book *The State of the University*). There are obvious limitations to its use in this new edition. Hauerwas mostly quotes Giussani not from the text printed here but from the omitted 1995 appendix. Hauerwas makes an extensive comparison between Giussani and Alasdair MacIntyre, but of course without taking account of MacIntyre's later writings on education, such as his 2009 book *God, Philosophy, Universities*, or his 2007 essay for this magazine, "The End of Education." The latter argues, much like Giussani, that in a coherent curriculum, theological education helps students ask "questions with practical import for our lives," "questions that need to be answered if we are to understand who we are here and now." Such an education begins with familiarizing oneself with one's tradition, in order to gain the ability to evaluate—to judge critically—the good and bad in one's own and other traditions.

MacIntyre's particular focus on disciplinary "fragmentation" highlights a third limitation of Hauerwas's perspective. A foreword in 2019 could have helped readers apply Giussani's insight to changes in education over the past fifteen years. In America these include significant developments at the primary and secondary level (the bipartisan devastation of No Child Left Behind and Common Core on the one hand, and the rise of alternative, classical, charter, and homeschools on the other). At the college level there is "the education bubble" and all of its symptoms—administrative bloat, increased economic pressure on indebted students, the quantitative and qualitative decline of the humanities, and the continued politicization of disciplines and campus culture.

Finally, touching not only all schools but all cultural phenomena, is the mobile digital revolution. Giussani describes three "conditions" for his proposed education for freedom. Students must actively engage their environment, and must experience shared community—these first two conditions are arguably intrinsic to the residential college (and further emphasized by student-affairs programming initiatives like "service learning" and "living-learning communities"). But in 2019, Giussani's most radical proposal is his third condition: that the primary and appropriate place where students engage their own formation is in their own free time. The classical notion of leisure is alien to many young people in the age of digital distraction. Mesmerizing screens seem to make the reading and dialectical engagement of intellectual and spiritual formation "incapable of fascinating young people in their free time." Short of banning smartphones, how can students today experience the kind of leisure Giussani imagines, and how can any creative teacher, much less an administrative initiative, foster such experiences?

Then again, Giussani's understanding of adolescent psychology suggests that it is students themselves who will demand a return to authentic leisure, even if—perhaps because—education experts eager to expand technology access would never think to offer it. In general, the best hope for the future of education seems to be the unspoiled impulses of the young, rather than the educational theories of experts. I might not have believed it before twenty-plus years of college teaching and two of my own children's college searches, but Giussani is right about the spiritual thirst of young people, which begins with their ability to see through ideological cant, empty slogans, and pandering clichés, and their instinctual hatred of "school" as a factory of worthless exercises.

Above all youth can smell a school's lack of confidence the way a predator smells fear. Nobody takes seriously an invitation to a "journey" of "self-dis-

covery" that does not boldly propose the conditions under which such a journey could be worthy and successful: "Young people feel attracted to a decisive proposal."

At a key point, arguing that "educators must bear in mind [the] love for freedom to the point of risk," Giussani quotes from *The Hopes of Italy* by the nineteenth-century statesman Cesare Balbo:

> [Only] cowards want to know the statistical probability of victory on the morning of battle. The strong and the dedicated do not ordinarily ask how long or how hard, but rather how and where they must fight. All they need to know is in what place, by which way, and to what end. And then they hope, and work, and fight, and suffer there until the end of the day, leaving the accomplishments to God.

Schools offering a concrete and venerable tradition to join, and boasting honorable authorities to challenge students to join it, may not have universal popular appeal; they may even offend. But they will attract students eager to learn, and such education will only increase in value as it becomes more scarce. Any school worth surviving the education bubble must take that risk.

With Giussani's insights into the psychology of youth, we can trust that the longing for something greater than skills, information, money, and pleasure will continue to animate Catholic education. Young people have the hunger. The best advice for educators sometimes starts with the reminder that educational expertise, like statistics on the battlefield, might do more to starve youthful vigor than to shape it. Young people will be naturally attracted to teachers and schools offering a vision of the whole. Everybody else should get out of the way.

JOSHUA P. HOCHSCHILD *is a professor of philosophy at Mount St. Mary's University and is co-author, with Christopher O. Blum, of* A Mind at Peace: Reclaiming an Ordered Soul in the Age of Distraction *(Sophia Institute Press).*

Ask the Dust

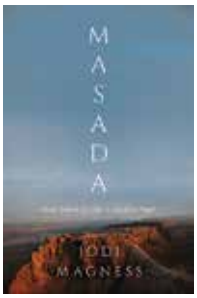
MAHRI LEONARD-FLECKMAN

Masada is one of the most important archaeological sites in Israel, and an awesome physical structure. A massive fortress hewn into the high hills of the Judean desert, its steep cliffs rise 1,300 feet above the Dead Sea. The only access is via cable car or the narrow, twisting "Snake Path" on the eastern slope. One of King Herod's most impressive building projects (ca. 30 BCE), it's also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, attracting more tourists each year than almost any other site in Israel. Excavating Masada remains a rite of passage for Israeli archaeology students.

But Masada is not just a significant site for the history of Second Temple Judaism. Its story also exerts a powerful hold on both the modern state of Israel and the contemporary Jewish-Israeli imagination. The key historical question surrounding Masada—the unanswerable question—is the so-called "Masada myth," the story of the mass suicide of 967 Jewish men, women, and children who chose to die at the site rather than submit to enslavement or murder at the hands of the Roman army (ca. 73 BCE). There's only one extant written account, Flavius Josephus's *The Jewish War* (composed during the 70s–80s CE), the historical reliability of which is highly debated today. Still, the myth became an important symbol for the modern State of Israel, which adopted the slogan "Masada shall not fall again" at its founding in 1948.

In light of the painful and complex relationship between Israel and Palestine today, the slogan (and the site) has become even more fraught. And not just for Israeli Jews, but for Jews throughout the world. Zionism—the idea of return to Israel so key to the current state, with roots in the Hebrew Bible—only adds to the growing unease with the site's history, compounding the potency of the historical question. What really happened out there in the desert so long ago?

Jodi Magness, a scholar of early Judaism at the University of North Carolina and one of the most important archeologists currently excavating in Israel, seeks to reevaluate this question in *Masada: From Jewish Revolt to Modern Myth*. Early in her career, Magness studied with Yigael Yadin at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Yadin had excavated Masada in the 1960s, and is remembered as one of Israel's most famous archaeologists. Based on his discoveries and subsequent interpretation of the archaeological data, Yadin perpetuated and popularized the myth of the mass suicide in his popular 1966 account *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealot's Last Stand*. Now, Magness's goal is to use more recent archaeological developments alongside Josephus's account in order to reevaluate what really happened at Masada, all within the broader context of Second Temple Judaism.



MASADA
From Jewish Revolt to Modern Myth

JODI MAGNESS
Princeton University Press, $29.95, 312 pp.

Leaning heavily on Josephus and comparing his account to the archaeological data, Magness's ultimate answer (it comes only in the book's final pages) is anticlimactic: we can't know. Such a conclusion isn't exactly new—archaeologists have come a long way from early proof-texts of written sources, and few scholars today would sign on unequivocally with the Masada myth.

Magness begins by providing a full contextual backdrop. The book's nine chapters offer an accessible historical overview of early Judaism in Israel-Palestine. The first three chapters center on Masada: Magness surveys the final siege, giving background to Josephus's account; outlines the early history of Western explorers of Masada; and maps Masada's geographical setting. She then expands the historical context, first cataloguing the building projects of Herod the Great, then tracing the history of Judea prior to Herod through the Jewish revolt against Rome. She concludes with the Jewish rebels' occupation of Masada. The book is an accessible read, and includes two sets of high-quality illustrations and maps. More than half of these focus on Masada—in addition to the maps, there are shots of discoveries like mosaic floors, pots, arrowheads, even a braid of human hair.

Only after this thorough historical examination does Magness finally offer her interpretation of what happened at Masada:

> I am often asked if I believe there was a mass suicide [there], to which I respond that this is not a question archaeology is equipped to answer. The archaeological remains can be interpreted differently as supporting or disproving Josephus's account. Whether or not the mass suicide story is true depends on how one evaluates Josephus's reliability as an historian—a matter I prefer to leave to Josephus specialists to resolve.

She thus ends the book, ironically handing Josephus back to the textual specialists after relying on him for her reconstructions of the history of early Judaism. It's a maddeningly neutral answer to the book's key question.

Magness's book has been almost universally well received, but there's reason to question her circumspection, strangely at odds with her otherwise fiery personality. I met Magness myself at Providence College back in 2017. Fresh off the plane from Tel Aviv (she'd left her dig at Huqoq in the Galilee to give a quick paper and head back), she struck me as *fierce*. Her build petite and wiry, her remarks biting and uninhibited, Magness electrified the room with her brilliance. (She remains an inspiration for me.)

That's partly why I left this book disappointed and conflicted. It ought to have occasioned serious grappling with the thorny issue of the limits of data (both archaeological and textual) for the reconstruction of ancient history, as well as the unavoidable subjectivity that colors scholars' interpretations. It also begged for Magness's final interpretation of the evidence, however qualified. Lacking Magness's typical energy, her dry account reads tiredly, like a skeleton without blood, sinews, or spirit.

Apart from the tone, there's a more serious issue with the book. Any textual scholar would find Magness's reliance on Josephus problematic, despite her caveats. Of course, she's an archaeologist attempting to reinterpret archaeological evidence; but a surprisingly large amount of Magness's historical reconstructions evince a facile acceptance of Josephus as "history," rather than a messy combination of ancient historiography, literature, and political and religious ideologies. Here Magness falls prey to a frequent risk in our interdisciplinary fields: those of us who work with ancient texts often use archaeology superficially; conversely, even the best archaeologists often commit the same error with ancient texts. There are limits to our training.

Critiques aside, there is much to commend in this book, especially for readers seeking more information about early Judaism, a better sense of early Jewish-Christian dynamics, or insights into the inherent tension between the paucity of ancient sources and our interpretations of them. The end of the first chapter, for example, contains an insightful discussion of how Christians and Jews differ in their reading of Josephus. (The tendency in Christianity, often marred by supersessionism, has been to elevate him, while Jews have rightly been more suspicious). And portions of chapters two and three provide beautiful physical descriptions of Masada and its surrounding geography; the historical account of the line of rule in Judea leading to Herod is likewise solid.

When it comes to pure archaeological bravura, in the end nothing tops Magness's analytical rigor. When she does train her gaze on the archaeological data, her insights are laser-sharp. One of the more memorable discussions pertains to the key evidence for interpreting Masada as a site of mass suicide. Yadin's discovery of three skeletons piled together in the ruins of the complex (a young man, a young woman, and a child) left him with no doubt that mass suicide had occurred. Yet, as Magness argues, we might just as easily interpret this collection of bodies as the result of a hyena dragging a jumble of bones into a corner.

The most memorable (and poignant) section of the book arrives at the end, where Magness describes Yadin and her early fascination with him as a young student. It's a powerful reminder that one cannot decouple the archaeologist from the sites she excavates, or the scholar from her work. Though certainly called to be objective, ultimately we archaeologists and textual scholars are all subjective interpreters of ancient evidence, bringing our desires and prejudices to our work.

History often repeats itself, and those of us who study the past have a duty to bring what we study to life, allowing our expertise to shed light on contemporary questions and conflicts. Archaeological sites, especially in Israel, contain layers of human experience—birth, death, war, occupation, daily customs—that bear directly on political, social, and religious debates today. Masada is but one example. What would Magness say about how the memories of this site (and the fraught slogan "Masada shall not fall again") function in modern Israel? Detachment has its limits. Throughout the book, it was her human viewpoint, not just her archaeological expertise, that I yearned for.

MAHRI LEONARD-FLECKMAN *is assistant professor of religious studies at the College of the Holy Cross. She is the author of* The House of David: Between Political Formation and Literary Revision *(Fortress Press).*

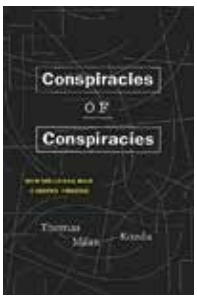
Wheels within Wheels

CHRIS HAMMER

We live in an era of conspiracy. In 1964, Richard Hofstadter diagnosed the "paranoid style" of American politics as a "sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy" animated by proponents' belief that their power had been dispossessed by secretive and sinister actors. Countering such conspiracies required a determination "to try to repossess" their power and thus "prevent [a] final destructive act of subversion." Hofstadter pitied the conspiracist, observing that, while "[w]e are all sufferers from history," the conspiracist "is a double sufferer, since he is afflicted not only by the real world, with the rest of us, but by his fantasies as well." Fifty-five years on from Hofstadter's essay, fantastic thinking and a sense of dispossession exists not only in the conspiracist's mind; it has pervaded our polity.

In his book *Conspiracies of Conspiracies: How Delusions Have Overrun America*, Thomas Milan Konda refines, expands, updates, and ultimately improves Hofstadter's thesis for our era of fake news. Although a conspiracy in both common and legal parlance can refer to any group of people coordinating in a deception, the conspiracism that Konda discusses is much more: like Hofstadter, he focuses on an all-encompassing Manichean worldview "that leads people to look for conspiracies, to anticipate them, to link them together into a grander overarching conspiracy" conducted by a malevolent group of people to wield power for nefarious ends.

The conspiracist's narrative connects "a variety of events with which at least some of the conspirators have no apparent connection." *Apparent* is the key word in that definition: the conspiracist searches out and supplies the connection. Once the conspiracist has connected the dots to identify the guiding evil force—whether the Illuminati, the Masons, "popery," "international bankers" (and other coded, and not-so-coded, anti-Semitism), international Communism or, more recently, one-worlders—he or she creates a narrative that incorporates every additional piece of evidence, or lack of evidence, as proof of a conspiracy. In other words, it's conspiracies all the way down.



CONSPIRACIES OF CONSPIRACIES
How Delusions Have Overrun America

THOMAS MILAN KONDA
University of Chicago Press, $30, 432 pp.

Konda, like Hofstadter before him, locates the origins of modern conspiracism in theories about the Illuminati, a secretive Bavarian society founded in 1776 as, in Hofstadter's words, "a somewhat naïve and utopian movement which aspired ultimately to bring the human race under the rules of reason." But in conspiracist tellings, beginning with John Robison's 1798 book *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, the Illuminati conspired to instigate the French Revolution and destroy religion across Europe. It's interesting that Konda describes the works of Robison and his successors, but chooses not to examine any primary sources of the Illuminati themselves—one assumes because the Illuminati's *actual* expressions neither refute the conspiracist's narrative nor lessen his fervor. That's the way the conspiracy works.

Conspiracism sprouted in the United States at the same time, and its proponents blended American self-government with piety and virtue. Yale University President Timothy Dwight gave a 1798 Independence Day sermon in which he feared that, without action to counter conspiracies, sons would "become the disciples of Voltaire, and the dragoons of Marat" and daughters "the concubines of the Illuminati." This desire to save and preserve is an especially powerful organizing principle where people expect a degree of self-government. A public that plays no role in politics does not exist as "important enough" for those pulling

the levers of power and influence "to try to deceive."

Because conspiracism is committed by the "other," conspiracists frequently use what Konda calls "the disembodied 'they'" and other nebulous terms to separate good from evil. In vogue now, of course, is the "deep state," but Konda's broad use of primary sources yields a wealth of examples throughout American history.

Conspiracism of the nineteenth century (primarily suspicions of the Illuminati, the Freemasons, or the pope) gave way to twentieth-century theories of a "Jewish conspiracy" popularized by Henry Ford; the more coded "banking conspiracy" popularized by opponents of the New Deal; the vast web of communist conspiracy feared by the John Birch Society; and various one-world conspiracies that persist to this day.

The sheer number of conspiracies makes exploration of each impossible here, but Konda discusses some striking examples that continue to affect public life. A 1955 pamphlet by the Keep America Committee sought to fight a "Communistic world government" by opposing fluoride in drinking water (described as "rat poison"), the polio vaccine ("the entering wedge for nationwide socialized medicine"), and psychiatry ("a subtle and diabolical plan of the enemy to transform a free and intelligent people into a cringing hoard [*sic*] of zombies"). In the 1980s, some conspiracists believed AIDS to be a human-made virus designed to wipe out gay men, African-American men, or Africans in their entirety. During the 2014 Ebola outbreak, a theory (perpetuated by Phyllis Schlafly) emerged accusing President Obama "of allowing the disease into the United States as part of his conspiracy to destroy the country."

The current occupant of the White House has spread his share of conspiracy theories, including birtherism; these fabrications helped launch his political career. But Konda shrewdly suggests that we should be more afraid of the lasting impact of his conspiracist mindset on mainstream politics than of the conspiracy theory *du jour*. The algorithms of Silicon Valley conspire against the health of our politics more surely than the Illuminati ever could: social media is designed to pull people deeper and deeper into rabbit holes of their own choosing, so that "the information any one person receives," whether true or not, "is constantly reinforced." Each conspiracy-minded, or even conspiracy-adjacent, click will bring about others.

The algorithms of Silicon Valley conspire against the health of our politics more surely than the Illuminati ever could.

And yet, conspiracism is ultimately a symptom of a broader societal malaise. During times of upheaval, whether arising from revolution, economic depression, or social change, some of the dispossessed have turned to conspiracism to explain their place in a changing world. Humans tell narratives, including the historical narratives that root us in a place and time, and Konda shows how conspiracist narratives have proved especially resilient because of this. But they are not the only stories we can tell: as Simone Weil explains, "We possess no other life, no other living sap, than the treasures stored up from the past and digested, assimilated, and created afresh by us." If, as Konda fears, conspiracism today is uniquely harming our political culture and institutions, then our future depends on our looking up from our screens to write a life-affirming story that will satisfy our need for roots.

CHRIS HAMMER *is an attorney in New York City.*

That Familiar Voice

VALERIE SAYERS

In case of psychological stress, some people keep therapy dogs around for a comforting nuzzle, but I prefer a strong dose of Flannery O'Connor. I keep *The Habit of Being*, the 1979 collection of her letters edited by Sally Fitzgerald, on a shelf just above my desk, easily reached in an emergency. A couple of pages of O'Connor and I am chastened, enlightened, cracked up, or all three, able to carry on with a newly installed ramrod for a spine.

Long before the substantial biographies and studies began to appear, O'Connor's letters revealed her to be ferocious in her Catholic faith and her many literary friendships, but also withering and funny in her judgments and her gossip. While the rest of her prose contains equal measures of wit and dead seriousness, the letters often reveal qualms and doubts. O'Connor seeks counsel of both the spiritual and the writing variety. Often—and more often, as she grows sicker—she asks for prayers.

Now we have this new volume of O'Connor's "uncollected" letters (those who have read the earlier volume will recognize several reprinted here) alongside a trove of her correspondents' letters to her and to each other. Since her circle included Caroline Gordon, William Sessions, Katherine Anne Porter, Walker Percy, and the writer identified in *The Habit of Being* as "A" (later revealed to be Betty Hester), this is an enticing volume for anyone anxious to hear O'Connor's voice again or eager to experience her friends' idiosyncratic voices. The juxtaposition can be exhilarating (though Caroline Gordon, who provides the volume's title and lavished attention on O'Connor's work, can also be mean-spirited and exhausting. As O'Connor confides to Hester, "[Gordon] will sacrifice life to dead form, or anything to grammar.") O'Connor's advice to Hester is more concise: "If you were stupider you would write much better fiction because you wouldn't conceptualize things so much."

GOOD THINGS OUT OF NAZARETH
The Uncollected Letters of Flannery O'Connor and Friends

EDITED BY BENJAMIN B. ALEXANDER
Convergent Books, $26, 416 pp.

For O'Connor devotees, the new collection is essential—but not without its frustrations. The order is sometimes chronological, sometimes thematic, which can result in introductory notes explaining what a letter a few pages ahead will soon make clear. The annotations, frequently illuminating and helpful, often blandly summarize what the letter below will say better (and more wittily). The new collection's editor, Benjamin B. Alexander, is currently professor of English and political science at Franciscan University of Steubenville. He pulls a vast array of references, allusions, and personalities into conversation, and his ability to keep them all talking to each other is impressive. But he sometimes drifts into anachronistic asides when discussing Southern historical contexts. Mel Gibson, for example, makes an appearance in a note explaining the Revolutionary War's Francis Marion. Ronald Reagan frequently enters the notes, as does a rant on the state of today's Democratic Party. Much as any discussion of O'Connor requires interdisciplinary approaches, surely the politics of the post-O'Connor era are far afield.

The politics readers are interested in are O'Connor's, and hers are complicated enough to keep us all awake at night without bringing Mel Gibson on the scene. If some of us are still recovering from the revelation that she refused to meet with James Baldwin and Martin Luther King Jr., it is useful to be reminded here of her support for the civil-rights stands of her friends Tom Gossett and Fr. James McCown. Her casually tossed racial pejoratives are excruciating, but just as her later stories show her to be deepening her vision and representations of race, the letters show her growing openness to the heterodox politics of two of her most intriguing and appealing correspondents, Fr. McCown and Roslyn Barnes. Both have personalities to equal O'Connor's, and that's saying a mouthful.

Flannery O'Connor stands next to a 1953 self-portrait of herself holding a pheasant.

ALPHA HISTORICA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

James McCown was a Jesuit and a Southerner whose readings of O'Connor pleased her. It is moving to see both sides of their conversation. The priest's reverence for O'Connor's art is beautifully balanced between his theological understanding of what she's up to and his appreciation for her sense of drama. Her growing reliance on his spiritual advice yields the most touching letter in the volume: an inquiry into whether she had committed sacrilege by eating a vegetable that might have been cooked in ham stock on a Friday. "There is something about you can use drippings but you can't use stock," she tells McCown. "I hate this kind of question." It is impossible not to imagine what the scrupulous O'Connor, who was not a fan of movements like the Catholic Worker, would have made of her correspondent's growing immersion in liberation theology.

O'Connor urged McCown to write to Roslyn Barnes, a fellow Georgian who dedicated her master's thesis to O'Connor and converted to Catholicism, training with Ivan Illich in Mexico for the missionary work she undertook in Chile (where she disappeared after O'Connor's death). Her letters to O'Connor are intensely vital as she searches for the best use of her talents. She can be as tart as her mentor—she writes to McCown, "Nobody can play dirtier than religious, Father, when the devil gets into them"—but the letter she wrote to him after O'Connor's death at the age of thirty-nine is filled with longing for a deeper connection. "Why didn't any real intimacy happen? I don't know.... F. invited me to see her—and then she kept her distance."

If their letters are standouts, the competition is tough. Walker Percy's objection in *Commonweal* to the tactics of the Berrigan brothers is one for the ages. And at the risk of again tooting this magazine's horn, O'Connor's variant spelling of *CommonWheel* is as charming as her misspelling of her own publisher. In the case of "Billy Ghrame," she is absolutely consistent and clearly delivering a message.

We are in the midst of an O'Connor revival, graced with O'Connor's recently released prayer journal as well as studies I believe she would have approved of: Richard Giannone's *Flannery O'Connor, Hermit Novelist,* and Ruthann Knechel Johansen and E. Jane Doering's comparative study of O'Connor and Simone Weil, *When Fiction and Philosophy Meet. Good Things Out of Nazareth* provides a different kind of pleasure. I open it at random to hear a familiar voice: "A Georgian cannot of course be against Coca Cola. We feed it to our babies, serve it to our guests, console the dying with it and expect it to make us loved throughout the world" and "[a] Catholic has to have strong nerves to write about Catholics." I consider my psyche set straight and my spine stiffened.

VALERIE SAYERS *is the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame and the author of six novels, including* The Powers *(Northwestern University Press).*

A Peace Church

TOM CORNELL

2017 protest, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Lompoc, California

In 1963, Pope John XXII wrote in *Pacem in terris*, "In our time, which prides itself in its atomic weapons, it is contrary to reason to hold that war is any longer an appropriate means to restoring violated rights." Twenty years later, in 1983, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. In it the bishops held that the possession and maintenance of nuclear weapons was morally acceptable only on a temporary and conditional basis, the condition being that time be bought to achieve negotiated general multilateral disarmament. Last November, thirty-six years later, having informed the United Nations through the Holy See's representatives that time had run out—that the condition had not been achieved—Pope Francis made it clear that there is no longer any legal or moral justification for the construction, possession, or maintenance of nuclear weapons.

It is hoped that within a few months a small delegation from the peace movement in the United States will travel to Rome to discuss the issue with Cardinal Turkson and the staff of the Vatican Justice and Peace Commission, and, with any luck, Pope Francis himself. Does it not seem appropriate that the church go on record in defense of anyone, civilian or military, who refuses in good conscience to participate in the deployment or maintenance of nuclear weapons, and that a form of conscientious objection be instituted in law to protect any such individual from negative sanctions? Of course, it is hardly likely that the United States or any of the other nuclear powers would institute such legislation. Maybe Andorra and Costa Rica! But it would be a significant moment if the church took that stand.

I doubt there is a Catholic parish in this country where all regular Mass attenders do not know the church's stand on abortion. The Catholic governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, objected to Cardinal Dolan's January 2019 letter denouncing the so-called Reproductive Rights legislation, which allows not only for late-term abortion but also for withholding medical attention from infants in certain circumstances. We are proud of Cardinal Dolan's clarity and forcefulness of expression. Would that pastors, preachers, and regular Mass-goers knew the position the church has taken on war and peace issues, especially weapons of mass destruction. Is not failure to address these issues—and failure to help Catholics form a conscience on these issues—a failure in the performance of pastoral duty? What holds bishops and priests back? Is it fear? Concern for the collection plate? Such a concern would not be irrational, but they must not yield to it. Conscience formation on issues about which the church is at odds with conventional wisdom can be done without sending people running for the doors, as long as it is done with patience, prudence, and a proper regard for people's sensitivities.

At the height of the Vietnam War, I was invited to preach at all of the weekend Masses at the church that serves the Catholics of Los Alamos, New Mexico, the birthplace of the atomic bomb and a major center of the nuclear-arms industry. I advised the parishioners, many of whom were no doubt involved in the weapons industry and Los Alamos National Laboratory, that such involvement should be examined in conscience. No one walked out. The pastor invited me back. People need to be helped to understand these issues, but they don't need to be bullied.

The Catholic Church has at long last become a peace church—not a pacifist church, but a peace church. That is to say, the church now supports its conscientious objectors. That was not always the case. Ben Salmon, a World War I Catholic conscientious objector, could get no priest to minister to him in prison. His cause for beatification is now being prepared for the Vatican. The great majority of Catholics do not claim conscientious objection to war or military service. Neither does a majority of Quakers. But Quakers honor their peace witness, and so will we. During the Vietnam War, Roman Catholics were overrepresented among draft resisters. The first demonstrations against U.S. participation in the Vietnam civil war were held in July 1964 by the Catholic Worker movement in New York City. We started with two people and ended with 250, and coast-to-coast television coverage. The first act of corporate resistance to the Vietnam-era draft was held in New York City at Union Square on November 6, 1965, again sponsored by the Catholic Worker along with the Committee for Nonviolent Action. It's time for the church to take the lead on this issue, to make good on the commitment to peace and disarmament that Pope John XXIII undertook more than fifty years ago.

TOM CORNELL *is a lifelong Catholic Worker now managing, with his wife Monica, the Catholic Worker farm in Marlboro, New York. They welcome visitors.*

ZUMA PRESS, INC. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Commonweal's transformation is under way.

We thank everyone who has made it possible.

Transforming Commonweal is a campaign making possible critical investments to increase *Commonweal*'s audience and effectiveness, from digital media to a redesign of the print magazine.

Thanks to these generous donors, we have now exceeded our three-year campaign goal of $1,050,000. But the work of transformation continues. For information about how you can help, please contact publisher Thomas Baker at tbaker@commonwealmagazine.org.

CENTENNIAL BENEFACTORS
$100,000+

Thomas Higgins
creating the John Garvey Fund
Porticus North America
Pat & Paul Saunders

CENTENNIAL SPONSORS
$50,000–$99,999

Sheila & Robert L. Berner, Jr.
In memory of
Deborah Pickman Clifford
James H. Duffy
Daniel R. Murray*
Barbara Mullin Rosiello
& Robert Rosiello*
Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP*
in support of the
Paul Saunders Fund
Michael Vertin

CENTENNIAL PATRONS
$25,000–$49,999

Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill
& John T. Cahill
Barry McCabe
Marcia & James Morley*
Mary Hasten & Brien O'Brien*
James Rowen

*Also supporters of the Paul Saunders Fund

CENTENNIAL CIRCLE
$10,000–$24,999

W. Shepherdson Abell
Samuel E. DeMerit
John Kuster*
Fr. Robert Lauder
Daniel M. Murtaugh*
Judith & G. Dennis O'Brien
Jane & Tony O'Connell*
William E. Simon Foundation
Mary Alice & Vincent Stanton
Dana & Marc vanderHeyden*
Elizabeth & Tim Welsh*

CENTURIONS
up to $10,000

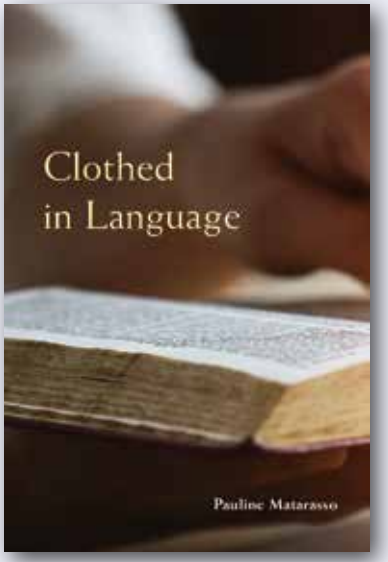
Anonymous
Suzanne McSorley
& Thomas Baker*
Vivian Segall & Paul Baumann
Maureen & Mark Dalton*
Robert K. Freeland
Loretta Brennan Glucksman
Valerie & Aaron W. Godfrey
Rosanne Haggerty
Anita M. Pampusch & Dr. Frank Indihar
Shirley Ferguson Jenks*
Cathleen Kaveny*
James R. Kelly
Betty L. Lovett
Thomas F. Mader
Alice McDermott
Jean McManus & John McGreevy*
Deacon Bartholomew J. Merella
Giacomo Meschia
John R. Miles
Mary & Roger Mulvilhill
Deborah Nicklas
Michael Peppard
Leslie & Dennis Purcell
John Sexton*
A.J. Schumacher
Peter & Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
George & Christine Stonbely

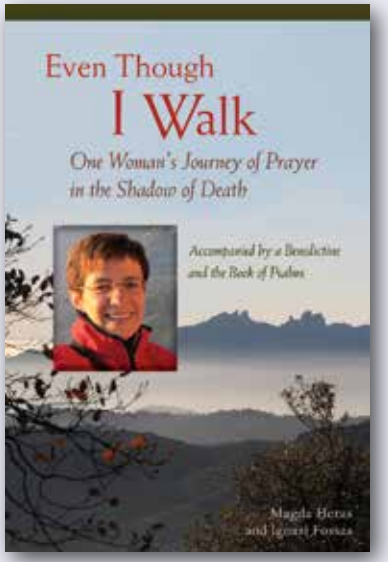
In addition, the following Commonweal Associates have doubled their annual membership gift in support of Transforming Commonweal:

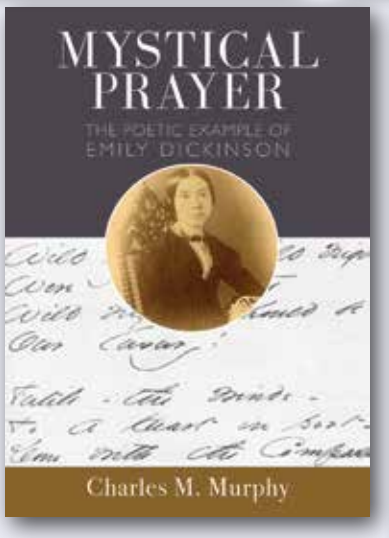
Fr. James A. Coriden
Susan Keane & Richard B. Griffin
Janet Hannon
Dr. George J. Harrison
Dr. Margaret M. Healy
Stanley J. Herber
Thomas V. & Mary Heyman
John W. Hinkley Jr.
Ann F. Johnson
John J. Mahoney
Msgr. John P. McDonough
Jerome E. McElroy
Thomas & Monica McGonigle
William McLaughlin
George & Carol McMullen
Lawrence J. Pirtie
Philip H. Ryan
Mary Ellen Sinkiewicz
William L. Woodward

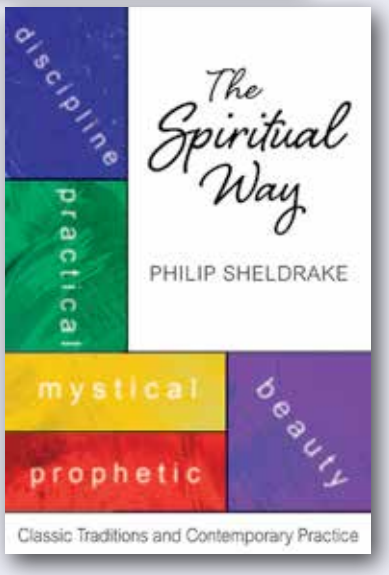
For more information on the goals of *Transforming Commonweal* visit www.cwlmag.org/transforming.

Spirituality resources to enrich your personal reflection and classroom discussions









PAULINE MATARASSO

Clothed in Language

"A modern Wisdom book."

Tim Vivian

Paperback,
160 pp., $24.95

MAGDA HERAS AND IGNASI FOSSAS

Even Though I Walk

One Woman's Journey of Prayer in the Shadow of Death

Paperback,
176 pp., $19.95

Rights: World, English

CHARLES M. MURPHY

Mystical Prayer

The Poetic Example of Emily Dickinson

Paperback,
128 pp., $15.95

PHILIP SHELDRAKE

The Spiritual Way

Classic Traditions and Contemporary Practice

Paperback,
192 pp., $24.95

CALL TO ASK ABOUT EXAM COPY POLICY

LITURGICAL PRESS litpress.org • 800-858-5450 **eBooks also available**