

America

FALL 2021

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

FALL LITERARY REVIEW 2021

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Welcome to Fall Books 2021

Several summers ago, I was walking up Sixth Avenue in Manhattan after work when I was passed by a man standing on the back bumper of a water truck. Holding a long hose affixed to a metal rod, he was performing the same task again and again: As the truck stopped at each sidewalk lamppost with a flowerpot attached, he would delicately raise his apparatus 30 feet in the air and water the plants within.

How does one get this job?

Don't get me wrong: I have no complaints about my current employment, for which I am much better suited than anything requiring a truck. But there was something about his work that felt oddly comforting: the ritual application of the water; the syncope created by the roar of the truck in transit and the silence of the act of watering itself; the careful task of keeping something alive in a place no flower should bloom. Every writer—maybe every artist—must have a fantasy about life being as ordered as that and so quietly nurturing and productive. Alas, most writers are probably more like Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., who famously once wrote:

birds build—but not I build;
no, but strain,

Time's eunuch, and not
breed one work that wakes.

Mine, O thou lord of life,
send my roots rain.

I am not sure if Hopkins's theme there was writing or sex, but you get his point. Writers usually do not tend to their flowerpots in orderly fashion, and so the appearance (or endurance) of the blossoms can seem like a moment of divine intervention. (Some-

times in the form of an angel known as "an editor.")

Both of the features in this special literary issue center on authors who seem to view writing that way: as a process of drawing life from soil that is fertile but stubborn, which gives and takes away in due season. In an excerpt from *A Place Called Mississippi*, W. Ralph Eubanks waxes eloquent on the literary landscape of his home state, small in size and yet occupying an outsized place in the world of American letters. "It is the beauty of the land mixed with the state's complex history that inspires and perplexes its writers," he writes. "That is the burden one feels when writing about Mississippi, because it is a place that everyone knows about—or at least claims to—yet few are willing to understand."

Our second feature is a profile of a Russian writer with whom not enough Americans are familiar: Olga Sedakova. A poet, essayist, translator and ethnographer, she is also "the most important Christian poet in the world today," according to Jim Curtis. Spending her formative years as a somewhat solitary soul in the arid cultural milieu of the Brezhnev-era Soviet Union, Ms. Sedakova flourished as a poet and a thinker within the confines of tiny Moscow apartments, environments where artistic endeavors could be nurtured in secret. In his survey of her works and days, Mr. Curtis asks a question that seems fair to answer in the affirmative: "Is Olga Sedakova Russia's next Nobel laureate?"

A change of pace for us can be found in Nick Sawicki's profile of Mark Carney, the author of *Value(s)*. Mr. Carney was the governor of the

Bank of Canada and the Bank of England and is now the United Nations' special envoy for climate action and finance. No bloodthirsty capitalist he, Mr. Carney lays out a blueprint for the future of financial markets that is informed by his decades of work in the financial sector but also inflected by the teachings of Pope Francis on solidarity and economic justice—and maybe he throws in a few quotes from Virgil here and there.

These pages offer much more from the world of books, including a reflection on the ideal place to grow up Catholic (it is not where you think), a reconsideration of classic children's tales, profiles of novelists and economists, our requisite look back at Flannery O'Connor (after all, we must keep up appearances), poetry and, of course, plenty of book reviews as well. We also honor our generous benefactors with a special listing in this issue.

Twice a year we publish an extra issue of *America* dedicated to books and all things literary; one in planting season and one at harvest time. They offer an opportunity to grow a little literary garden of our own. They are also a chance to share with our authors, editors and readers the experience of watching it all come together and bloom.

James T. Keane, *senior editor*.



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Protestors take part in a library read-in outside Whiteinch Library on June 12 in Glasgow, Scotland. The protesters were demonstrating against the closure of the library.

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A JESUIT MINISTRY

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ELIZABETH BECKWITH
Confessions of a Las Vegas Catholic

What Has the Catholic Book Club Been Reading Recently? Novels.

Our two most recent selections in the Catholic Book Club are both set in the American Southwest and are both deeply Catholic in their themes and their characters; both are also novels that their authors developed from previously published short stories. But that may be where the similarities end.

The first, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, by Walter Miller Jr., is a 1959 science fiction tale about a desert monastery that was founded to preserve knowledge after a nuclear holocaust. The second, *The Five Wounds*, by Kirstin Valdez Quade, is a 2021 novel (developed from a short story published in *The New Yorker* in 2009) about five generations of a Catholic family in northern New Mexico, who find life a tumultuous succession of moments of grace and of tragedy.

Our Catholic Book Club moderator, Kevin Spinale, S.J., crafted essays for both books, including questions for contemplation and discussion. Our Facebook page continues to be the gathering place where our more than 7,000 Catholic Book Club members discuss each book.

A Canticle for Leibowitz

Our discussion of Walter Miller Jr.'s classic tale got off to an entertaining start with a surprising confession from Father Spinale. "I am sorry, but I do not like science fiction. So perhaps a fruitful way to initiate discussion on this novel is for me to admit that I do not really like it," he wrote in his interpretive essay for *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. While he found it "prescient" and "clever and funny in spots," he needed convincing that the book "is, in fact, a great novel."

The easy if snarky answer—that Father Spinale is a philistine—made some sense to me. I have considered *Canticle* a brilliant and thought-provoking story ever since I first read it as a freshman in high school. But some of our fellow readers, many of whom had also read it years ago, also had mixed reactions to the book. "Unlike Father Spinale, I do like science fiction," wrote Gerald Moss. "Like Father Spinale, I disliked this novel and don't understand why it has endured. It frustrated me; it annoyed me; it seemed to have been the longest read I have encountered in quite a long time."

When *Canticle* first came out, David Doel noted, three novels about the end of the world as we know it were popular: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's

1984 and Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*. "A *Canticle for Leibowitz* had just been published in 1959 and is good enough to have made the list," he commented. "But *Canticle* is far more than a dystopian novel. This time [reading it], I paid more attention to the Catholic aspects, and doing so made the book more interesting to me."

Miller had been a tail gunner in the Second World War and participated in the controversial American bombing of the Italian abbey of Montecassino. Profiles of him after his death (he died by suicide in 1996) suggested that his experiences in World War II had given him a haunting sense of an apocalypse in humanity's future. "It struck me that this veteran's life after the war was devoted to working through the reality of nuclear weapons and war," commented Rita Rings. Miller converted to Catholicism after the war, and it is clear in *Canticle* that he considered the Catholic Church to be the world's sole bulwark against madness and decline.

No surprise, then, that Miller found his world once again turned upside down with the many changes in the church that followed the Second Vatican Council. "Even though theologians, Scripture scholars and liturgists had been at work for years prior to Vatican II, it took place and went into effect at a time when cultures around the world were experiencing drastic changes," commented Sally Meyers. "Add a stable church into the mix and it was too much for many staunch believers to understand and accept." That seems to have been the case for Miller, who eventually drifted away from the church.

Liz Latorre noted that the dominant theme of the book was that "human intellectual progress will inevitably lead to destruction because of a decrease of reliance on God and an increase of reliance on humanity." David W. Madsen commented that Miller had a fairly accurate (if acid) take on human nature: "George Santayana cautioned that history serves no purpose unless people learn from its lessons. Miller seems to suggest (and, ironically, history would bear him out) that we do not learn and so it does not provide 'a stay against self-destruction.'"

The Five Wounds

We just recently began our discussion of our latest selection, *The Five Wounds*, by Kirstin Valdez Quade. Readers of **America** may be familiar with Valdez Quade,

as her writing has been the focus of several reviews and profiles, including a recent review of *The Five Wounds* by Jenny Shank. “While the short story [from which the novel is developed] dazzled with its humor, verve, bold use of Catholic imagery and shocking action, the novel settles in,” Shank wrote. This longer work “lets the virtues and contradictions of its characters unfurl and offers profound insights about how the stability of even a tension-filled family can serve as a saving grace for each member.”

The protagonist of the story is Amadeo Padilla, a local ne'er-do-well who wants to be like Jesus, though in his own special way. He was “no silky-haired, rosy-cheeked, honey-eyed Jesus,” writes Valdez Quade. His brief moment imitating Jesus is not followed by grace and peace; rather, for Amadeo and his family, “the dramatic moments in life merely set the stage for the hard, quotidian work of dealing with their aftermath with purpose and without despair,” Shank writes.

Some readers found Valdez Quade’s frank depictions of sex in the novel off-putting, and some thought the hard-bit-ten characters did not seem likely to find redemption. Others argued that Valdez Quade presented believable characters with complicated lives. “I enjoyed it,” wrote Brian Lennon. “I kept thinking the ladies at my church would probably not appreciate it, but it’s real life.” Jeanne Blum thought the same. “It really presents a beautiful insight,” she wrote, “but it all comes together toward the end. I loved the character development, which kept me engaged.”

While Valdez Quade’s stories frequently feature Catholic characters, her own relationship to the church is complicated. “I consider myself Catholic,” she told Shank in a profile in *America* in 2018. “That history, that tradition, feels very central to my understanding of my family history and my place in the world. On the other hand, there are a lot of ways in which I feel that it’s a pretty inhospitable religion for me. I think that’s another tension that I keep returning to. What does it mean for me to love this religion that I don’t always feel wants me?”

So perhaps that is one more similarity between *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and *The Five Wounds*. The authors of both cherish so much about their faith that it inevitably becomes central to their fiction, and yet they struggle with the tensions of being a Catholic in the modern world. Very

Graham Greene.

We try to mix it up in terms of genres in our Catholic Book Club selections. In the past we have covered biographies, histories, books of poetry and plenty of novels. We are always interested in suggestions for what to choose next. Are you interested in reading and discussing with us? Join the Catholic Book Club at americamagazine.org/catholic-book-club or on Facebook at facebook.com/groups/americancbc. Happy reading!

James T. Keane, *senior editor*.

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Memory and Mississippi

By W. Ralph Eubanks

Craig Hanckey



Stuckey's Bridge over the Chunky River, just outside Meridian, Miss.

Why does this land—a very poor rural state with a high rate of illiteracy—inspire and produce so many writers?

*Editor's note: "To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi." These words, often attributed to William Faulkner, "have become the mantra of every writer who works within the borders of this state. If you can find where the past and the present intersect within Mississippi, you can indeed understand the world," writes W. Ralph Eubanks in *A Place Like Mississippi: A Journey Through a Real and Imagined Literary Landscape* (Timber Press, 2021). Such a journey, Eubanks writes, requires an understanding of the physical landscapes of Mississippi as well as its literary topography: "A journey through the terrain that inspires Mississippi writers is one taken through both real and imagined places, where sometimes what is imagined seems real and what is real seems imaginary."*

Though a small state in terms of geographic size and population, Mississippi occupies an outsized place in the world of American letters. Why? How has "a little state that rests alongside the banks of a great and mighty river" made so many significant contributions to American literature? "The answer," Eubanks writes, "lies in a landscape that pairs ordinariness with beauty, magic with madness, and mystery with magnificence."

*Born in Mount Olive, Miss., Eubanks is a visiting professor of English and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. He is the author of *The House at the End of the Road: The Story of Three Generations of an Interracial Family in the American South* and *Ever Is a Long Time: A Journey into Mississippi's Dark Past*. The former editor of the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, he is a recipient of a 2007 Guggenheim Fellowship. He served as director of publishing at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., from 1995 to 2013.*

*The following excerpt is drawn from *A Place Like Mississippi*.*

To a first-time visitor, Mississippi's rural landscape brings to mind solitude and loneliness, a place from which one



A journey through the terrain that inspires Mississippi writers is one taken through both real and imagined places. ●●

escapes rather than returns. Yet once the bright and pure quiet of a Mississippi country setting consumes your senses, you begin to feel as if you are in a place comfortably frozen in time. Off the beaten path of four-lane highways, on two-lane blacktops that wind through the rolling hills of the Piney Woods or run the vast stretches of flat Delta land, the hush of the setting is punctuated by tin-roofed barns and houses both large and small. Even close to a small town or suburban development, the land feels remote and holds the power to transfix your gaze. If you slow down and look closely—or even stop to walk around and seek out local inhabitants—you’ll understand why some of the loneliest spaces and most decrepit buildings in the state inspire writers to move them from the landscape to the page. This migration of Mississippi from the real to the imagined is a source of pride for its residents. Whether it is a tree-lined street in the Belhaven neighborhood of Jackson or a narrow stretch of the Chunky River that weaves through the hills outside of Meridian, many writers have taken a piece of the state’s landscape and populated it with a world that mirrors and magnifies the space that inspired it.

Eudora Welty recognized Mississippi as a place that held mystery. In *The Golden Apples*, she sought to expand upon the land’s seemingly unknowable qualities through the fictional setting of Morgana. The result is a town in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta as complex as the landscape itself. Welty combines the red clay with the hayfield and the cotton field, and throws in the Old Natchez Trace for good measure. Morgana could be any small town in the state.

But it was not the Delta that inspired her story “June Recital,” which is set in Morgana. Instead, it was the very street she lived on in Jackson, Pinehurst Street, across from the Belhaven University Music Department where she would hear the constant practicing of piano. In the afterword to her Morgana stories Welty writes, “I began to hear, in what kept coming across the street...the recurring dreams of youth, inescapable, never to be renounced, naming themselves over and over again.” Those “recurring

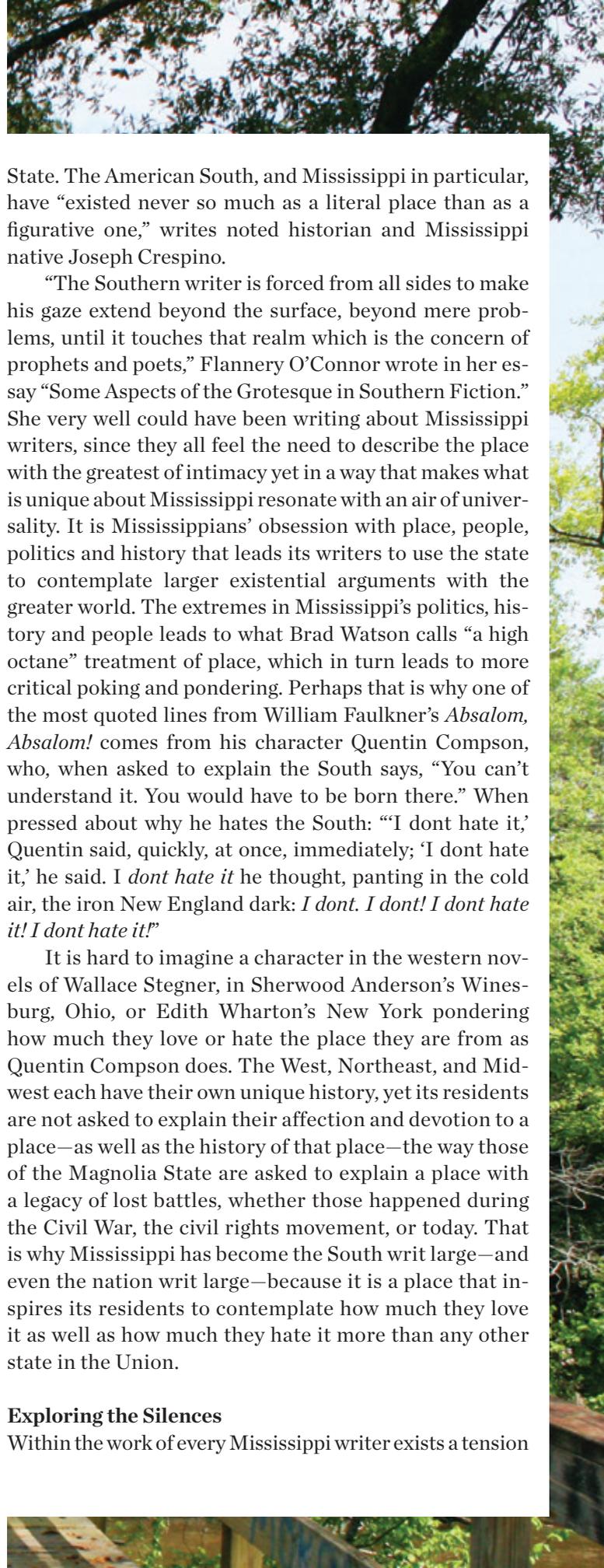
dreams of youth” were poured into her character Virgie Rainey and transported to her imaginary Morgana.

Welty is not alone in creating a confluence of place and memory on the page. Often there is a melding of settings by Mississippi writers rather than the pure re-creation of a solitary location. When Brad Watson set parts of his novel *The Heaven of Mercury* along the banks of the Chunky River, a popular spot for canoeists and fishermen, he mixed together family stories and childhood memories as well as accounts of the riverbank as it exists today. “I have it in my mind that in my parents’ and grandparents’ days, excursions to the Chunky River were even more common than they were in my time. There were a lot fewer ways for young people to entertain themselves in those times,” Watson recalls. But it was also a memory from his childhood that led him to use the river as a setting. “Young people have gone there for a long time to have fun in the summer, so a picnic there makes sense. During my family’s leanest times my brothers and I asked my father one spring if we would get to have a vacation at the beach that year. My father laughed and said, ‘We can’t even afford a vacation to *Chunky* this year.’”

When a place is experienced through the lens of the real and the imagined, whether through our own eyes or those of a writer, it takes on a heightened sense of reality. When Nina Simone sings “Everybody knows about Mississippi, goddam,” images of the violent, turbulent civil rights era come to mind and those scenes from the past become vividly real. Natasha Trethewey evokes a different image in “Theories of Time and Space” when she implores you, her reader, to head south on U.S. Route 49 until it dead-ends in the coastal town of Gulfport, asks you to walk on its artificial beach, and then reminds you to “Bring only what you must carry—tome of memory, its random blank pages.” These two impressions of Mississippi—one forged in anger and the other in a mixture of love, memory, loss and recovery—have much in common. What each writer reveals are the complex emotions that a place so beautiful yet so confounding can bring about.

‘Place Became Central to the Story’

Whether the pages of your notebook are blank or filled with memory, Mississippi’s landscape is one that feeds the work of its writers. When I returned to Mississippi in 1999 to begin research for what I thought would be a narrative history of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission—a civil rights-era, pro-segregation spy agency run and funded by the state for nearly twenty years—I found myself drawn in by the land itself because it was this landscape that made



me a writer. That narrative history became a memoir and place became central to the story I decided to tell. What I realized upon returning was how much of my imagination was threaded together in Mississippi, so much so that it affected the way I looked at the entire world. Growing up on a farm, I also knew the rhythm of the land, with pictures imprinted on my mind of what it looked like in each of the four seasons. That is why my hometown and my farm are characters as much as the people I interviewed and wrote about in *Ever Is a Long Time*.

This transformation of Mississippi's landscape into the canon of American letters is one that makes many ask, "Why does this land"—a very poor rural state with a high rate of illiteracy—"inspire and produce so many writers?" While many have sought to find the answer to this great anomaly, some, like Mississippi-born literary critic Noel Polk, facetiously ascribe it to the air Mississippians breathe and the water they drink. In his book *Tell About the South*, Fred Hobson notes that, "The Southerner, more than any other Americans, has felt he had something to explain, to justify, to defend, or to affirm." John Grisham believes Mississippi's outsized literary output has its origins in suffering, but a particular type of suffering. "Suffering that has been self-inflicted by slavery, war, poverty, injustice, intolerance. Great conflict produces great art, and Mississippi has its share of both." Poet Natasha Trethewey also notes that the pain in Mississippi, like the pain in other parts of the world, leads to art. She writes, "In his memorial to William Butler Yeats, W. H. Auden wrote 'Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.' Likewise, my native land, my South, my Mississippi...hurt me into poetry, inflicting my first wound."

Like Ireland, Mississippi's history is filled with suffering that must be explained; it is a place that comes alive in its stories and inspires those stories, which flow through every bend of its winding rivers and across every piece of land within its borders. It is the beauty of the land mixed with the state's complex history that inspires and perplexes its writers. That is the burden one feels when writing about Mississippi, because it is a place that everyone knows about—or at least claims to—yet few are willing to understand.

The Concern of Poets and Prophets

For better or for worse, Mississippi has become a metaphor for the entire South and for that matter even the entire nation. As Malcolm X said, "As far as I am concerned, Mississippi is anywhere south of the Canadian border." A story about race set in Mississippi is as much about the sins of the nation as it is about the sins of the Magnolia

State. The American South, and Mississippi in particular, have "existed never so much as a literal place than as a figurative one," writes noted historian and Mississippi native Joseph Crespino.

"The Southern writer is forced from all sides to make his gaze extend beyond the surface, beyond mere problems, until it touches that realm which is the concern of prophets and poets," Flannery O'Connor wrote in her essay "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction." She very well could have been writing about Mississippi writers, since they all feel the need to describe the place with the greatest of intimacy yet in a way that makes what is unique about Mississippi resonate with an air of universality. It is Mississippians' obsession with place, people, politics and history that leads its writers to use the state to contemplate larger existential arguments with the greater world. The extremes in Mississippi's politics, history and people leads to what Brad Watson calls "a high octane" treatment of place, which in turn leads to more critical poking and pondering. Perhaps that is why one of the most quoted lines from William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* comes from his character Quentin Compson, who, when asked to explain the South says, "You can't understand it. You would have to be born there." When pressed about why he hates the South: "I dont hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; 'I dont hate it,' he said. I *dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark: *I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!*"

It is hard to imagine a character in the western novels of Wallace Stegner, in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, or Edith Wharton's *New York* pondering how much they love or hate the place they are from as Quentin Compson does. The West, Northeast, and Midwest each have their own unique history, yet its residents are not asked to explain their affection and devotion to a place—as well as the history of that place—the way those of the Magnolia State are asked to explain a place with a legacy of lost battles, whether those happened during the Civil War, the civil rights movement, or today. That is why Mississippi has become the South writ large—and even the nation writ large—because it is a place that inspires its residents to contemplate how much they love it as well as how much they hate it more than any other state in the Union.

Exploring the Silences

Within the work of every Mississippi writer exists a tension



between the history of the characters and actual historic events, between the history of place and the region's idea of itself. Historical events are seen as metaphor, while a character's history is viewed as the real thing. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* is a novel about history, and it is the South's history of slavery and miscegenation—and the shame sometimes associated with that history—that propels the narrative. The main character, Thomas Sutpen, is framed in the narrative as a man with “no past,” but he is actually a man with a hidden past, which Faulkner slowly unspools, revealing how the past is a living force, one that frames and shapes our sense of the present.

Thomas Sutpen in some ways is a metaphor for Mississippi, which is a place that sometimes avoids its past rather than confronting it. Perhaps that is why every Mississippi writer feels in some way that the past can never be escaped. It is largely this inability to shut the door on the past that fuels the work of Mississippi's writers, who feel the need to explain these shards of history. It certainly has provided the backdrop for my work as a writer and essayist who focuses on the American South. I sense a profound need to serve as a clarifying force in understanding Mississippi and the South. To find a good Mississippi story, I always say, “explore the silences,” for it is within the parts of our history we have chosen to shroud in silence in which our best stories reside. My writing life involves the pursuit of those silences.

But the idea of Mississippi's landscape and history serving as the inspiration for its writers is not merely an outgrowth of the aftermath of the Civil War or a twentieth-century literary movement, or a movement that has its origins in the work of William Faulkner. Mississippi's indigenous people are the earliest creators of literature in the state, with an oral tradition that also focused on explaining the past, a past that in some ways has been lost. Yet their literary voices remain in the names of places that dot the landscape: Biloxi, Tunica, Pascagoula, Yazoo, Tishomingo, Yalobusha, Tallahatchie, Itta Bena, Yockanookany and, from my native Piney Woods, Okatoma. It is in the names of these places that this state's native people contributed to Mississippi literature's distinctive voice, described by writer Willie Morris as “the mysterious, lost euphonious litany.”

Rebuilding From the Ruins

A journey through the terrain that inspires Mississippi writers is one taken through both real and imagined places, where sometimes what is imagined seems real and what is real seems imaginary. The centrality of place to Mississippi

writers is what makes the real and imagined so closely intertwined, whether it is Faulkner's Jefferson and the university town of Oxford, Elizabeth Spencer's town of Lacey from *The Voice at the Back Door* and Carrollton, or Steve Yarbrough's imagined Delta town of Loring and his hometown of Indianola. While those beautiful and mysterious Native American names dapple the landscape, keeping a lost piece of the state's past alive, Mississippi as a place is changing and evolving, even in places like the Delta, where much seems to be frozen in time and the past only seems to melt along the edges. Still, change can be difficult to embrace.

Change, particularly cultural change, may be difficult to accept in Mississippi because it is a place held rapt by its own mythology as well as cultural rituals that sustain those myths. Yet the patchwork of eighty-two counties that make up Mississippi are indeed changing, and those changes reverberate from the piers along the Mississippi Sound in the Gulf of Mexico right up to the Tennessee state line at Memphis. Sometimes that change feels like a ruin that cannot be rebuilt, its original structure now compromised by constant battering. It is the rebuilding from the ruins that drives the work of the state's writers and allows their work to be so central not only to the culture of Mississippi but also to American literature. As Jackson-based writer Katy Simpson Smith has noted, to be a Mississippi writer today is not to write about a state “dripping with Spanish moss and punctuated by mockingbird song,” but instead to explore “surprising intersections, where violence within the self had become as important as violence across racial lines, where poverty was nuanced rather than made perverse, where families were built from intentional love rather than tied to tortured bloodlines.”

“To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi” are words that are said to have come from William Faulkner, but were more likely to have been attributed to Faulkner by his fellow Mississippian Willie Morris. The story I've heard is that either Willie thought Faulkner had said it, or maybe he *wanted* Faulkner to have said it. Whatever the origin of these words, they are true and that is why they have become the mantra of every writer who works within the borders of this state. If you can find where the past and the present intersect within Mississippi, you can indeed understand the world.

The idea that Mississippi is a place larger than life serves as inspiration to writers who were born there but work elsewhere. These writers have never been able to shake their conscience free of the place because in Missis-

sippi nothing is ever escaped. This sense also inspires those Mississippi writers who now claim this state as home and seek to understand its wounds and imperfections as they create poems and stories that spring from this soil. Both the words of these writers and images of the places that inspired them reveal how a little state that rests alongside the banks of a great and mighty river has made so many significant contributions to American letters, carrying an out-sized role in the national imagination. The answer lies in a landscape that pairs ordinariness with beauty, magic with madness, and mystery with magnificence.

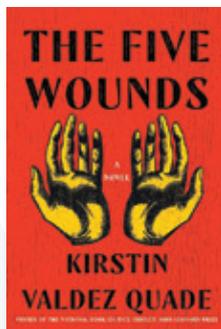
W. Ralph Eubanks is the author of *Ever Is a Long Time* and *The House at the End of the Road*. He has written for *The Chicago Tribune*, *Preservation*, *Time*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *WIRED*, *The New Yorker* and *NPR*. This essay is taken from *A Place Like Mississippi* and is used by permission of the publisher (Timber Press, Portland, Ore.).

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Eviction—

Paterson, 2020

By Gerald McCarthy

This man, this woman
are the city—
the child's toys
stuffed
in a cardboard box—
sagging at the edges,
and a blue tricycle
one handlebar
askew, its flag of
colored plastic streamers
lifted by the rush
of passing cars—
a three-legged table, car tires
stacked like lopsided
dishes—
and two black and whites
parked
back to back
along the curb—
one with its amber light
flashing.

Gerald McCarthy's most recent book of poetry is *Door in the Wall* (Spuyten Duyvil Press, 2020).

Olga Sedakova's Poetic Faith

A close-up portrait of Olga Sedakova, a woman with short, wavy, light brown hair. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a black turtleneck under a red, textured knit sweater. A necklace of dark brown, round beads is visible around her neck. She has a small hoop earring in her left ear.

Olga Sedakova is a poet, essayist, translator and ethnographer who is a master of the contemporary poetic canon.

A profoundly Russian author offers insights into Christian living

By Jim Curtis

Is Olga Sedakova Russia's next Nobel laureate? The multitalented poet, essayist, translator and ethnographer is an astoundingly prolific writer: A four-volume edition of her collected works was published in 2010. She won the European Prize for Poetry in 1995 and the Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn Prize for "the striving to convey the mystery of life in a simple lyrical style" in 2003. She has published over two dozen books on everything from Old Church Slavonic to Dante. American readers may be interested to know that some of her work is available in English. An anthology of her essays entitled *Freedom to Believe: Philosophical and Cultural Essays* came out in 2010, and *In Praise of Poetry*, a volume of translations of selections from her poems, followed in 2014.

Like her fellow countryman Leo Tolstoy, Sedakova exhibits a fascinating combination of specifically Russian attitudes and cosmopolitan interests. She may attract the attention of readers in the United States not just because of the quality of her poetry, but because she has such striking affinities with American writers (much like Vladimir Nabokov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn). It is not surprising, then, that Sedakova's deepest affinities lie with T. S. Eliot and Emily Dickinson, poets whom she admires and has translated.

More than any other poet of the last century, Sedakova exemplifies what Eliot had in mind when he wrote that "poetry is not the expression of emotion, but the release from emotion." Sedakova relentlessly eschews any confessional or autobiographical elements in her poetry and in her interviews. Although she is a major cultural celebrity

in Russia, she has revealed very little about herself, aside from what one might find on a résumé—a list of her degrees, publications and awards. She seems to have devoted her life exclusively to reading and writing, and as a result has published a great deal of scholarship as well as poetry.

Born in 1949 in Moscow, Sedakova still lives in Moscow and has a summer house in Azarovka, a suburb outside the city. Now 71, she is a devout Orthodox Christian. Though she remains a profoundly Russian poet, steeped in Russian tradition, she is also fluent in Greek, Latin, French, English and Italian. Her major works (both originals and translations) include the poetry collections *Gates*, *Windows*, *Arches*; *A Chinese Journey*; and *The Beginning of a Book*. Two of her major prose works are *In Praise of Poetry* and *Translating Dante*.

Formative Years

In "The Word and Faith," the excellent documentary film about her that aired in Russia in 2019, she shows photographs of her parents, but otherwise says nothing about them. Nor are her parents even named on her website or social media (which is available in four languages). She has one sister, Irina. Readers may find parallels to the American spiritual teacher Caroline Myss or the British biblical scholar Karen Alexander in her lack of mention of personal detail. In "A Few Lines About Myself," a brief essay published in *The Hudson Review* in 2014, she says, "I don't much like to remember all that is known as biography."

Like Emily Dickinson, Sedakova has written great prose and poetry in response to an experience of enclo-



Early on, Sedakova realized that the study of foreign languages offered one way out of the closed circle of Soviet life. ●●

sure. Dickinson spent almost all her adult life in her house in Amherst, Mass., so she often thought about things that moved. She described a book as a frigate in her poems and said, “Hope is the thing with feathers.” Sedakova also spent her formative years shut off from the outside world, although for very different reasons.

The environment in which Sedakova matured as a poet was the pressure-cooker era of the Leonid Brezhnev regime in the Soviet Union, which lasted from 1964 to 1982. In an influential essay, “The Generation That Found Itself,” the Russian scholar Mikhail Epstein has pointed out that since day followed day with little prospect of change during that era, the pace of daily life slowed down so much that people turned inward, both literally and figuratively, as Dickinson had done in 19th-century New England. Painters could not put on public exhibits, and poets could not give public readings, so they held those events privately in apartments.

Poetry was not the only element of Russian culture that privately flourished during the public stagnation of the Brezhnev years. Painters, practicing another art that was able to be performed and experienced in private, also

experienced a renaissance. Art lovers in the West may be familiar with the names of Ilya Kabakov and Erik Bulatov, the two major figures of the Soviet painting underground, but there were other major artists as well. One major, if less known, figure was Vladimir Weisberg. Among Weisberg’s major works are his “white on white paintings”; these, along with his “Still Life With Geometric Figures” from 1978, give visual representation to the desire for spiritual purity that has animated Sedakova’s written work.

Influences and Inspirations

What were the formative influences in her life? If it is true that it takes a village to raise a child, then it is also true that it takes a village to raise a poet—especially such a subtle, complex, erudite poet as Sedakova. Where did she find her village?

Here we must begin by acknowledging the inadequacy of the standard narrative that informs so much discussion in the West about Russian artists, one that reflexively assumes that all Russian intellectuals were dissidents in revolt against the Soviet state. This narrative works for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as well as other brave souls who opposed the government in various ways, but it does not apply to Sedakova; she belonged to a movement now called “the Second Culture,” which is little understood today even by Russians. Members of the Second Culture did something arguably more radical than the dissidents: They did not oppose the Soviet Union; they simply ignored it. They proposed to live their lives as though the Soviet Union did not exist.

This shared sense of “us versus them” created deep bonds among the Moscow intelligentsia who were part of the movement. This was, in effect, Sedakova’s village, which produced significant results for other artists as well. So far, the infamous Brezhnev era has produced two Nobel laureates—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky. There is good reason to believe that Sedakova will follow in their footsteps to Stockholm.

In the dark days of the 1960s and 1970s, Sedakova must have often thought of Heb 11:1, which tells us that faith is “the evidence of things not seen.” She had no reason to believe that the Soviet Union would not last forever and that its aggressive atheism would not prevail against religion. Her opposition to the closed Soviet society can be found in her references to openings in the title of her important collection *Gates. Windows. Arches*. All these words connote openings, in opposition to enclosure. In a telling line from that collection, she affirmed that “there is always a step,

there is always a move, there is always a path.” (All quotations here from Sedakova’s poetry are my own translations from the original Russian texts.)

When exactly Sedakova became a believer remains a mystery. Among what were probably many factors in this momentous decision was surely her association with Sergey Averintsev (1937-2004), a professor of classical studies at Moscow State University.

Averintsev was one of the major intellectuals of the late 20th century, a scholar of such erudition that his colleagues were in awe of him. In the 1960s, his lectures on spirituality in the ancient world became a social phenomenon in the Soviet Union that responded to the spiritual hunger of his society. He spoke before packed auditoriums; loudspeakers were installed in additional rooms to accommodate the overflow crowds who wanted to hear him. He was ordained a Russian Orthodox priest in 1973 and began to deliver sermons in addition to lectures. By both example and precept, Averintsev showed Sedakova how one might combine scholarship with faith.

Averintsev’s work is almost completely unknown in the West, as is that of the two other professors who served as mentors and father figures to Sedakova, Vladimir Bibikhin and Yuri Lotman. These exceptionally prolific and influential thinkers created such a substantial body of work that they and their contemporaries are considered the leaders of a Second Renaissance of Russian thought.

Without the demands of personal relationships, and under the influence of Averintsev, Bibikhin and Lotman, Sedakova added scholarship to poetry and devoted her talents to these two mutually supportive poles of her life. She earned a doctorate in anthropology, with a dissertation on ancient burial practices.

Early on, Sedakova realized that the study of foreign languages offered one way out of the closed circle of Soviet life, and so made herself a polyglot. In addition to the multiple languages mentioned above, she is also fluent in Old Church Slavonic, the liturgical language of the Russian Orthodox Church, which she has taught and for which she has published a concordance.

Prose and Poetry

Sedakova is one of few major poets in the world today who might claim to have mastered the entire Western canon. She has exactly the kind of historical sense that T. S. Eliot described in his influential 1922 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” where he says:

[T]he historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.

Bringing Eliot’s modernist sensibility into the post-modern world makes Sedakova an outlier in the 21st century. Although we may hope that she is not the last great Russian poet, she is probably the last great one with such a richly informed historical sense.

Sedakova began writing as a teenager. But her early work contains no confessions, no teenage angst. It shows that she was already striving for what the Victorians called “high seriousness.” To judge from her second collection, *The Wild Rose* (1976-78), her conversion to Christianity likely occurred when she was in her late 20s. In “The Second Legend,” a key poem from that collection, she asserts a turning away from human love to spiritual love: “Among the paths given to the heart/ There is a path laid out in those days....” By “those days,” she means *in illo tempore*, to use the Latin phrase for transcendent time as opposed to historical time. What is implied is that this path leads away from human relationships and toward God.

Sedakova’s 24-line poem “A Strange Journey” is another exceptional work of the imagination. As in Bob Dylan’s great song “Visions of Johanna,” which it closely resembles, the poet’s sensibility moves from an acknowledgment of the physical world to a visionary experience of its disintegration, with the result that nothing but spirit is left. Thus, the journey in the title is not a physical journey, but a journey of the soul—a metaphysical and simultaneously autobiographical statement. It shows how she benefited from reading Eliot, and yet its concentrated power rivals anything he ever wrote.

For Sedakova, as for Dylan (an artist with whom she has deep affinities), the theme of transcendence is so rich with meaning that it takes many guises. As her personal and poetic drive toward transcendence matured, it seems to have deepened into a belief in God, the belief that unites her poetry and her scholarship. Three lines near the beginning of “A Strange Journey” sum up the work:

So, as your soul aches and your vision wants to break

The evil, crooked mirror that teaches us to not-love
So I found out who I am destined to be with.

The soul wants to break “the evil, crooked mirror”—the Soviet system—because external appearances do not matter to the soul. “The soul groans from appearances,” as she puts it. The fixation on externals separates people and teaches them to “not-love,” an apt neologism for Soviet aggressive attitudes. Her inner vision, the only kind that matters, shows her true destiny.

She concludes “A Strange Journey” with the image of a train, an image that has been packed with meaning in Russia ever since Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* committed suicide by throwing herself under one: “The train hurtles along,” Sedakova writes. Because of the exceptional power of Tolstoy’s novel, when a woman in a Russian poem rides a train, it makes readers think of death. But in Sedakova’s mystical consciousness, death is in life, and life is in death: “I will ride and think in my pre-heart emptiness,/ Ride and ride and cry about my endless death....” The striking phrase “pre-heart emptiness” surely refers to the newfound awareness of her mortality that her vision has given her. It is a quasi-Buddhist image that suggests that she has been emptied out of all that is superficial—all that is a matter of surfaces—and precedes and impedes the openness of the heart.

Encounters With John Paul II

Though she once modestly described herself in an interview as “an ordinary parishioner,” Sedakova has had a profound influence on many Russian Orthodox Christians in both Russia and the United States. Nevertheless, she is drawn to Catholicism, as the fact that she wrote a book on Dante suggests. The predominance of dogmatic attitudes among the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy and its obsequious stance toward President Vladimir Putin of Russia might also help to explain why she is drawn to Catholicism, and why in particular she has a connection with St. John Paul II, the first Slavic pope. During the late 1990s, she met with him several times, and these meetings left her filled with fervent admiration.

In a post on her Facebook page, she wrote: “I had the good fortune to meet with John Paul II several times and at length. These were the ‘Solovyov Sessions’ in his chambers in 1996-9. After every meeting with him the feeling that I had been in the center of the world, perhaps, in the heart of the world, and that that heart was Christian. Everything else seemed like the provinces,” she wrote in 2020. “He

probably saw in each person whom he met that this was a precious illumination for him. It was as though he seriously expected something from those whom he met and parted with them with gratitude. Such, I supposed, is the view of sainthood. You feel yourself seen in depth—and that is not frightening, as one might expect.”

“Next to a saint we feel ourselves in the center of the world,” she continued. “This feeling that everything is saved and nothing will perish. That everybody and everything is together. Unity is one of the most important of John Paul II’s words: Christian unity and the unity of the human race. He loves Russia, Russian culture, Orthodoxy, and hopes that we will be together. ‘I pray for Russia every day,’ he said to me at our first meeting.”

Poetry and Belief

Not surprisingly, this bond between the two came out in Sedakova’s poetry. Her anthology *The Beginning of a Book* contains “Three Poems to John Paul II.” As with all poems by Sedakova, one should not expect to find sentimental piety in them. What we do expect, and what we find, is a cycle of poems filled with powerful, subtle images that express a complex poet’s deep faith.

The individual works in Sedakova’s triptych of poems dedicated to John Paul II are written in unrhymed free verse. They are entitled “Rain,” “Nothing” and “Sant Alessio. Roma.” The first poem shows that Sedakova can use the kind of startling beginning that Dickinson was so fond of: “It’s raining,/ And people say there is no God!” This is not so much an affirmation of pantheism as it is the beginning of a theme of life-giving touch, which expands into a biblical reference in “Nothing”: “A stalk rises from the black plowed land,/ The four-day Lazarus rises.”

The images of “Rain” and “Nothing” adumbrate the theme of death in life, and life in death that Sedakova had used previously. It appears in the final lines of the final poem “Sant Alessio. Roma”:

How good finally
How good that everything
That people want so much and ask for
For which they give up
The most precious thing
That, it turns out, is quite unnecessary.
Did you not recognize that?
What remained?
Sores and bones
Dry bones, as in the valley of Jehosaphat.

These provocative images and allusions require some commentary. First of all it must be said that Sedakova owes a certain debt to Eliot's "The Waste Land" here. Eliot's lines "I think we are in rats' alley/ Where the dead men lost their bones" may have suggested that final line.

But Sedakova's dead men have lost their bones in a particular place, "in the valley of Jehosaphat." Sedakova, as a poet concerned with transcending the physical, rarely uses geographical references, so this one contains deeper meaning. We read in Joel 3:1: "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley Jehosaphat." Thus, what is on one level the spiritual theme of death in life is also and simultaneously the theme of the life of culture that results from unity.

The life of St. John Paul II, Sedakova's fellow Slav and fellow polyglot, suggests this theme and the implications that follow. For Sedakova, the theme suggests a *rapprochement* between Russia and the West. For a Russian religious poet, this means the *rapprochement* between Eastern Or-

thodoxy and Roman Catholicism. As Sedakova indicates in a footnote to the poem "Sant Alessio. Roma," the church of the title contains the remains of Aleksey the Man of God, an ascetic saint who died in 411 C.E. and who is recognized by both the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

In those images we might find Olga Sedakova's greatest contribution to the worlds of poetry, spirituality and belief. She deserves widespread interest and attention for her verse, her scholarship and her insights into Christian living, but she still offers something more than that. A rare example of a writer who can bring poetry lovers together with believers, she is the most important Christian poet in the world today.

Jim Curtis is a professor emeritus of Russian and is the author of several books, including *Stalin's Soviet Monastery*.

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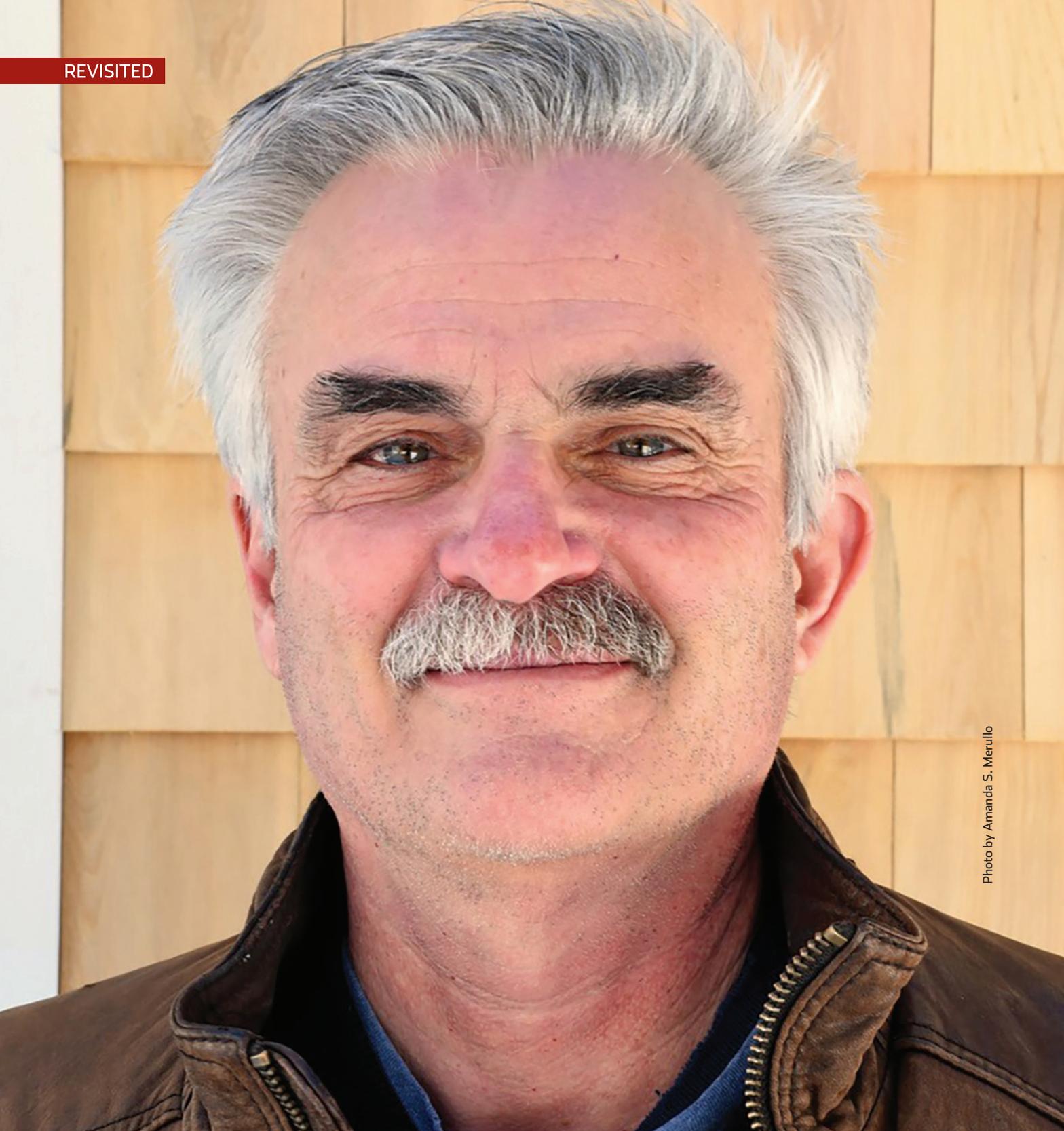


Photo by Amanda S. Merullo

Looking Eastward

The faith of the writer Roland Merullo

By Michael Mastromatteo

A nasty bout of Covid-19 swept through the Merullo household in December 2020, making traditional Christmas celebrations a bit of a problem. The Merullo *capofamiglia*, the Massachusetts writer Roland Merullo, had some weary words of advice for me. “Don’t get Covid,” Merullo said by way of warning. “My wife and I were down for two full weeks and truly miserable. It’s a beast.”

The experience may have ironically provided a moment of pause and reflection for Merullo before we spoke together over several weeks at the end of 2020 about his long and varied writing life. Since publishing his first work in 1991, *Leaving Losapas*, Merullo has written nearly two dozen novels, memoirs, travelogues and, not surprisingly, a book of advice for writers. He has sited much of his writing in fiction and memoir in Revere, Mass., a colorful but ragged community just north of Boston. His most recent novel, *From These Broken Streets*, a story of Italian families coping with the devastation of Naples in the waning days of Mussolini’s fascism, came out in November 2020 through Lake Union Publishing.

While the writer was raised in a traditional Italian Catholic family—and counts St. Anthony of Padua parish in his hometown of Revere as a touchstone in his early life—the author has traded his longstanding Catholicism for an exploration of the Buddhist faith tradition. Although Merullo does not define himself as a Buddhist, he is spiritually comfortable with many aspects of it. “Thomas Merton was fascinated by Buddhism and actually gave me ‘permission’ as a practicing Catholic in my mid-20s to explore that and other Eastern teachings, like Hinduism and Sufism,” he told me.

Like Merton, Merullo appreciates the similarities between Buddhism and Catholicism. There are some fundamental differences, but also a vast common ground. “I don’t put any labels on my spiritual life. I have a hybrid faith or practice and it suits me very well,” he said.

Merullo’s discernment, both as a writer and as an observer of the human condition, is described almost sentimentally in the protagonist’s first-person disclosure in the 2002 novel *In Revere in Those Days*:

I have stopped trying to explain to my friends...what a central place St. Anthony’s Church occupied in my childhood years, and occupies still, in my memory.... That brown stone building, for me, is a museum that holds the solids, the vapors, and liquids that

make up human existence: the joy of birth and the sudden mysterious disappearance that is death, the wailing of babies, the shrieks and laughter of young children, the love of God and the terrors of hell as described to us by pale nuns in spectacles.

Open-Ended Paths

Before finding his vocation as a writer, Merullo took several different career paths. He graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire in 1971 and later attended Boston University and Brown University for bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Russian language and literature.

As a first step in an open-ended career path, Merullo signed up for Peace Corps service in the Truk (now Chuuk) District of Micronesia. He also did three tours (28 months) of the former Soviet Union with the United States Information Agency, where he set up displays of new American technology and answered questions (in Russian) for curious onlookers.

His adventures in Micronesia and the Soviet Union often show up often in the fiction and memoirs Merullo has penned since turning to full-time writing.

Perhaps because he grew up in a traditional Italian family with dozens of uncles, aunts and cousins, Merullo’s work includes obvious homages to the benefits of faith and community. His own parents and grandparents, thinly disguised as characters in his Revere-based novels, continue to inspire the author as models of faith-filled but imperfect and striving humanity. There is also a strong generosity of spirit among Merullo’s fictionalized characters. Even his villains, like the revenge-obsessed mafioso Eddie Crevine in his 2014 novel, *The Return*, acknowledge the evil of their ways and hold on to a sliver of redemption as they live out their final moments.

Early in his writing career, Merullo determined that the faith of his youth and young adulthood insisted on too many rules, expectations and restrictions on thought and behavior. In his memoir *Revere Beach Elegy* (2011), a more world-weary Merullo describes this weakening of traditional belief: “Somewhere in my twenties the list of rules put forth by the Roman Catholic Church became too long for me, the laws too arbitrary, some of the attitudes too narrow, harsh, and un-Christlike. But the power of biblical stories remained, and remains still, and the days leading up to Easter occupy a special place in my spiritual landscape.”

I want the church to 'succeed' because at its best, it does wonderful things in the world and for people.

A Catholic Sensibility

Merullo maintains a deep regard for the Catholic faith despite some of its blemishes, a respect that is readily apparent in the artist's charitable treatment of all his fictional characters. Compulsive gamblers, underworld hitmen, drug abusers and assorted suffering people populate his stories; each of them exhibits traces of goodness within their corrupted souls.

Merullo's concerns with the institutional church come through vividly in two novels that are certain to disturb the sensitivities of many traditional Catholics. The first of these, *American Savior* (2008), can be seen as the Way of the Cross for the new millennium. This book's seemingly preposterous premise jumps out at the reader in the opening sentence: "When Jesus decided to run for president of the United States he began his campaign, sensibly enough, with a miracle."

The book tells the story of a contemporary, hip Jesus, clad in Armani suits and highly polished loafers, running for president as an independent, unaligned candidate. Merullo walks a tightrope of sensitivities in this work but still manages to present a humorous yet challenging scenario of the Word being made flesh in the 21st century.

In keeping with the real crucifixion story, the novel has a somber but inspiring denouement. "I had a hard time having Jesus do anything, say anything in *American Savior*," Merullo told me. "It's tremendously risky and maybe even conceited, but there was no way to write the book otherwise, and I felt strongly about writing it. I think we all have our own Jesus, all of us, even atheists. We imagine him a certain way, looking a certain way, saying certain things, doing certain things."

"I believe that some of what he said and did is accu-

rately reported in the Bible," Merullo continued. "But a lot has been left out; everything he did between age 13 and 30, for one example. I tried to be respectful—I always do—but I felt I could put my imagined Jesus on the page as long as I was a bit irreverent but not disrespectful."

Toward the climax of the story, Christ's incredulous campaign manager, Russ Wilson, reflects on the election experience and, in turn, voices one of Merullo's emerging beliefs:

It was becoming clear to me that what Jesus wanted from us was not pious obedience to a narrow set of rules, but a smart, limitless open-mindedness that allowed us—in real life, in actual day-to-day modern American life—to treat the other person the way we would want to be treated. Gay people, Jewish people, dumb people, rich people, poor people, women, men, right-wingers, liberals, soldiers, and antiwar protestors, maybe even animals—we were supposed to see through the disguise they were wearing, all the way down to the I AM in them. That was it. That was the big commandment, I was almost sure.

Another provocative effort is *Vatican Waltz* (2013), Merullo's crafty attempt to transpose the life of the Virgin Mary into contemporary times. The novel presents a young Boston-area nursing student responding to a persistent inner voice to seek ordination as a priest. Despite opposition from church leaders in her own archdiocese, the heroine, Cynthia Piantedosi, manages to arrange an interview with cardinals at the Vatican, who assess the authenticity of her strange calling.

The story continues with the thwarted heroine discovering that she, like the Blessed Virgin, is pregnant with what could be the son of God.

In *Vatican Waltz*, Merullo again voices his concerns about the church's diminishing reputation in contemporary society through Cynthia, an otherwise devoted cradle Catholic, who observes that "the Church I loved and cherished was shrinking down to a place where it would no longer have the power to remind people of that other dimension, and it seemed clear that so much of that shrinkage had to do with the fact that my Church, in clinging to the old ways, had fallen so far behind modern life that for many people—most of my once-Catholic friends—it wasn't even relevant any longer."

A careful reading of Merullo's Catholic-themed novels reveals the writer's wistfulness over his memories of a

cherished institution that now has a reduced status. But Merullo's work is much more than what might be termed church bashing. His tone is respectful throughout, and by introducing elements of Buddhist thinking in his more recent stories, Merullo appears headed toward a synthesis of the best parts of both faiths—perhaps of all faiths.

In the book *The Delight of Being Ordinary* (2017), for example, Merullo challenges the reader's credulity as he paints a word portrait of a secret three-day road trip through the Italian countryside by the pope and the Dalai Lama. Enlivened by good humor and a sense of carefree adventure, this book allows the two faith leaders to discourse on how Catholicism and Buddhism can complement each other in the quest for a more universal system of truth. It also gives readers yet another glimpse into Merullo's part-Catholic, part-Buddhist outlook.

Partway through the road trip, the Dalai Lama argues gently for the contemplative life:

"In the East, we have not so good roads, not so beautiful buildings, not so much medicine like you have." He paused there, sadly it seemed, but then added, "All those same years we have used power of the mind to go into the deepest parts of meditation, to learn not to be afraid of death and suffering, to learn that we are not really this body, to raise consciousness toward another level of life."

The character of the pope, unabashedly modeled on Pope Francis, has his say in response about how faith can be nuanced to effect a new understanding:

But there are also times when we must yield, accept the unexpected, the unwanted, even the apparently unbearable. The world is bursting with neurosis, and it seems to me that the source of this neurosis is a lack of appropriate acceptance, an urge to control everything, to resist God's divine guidance in whatever surprising or difficult form it takes.

Spiritual Responsibility

In reflecting on his extensive body of work over the last 30 years, Merullo stresses that he is not a theologian, and he makes no claims to having special insights into how Christ's life on Earth should be understood or emulated.

"I want the church to 'succeed' because at its best, it does wonderful things in the world and for people," Merullo

said. "It's not so much that I want to borrow from other faiths—though that would be nice, especially in the contemplative tradition that is emphasized more in Buddhism, and, I feel, less than it should be in Catholicism—but because the strictest rules, such as no women priests, no birth control, attending Mass every Sunday or it's a mortal sin, are man-made. They put off good people and, in my humble opinion, they have nothing to do with Christ's teachings."

What Merullo takes from his reading of the New Testament is that Christ is ultimately about love, not about imposing and following rules. This attitude might have lessons for cynical secularists who dismiss religious faith as superstition, or for religious extremists who are threatened by a loosening of centuries-old doctrines. Ultimately, for Merullo, the key is not what you believe, but how you behave toward those around you.

"I think cynics are afraid to be good, afraid that [Christianity] is false, or it will make them vulnerable or make them appear to be unintelligent," Merullo said. "And I do think that religious extremists are also operating out of fear. They are too rigid—something Christ definitely was not—and too forceful with the belief systems of others. If you really are at peace with yourself and with God, you don't need to force your ideas on others."

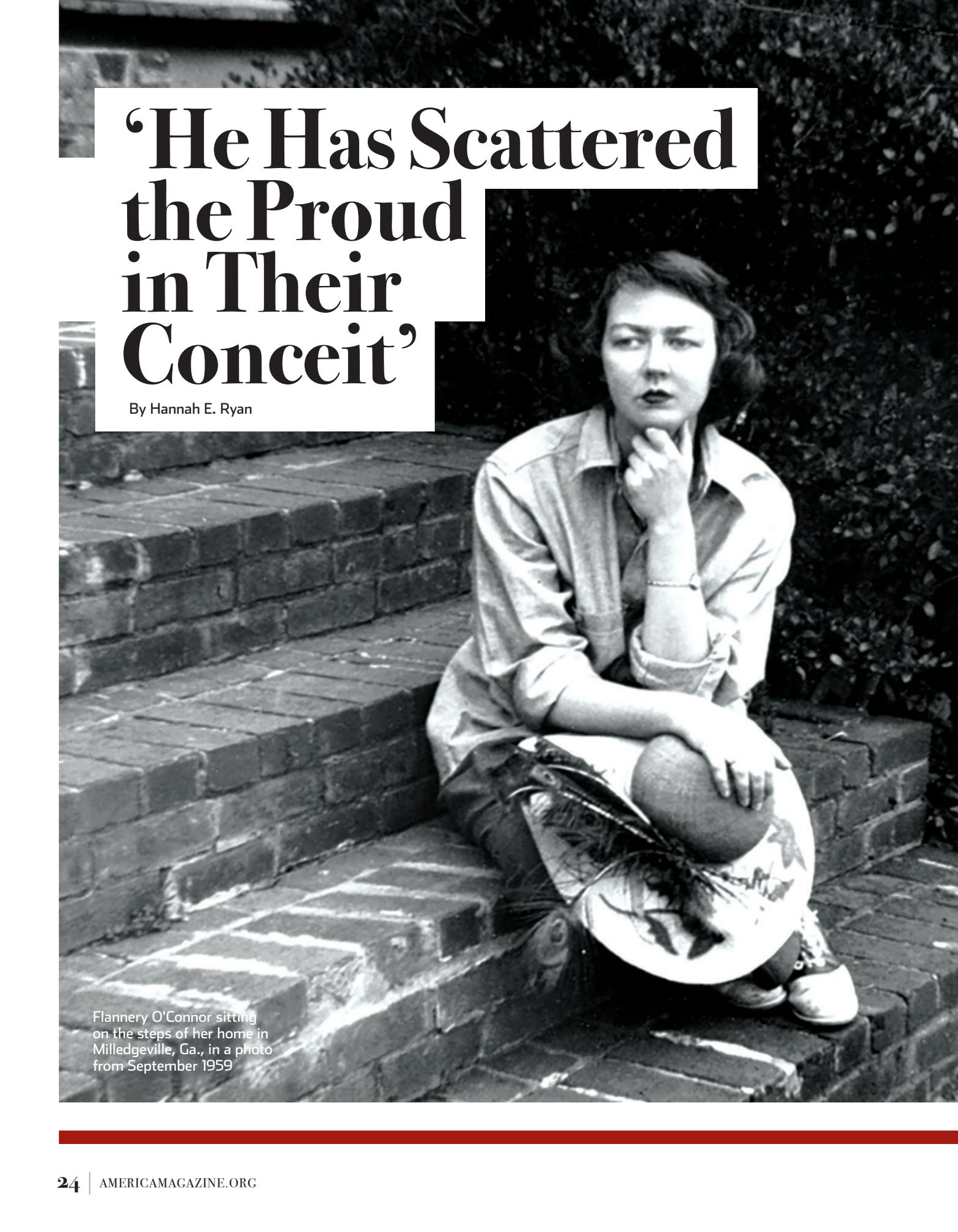
As Merullo approaches septuagenarian status, he remains alert to new writing projects. His latest novel, *Driving Jesus to Little Rock*, was released on Aug. 13. The story features a narrator who picks up a hitchhiker who turns out to be Jesus and drives him all the way from Little Rock, Ark., to western Massachusetts—Merullo's home locale. "They have all kinds of conversations and adventures," the writer said. This latest publication will certainly give readers further access to Merullo's personal exegesis on what potential still exists in religious faith.

"I think we are all given gifts, sometimes subtle ones, sometimes big ones, and our main calling is to figure out what the gift is and use it for our own contentment and for the benefit of the world," he said. "Part of our spiritual responsibility is discovering what we are designed to do in this life, and then doing it as well as we can."

Michael Mastromatteo is a Toronto-based columnist and book reviewer for *Catholic News Service*.

‘He Has Scattered the Proud in Their Conceit’

By Hannah E. Ryan



Flannery O'Connor sitting
on the steps of her home in
Milledgeville, Ga., in a photo
from September 1959

Flannery O'Connor's theology of displacement and what it can offer our current moment

In an installment of Bishop Robert Barron's film series "Catholicism: The Pivotal Players," Flannery O'Connor, on a pilgrimage to Rome, stands behind a cluster of clerics. A shadow covers her face as she stares into the distance, past the priests and even Pope Pius XII himself. Her pursed lips, plastic-rimmed glasses and appraising expression contrast with the expressions of the other women in the photo, who smile gently. The photo reflects something of O'Connor's presence in public consciousness—and in the minds of many Catholics. She peeks from behind the shadows, easy to miss among ecclesial elites. Yet her writing is perennially relevant, especially in difficult moments.

O'Connor's lovingly detailed renderings of the mid-20th-century American South, brutally funny characterizations and Southern accent—a musicality that renders her stories incantations—have endeared her to readers for decades. Most recently, she has surfaced once again into greater popular awareness in both revered and critical light. Two documentaries published in 2019 tell of her life and fiction: An episode of the aforementioned series by Bishop Barron narrates her role in creating stories that illuminate sin, grace and the need for salvation; and "Flannery" chronicles her remarkable and all-too-short lifetime, released virtually again in July.

Celebration of O'Connor's intense Catholicism and literary prowess, however, has also been tempered by further and definitive revelations of a racism that endured throughout her life, detailed in Paul Elie's article in *The New Yorker* in June, "How Racist Was Flannery O'Connor?" The administration of Loyola University Maryland recently renamed Flannery O'Connor Hall on campus for this very reason—it now honors Thea Bowman.

What can Flannery O'Connor—warts and all—and her writing tell us about our current moment, when the United States grapples with the continuing effects of racism and life has been

upended throughout the world by a virus we cannot see?

O'Connor's faith and the popular presumptions about how it affects her fiction often obfuscate the radical subversion of social order latent in many of her stories, especially her critiques of the racist, capitalist and anti-Catholic Cold War South. In her stories, the immanence of grace—which the characters often reject—convicts both the characters and the social systems that allow them to exist comfortably amid often grotesque vice.

The relationship between dominant and marginalized characters throughout O'Connor's body of work offers a theology of displacement—that is, a means of experiencing God in the midst of upheaval, geographic and otherwise. She melds social critique and her self-described "realism of distance," which includes things visible and invisible, best seen in her representations of people demonized or at the margins of the mid-20th century: alleged Communists, African-Americans, poor whites and refugees. In her stories, we find a radical critique of the middle class respectability ascendant in the United States at the time, not in spite of her theological outlook, but because of it. O'Connor's marginalized characters prophesy about the universal displacement of alienation from God—a displacement that cannot be averted by economic or social standing.

Wise Blood and Countercultural Christianity

O'Connor's first novel, *Wise Blood*—published when she was 26—features Hazel Motes, a military veteran who moves to the Southern city of Taulkinham to preach a "Church without Christ." The story's characters seek to belong through material consumption. Enoch Emery, Motes's unwanted sidekick, prides himself in working for the city of Taulkinham while feeling rejected by most other people. Mrs. Flood, Motes's landlady, acts as a gatekeeper of respectability. She asks Motes if his Church without Christ is "Protestant or something foreign," and later wonders if Motes

is “some kind of agent of the pope” because he blinds himself, wraps his torso in barbed wire and walks around the city with rocks in his shoes. Still, Mrs. Flood, despite her economic standing, “had had a hard life without pain and without pleasure,” one where her relatives contact her only for money.

Despite her misgivings about his alleged connections with Catholicism and the foreign, Mrs. Flood is fascinated by Hazel Motes. She sees him “going backwards to Bethlehem” like the Magi on Christmas cards, a vision that amuses her. This comparison makes Motes the ultimate outsider. Not only does his self-mortification alienate him from the dominant culture of Taulkinham, but his kinship with the biblical Magi associates him with outsiders in the Bible. The biblical Magi were not Jewish but had spiritual insight into the revolutionary importance of the star over Bethlehem and eagerly left their country to follow it. Mrs. Flood’s fascination with Motes—and her comparison of his journey with that of the Magi—offers the possibility that she may someday have that insight, too. She experiences emptiness and isolation despite her stable economic standing, and Motes’s radical and visible counterculturalism makes him an icon for an alternative, however misguided.

‘The Displaced Person’ and Strangers in a Strange Land
O’Connor’s later stories, including “The Displaced Person” (1955) and “Revelation” (1965), connect foreignness and social marginalization with theological realities more explicitly than *Wise Blood*. In “The Displaced Person,” the Guizacs, a family of Polish refugees, are brought to work on a farm in the post-World War II South by a Catholic priest. Mrs. McIntyre, the owner of the farm, and Mrs. Shortley, the wife of one of the hired workers, express apprehension about this “displaced person” (Mr. Guizac).

Prior to their arrival to the farm, Mrs. Shortley recalls news footage of the Holocaust and mass graves, and she reasons that “[t]his was the kind of thing happening every day in Europe where they had not advanced as in this country.” She worries that the “Gobblehooks”—her name for the Guizacs—“like rats with Typhoid fleas, could have carried all those murderous ways over the water with them directly to this place.” A belief prevails that the displaced person may potentially import violence into the United States, and Mrs. Shortley reminds herself that “these people did not have an advanced religion”—that is, they were Catholic. For Mrs. Shortley, immigrants and refugees are prone to violence, their Catholicism antithetical to civilized society.

Noting the tension between the displaced person and

her hired help, Mrs. McIntyre tries to rationalize laying him off in spite of his competence. The priest, listening, compliments her peacock and tries to talk about Jesus, who Mrs. McIntyre says “was just another D.P.” (displaced person). In other words, God himself is foreign to the world of Mrs. McIntyre’s farm. Before Mr. Guizac is crushed and killed by a tractor, Mrs. Shortley observes him working: “She could not see his face, only his feet and legs and trunk sticking imprudently out from the side of the tractor.” This fragmented, non-personal view of him evokes an image of the mass graves of World War II that so frightened Mrs. Shortley at the beginning of the story. But then she, Mrs. McIntyre and the farmhands Astor and Sulk stand by and allow the tractor to crush Mr. Guizac.

The shock makes Mrs. McIntyre feel “like she was in some foreign country where the people bent over the body were natives, and she watched like a stranger.” This experience of alienation links Mrs. McIntyre to the foreignness of God. The death of Mr. Guizac renders her a foreigner on her own property; she is at once in another country and on her own farm. The indifference of many who contributed to atrocities in the Holocaust can possess even those in Mrs. Shortley’s so-called advanced society. Mrs. McIntyre is displaced not by geographic movement, but by the realization that her country is not what she thought it was.

As her health declines in the wake of the incident, “Not many people remembered to come out to the country to see her except for the old priest.” Only he would feed her remaining peacock, “sit by the side of her bed and explain the doctrines of the Church.” Much like Mrs. Flood, Mrs. McIntyre is left lonely and disabused of ideas and values she once took for granted. The priest’s catechesis, a more explicit reference to Catholicism than Hazel Motes’s cinematic conversion, similarly offers Mrs. McIntyre an alternative outlook on her poor health and isolation.

‘Revelation’ and the Inversion of Hierarchy

Without naming foreigners directly, O’Connor’s 1965 story “Revelation” indicts a sense of superiority over others. It begins in a doctor’s waiting room, indicating that everyone in that room, white and Black, rich and poor, is in some way ill—but Mrs. Turpin insists that her husband Claude is ill while she is not. She and a “stylish lady” trade platitudes, while Mrs. Turpin categorizes and evaluates every person in the waiting room, judging herself superior to them all. The conversation moves to whether Blacks should return to Africa and how clean Mrs. Turpin’s pigs are because they live in a “pig parlor.”

As Mrs. Turpin converses with the women around her, she senses the intense observation of a young woman named Mary Grace, who attends college in the North and is reading a book appropriately named *Human Development*. After Mrs. Turpin exclaims, “Thank you Jesus for making everything just the way it is!” Mary Grace hurls the book at her and leaps at Mrs. Turpin, grabbing onto her neck before falling to the floor in a convulsion.

As both Mrs. Turpin and Mary Grace lie on the floor, Mrs. Turpin felled by the attack, Mary Grace tells her to “Go back to hell *where you came from*, you old wart hog.” Mary Grace identifies Mrs. Turpin—and by extension, “the way things are”—as from hell, not from Jesus. In this way, she identifies the self-proclaimed dominance of Mrs. Turpin and those like her as more unnatural than clean pigs. To Mary Grace, it is Mrs. Turpin who is out of place, not everyone else.

Mary Grace’s outburst deeply affects Mrs. Turpin, who understands that “[s]he had been singled out for the message, though there was trash in the room to whom it might justly have been applied.” She spends the remainder of the day arguing with God—“How am I a hog and me both? How am I saved and from Hell too?”—until she sees a vision of a huge number of souls that were destined for heaven:

There were whole companies of white trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black n— in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping, leaping like frogs, and bringing up the end of the procession was a tribe of people whom she recognized at once as those who, like herself and Claude, had always had a little of everything and the God-given wit to use it right.

In this vision, Mrs. Turpin learns that divine order is not “things the way they are,” but an inversion of the current social hierarchy.

The ‘Old Normal’ as Dystopia

In all three of these stories, we are left with grace begun, but not grace completed. We do not know whether Mrs. Flood embarks on the journey of the Magi, whether Mrs. McIntyre regrets her treatment of Mr. Guizac—or if she joins the church—or whether Mrs. Turpin will ultimately transcend her established cultural categories. All three characters glimpse the limits of their worldviews. Their sense of belonging in the world is shaken, but O’Connor’s

masterly storytelling ends the narrative there and the reading of the story itself displaces us. As readers, we may recognize the shortcomings of these characters and perhaps, by extension, of ourselves, especially in this time of great vulnerability.

The outbreak of Covid-19 in the United States ironically displaced us from our normal lives; and as we learn to live with the virus, we have a choice about what our new lives will look like. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others, along with the ensuing protests in 2020, have made terms like *systemic racism* mainstream and more widely understood than ever before. As we reopened, the demands for higher wages and better treatment by workers in the service industry may also suggest grace begun.

Without denying the catastrophic medical, social and economic consequences of the pandemic, perhaps we can register the interrogation of an overscheduled lifestyle taken for granted in American culture, the more widespread demands for racial and economic justice and the newfound appreciation of our local communities as grace begun by displacement. Over the past year, it has become almost a meme to say that we currently live in a dystopia, but the works of Flannery O’Connor reveal that even the “old normal” is dysfunctional and that dystopia lives within us all. Indeed, the partisan motivations of responses to Covid-19 and attitudes towards vaccination demonstrate our risk of refusing to learn from the events of 2020 and 2021. If Mrs. Turpin had her vision today, one might wonder if the masked and unmasked would join the heavenly procession separately.

The coexistence of profound theological vision, astute social commentary and lifelong racism in the life of Flannery O’Connor demonstrates an internal dissonance that should give us all pause. Yet while the coexistence of these realities may be the point of much of what O’Connor writes, her renderings of catastrophe and the subsequent breakthrough of grace are only a beginning for reflection on how we will choose to live; they offer the possibility of not only a new heaven, but a new earth.

Hannah E. Ryan is an independent scholar who studies the intersection of religious and secular discourse in 20th-century American literature. She is currently conducting research for a book on the relationship between traditional Catholicism and secular conspiracy discourse.



A Mature Return to Childhood Favorites

By Mitali Perkins

Is there a book you first encountered as a child that you read time and again? If so, consider yourself blessed. “A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say,” said Italo Calvino in *The Uses of Literature*. If you’ve stopped reading books you loved when you were young, don’t you miss the peace that a good story left behind in your soul? Books from our childhood can still do so much good work for us.

“Think of children’s books as literary vodka,” Katherine Rundell writes in *Why You Should Read Children’s Books, Even Though You Are So Old and Wise*. Children’s fiction “helps us refind things we may not even know we have lost.” It takes us back to a time when “new discoveries came daily and when the world was colossal, before the imagination was trimmed and neatened.”

Why, then, do most people stop reading children’s

books they loved once they come of age? I have heard five main arguments, and I don't agree with any of them.

First, we are told these books are no longer worthy of our time because they were written in eras defined by such social scourges as racism and colonialism. It is true there is no way around the outdated mores in most of the books we read as children. Cultural and historical context matters; the problem is that when we are in it as writers, both now and in the past, it shapes us morally—for better and worse—and it is hard to see how. Cultures and eras, like individuals, are marred and beautiful at the same time.

To widen the narrow vision of our own perspectives, we can cross borders of race and culture and learn from a range of diverse storytellers. But to widen the narrow, limited vision of our own era, we may—dare I say, must—also cross borders into the past to receive stories created there as well. As the editors of *The Atlantic* posited with regard to publishing poems written by dead people, “Sometimes we need to turn to the past to help make sense of the present.” As we revisit old books along with fiction created in the heat of our moment, it becomes easier to discern—and if needed, resist—subversive messages, and to teach the next generation to do the same.

Second, some people look down on children's books, both classic and contemporary, as a genre that is less literary than books for adults. To me, the opposite seems true. Some “grown-up” award-winning novels seem written to display the author's intellectual prowess, mastery of language and depth of thought. Children see right through that kind of pretension. They want the author to step aside and give the reader direct access. Storytellers in this genre have to create heroes' journeys with page-turning plots, characters that come alive and a strong sense of place that transports readers into another reality. To do this, we must become ruthless eradicators of verbal fluff and restrainers of intellectual vanity.

Third, we might have stopped reading children's books because we are embarrassed to be associated with children's activities. But there is no valid reason for shame. “There are good books which are only for adults, because their comprehension presupposes adult experiences, but there are no good books which are only for children,” wrote W. H. Auden. So cast aside fear and carry that children's book boldly with you on public transportation, in the cafe or on holiday.

“Is there any call for comment, if an adult reads them

for himself?” asked J. R. R. Tolkien in a lecture titled “Fairy Stories.” “Reads them as tales, that is, not studies them as curios. Adults are allowed to collect and study anything, even old theatre programmes or paper bags.”

C. S. Lewis, as was his wont, took on critics of children's literature head on:

Critics who treat “adult” as a term of approval, instead of as a merely descriptive term, cannot be adult themselves. To be concerned about being grown up, to admire the grown up because it is grown up, to blush at the suspicion of being childish; these things are the marks of childhood and adolescence. And in childhood and adolescence they are, in moderation, healthy symptoms. Young things ought to want to grow.

Further, Lewis is unapologetic about his own love for fairy tales:

But to carry on into middle life or even into early manhood this concern about being adult is a mark of really arrested development. When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.

Fourth, we are told that classic children's books are moralistic, promoting a particular worldview and designed to inculcate virtues in the reader. Adult books and contemporary children's books are free of that kind of agenda, right?

Not at all. Stories are by nature didactic. George Orwell was blunt about this in his essay “Why I Write”: “No book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude.” D. H. Lawrence agreed, saying, “The essential function of art is moral...a morality which changes the blood, rather than the mind.”

All stories, not only the ones written in the past for children, are transmitters of morality. Stories for children might be more powerful because a child has less capacity to discern and resist moral agendas, but the fact that they are aimed at children doesn't make them more didactic. And

far from being simply “moral pap for the young,” as Louisa May Alcott deprecatingly described her own stories, Rundell points out that children’s books—whether penned by authors now dead or still alive—are actually *more* subversive, because they are “written to be read by a section of society without political or economic power.”

Fifth, literati are suspicious of stories with happy endings. Have you noticed that authors of “serious” fiction (read: for adults) seem abnormally fond of writing depressing endings? Many of today’s award-winning novels for grown-ups should be labeled with a warning: *Not suitable for an upbeat beach holiday*. In contrast, good stories for children, after taking us through a hero’s journey fraught with danger and loss, leave us with hope. Why is building hope considered less of a literary achievement than crushing it?

Because of this hope, books for children are also likelier to be reread than any other kind of book. As Lewis wrote in his essay “On Three Ways of Writing for Children,” “Where the children’s story is simply the right form for what the author has to say, then of course readers who want to hear that will read the story or reread it at any age.”

Speak, Memory!

Each time I reread a novel I loved as a child, the encounter is richer and deeper, perhaps because I myself am changed as a reader. Like aromatic leaves that eventually turn water into tea, so those stories changed my psyche. But the process takes time. Madeleine L’Engle told a class of fourth-graders in 1985, “The great thing about getting older is that you don’t lose all the other ages you’ve been.” When we reread books, we encounter them as all the ages we have been as well as the age we are now. Our souls are steeped in stories.

Rereading also slows us down in the reception of a story, making room for the good work of loving transformation. “Love has its speed,” writes the theologian Kosuke Koyama in *Three Mile an Hour God*. “It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It goes on in the depth of life at three miles per hour. It is the speed we walk and therefore the speed the love of God walks.”

I try to replace a smartphone on my nightstand with a book I loved in childhood because the last place my mind dwells before sleep is crucial. Why not feed my unconscious soul with the goodness of a story instead of a depressing sweep through the headlines of the day? And if it’s a reread,

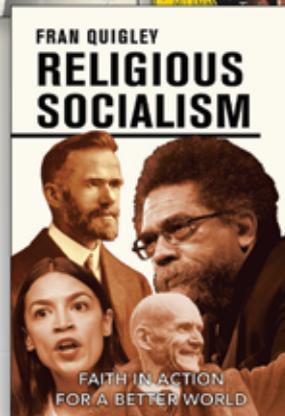
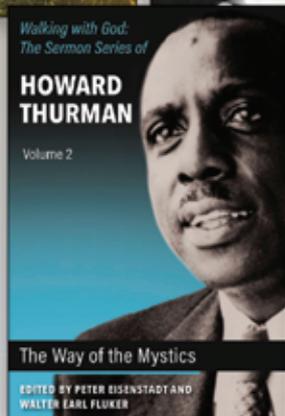
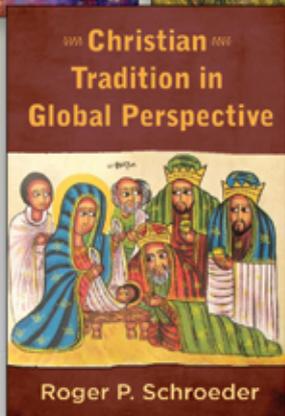
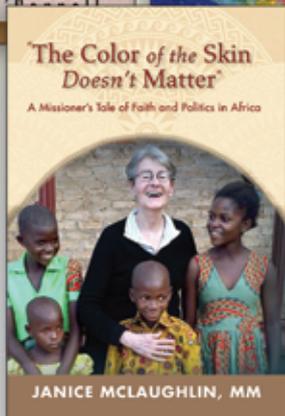
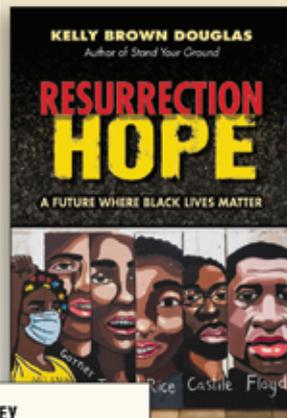
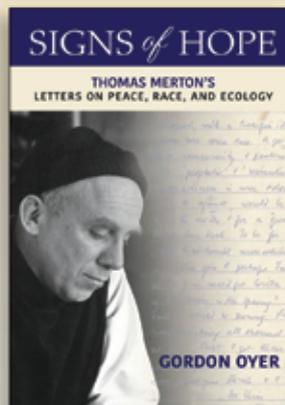
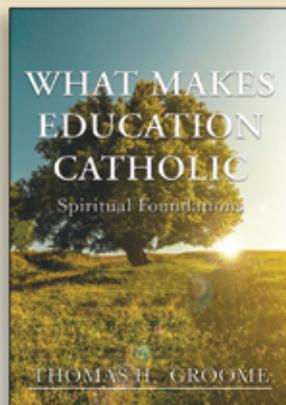
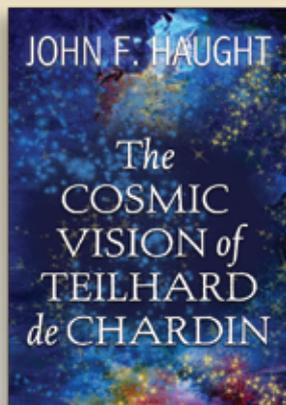
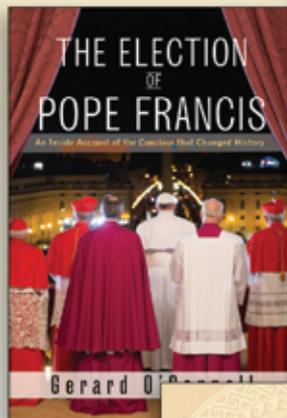
even better, because the words and story are grooved more deeply into memory.

“The Web provides a convenient and compelling supplement to personal memory,” wrote Nicholas G. Carr in his prescient book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. “But when we start using the Web as a substitute for personal memory, bypassing the inner processes of consolidation, we risk emptying our minds of their riches.” Like memorized poetry, children’s stories that we know inside and out, even to the point of remembering passages by heart, may be mined as treasures by our sleeping brains. Rereading is deep, slow reading, and the practice is a necessary counterbalance to the intake of information gained from a shallow, quick bounce around the internet.

“I am absolutely not suggesting adults read only, or even primarily, children’s fiction,” writes Rundell. “Just that there are some times in life when it might be the only thing that will do.” In a review of Rundell’s essay, the critic Jo Hemmings sums up the gift that children’s books bring to readers: “[Rundell’s] argument is that sometimes adult literary fiction does not help. The old narratives, most commonly seen now in children’s books, are the ones that best record human vice without despair. As she puts it, ‘Children’s fiction necessitates distillation: at its best, it renders in their purest, most archetypal forms hope, hunger, joy, fear.’”

Even laden with errors that were embedded in their eras, books we loved as children are an excellent source of refreshment for tired old souls, especially when we are blinded by our own divisive and despondent age.

Mitali Perkins is the author of many books for young readers, including *You Bring the Distant Near*, a National Book Award nominee, and *Rickshaw Girl*, which has recently been adapted as a film. Her next book for children is *Bare Tree and Little Wind: A Story for Holy Week*. This article is adapted with permission from the introduction to *Steeped in Stories: Timeless Children’s Novels to Refresh Our Tired Souls*.



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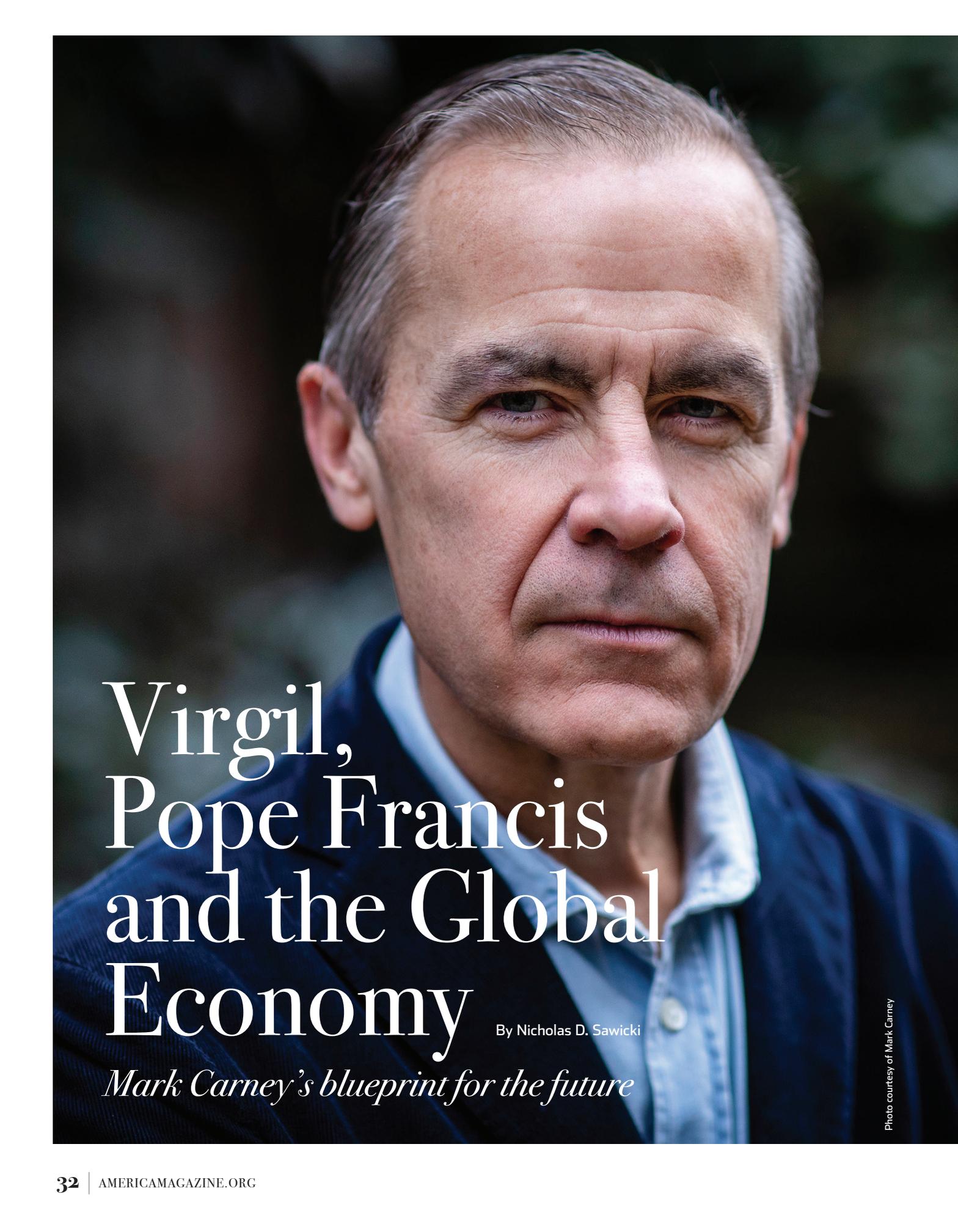
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A close-up portrait of Mark Carney, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark blue jacket over a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

Virgil, Pope Francis and the Global Economy

By Nicholas D. Sawicki

Mark Carney's blueprint for the future

Photo courtesy of Mark Carney

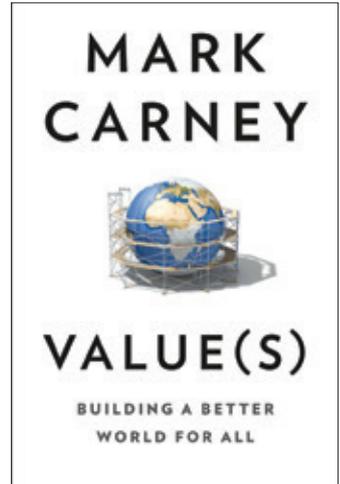
Value(s)

Building a Better World for All

By Mark Carney

PublicAffairs

608p \$19.99



Sic vos non vobis. This famous rebuke by the poet Virgil to the plagiarizer Bathyllus, “For you, but not yours,” frames Mark Carney’s new book *Value(s): Building a Better World for All* rather succinctly: We can either continue on the current path of what some argue is amoral wealth generation in a dehumanizing market society, or we can build new systems, grounded in common values, that encourage growth while stewarding resources for future generations. Virgil’s words, carved into a wall at Carney’s old haunt at the Bank of England in London, remind us that we may enjoy what has been handed down to us, but with the recognition that we too must pass it along.

Carney draws on nearly two decades of experience in writing *Value(s)*. He was the governor of the Bank of Canada (2008-13) and governor of the Bank of England (2013-20) and is now the United Nations’ special envoy for climate action and finance. Additionally, Carney is the finance advisor for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in preparations for the U.N.’s COP26 climate change conference in Scotland later this year. His career in private and public banking has provided him with a wide array of experiences, acquaintances and firsthand knowledge of financial systems, all of which he has drawn upon in writing this blueprint for a more equitable global economy that serves all people.

Papal Inspiration

Value(s) may be the first book from a former central banker that not only calls for an entire re-evaluation of the underpinnings of market forces, but cites a metaphor used by Pope Francis as a central inspiration. “I was at a meeting that the Vatican had with a wide range of people about the market economy and the social market economy,” Mr. Carney said in an interview with **America**.

“It was around the time of the Argentina-Germany World Cup match in 2014, and the pope came into a lunch we were having and surprised us all.”

The pope’s lesson, as Carney relates it in *Value(s)*, was relatively straightforward: Wine, which was served with their meal, is many things and enlivens the senses. But grappa, which was served at the end of the meal, is but one thing: alcohol distilled. Drawing on this theme, Pope Francis likened humanity in its diversity and richness to wine, and the marketplace to grappa—humanity distilled. The job of those present, the pope said, was to turn grappa back into wine, the market back into humanity. “What I took from his parable was the question: To what extent can you turn the market back into humanity? And what are the values over time that preserve the best of the market but also more broadly serve society?” Mr. Carney said.

With over 500 pages, the book meticulously lays out Carney’s argument that the market is not fundamentally amoral but that there are existential threats that will require broad cooperation across markets, governments and societies to meet the pope’s challenge. Mr. Carney’s writing, while not explicitly invoking Pope Pius XI’s encyclical “*Quadragesimo Anno*,” adheres closely to the notion laid out by Pius XI that both libertarianism and collectivism are the “twin rocks of shipwreck,” the Scylla and Charybdis between which we must chart a safe passage.

The market economy is a fundamental good of modern society, Carney is quick to note, but “if market fun-

damentalism becomes the dominant force relevant to the state...it will undercut some of the values that are necessary for proper market functioning.” Particular values, if recognized and incentivized, can promote sustainable market growth, encourage the benefits of competition and create more equitable economies. This requires a shared value system.

“Moral sentiments can be passed down and preserved, but they can be corroded, and that undercuts markets,” Mr. Carney said. “Bringing the sacred into markets can have the same effect. How do we strike the balance so that we can secure the moral underpinnings that [also] allow markets to function well?”

Striking such a balance, he said, requires the proper deployment of social capital. But social capital, which dictates what, how and why societies value what they do, is always at risk of being devalued in a market society. “[U]nchecked market fundamentalism,” Carney writes in *Value(s)*, “devours the social capital essential for the long-term dynamism of capitalism itself.” While affirming the benefits of a free market and acclaiming the power of capitalism-driven dynamism, Carney sees clearly through the tattered shroud; as society sets a price on everything and affixes a market value to everything, it reduces its own ability to change and meet new challenges.

While Carney lays out clear evidence of how increasing economic disparities slow growth in developed economies, his principal objective is a sociophilosophical one: how to sustain values in the marketplace that reflect social demand.

After the global financial crisis of 2008, central bankers “did a series of things to align incentives for senior managers at banks with the long-term benefit of their institution and their clients as a whole. For example, to make sure not to allow excessive risk to build up,” said Mr. Carney. “There’s a concept in economics called ‘divine coincidence’—the idea that corporations who do good and treat their employees well also have strong financial returns. But the more this happens, the less it stands out. That’s what we call progress. For example, there are some fossil fuel companies that are taking their cash flow and investing in and transforming themselves to prepare for the future.”

“What I try to show,” he explained, “is that these are the types of opportunities and measures that reinforce these values and align with your interests. It’s not as high a bar as for-

going profit, but it is more likely to succeed in the long term.”

Regulations and Innovations

“The challenge,” said Mr. Carney, “is managing the regulatory pendulum. In finance, we had a ‘light touch’ pendulum and had to put in place regulations that got us back to the center.” The worry for any regulator in such a situation is that “you are creating conditions that stifle competition and innovation.... [And] you do not know what innovation is coming down the line next.”

As a former central banker, Carney retains a skeptic’s outlook on unbridled markets. His own predecessor at the Bank of England, the late Robin Leigh-Pemberton, once noted the perception of central bankers as “rather gloomy, possibly pessimistic, certainly a restrictive sort of people.” But approaching the issue as someone who managed the 2008 financial crisis as the governor of the Bank of Canada and dealt with the beginning of the Covid-19–spurred financial crisis in England, Carney disagrees with this characterization.

“As a central banker, I can’t always show you that the measures I’ve taken or my colleagues have taken prevented massive loss or instability, and after a while we begin to look like this expensive operation that isn’t doing very much. But the effects of good policy in the market prevent crises and encourage stability,” Mr. Carney said. “We do have a frequency of crises that have some value elements to it. What’s the downside of reinforcing, from a ‘no-regret’ perspective, the values that appear to help markets function well and for society more broadly? And then try and strike the balance of what should be in the market? And be more conscious of the corrosion factor that would have us pricing everything?”

A Fourth Industrial Revolution

In addition to the challenges created by credit crises, climate change and now the Covid-19 pandemic, *Value(s)* also addresses the oncoming “fourth industrial revolution,” a term for the digital revolution that will prove as disruptive to our society as the previous socioeconomic revolutions that were powered by steam, electricity and information, and what it will mean for both the free market and the regulators. In particular, Carney sees the challenges of upcoming market shifts as sources of volatility and opportunity that must be managed and seized upon before they happen.

“The experience of previous periods of big technological change, industrial revolutions, is that there are these longer periods of increased inequality, lots of displacement,” Mr. Carney said, “and our response is so very much after the fact. We gradually learn into the response—e.g., education institutions, financial changes, social welfare and more.”

From Carney’s perspective, no particular social or economic sector is safe from the forthcoming upheaval. “I think the first thing is recognizing that the potential scale of what’s coming, particularly on the digital side, is quite profound and could lead to a very long period of adjustment for both blue- and white-collar workers,” he said, “those holding jobs that felt pretty secure but that the algorithm is coming for.” Nevertheless, he holds out hope that “when the economy reorganizes, it will be more distributed, more dispersed and potentially more equal with a broader range of opportunity.”

“The ability to be part of commercial creation, either because you have your own business or as part of a major corporation, raises the question: What are we doing to make commercial creation possible? There are big challenges that could accelerate inequality for a longer period of time,” he continued. “Can we be deliberate about it? Can we incentivize societies to invest more in people than just particular sectors of the economy? Can we invest in human development ahead of the technological curve?”

Resilience Is Key

One of the key values Carney highlights is “resilience.” “We need to deliver resilience to the system,” he said. “We need a system that doesn’t blow over because there’s a crisis somewhere. But we can’t have the resilience of the graveyard.” As regulators, “we need to have a very pro-competitive stance so that you are creating opportunity for different financial businesses to compete to provide services. This stops you from being captured by the megabanks, it increases the quality of service, and it gives you some diversity in the system that helps prevent everyone from collapsing in a crisis.”

“Whether we’re digital by design or digital by default,” Mr. Carney observed, “we have to assess how we organize the economy around maximizing employment, maximizing business creation and creating more financial inclusion—all of which are manifestations of

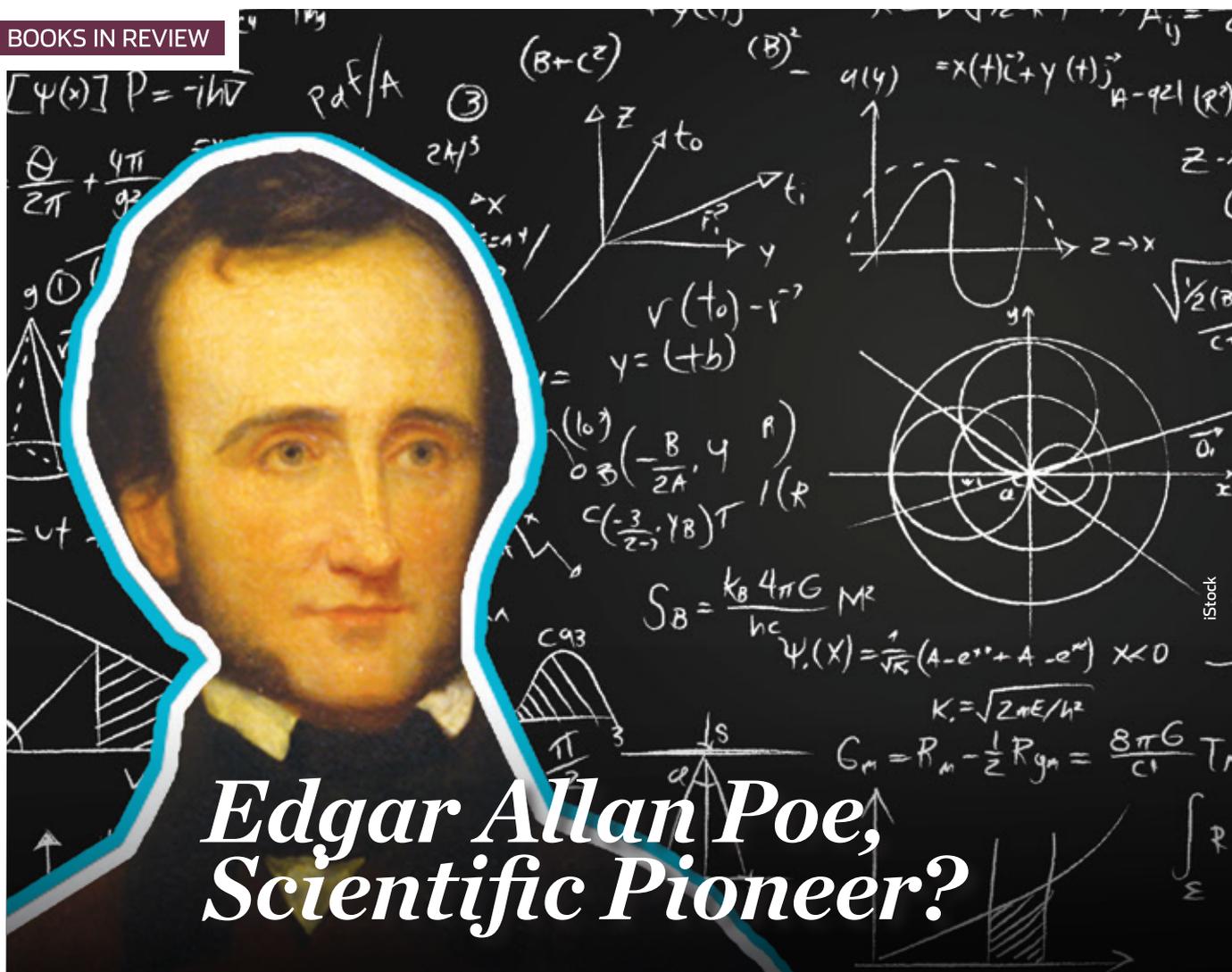
greater solidarity.”

Carney’s re-envisioning of the global economy is not limited to governments and market forces but is inclusive of society at large, including faith communities. “There is a non-exclusive role for faith communities to help shape the marketplace,” he said. “Friedrich Hayek wrote extensively on the moral underpinnings of markets, in particular on the Judeo-Christian values that underpin markets.” But while aligning economic incentives with such values can help, “you can’t legislate virtue.”

Mr. Carney emphasized that “it’s about culture, and that’s a role that faith communities can play. The market is there to provide solutions for humanity, and the pendulum is swinging somewhat back in that direction that corporations are for people and that they have a responsibility.”

“*Thus do ye, bees, for others make honey.*” This, another line from Virgil, suggests that whatever is made is not meant to be hoarded; if it is, what good is it in this transient life? Early on in *Virtue(s)*, Mr. Carney recognizes that “a sense of self must be accompanied by a sense of solidarity,” that the success of our global enterprise requires a recognition of the intertwined nature of individual and collective actions around the world. In answering the challenge set forth by Pope Francis, he provides not just individuals, but also societies and governments with a realistic and evidence-based blueprint for the tactics and values of building a more just and more equitable global society. Mr. Carney seeks to distill the market back into humanity, and to help us do the same.

Nicholas D. Sawicki is chief content officer at *Crescite Innovation* and a former member of the *America Media* staff.



Edgar Allan Poe, Scientific Pioneer?

This biography of Edgar Allan Poe is as much a history of science in America as it is a biography of Poe. Which is not a bad thing. But if you are looking for a moody, atmospheric biography, this is not it. Nor is it an investigation of the literary or psychological aspects of Poe's strange and unlucky career. One of the best books for that—"The best book by anybody on Poe," according to Allen Tate—is *Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe* by Daniel Hoffman.

However, for Poe fans as well as those interested in the role of science in American history, this book is absorbing, informative and entertaining. Author John Tresch, a professor and the Mellon Chair in History of

Art, Science and Folk Practice at the Warburg Institute in London, writes, "This book tells the full story of Edgar Allan Poe's life, but it does so from a new angle. It returns Poe's cosmology to its place at the summit of his life and thought and shows his work as a singular expression of the tumultuous ideas and passions of his age, thoroughly bound up with the emergence of modern science."

Poe, he writes, "explored the exhilarating prospects and treacherous blind spots of powerful new ways of assembling the world." To understand his life and work "demands close attention to his engagements with scientific thought and discoveries. In

return, Poe's life and works are vividly revealing of modern science in this decisive moment."

And so Tresch tells parallel stories, of how science developed under the guidance of top practitioners into an institutionally strong force, and how "Eddy," as his aunt called him, became a famous writer. He was undone, after many spectacular falls and amazing recoveries, by some of the worst luck imaginable and a self-destructive streak that erupted at precisely the worst times.

Poe was born in Boston in 1809. His mother, Eliza, was a relatively famous actress, while her husband David was a "feckless" alcoholic who

The Reason for the Darkness of the Night
Edgar Allan Poe and the Forging of American Science

By John Tresch
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
448p \$30

abandoned the family and died soon after Eliza's death in 1811. John Allan, a wealthy Richmond trader of Scottish descent, prone to drinking and womanizing, took Poe in at the urging of his wife but never adopted Poe as his own son, something Poe naturally resented. But things went well enough during childhood, and for a few years the family lived in England. There, Poe soaked up classical studies—he was more than proficient in Latin and could speak French well—at Manor House School, “a ‘palace of enchantment’ with labyrinthine corridors,” a backdrop he used for his doppelgänger story, “William Wilson.”

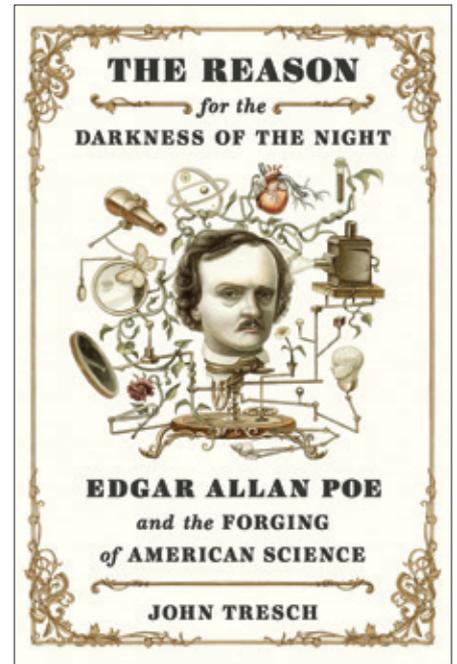
After dropping out of the University of Virginia because of Allan's lack of monetary support, Poe went to Boston and, after a brief but illustrious spell at West Point, where he studied math and engineering, began his peripatetic life of writing and editing. He was trying to support his aunt Maria Clemm and her daughter Virginia, whom Poe had married when he was 26 and she was 13. Tresch calls it “a passion at odds with today's sensibilities and viewed with some suspicion at the time,” although marriages between cousins were considered “fairly common.”

Poe worked for several magazines, writing a tremendous amount for little pay. He dreamed of editing his own magazine and once had a good opportunity, but the economy tanked and his backers pulled out. It didn't help that in stressful times, Poe would have one drink that would send him on a binge where his usual courtly manners would devolve into boorishness. However, his caustic criticism,

eerie tales, hoax articles and haunting poetry, especially “The Raven,” made him famous for a season.

Meanwhile, charlatans traveled the country with shows explicating a popularized version of science with lots of lights and whizz-bangs. The common folk paid up and thought they were learning about real science. But the real scientists, like Joseph Henry and Alexander Dallas Bache, who did actual experiments and wrote books, strove for political influence to get federal dollars funneled into genuine scientific research. Tresch reminds us how divided and violent our political life has periodically been. The struggle between nativist Jacksonians, who distrusted government, and Whig federalists, who wanted to use government to unite the country via science and technology, was often a vicious battle.

Tresch also shows how familiar Poe was with the latest science—he often reviewed scientific books and periodicals. His best-selling book was a commissioned school textbook, *The Conchologist's First Book*, which Stephen Jay Gould praised. “The ‘Poe effect,’” Tresch writes, “was an exclamation point followed by a question mark: a striking concentrated impact that left the reader wondering after a chain of causes.” This was how Poe viewed the advances of science: something to be exclaimed at but then severely questioned and never allowed to become more important than the humanity it purported to serve. Tresch points out that Poe prophesied “huge smoking furnaces” ravaging “the fair face of nature.”



And he shows how Poe solved what was called Olber's paradox: “If the universe is infinite, as Newton and his followers believed, and space is filled with infinite numbers of celestial bodies, the light from those stars should fill the night sky.” In other words, the sky would never be dark:

The explanation Poe provided is the one that twenty-first-century physicists accept. The universe is finite; it had a beginning and will have an end. Because the quantity of stars is limited, they leave dark spaces between them. This solution overthrew a fundamental principle of Newton—the infinity of space.

Poe also conjectured that the universe started with one small particle of matter that exploded into the universe, what was later called the Big Bang theory.

The only hitch here is that the two narratives—the life of Poe and the rise of science in America—rarely connect

in an external way. Tresch can neither describe Poe meeting Bache or Henry, nor quote him supporting the founding of the Smithsonian. This is not to say that Poe had nothing to do with the science of his time, only that the evidence is mostly internal, in the realm of thought and text. It is true, however, that Poe knew the explorer Jeremiah Reynolds and edited his proposal for an expedition to the South Pole, which probably inspired Poe's only novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*.

After his wife Virginia died, Poe, in the autumn of 1847, wrote his last major work: *Eureka: A Prose Poem*, also called *An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe*. Here, Poe proposed his version of the Big Bang and the pantheistic idea that spirit and matter are one. Tresch comments:

The secret at the center of *Eureka's* labyrinth is that the heart is the whole; an identity is shared between the core and the shell, the inner and the outer—between soul and body, spirit and matter, feeling and reason, beauty and truth, self and other, beholder and beheld, poetry and science. They form an infinitely resonant structure, made of weirdly fractal symmetries repeated at every scale of the composition.

The English physicist Arthur Eddington and Albert Einstein both admired *Eureka*, as have more modern scientists, like the Italian astronomer Alberto Cappi and the Dutch chemist René van Slooten. Poe told his aunt that “I have no desire to live since I have

done ‘Eureka.’ I could accomplish nothing more.” Poe, as Tresch concludes, had “sharpened the piercing light of reason and deepened the darkness in its wake.”

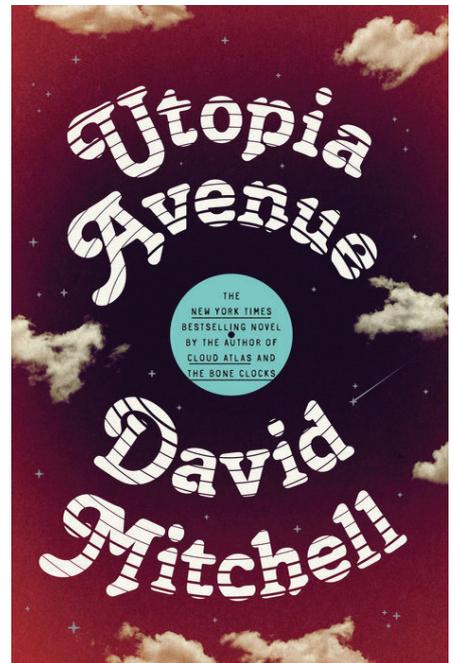
Franklin Freeman, a frequent contributor to *America*, lives in Maine.

Everything Is Connected

The British novelist David Mitchell has taken people in extraordinary directions throughout his career. Individually, each of his critically acclaimed and popular books—including the best known, *Cloud Atlas*—plays games with storylines, characters and relationships that stretch and bend and snap and reassemble across history, geography, even different dimensions. They comprise a sprawling narrative singularity marked by teasing, dark recurrences and transformations, through characters who appear in different books in defiance of conventional time, place and being.

Mitchell's fiction affirms that defining statement in Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, that “everything is connected,” by both emphasizing the consolation this can afford—no matter how alienated you may feel in your immediate circumstances, you are not alone—and confirming the suspicion this otherwise encourages: that unseen forces exert decisive and likely malevolent control over our seemingly freely pursued lives.

Mitchell's latest, *Utopia Avenue*, is at first glance a maximally detailed historical novel. Its particular areas of interest and treatment—recent North Atlantic history and culture, celebrity and politics, 1960s historical figures



Utopia Avenue
By David Mitchell
Random House
592p \$30

and a briefly famous rock band—are related to music-making. That said, there is another, darker story here that (depending on how you feel about Mitchell's overall body of work) either threatens or promises to be the primary source of the book's considerable, if diffusive, energies and ambitions.

The novel begins with a young man, Dean, rushing down a busy street. He slips and falls on black ice: “*Bloody London*. A bewhiskered stockbroker type in a bowler hat smirks at the long-haired lout's misfortune, and is gone.” Dean heads off again, only to be pickpocketed on his way to pay the rent to his merciless landlady before begging in vain for a pay advance from his boss, a miserly Italian restaurant owner. He is soon bruised, jobless and homeless. He wields his bass guitar

as a final attempt to make it as a musician in late 1960s London. Amping up the already-high Dickensian mode, Dean flips his last coin to decide what to do next; the coin disappears down a gutter, and a mysterious stranger appears. Levon is a music producer who likes Dean's music and invites him along to a nightclub to hear a virtuoso guitarist play psychedelic covers of Mississippi blues standards. "He's bloody amazing," Dean says. "Who is he?" "His name's Jasper de Zoet."

This all takes place in the first 15 rollicking pages of a 600-page story, and Mitchell is signaling, by way of the guitarist's name, that what we're about to read is linked somehow to his previous writings, including his historical novel about a Dutchman's experiences in 18th-century Japan, *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*. But Mitchell defers the unfolding of an intra-novel, inter-dimensional, trans-temporal war for human souls to the novel's closing sequence. In the meantime, he blends two more standard kinds of novels: historical fiction and a rock band book. Levon, the quietly ambitious, gay Canadian impresario, brings together bassist Dean and guitarist Jasper with a female singer and keyboardist named Elf and a remote drummer called Griff to create the band. Mitchell provides all of his characters with an affecting back story that informs the aspirations and longings that figure in their musical collaboration, eventually called Utopia Avenue.

The main story focuses on the band's trajectory from mediocre early work to underground success to broader British attention and, eventually, fame and fortune in the United States. Bandmates sleep with other

people's spouses and deal with groupie pregnancies; Griff is behind the wheel in a car accident that kills his brother; and he steps away from the band at a crucial moment in its ascent; more established managers tempt the band to drop Levon; music journalists flirt and fence with Dean and his mates for inside stories on the promise of good coverage; one of Elf's boyfriends, not a musician, offers uninvited creative advice to the other members; another, her ex from a defunct folk duo, returns to her life with perfect dirtbag timing, just as Utopia Avenue is beginning to enjoy success, and casually volunteers to begin sitting in on sessions.

Later, the band has a bad mix-up with corrupt Italian police following a performance in Rome. Dean is imprisoned on false drug charges, and the British media play up his predicament.

Historical figures appear alongside the members of Utopia Avenue constantly. David Bowie, Nina Simone, Allen Ginsberg, Syd Barrett, the Butterfield Blues band, Diana Ross, Engelbert Humperdinck, Keith Moon, Grace Slick, Michael Caine, George Best, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa and John Lennon all pass through, the effect of which is to encourage page-turning celebrity-sighting, not to substantively advance the novel's story and ideas.

Building on its rising profile, which is helped by Dean's Roman confinement and by songs that begin to chart, Utopia Avenue is invited to play in the United States. The band flies to New York and sets up at the Chelsea Hotel; members attend sodden parties where Leonard Cohen and Janis Joplin think aloud the lyrics of now-famous songs.

Here a driving rationale emerg-

es for why Mitchell chose this historical-cultural moment for his new novel: He uses the altered-state conditions of the late 1960s music scene to set off and also conceal his characters' intensifying struggles with otherworldly forces and presences, particularly in the case of the talented guitarist Jasper, who has heard a particular voice and knocking in his head since childhood.

To the extent that they notice, the people in Jasper's circle think he is acting a little weird, but then most people partying at the Chelsea Hotel circa 1969 are acting a little weird. They only become worried when Jasper suddenly disappears for hours and reappears just before a make-or-break U.S. show, where he plays alternatively like "the Dutch Jimi Hendrix" and like a semi-sentient zombie, thereby threatening the band's prospects.

Thereafter, Mitchell pursues an alternatively dramatic and mellow denouement. He braids together the personal and public rise, fall and renewal of a loveable group of ordinary British musicians, reaching to the present day, with an increasingly convoluted story of powerful time-travelling beings who fight each other, in and through the bodies of people from all over the world and all time, including both Jasper and his 18th-century ancestor, Jacob (and from many other places in David Mitchell's oeuvre). By the end, both storylines affirm the irreducible and vivifying goods of the human soul.

Randy Boyagoda is a novelist and professor of English at the University of Toronto.

When Anger Turns to Apathy

The rule of sequels is that they rarely capture the magic of the original. Typically, the best you can hope for with a sequel is that it will advance the story or provide some answers, if not a perfect resolution. Perhaps in hope of advancing the story of Irish Catholicism and the sexual abuse scandal in the church—and nudging that story toward some answers and resolution—Derek Scally’s *The Best Catholics in the World* begins with a sequel that says much about where the story has stalled.

It is 2018 and Scally, an Irish Times correspondent based in Berlin, is back in Ireland for Pope Francis’ first papal visit to the country. The last time a pope visited Ireland, Pope John Paul II nearly 40 years earlier, a crowd of more than a million gathered in Dublin’s Phoenix Park to celebrate Mass with him. This time around, however, attendance is estimated at a dismal 150,000. “Pope John Paul II’s visit was staged as a triumphalist celebration of Irish spiritual exceptionalism,” Scally writes. “This visit is turning out to be more of an attestation of Irish spiritual indifference.”

Scally paints a vivid picture of this spiritual indifference. At a concert the night of Francis’ arrival, the biggest cheers are reserved not for the pope but for a revival “Riverdance” performance. During the opening liturgy of the Phoenix Park Mass, Francis reads a personal note in response to the testimonies of clerical abuse survivors he had heard earlier in the day. He then turns the penitential rite back on the church itself—asking forgiveness for

its abuses. It is a powerful moment, but as Scally observes: “Few notice what he’s doing.” Even the protests countering the visit are too scattered to be a righteous show of force. Most people seem to have stayed home or gone on with whatever plans they had for the week, leaving Scally to suggest “perhaps distance is the most potent form of protest.”

This portrait of a once ultra-devout country undergoing rapid spiritual decline should not come as a surprise. Since the 1990s, when the first of a long, still-unspooling series of clerical abuse revelations began to expose the Irish church’s history of forced institutionalization, misogyny and a culture of silence and denial (and the Irish state’s collusion with it all), the Irish people have been on the road to a new identity that departs from their reputation as “the best Catholics in the world.”

Or maybe not. As Scally presents it, the Irish are stuck in a transitional zone between the damaging clerical deference of the past and the “angry-apatetic” clerical blame of today. “In a few short decades,” he writes, “Ireland has gone from a country where you couldn’t escape religion—whether silent, pervasive devotion or rigid doctrinal practice—to a place where faith dare not speak its name.” An immature spiritual identity has been swapped with a shallow secular one, leaving a vacuum of accountability.

Scally interviews notable religious figures (from Cardinal Seán Brady, the archbishop emeritus of Omagh, to the former director of Mercy International, Mary Reynolds, R.S.M.), Vatican officials, professors, past presidents, artists, survivors,

trauma experts and ex-Catholics, lapsed Catholics and practicing Catholics. His interviews reveal defensiveness, anger and deep regret, and a still-smoking shell shock. The conversations with Cardinal Brady, whose reputation was tarnished when he mishandled the church’s inquiry into the pedophile priest Brendan Smyth, frustrate as much as they reveal. The interviews with him end on a note that suggests that Brady has more to say but believes no one really wants to hear it. It is an ironic and bewildering endnote, given how it parallels statements quoted in the book from clerical abuse survivors.

Indeed, one of the book’s most painful revelations is how much survivor testimonies continue to be rendered ineffectual by empty gestures from many sectors of society. Scally describes a media-saturated event hosted by Michael D. Higgins, president of Ireland, and the Dublin City Council called “Dublin Honors Magdalenes.” Over 200 women who had formerly been institutionalized in the now-infamous Magdalene laundries were invited to what amounted to a “girlie afternoon” garden party with tea, chocolates and famous musicians. One survivor tells Scally, “I don’t think people’ll ever really be sorry.... They’re sorry they’ve been shown up for what they did to us.... This all here is about them, not us.”

At the faith level, the gestures seem even more pointless. Paddy Doyle, the late author of *The God Squad*, a 1988 memoir that recounted his 11-year, state-ordered ordeal in religious-run institutions after his parents died when he was 4, tells Scally he believes Irish society has learned nothing from testimonies like his.



The Best Catholics in the World

By Derek Scally
Sandy Cove
352p \$21.99

“What you might get is, ‘I don’t go to church any more.’ That is someone’s contribution. That’s it.”

Considering the continuing misdirection and denial, is trauma testimony futile? How can a people who survived so many traumas across centuries, to such an extent that “victimhood” plays a role closely entwined with Catholicism in the Irish national narrative, make outcasts and victims out of society’s most vulnerable members, including poor and unwed mothers and their children? Scally explores pivotal shifts in Ireland’s religious development to find the answers, from pre-Christian Ireland and St. Patrick, through the Penal Law years and the Famine to the 19th century’s shameful introduction of wide-scale institutionalization of women and children

and the 20th century’s rote-learning religious education.

One scholar he interviews, Liam Breatnach, refreshingly debunks the persistent myth of a pure, mystical, Rome-independent “Celtic Christianity.” The persistent victimhood narrative, which reflects terrible truths about colonialism, is not so much debunked as it is widened to nudge the Irish people to reconsider their perception of themselves as powerless:

Once Catholic Ireland was “us”: our sons and daughters were God’s holy anointed, spreading the faith and creating a glorious Irish spiritual empire around the world, and keeping the show on the road at home. Our pride knew no bounds. Then came scandal and the fall. A new narrative was written, framing the same religious as a disgraced “them,” with each of the group’s members responsible for the acts of their institutions and their colleagues. We reserve for them a collective blame that it doesn’t seem to occur to us to apply to ourselves as a people. We assume they knew exactly what was going on and we seem to think lay people knew nothing at all.

Irish clerical abuse survivors who publicly open up vein after vein of trauma in the hope of justice are still being met with circular evasion by the church and state, as well as the moral solution resorted to by the Irish people of simply sleeping in on Sunday.

Is there any chance of advancing the story beyond narratives of shame and blame to justice—and maybe even spiritual maturity?

Scally has suggestions. He takes cues from friends and colleagues in his adopted country of Germany who offer an unsparing take on complicity and the need for national accountability and spiritual reintegration. Other suggestions involve a citizens’ assembly, a transparent truth and reconciliation process and repurposing Ireland’s empty and tarnished religious institutions into memorials. These suggestions are clearly attempts to prevent rendering the Irish people powerless, as past and current narratives do.

The Irish identity as “the best Catholics in the world” is deservedly dead and gone. Maybe in carving out a new identity, the Irish people can lead the way for faith populations beyond Ireland in how to respond to and eliminate abuse by recentering justice as essential to spiritual wholeness. No longer the “best,” but maybe the bravest.

René Ostberg lives in Illinois and is working toward a master’s degree in library and information science at Dominican University. Her work has been published in U.S. Catholic, Brevity and Hobart.

A People's Priest

In *The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico: Neil Connolly's Priesthood in the South Bronx*, Angel García tells the story of a man growing into his vocation as he explores what role there is for a priest in the church, among believers and in the world. Based on a series of long interviews the author conducted with the Rev. Neil Connolly before the priest's 2017 death, the book is bolstered by contextual reporting. Like the Bronx, like the church, this story is at times heartwarming, at times tragic.

The Kingdom Began follows Connolly in the South Bronx during the years those neighborhoods were being destroyed by racist public policy: the effects of redlining, urban renewal and the austerity politics of New York's fiscal crisis. Forty percent of buildings in the South Bronx were burned or abandoned in the 1970s. Two hundred thousand people fled the borough in that decade as the place became a code word for blight and ruin. The church stayed.

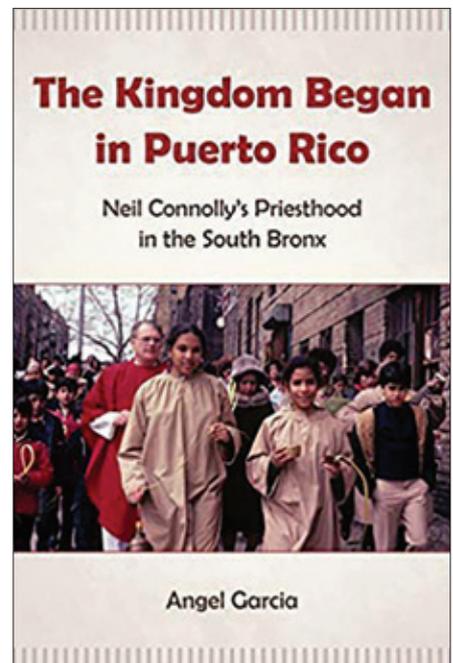
García reveals Connolly as a man with an unusual capacity to share, not hoard, power and with a deep faith in his parishioners, who carried their faith from the mountains of Puerto Rico to the streets of the Bronx, making a new church. In those dark years, Bronxites built community organizations that stemmed the tide of neighborhood destruction and laid the groundwork for the borough's recovery. *The Kingdom Began* is one history of that period, told through the life of an Irish American priest who staked his loyalty across racial and ethnic lines.

Outsiders tend to get the

CliffsNotes version of the South Bronx: the 1977 World Series, "Fort Apache: The Bronx," sad pictures of broken buildings; and then 30 years later, New York Times articles about luxury high-rises. The real story played out in parish halls and crowded lobbies as people saw Christ beside them in their unheated apartments and found power in what they could do together. Mirroring methods then ascendant in Latin America, Connolly established base Christian communities, put lay and religious women in positions of authority and launched a pastoral training center that brought people from around the archdiocese to the south Bronx to learn how faith could be harnessed to action.

The die was cast early for Connolly. In the late 1950s, he spent summers in Puerto Rico at the Institute for Intercultural Communication, a project of the radical education theorist Ivan Illich and the pioneering sociologist Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J., that was designed to immerse seminarians in rural Puerto Rican communities so they would learn Spanish and understand the parishioners they would serve back in New York. It worked. By the 1970s, graduates of the Institute formed the backbone of the community organizations responding to the crisis in the Bronx. Connolly helped establish one of these: South Bronx People for Change.

In 1979, the group ran the South Bronx Via Cruz, a daylong march that named as Christ's tortures the neighborhood crises of absent landlords, recalcitrant city officials, addiction and crime. By the last station, more than 1,000 people had joined the procession. It was just one of a decade of actions. In the years when



The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico
Neil Connolly's Priesthood in the South Bronx
By Angel García
Empire State Editions
336p \$34.95

"the Bronx was burning," the people who lived there ran study sessions, sat in at city offices and testified at city hall to demand housing code enforcement and fire inspectors, youth programs and eventually a massive investment in publicly financed affordable housing that, in time, rebuilt shattered neighborhoods.

In the end, the survival and recovery of the Bronx is a resurrection story—a tale of the people rising. But that is rarely the story that gets told. Instead, everybody has a story of a Bronx mugging. While true enough, those stories serve a lie. They are sleights of hand to distract from the real crime: the destruction of a community, decade after decade, through conscious public policy decisions predicated on racism.

The federal government determined in 1938 that the South Bronx would fail when it drew redlining maps around the neighborhoods, marking them unsafe for investment due to infiltration by Puerto Ricans and African Americans. “Infiltration” is the word on the government documents. Linked federal policies built the highways and subsidized the growth of the suburbs to which white Bronxites would later flee as, starved of investment, their Bronx neighborhoods declined. Because of racist banking practices, their Puerto Rican and Black neighbors could not get mortgages in those suburbs.

As conditions in the South Bronx worsened and poor people displaced from other parts of the city and from their native Puerto Rico crowded into aging buildings, New York City closed firehouses. Wall Street demanded smaller city budgets, and the government complied. A dismaying but predictable wave of fire and trauma followed. By the late 1970s, the department of city planning spoke openly of “planned shrinkage,” a policy of pulling back city services from “blighted” neighborhoods. García deftly leads readers through these issues as Connolly and his community grapple with them.

García does great work sketching out the history of America’s oldest colony, explaining the economic forces that pushed Puerto Ricans to the United States and recounting the communal, heavily lay Catholicism they brought with them. The reader moves with Connolly as he “goes Spanish,” in the words of García. The term referred to the ethnic turnover of parishes as Irish, Italian and other whites fled the borough and were replaced by Spanish-speaking parishioners, but Connolly also uses the term for himself as he stakes his loyalty with his parishioners. A deeper exploration by the Puerto Rican author of the meaning of an Irish American identified so thoroughly

Under Sail

By Ilya Bernstein

To hear what sirens was Jesus Christ
nailed to a tree, unable to move?
To what treacherous love
was the world near?
The ears of all its other crew required no wax
to seal them to that singing
only his to hear.

*Ilya Bernstein is a poet and translator. His recent publications include a book-length poem, *Distances and Sounds* (Ars-Interpres, 2020), and a collection of poems by *Osip Mandelstam in translation* (M-Graphics, 2020).*

with the people he served would have been valuable.

Connolly's efforts were directed both inside and outside the church. He worked with other priests to establish a priests' council, akin to a union for parish priests, and argued that the archbishop be elected, not appointed. In 1984, when he learned that repairs to the archbishop's residence on Fifth Avenue would cost more than a million dollars, Connolly wrote to the incoming archbishop, John O'Connor, then bishop of Scranton, and suggested he instead live in a rectory in the South Bronx, the poorest part of the diocese. O'Connor did not reply.

García's lovingly told story reveals how much energy and hope was alive even—or maybe especially—in the depths of crisis. In contrast, O'Connor comes in like a cold wind. A military

man who hears that the South Bronx vicariate is out of control, he is skeptical of Connolly, his panoply of initiatives and his insistence on lay empowerment. Within a year of O'Connor's arrival, Connolly is reassigned out of the borough.

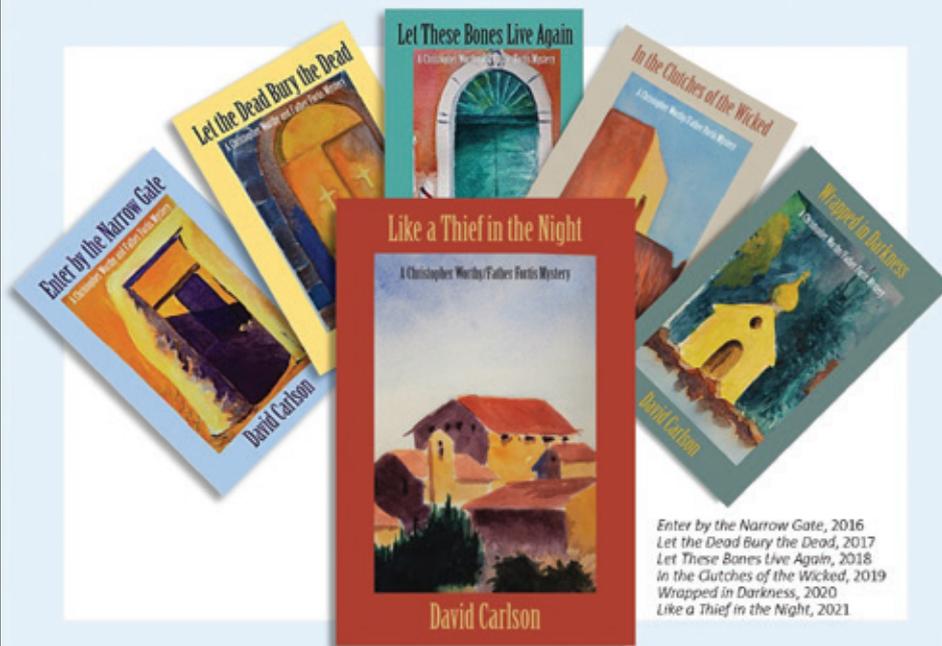
It is telling, and depressing, that the affordable housing system that South Bronx People for Change and a panoply of other groups pushed for eventually rebuilt the South Bronx—but the consultative systems between the hierarchy and priests and laity that Connolly advocated are dead. You can fight city hall. You can even fight the banks. But maybe you can't fight the cathedral.

Connolly comes across as a deeply secure, self-knowledgeable and capable person, trying with resolve and creativity to fulfill his vocation. In our

disgust with clericalism, the cover-ups of sex abuse and other crimes and failures of the hierarchy, in our frustration over the withholding of the sacrament of holy orders based on sex, in our debates over married clergy, we can forget what a tremendous grace a good priest is. Neil Connolly was a good priest. *Presenté*, Neil Connolly.

Eileen Markey teaches journalism at Lehman College and is the author of *A Radical Faith: The Assassination of Sr. Maura*.

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I invite you to flip through the following pages to see how many people contribute to **America**. Please join me in giving thanks for the more than 4,400 supporters—including more than 2,000 first-time donors!—who have generously given. I hope, too, that you'll notice the year next to each name. That is the first year each benefactor made a gift. It is simply astounding how so many have given so much for so long. I want to recognize two donors in particular: John and Ann Lounibos. John and Ann have been supporting our work since 1969. That's 52 years of dedication to **America**—almost half the life of the magazine! The Louniboses have our lasting gratitude.

In my annual appeal letter, which many of you may have already received, I reflect on the 500th anniversary of the conversion of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. What I offer in that letter I would like to reiterate here: **America** exists to help you make sense of the world in all its lights and shadows, its desolations and consolations. The old cliché is that good news doesn't sell newspapers, but the insight of St. Ignatius reminds us that the Good News is always breaking news. Through editorials and newsletters, deep dives and thoughtful analyses, the team at **America** is working all year long to produce the groundbreaking content and spiritual resources you expect from us.

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Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Matthew F. Malone, S.J.
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America's writing inspires and enriches my life in many ways. Thought-provoking and diverse approaches to all topics help me think and pray. It is a privilege to be able to support the work in any possible way.

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Mr. and Mrs. Dennis and Helen Kaptur.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. Paul Leitzinger.....	1994	Hon. J. Kevin McKay.....	1977
Ms. Jane C. Karpick.....	2016	Ms. Rita Leland.....	2018	Rev. Henry McKee.....	2002
Yvonne M. Katharopoulos.....	2020	Todd Leventhal.....	2020	Mrs. Catherine A. McKeen.....	1982
Mr. and Mrs. Christopher P. Keating.....	2017	Ms. Jeannine T. Levesque.....	2020	Jeffrey B. McKeever.....	2020
Dr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Keffer.....	2015	Paul P. Levesque.....	2021	Ms Ann E. McKenna.....	1993
Ms. Marcela Kelley.....	2018	Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and Mary Lewis.....	1996	Mr. and Mrs. Daniel J. McMahan.....	2000
Mr. James R. Kelly.....	1990	Ms. Judith A. Linden.....	2015	Julia McNamara.....	2021
Deacon John P. Kelly.....	1996	Ms. Nancy E. Lindsay.....	2008	Mr. and Mrs. Dale R. Meers.....	2009
Dr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Kelly.....	2013	Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas A. Lombardo.....	2006	Mrs. Barbara J. Menard.....	2010
Mrs. Mary Ann T. Kelly-Wright.....	2002	Ms. Kathleen Lombardozzi.....	2003	Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Merklin.....	1994
Mr. & Mrs. William and Annmarie Kennedy.....	2014	Mr. and Mrs. Frederick J. Lower, Jr.....	1989	Mr. and Mrs. Francis J. Mertz.....	1991
Ms. Eileen D. Kennedy.....	2017	Mr. Neil Lucey.....	2005	Mr. John E. Metzler.....	2000
Catherine A. Kennelly.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. Michael R. Lucey.....	2014	Mrs. Elizabeth A. Meyer.....	1985
Ms. Beatrice Kernan.....	2020	Dr. Thomas J. Ludlum, J.W.C.....	2015	Mr. Harry J. Meyer.....	2012
Travis J. Ketterman.....	2021	Rev. John P. Ludwig.....	2005	Mr. John Michel.....	2016
Francis J. Kicsar.....	2002	Thomas and Alicia Luna.....	2014	Ms. Ann Migliaccio.....	2018
Ms. Ann E. Kiely.....	2020	Mr. James Lund.....	2018	John R. Miles.....	2020
Robert Kilcullen.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. Joseph and Margaret Lynaugh.....	2019	Rev. Theodore J. Miller.....	1984
Paul and Janice Klaus.....	2019	Mrs. Yvonne T. MacCormack.....	2015	Mr. Paul Miller.....	2018
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Klein.....	2017	Mr. Ian R. Macdougald.....	2015	William Miller.....	2021
Mr. Denny Klosterman.....	2015	Mr. Eugene J. MacElroy.....	2010	Mr. Robert J. Mirabile.....	1994
Mrs. Marie E. Knoblock.....	1997	Mr. Robert E. Mack.....	2010	Deacon Michael Missaggia.....	1992
Ms. Elizabeth Knowles.....	2016	Mr. John H. Mackinnon.....	2013	Dr. William Mitchell.....	2011
Mr. Kenneth D. Knuth.....	2006	Diane C. Mader.....	2020	Mr. Michael Mitchell.....	2016
Rev. Kenneth Koehler.....	2012	Mr. David Madsen.....	2019	Mr. Nicholas M. Mohr.....	1983
Mrs. Diane Kortan.....	2018	Ms. Mary Ellen Mahon.....	2015	Mr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Monahan.....	2013
Jean Korte.....	2019	Anthony P. Mahowald.....	2021	Ms. Geraldine D. Monteleone.....	2006
Rev. Rudolph J. Koser.....	2015	Mr. Michael J. Makowsky.....	2021	Mr. Matthew Morano.....	2018
Ms. Mary Kosick.....	2018	Robert M. Malene.....	2021	Mr. James T. Morley, Jr.....	2012
Rev. Paul P. Koszarek.....	1998	Mr. Delbert J. Malin.....	2012	Mr. and Mrs. Edward N. Morris.....	1992
Mr. John N. Kotre.....	2001	Deacon & Mrs. Thomas and Mary Mallinger.....	2015	Rev. Msgr. Philip D. Morris.....	1995
Anne Kravitz.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. Timothy and Martha Malloy.....	2020	Robert Morris.....	2011
Rev. William T. Kremmell.....	2009	Mr. and Mrs. Francis X. Maloney, Jr.....	2015	Ms. Sara L. Morrison.....	1980
Mr. Thomas Krentel.....	2018	Mrs. Ann Mangone.....	2020	Fr. William Morton, SSC.....	2021
Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Clare Kretzman.....	2019	Mrs. Lisa Manico.....	2020	Alicia Moss.....	2020
Rev. Henry Kriegel.....	1989	Ms. Kathleen M. Manning.....	2009	Ms. Jane Mraz.....	2018
Rev. William F. Krlis.....	1989	Mr. Michael Manzulli.....	2019	Mr. and Mrs. Barbara T. Mugnolo.....	2016
Ms. Alice Krolczak.....	2018	Ms. Katherine Maria.....	2017	Rev. Christopher Muldoon.....	1998
Ms. Sandra F. Kuhn, AU.D. CCC.....	2014	Dr. and Mrs. William H. Marmion.....	2005	Matthew P. Mullane.....	2021
Mr. Joseph Kulik.....	2018	Ms. Lucine Marous.....	1987	Mrs. Barbara Mullen.....	2001
Rev. Msgr. Raymond J. Kupke.....	1989	Ms. Elizabeth Marren.....	2020	Mr. Patrick Mulligan.....	2018
Mr. Michael R. Kuse.....	2016	David Martin.....	2021	Mr. Joseph P. Muriana.....	2005
Mrs. Barbara L. Kuttner.....	2018	Mr. and Mrs. Ronald and Margaret Martone.....	2015	Mr. and Mrs. George W. Murphy.....	1991
Dr. Dolores E. Labbe.....	2012	Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Maxwell.....	2003	Ms. Elizabeth M. Murphy.....	2019
Barry Ladendorf.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. Kimball Mc Mullin.....	2018	Mr. and Mrs. James and Jeanne Murphy.....	2019
James C. Lamal.....	2020	Mr. H. William McAttee.....	1987	Mr. John Walter Murtagh.....	2019
Susan and Chris Lane.....	2000	Mr. Joseph McAuley.....	2020	Joseph L. Muth, Jr.....	2021

Mrs. Teresa B. Nally.....	2001	Mr. William Plante.....	2004	Mr. and Mrs. Stephen A. Scherr.....	1977
Mr. Christopher F. Naughten.....	2012	Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L. Plue.....	2012	Ms. Eleanor M. Schleider and	
Mrs. Sigrid Nelson.....	2019	Mr. John Polanin, Jr.....	2002	Mr. Thomas S. Poutier.....	2018
Carol S. Nelson.....	2021	Ms. Mary Pope-Handy.....	2002	Dr. Eugene J. Schmitt.....	1985
G. Michael Nidiffer, M.D.....	2010	Mr. Marcus P. Porcelli.....	1997	Ms. Catherine Schmitt.....	2018
Mr. David Niedermaier.....	2020	Thierry Porte.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. David and Andrea Schmitz.....	2020
Mr. Joseph P. Nolan.....	1997	Raymond Pothier.....	2021	Ms. Mary Ann Schneidenwind.....	2016
Mr. Robert E. Nolan.....	2000	Mr. and Mrs. Lantz Powell.....	1983	Rev. John W. Schneider.....	2007
Mr. Richard Nolan.....	2017	Mr. Wayne Puetz.....	2017	D.M. Schone.....	2021
Michele Nolen.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. Mary Quinlin.....	2018	Mr. John Schoonover.....	2016
Mr. Daniel A. Nolet.....	2009	Ms. Florence E. Quinn.....	2004	Rev. Donald C. Schramm.....	1998
Dr. and Mrs. Ray R. Noll.....	2002	Mr. and Mrs. William J. Quinn.....	2012	Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Schreiber, Jr.....	2014
Mr. and Mrs. Dave Nona.....	1985	Mr. James Quinn.....	2019	Camille Schroeck.....	2020
Elizabeth Norman.....	2021	Scott Quinn.....	2020	Mr. Paul Schuchman.....	2009
Noreen Normandeau.....	2020	Mr. Lawrence T. Quirk.....	2012	Rev. Arthur B. Schute.....	2002
Ms. Eileen M. Norris.....	2015	Prof. Brian Abel Ragen.....	1994	Beth Barton Schweiger.....	2020
Mr. and Mrs. Bill and Mary Novotny.....	2015	Mr. Ryan J. Raisio.....	2012	Mr. and Mrs. James J. Scott.....	2002
Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. O'Brien.....	1988	M.J. Ramirez.....	2018	Mr. Charles T. Scott.....	2019
Mrs. Brigid O'Brien.....	2012	Pastor Philip Ramstad.....	2019	Mr. Milton W. Seiler, Jr.....	2016
Ms. Shelia O'Brien.....	2021	Mr. Stanley K. Rashid.....	2019	Olivia Selinger.....	2019
James J. O'Connell.....	2021	Mr. Alex J. Ravnik.....	1988	Rev. Msgr. Joseph F. Semancik.....	1985
Mr. Sean O'Connor.....	1988	Matthew Rayechau.....	2021	Ms. Maryann Semancik.....	2014
Mr. Kevin J. O'Connor.....	2013	Roderick and Nancy Read.....	2012	Mr. James A. Serritella.....	2015
Sinead O'Doherty.....	2018	Mr. John Reehill.....	2013	Mrs. Johanna Shaghalian.....	2020
Drs. Emmett Pearse O'Grady.....	2016	Ann W. Regan.....	2021	Mrs. Mary Shapiro.....	2015
Thomas O'Kress.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. George E. Reid.....	1995	Ms. Margaret M. Sharkey.....	2017
Robert C. O'Sullivan.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. David P. Reid.....	2018	Mr. Terrence P. Shaughnessy.....	1995
Paul O'Connell.....	2020	Mr. John I. & Jeanne M. Reilly.....	2001	Dr. P.G. Shaw and Mrs. Paula M. Rooney.....	1994
Mr. Dennis Ohler.....	2017	Charles and Marta Reilly.....	2021	Mr. Bartholomew A. Sheehan, Jr.....	1991
John & Lisa Oliva.....	2021	Ms. Noraleen Renauer.....	2017	Mr. Edward J. Sheridan.....	2013
Rev. Theodore D. Olson.....	2006	Mr. William Rice.....	2013	Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Shields.....	2008
Randy and Kellie Onxley.....	2016	Mr. Daniel H. Riddick.....	2016	Mr. James F. Shields.....	2014
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Orr.....	2017	Warren B. Rigdon.....	2020	Dr. and Mrs. James L. Shumaker.....	1992
Rev. Robert E. Osborne.....	2009	Rev. Norman D. Riksen.....	2015	Rev. Richard R. Siefer.....	2008
Mr. Timothy J. Padgett.....	2010	Herminio and Rosa Rios.....	2019	Mr. Thomas H. Sieg.....	1993
Ms. Ellen Pairo.....	2018	Ms. Kathleen M. Rivet.....	2003	Mr. Ronald L. Sigrist.....	2013
Rev. Michael L. Palazzo.....	2000	Dr. Edward F. Rizy.....	2010	Sidney S. Simmons.....	2012
Mrs. Martina G. Parauda.....	1992	Rev. Michael G. Roach.....	2000	Mr. Jeff Simon.....	2020
Ms. Mary Alyce Pardo.....	2018	Ms. Kerry Robinson.....	2009	Rev. Kenneth C. Simpson.....	2015
Ms. Janice M. Patronite.....	2015	Richard M. Rodney.....	2020	Mr. Sam Sirianni.....	2016
Mr. Gerald M. Pauly.....	1994	Mr. and Mrs. Ricardo R. Rodriguiz.....	2007	Dr. Frank Siroky.....	2005
Mrs. Susan M. Pauly.....	2018	Mr. John S. Rogers.....	2014	Fr. Richard A. Sitzmann.....	2012
Mr. John Paxton.....	2017	Mr. and Mrs. Jason Rogers.....	2018	Mr. and Mrs. Stephen & Gail Sladek.....	2018
Mr. Steven Pelak.....	2020	Loretta Romanow.....	2021	Dr. Donald J. Slowinski.....	2015
Mr. and Mrs. John M. Pellegrino.....	1998	Patrick H. Rombalski.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. Richard W. Smith, Jr.....	2014
Mr. and Mrs. John And Fran Pelrine.....	2018	Ms. Mary Ann Ronan.....	2012	Ms. Susan M. Smith.....	2016
Mr. and Mrs. Helen K. Penberthy.....	2009	Mr. and Mrs. Guy R. Rorive.....	2016	Mr. William Smith.....	2019
Deacon and Mrs. R. J. Penzenstadler.....	2016	Most Rev. Peter A. Rosazza, D.D.....	1987	Rev. Thomas Smith.....	2021
Mr. and Mrs. Les Perino.....	2015	Ms. Alessandra Rose.....	2019	Mr. Russell T. Ciolli and Ms. Karen D. Snyder.....	2015
Mr. and Mrs. Hal Perry.....	2015	Ms. Patricia P. Rossmann.....	2012	Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and Mary Sobota.....	2008
Mr. Edward H. Perry.....	2018	Ms. Diane E. Rosztozcy.....	2004	Dr. Richard F. Spagnuolo.....	2016
Mr. John M. Peters.....	2015	Rev. Msgr. John Rowan.....	2002	Mr. Thomas C. Spavin.....	2016
Mr. and Mrs. Drew M. Petersen, Jr.....	2009	Mr. John Ruder.....	2015	David C. Spinks.....	2021
Mr. Dale Petrishe.....	2019	Deacon James A. Ryan.....	2014	Mr. and Mrs. John W. Spollen.....	1982
Mr. W. James Petru.....	2018	Ms. Sarah Ryan.....	2019	Mr. Robert Spolzino.....	2020
Mr. Edmund Peyton.....	2018	Sacred Heart Catholic Church.....	2021	Mr. Brian St. Clair.....	2020
Kathy and Ed Pfister.....	2019	Ms. Maria Salazar.....	2012	St. Jeanne Jugan Parish.....	2020
Dr. and Mrs. James J. Phelan.....	2007	Col. and Mrs. John Salomone.....	2014	Daniel Stack.....	2021
Rev. Michael J. Phillips.....	2005	Ms. Sandra B. Sandvoss.....	2019	Mr. and Mrs. Gaeton F. Stella.....	2017
Ms. Erin Pick.....	2014	Dave Sauerbeck.....	2021	Mary Stephen.....	2020
Mr. and Mrs. John and Mary Pickitt.....	2008	Ms. Therese M. Saulnier.....	2016	Mr. Michael Stepovich.....	2014
Carol Pike-Bergeson.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. Mark and Margaret Scheibe.....	1988	Mrs. Therese Stewart.....	2015

Mr. Michael T. Stieber.....	1997	Mr. and Mrs. Stephen K. Tim.....	1997	Mrs. Ninette P. Webster	1988
Most Rev. John Stowe, OFM, Conv.....	2016	Most Rev. James C. Timlin.....	1992	Ms. Christie Weeks.....	2018
Dr. and Mrs. John P. Straetmans	2017	Ms. Ann C. Tobey.....	1990	Rev. John B. Wehrlen.....	2007
Joseph R. Streva, Jr.....	2020	Mr. Brian E. Torgersen	2020	Mr. Robert Weickert.....	2010
Ms. Mary Strickland.....	2016	Mr. and Mrs. Enrique Torres.....	1994	Mr. George J. Welch.....	2010
Mr. Andy Stulc.....	2018	Mr. Thomas Travers.....	2017	Francis G. Weldgen.....	2021
Mrs. Gail L. Sturdevant	1995	Mr. Christopher Treado	2015	Mr. John R. Wempe.....	2017
Rev. Terrence J. Sullivan.....	2014	Mr. Richard Troy	2019	Mr. William Werwaiss	2010
Maureen O'Brien Sullivan.....	2015	R. M. M. Ttees.....	2020	Dr. and Mrs. John Tom Whalen.....	2020
Barry and Winnifred Sullivan	2015	Mr. Robert D. Tuerk	1988	Mr. Paul Wheeler.....	2018
Ms. Judith Sullivan	2016	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Uelmen.....	2018	Mr. and Mrs. Donald J. Whittam	2002
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sullivan.....	2017	William R. Ulmer and Steven Serradilla	2019	Mr. Emil C. Wick.....	2016
Mrs. Nancy Sullivan	2020	Mr. Gregory Ulrich.....	2012	Ms. Mary V. Widhalm	2019
Katherine Sullivan.....	2021	Richard and Joy Vaccari.....	2018	Rev. Lyle Wilgenbusch	2012
Ms. Patricia M. Surdyk.....	2001	Mr. Emmanuel Van Der Mensbrugge.....	2019	Mr. Mark J. Williams	2000
Rev. Thomas J. Sutherland.....	1993	Mr. John van Rens.....	2019	Mr. Dennis Wilson	2015
Ann and James Swaner.....	2007	Jay and Ellen Vancura.....	2006	Jim and Nancy Wilson.....	2018
Ms. Ann M. Swanson.....	1990	Mr. William J. Vanden Heuvel	2000	James A. Wilson.....	2021
Ms. Ann M. Swartz.....	2014	Mr. Richard VandenBrul.....	2020	Mrs. Linda Nowakowski Winter	2004
Mr. and Mrs. Neil and Beverly Sweeney.....	2018	Ms. Kathleen Vecchio.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. James Wochner.....	2020
Denise S. Szabo and Thomas J. Booth	2020	Mr. Santiago Velez Ferro.....	2019	Dr. & Dr. Timothy & David Wohlstadter-Rocha.....	2014
Mr. and Mrs. James R. Tallon, Jr.....	2014	Ms. Vivian Veloso Macaspac.....	2018	William Wood.....	2021
Mr. Anthony J. Tambasco	2002	Ms. Jane M. Vervalin.....	1998	Rev. Jonathan A. Woodhall	2004
Mr. and Mrs. Laurance Tapper.....	2015	Michael J. Vjecha, M.D.....	2021	Rev. Walter J. Woods	1995
Sarah Taylor	2020	Rosemarie Vohsen.....	2021	Mr. Michael J. Wotypka	2013
Richard D. Taylor.....	2021	Ms. Cindy M. Vojtech	2016	Mr. and Mrs. John Wynton	2018
Ms. Minda Te	2016	Rev. Eugene F. Vonderhaar	2005	Xavier High School - NYC	1997
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Teaford.....	2018	Mr. Thuan Duc Vu.....	2017	Mr. Martin M. Yadrick, Jr.....	2015
Ms. Mary Jane Terrell.....	2015	Thuy Vu.....	2021	Ms. Kristen Yoo.....	2019
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Terry.....	2019	Rev. and Mrs. Walter M. Wagner.....	2003	Richard E. Zajac.....	2021
Mr. Dwayne J. Thoman	2012	Ms. Jeanne S. Walewski	2016	Mr. and Mrs. Paul N. Zenker	2016
Mr. Stephen H. Thomas.....	1992	Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Wall	2001	Anthony Ziebert.....	2021
Meredith Thomas	2020	Mr. Richard Walters.....	2020	Michael A. Zoellner.....	2021
Ms. Clare Thompson	2013	Mr. Kent R. Weber.....	2003	Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Zwiren.....	2012
Mr. John M. Thomson.....	2014	Robert Weber.....	2019		

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Aaron Aaron.....	2020	Andrew J. Amyot	2021	Mr. Henry L. Atkins, Jr.....	2012
Ms. Jennifer Abbate.....	2019	Rev. Msgr. Gaspar F. Ancona.....	2016	Mr. William Auble.....	2019
Mr. and Mrs. Frank and Mary Frances Abbott	2015	Sr. Elizabeth Anderson, CSJ.....	2018	Ms. Patricia K. Austin.....	2007
Mr. and Mrs. Michael and Sue Abell.....	2020	Jonetta Anderson.....	2020	Dr. and Mrs. Donald F. Averill.....	2010
Charlene Abellana.....	2020	Dennis E. Anderson.....	2021	Ray Ayotte.....	2021
Georgia C. Abraham	2020	Elizabeth Anderson.....	2021	Deacon Walter C. Ayres.....	2015
Ms. Lee Ann Abseck.....	2021	Dan and Susan Andrews.....	2014	George Azrak	2020
Mr. Henry J. Ackels.....	2020	Edward A. Andros	2021	Mr. David Azzarello.....	2018
Dr. Annette Acosta-Dickson	2021	Ms. Ann Anesta	2018	Mr. Gabriel B.....	2019
Mr. Glen Adams.....	2018	Anonymous (55).....		Anne Baas.....	2021
J. Rodger and Barbara F. Adams.....	2018	Ms. Elizabeth A. Anthony.....	2015	Ms. Mary Sue Babb	2014
Al Adams	2020	Annette Antoneille	2020	Ms. Alanna Backx.....	2020
Mr. Ernest Adelman	2019	Ms. Jane Antrobus	2008	Ms. Elizabeth M. Bailey.....	2000
Adrian Dominican Sisters - MI	2021	Robert and Marie Arbour	2002	Mr. and Mrs. Wallace E. Bailey	2000
Mr. Robert F. Ahern.....	1983	Ms. Mariane Armstrong.....	2020	Timothy Bailey.....	2021
Mr. Michael Airo.....	2019	Monica Armstrong and Don Kapa	2021	Ms. Virginia Baker	2018
Mr. Michael C.R. Alavanja	1991	Randy Arnold.....	2020	Ms. Lynne Baker	2018
Roy A. Alberts	2021	Jaime Arredondo.....	2019	Mr. and Mrs. William and Marchelle Bakken.....	2014
Mr. and Mrs. George Allen.....	2004	Mr. Christopher Arsement, C.P.A.....	2013	Roy Bakos.....	2020
Dr. Loyd Allen.....	2013	Rev. David J. Arseneault.....	2013	Mr. James Balma	2012
John A. Allen.....	2020	Mr. John Arthur.....	2016	Ms. Kathleen M. Baluha	2020
Ms. Marcia Walker Alvis.....	2019	Mrs. Katie Artzt.....	2021	Mary L. Banino	2021
Anthony Amodeo.....	2019	Helen Arvizu	2020	Mrs. Barbara Bank.....	2015

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen A. Banks.....	2010	Ms. Dori Bolling.....	2019	Ms. Kathleen Hughes Burgess.....	2021
Ms. Christine Bannan.....	2018	Mr. and Mrs. Francis X. and Barbara Bolton.....	2020	Ms. Mary P. Burke.....	2015
Mr. Chuck Baptiste.....	1999	Ms. C. Angela Bontempo.....	2019	Steve Burke.....	2020
Arthur R. Baranowski.....	2021	William Boozang.....	2020	C E. Burke.....	2021
Brittany Baranski.....	2021	CJ Borkowski.....	2021	Joan Burlew.....	2021
Ms. Ruthann Barbel.....	2019	Robert E. Bosch.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. Kevin and Marie Burns.....	2020
William Barbel.....	2021	Mr. James Bosinger.....	2016	Nate Burns.....	2020
Mr. Robert R. Barrimond, MBA.....	2018	Ms. Angelina Bottorff.....	2018	Jeffrey and Sabina Burns.....	2021
Ms. Milena Barrios De Vengoechea.....	2020	Mr. Timothy R. Bouffard.....	2016	Ms. Victoria Busch.....	2020
Mrs. Christine L. Bart.....	2000	Mr. Keith Bourgoïn.....	2018	Ms. Paula Butturini.....	2019
Ben Bartosik.....	2018	Richard P. Bourne-Vanneck, Esq.....	2020	Dr. and Mrs. Karl W. Butzer.....	2001
Mr. Edward Basanese.....	2018	Ms. Christina Bowen.....	2018	Ms. Vivian Cabrera.....	2018
Mr. Michael Basile.....	2013	Mr. Thomas Bowes.....	2013	Ms. Marie L. Caffrey.....	2012
Ms. Kathleen Basile.....	2019	Mr. Brian Boyce.....	2018	Ms. Eileen M. Cain.....	2008
James Basilio.....	2020	Rev. Thomas Boyer.....	2021	Ms. Patricia Calabrese.....	2003
Ms. Tanya Bastianich Manuali.....	2014	Mrs. Kathryn C. Boylan.....	2020	Ms. Rosemary Callaghan.....	2014
Ms. Elizabeth Bates.....	2020	Debra Boyle-Borkowski.....	2020	Katherine Calnan.....	2020
Katherine S. Batts.....	1999	Anne Bracchi.....	2020	Ms. Mary Cameron.....	2018
Mr. and Mrs. Gerard Baumbach.....	2014	Ms. Geraldine M. Bracken.....	2003	Ms. Rose-Ellen Caminer.....	2018
Joe Baxter.....	2020	Mr. E. M. Bradley.....	1989	Ms. Lucy M. Campanella.....	2007
Ms. Carol Bayens.....	2019	Mr. John Bradley.....	2017	Ms. Marita A. Campbell.....	2002
Daniel J. Bean.....	2021	Mr. John T. Bradt.....	2012	Ms. Colleen N. Campion.....	2012
Ann Beaulieu.....	2021	Mr. James M. Brady.....	2019	Ms. Jane K. Campion.....	2018
Mr. Charles J. Beaupre, Jr.....	2014	Thomas P. Brady.....	2020	Mr. Mark Canales.....	2015
Dr. and Mrs. Margaret Beauregard.....	1998	Mary Ellen Brady.....	2020	Ms. Margaret A. Canary.....	2018
Mr. and Mrs. Michael J. Bechelli.....	2015	Ms. Carmen Braeuninger.....	2018	Ms. Marie Cannella.....	2019
Dr. and Mrs. Alfred M. Beck.....	2018	Mary Alice Bramming.....	2021	Robyn and Vincent Caponi.....	2013
Carol Beck.....	2020	Ms. Barbara Brandes.....	2015	William Cappella.....	2020
Ms. Jeanne M. Beck.....	2021	Ms. Susan Brandon.....	2014	Ms. Acacia Caraballo.....	2018
Mr. William Becker.....	2018	Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Brannon.....	2010	Mr. Eric Carleen.....	2020
Mr. and Mrs. Paul O. Behrends.....	1990	Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Braun.....	2007	Ms. Mary T. Carlson.....	2017
Mr. Raymond J. Behrendt.....	2001	Robert Brearley.....	2020	G. D. Carney.....	2021
Ms. Mary Behrens.....	2018	Marcia A. Bredar.....	2021	Ms. Sandy Carosella.....	2019
Mr. and Ms. Steven Bell.....	2005	Patricia Breedlove.....	2021	Kathleen Carrico.....	2021
Christian Bellavia.....	2020	Mary E. Breen.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. Roger A. Carrier.....	2015
Ms. Patricia Belles.....	2018	Mr. Bruno G. Breitmeyer.....	2019	Mr. William W. Carruth.....	2016
Ms. Stephanie J. Belovich.....	2001	Dr. Ralph J. Bremigan.....	2010	Mr. and Mrs. John P. Carter, Jr.....	2015
Deacon and Mrs. James J. Benjamin, M.D.....	1990	M Brennan.....	2018	David Carttar.....	2020
Mr. B. Benjamin Lowry.....	2019	Joan and Kevin Brennan.....	2021	Ms. Verity Caruso.....	2018
Mr. Paul J. Beno.....	2010	Sr. Sally Ann Brickner, OSF.....	2020	Mrs. Kathleen Caruso.....	2020
Mary J. Benton.....	2021	Christine Bridenbaker.....	2020	Rocco F. Caruso.....	2021
Mr. Scott Berger.....	2018	Ms. Marie C. Bridy.....	2015	Mr. Patrick Casey.....	2018
Ms. Myra Berghane.....	2016	Rev. Michael W. Briese.....	2012	Ms. Barbara Casserly.....	2021
Sister Kilcoyne Berthiaume.....	2021	Alana Brinker.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M. Cassidy.....	2016
Mr. Michael Bertsch.....	2019	Ms. Maryjane Brisbane.....	2018	Robert J. Castagna.....	2021
Victoria E. Beynon.....	2020	Sandra Brown.....	2016	Frank A. Castro.....	2020
Ms. Norah M. Bischoff.....	1998	Mr. Warren Brown.....	2018	Tom Cattapan.....	2020
Mr. David Bjerklie.....	2010	David J. Brown.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. John V. Caulfield.....	2021
Mrs. Carol-Ann Black.....	2015	Ms. Barbara Brozovic.....	2018	Patricia A. Cavanaugh.....	2020
Helen K. Black.....	2021	Terry Bruce.....	2020	Joe and Linda Cavato.....	2010
Mr. William Blackburn.....	2020	Ms. Mary A. Bruemmer.....	1991	Robert A. Cekay.....	2020
George C. Blankenship, Jr.....	2021	Katherine H. Bruemmer.....	2021	Rev. Thomas M. Cembor.....	2014
Servants of the Blessed Sacrament - ME.....	2021	Mr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Bruno.....	2003	Mr. Lawrence A. Chadwick.....	2015
Ms. Linda Blincow.....	2019	Gary and Diane Buckley.....	2019	Mr. Charles P. Chalko.....	2004
Mary Ann Blome.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. James Buckley, Jr.....	2020	Ms. Caroline Chambre Hammock.....	2020
Ms. Jolan B. Bloss.....	2005	Dr. Ely Bueno.....	2020	Mr. Peter Chan.....	2019
Ms. Sharon Blumenthal.....	2015	Mrs. Karen A. Bukoll.....	2020	Joel Chapa.....	2020
Mary T. Boggie.....	2020	Chandler E. Bullion.....	2020	Mrs. Irene B. Chapman.....	2010
Mr. Robert A. Boguski.....	2014	Ms. Marilyn A. Bunnewith.....	2019	Eileen Chapoton.....	2020
Ms. Patricia Bohlman.....	2018	Mr. Paul J. Buras.....	2016	Sisters of Charity - NY.....	2021
Stacia M. Bolakowski.....	2020	Ms. Martha A. T. Burch.....	2016	Sisters of Charity - The Villa - NY.....	2021
Mr. William Boles.....	2014	Mrs. Jerilyn Burgess.....	2020	Kathryn H. Chastain.....	2021

Rev. Paul F. Chateau.....	2004	Thomas Conlon.....	2020	James A. Cutropia.....	2021
Stephen H. Chertock.....	2021	John L. Conlon.....	2021	Mr. Richard F. Czaja.....	2006
MaryLouise Chesley-Cora.....	2021	Fred Connally.....	2021	Mr. Thomas D'Albro.....	2018
Ms. Lindsay Chessare.....	2020	Ms. Maureen Connelly.....	2018	The Honorable Matthew D'Emic.....	2021
Chiaramonte.....	2020	Mr. and Mrs. William F. Connelly.....	2016	Mr. Gilbert D'Souza.....	2020
Karis Chodzko.....	2020	Ms. Jane Connelly.....	2018	Mr. Joel Dabu.....	2019
Gerald T. Chojnacki.....	2020	Mr. Donald A. Connolly.....	2005	Ms. Kathleen Dacunto.....	2020
Ms. Mary Chollet.....	2018	John R. Connolly.....	2021	Wade and Susan Daigle.....	2019
Ms. Kathleen S. Christenson.....	1988	Thomas Connors.....	2020	Mr. Jeffrey Daily.....	2018
Christopher Christou.....	2021	Mr. Robert Conway.....	2017	Mrs. Theresa Daly.....	2017
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Mr. Thomas Libera.....	2018	Mr. Steven J. Mailloux.....	2012	Mr. James J. McConnell.....	2003
Ms. Maire Liberace.....	2018	Ms. Cathleen Makley.....	2019	Ms. Marie McConnell.....	2012
Maria E. Lim.....	2021	Mr. Kim Makuch.....	2018	Mr. James McConnell.....	2018
Felipe and Elizabeth Lima.....	2018	Mr. Frank Malensek, Jr.....	2021	Mr. Jim McConnell.....	2020
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William McDonald, Jr.	2021	Nancy Moeller	2021	Dr. Carolyn Nickerson	2021
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Virginia McEvoy.....	2020	Joseph M. and Constance M. Mondel.....	1997	Mrs. Mary Nolan.....	2019
Mr. Arthur McFadden.....	2018	Ms. Mary J. Mondello	2004	Rev. Mark L. Noonan.....	2008
Mike McFarland	2020	Mr. Mark Mongelluzzo	2020	Mr. and Mrs. Frank and Lois Noonan.....	2014
Mrs. Mary E. McGinley.....	2015	Mr. Marc Montalbino.....	2018	Mary A. Noonan.....	2021
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Hassan Sayeed.....	2021	Ms. Steven A. Sloniker	2019	Mr. Kevin M. Sweeney	2019
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Confessions of a Las Vegas Catholic

'Sin City' was a great place to grow up

By Elizabeth Beckwith



The title above promises probably way more scandal than I can deliver. But still—you're intrigued, right? Growing up Catholic in Las Vegas is a defining characteristic of mine, right next to growing up Italian-American. What if I had been baptized in some Protestant denomination, in some normal city? I shudder to think. But it was also a major reason I became a writer.

What must have it been like, you wonder? To have grown up belting out "On Eagles' Wings" every Friday morning at the school Mass less than a mile away from a stage where a show-girl performed wearing what appeared to be only eagle's wings?

It was fabulous.

My Catholicism was intertwined with my Vegas upbringing right from the beginning. I was baptized at Guardian Angel Cathedral, located just off the Las Vegas strip. Some of the stained glass windows feature distinctly Las Vegas imagery woven into biblical tableaux, the beautiful creations of the artist Isabel Piczek. One window features Judas with his 30 pieces of silver—or is it a man carrying poker chips? The same window shows Roman soldiers casting lots for Jesus's robe—or are they gamblers down on their luck?

And of course, the lessons taught to me at Catholic school were more than supplemented by the examples in my very Catholic home. My parents were the best examples of forgiveness, of not judging, of loving your neighbor,

of giving until it hurts and then giving more. And the fact that we were in Vegas made that all the more important, because what you might think are the terrible parts of being raised in that environment actually benefited me greatly in my development and in my career as a writer and a comic.

Everyone was welcome into our home, saints and sinners alike. We had all kinds of people sitting around our table: pimps and priests, prostitutes and nuns, rich and poor, addicts, gangsters. It was not an antiseptic world, not a world where I interacted only with the "right people." The lessons I gleaned from the love my parents extended to "the sinners" was just as valuable to my spiritual development as my interactions with "the saints."

I have spent my entire career attempting to pay homage to (and in a deeper sense, to keep alive) all the incredible characters of my Catholic-kid-in-Las Vegas life. In the sixth grade, captivated by time travel, my best friend Angela Mullins and I took several cracks at building a time machine. We were unsuccessful in building an actual machine that could go faster than the speed of light. But in my own weird way, my writing career has become my time travel vessel back to the world of my childhood.

My obsession with my parents moving their family from Brooklyn to Vegas, and then raising good Catholic kids right in the middle of Sin City, is the subject of several television proj-

ects of mine. It also features prominently in my satirical parenting book, *Raising the Perfect Child Through Guilt and Manipulation*, which in itself is an entire love letter to my parents. I told you. I am obsessed.

If I take a step back and look at my work, it appears that my primary focus as a writer has always been a desperate attempt to shine a light on my obsessions and hope that the world becomes obsessed with them too. In his autobiography, *Born to Run*, Bruce Springsteen (my fellow Italian-American Catholic kid!) describes what kind of artists he admired and wanted to emulate when he first started performing: "Songwriters with their own voice, their own story to tell, who could draw you into a world they created and sustain your interest in the things that obsessed them."

So I guess I'm not alone. Bruce gets it. He's a guy who built an entire career writing songs about his hometown, about the colorful characters of his childhood, about the sacred amid the profane. While I haven't earned a moniker as amazing as "The Boss," I'm certainly trying to do the same. And I am grateful to get to time travel to that uniquely outrageous time and place of my life again and again.

Elizabeth Beckwith is a writer and comedian. She is the author of the comedic parenting book *Raising the Perfect Child Through Guilt and Manipulation*, and is currently a writer for ABC's *"The Goldbergs."*



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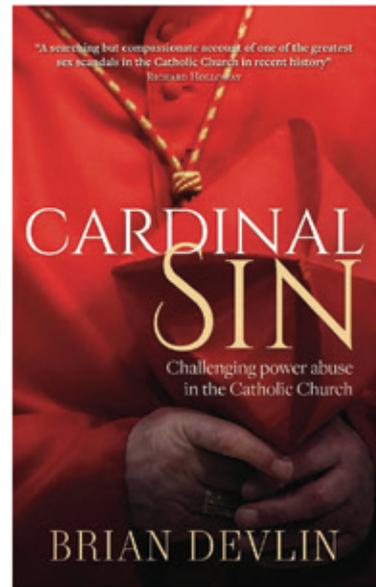
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DESCRIPTION

As the papal conclave that was to choose Pope Francis was being called, a cardinal of the Catholic Church was exposed and took a monumental fall from grace. Since then, many more high-profile Catholic clerics have been confronted. One of four whistleblowers, former priest Brian Devlin relates what it took to uncover the sexual hypocrisy of Cardinal Keith O'Brien in this previously untold inside story. The author asks the hard questions, analyses the harsh responses of the Catholic hierarchy and provides ways the Church can heal and regain the trust of its faithful.

Cardinal Sin: Challenging power abuse in the Catholic Church is a critical work for understanding how the Catholic Church does and should react when its senior figures are challenged.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Devlin was ordained a Catholic Priest in Edinburgh in 1985. Once the announcement that Keith O'Brien would be ordained as his Archbishop, he left the priesthood to work with heroin users in Leith.

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4:00pm CDT

Zoom Forum

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