

in people's everyday lives; the real growth of Leviathan came with the vast rearmament and bureaucratic mobilization brought on by America's intervention in World War II, made permanent by the demands of the Cold War. The needs of war trumped all.

For the first two decades of that protracted confrontation with communism, however, the vision of American domesticity still served as the locus of loyalty in the rhetoric of politicians and the calculations of policy-makers. Carlson offers a fascinating exploration of Henry Luce and his valiant attempt in the pages of *Life* magazine to create a visible embodiment of the virtuous, prosperous, enduring American family, even as its cohesiveness was slowly under erosion by the very consumerism and individualism encouraged by unprecedented wealth. Carlson unearths sober analyses by Cold War theorists who examined the implications for national security of threats to domestic harmony, such as "juvenile delinquency." How quaint a phrase that seems today, it is melancholy to reflect.

Poignantly, Carlson shows the legislative moment when the maternalist idea

and the pro-family policies it had supported were driven from the public square. By way of bitter irony, it was conservative Southerners who were responsible. In a last-ditch attempt to derail the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Carlson relates, die-hard legislators inserted language forbidding sex discrimination into the Act—thinking that they'd thereby made it so unpalatable it would sink from sight. Instead, the bill sailed through Congress and in a single stroke rendered illegal every attempt to provide a workingman with a "family wage" that would enable his wife to rear her children at home. Henceforth—with the industrious aid of a reborn feminist movement—the preservation of the family would no longer be the goal of government policy. Indeed, the very definition of "family" would decay into meaninglessness, to the point where today it can equally refer to single mothers, lesbians made parents by artificial insemination, and two-income suburban households along with their hired surrogate mother. While Carlson does not pretend that all these social changes flowed from a single law, or even from the actions of the government more broadly, he shows the profoundly corrosive influence of the raft of equality laws and court decisions following upon the 1964 Act, which collectively led the state to regard each citizen as an atom, a locus of taxation or subsidies buffeted by market forces and fluctuating values, spinning through a chaotic social void.

Our attempts to reconstruct society—sometimes, it seems, from scratch—must be informed by the history Carlson records. One obvious policy implication presents itself: if the successful absorption of millions of poor immigrants early in the last century was only made possible by a vigorous, popular, state-sanctioned movement to reinvigorate the patriarchal family, what on earth will assimilate them now? ■

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[*No Crueler Tyrannies: Accusation, False Witness, and Other Terrors of Our Times*, Dorothy Rabinowitz, *Wall Street Journal Books*, 239 pages]

An Inquisition for the Children

by Marian Kester Coombs

THIS BOOK HAS GONE to paper only one year after its publication by Wall Street Journal Books, a Simon & Schuster imprint. It recounts cases of judicial and prosecutorial misconduct so extreme as to defy belief. But what is judged believable or unbelievable lies at the heart of the whole matter. For elucidating and forever changing our beliefs about allegations of mass child abuse, author Dorothy Rabinowitz won the Pulitzer Prize in 2001.

Ms. Rabinowitz, a City College- and NYU-educated investigative journalist who has written for the *Wall Street Journal* since 1990, acts as a one-woman truth squad. But even the most piercing of whistles can use amplification, and it was not until Lewis Lapham of *Harper's* proved willing to print the first results of her investigation into the Amirault family case in Massachusetts that the fog of hysteria surrounding such cases began to clear.

It may seem easy to look at the day-care and nursery-school abuse scares that have scarred the American landscape from sea to sea and conclude that their cause is a combination of mass hysteria and bad conscience, i.e., unacknowledged parental guilt at abandoning their children to the care of strangers. But the hallmark of mass hysteria is that virtually everyone is caught up in it before there is time to reflect, and by then much damage has already been done. It also bears remembering that in the 1980s, when these scares began, the popular (and very PC) belief in the infallibility of a woman's or a child's claim to have been victimized

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was at its height. No one wanted to hear, much less go near, the suggestion that “the children” might not be testifying truthfully in cases of abuse.

In an interview with Brian Lamb on C-SPAN’s “Booknotes” (May 4, 2003), Ms. Rabinowitz noted, “You know, as soon as there was an accusation in the early ’80s, you did not have reporters going around saying, ‘Hey, maybe this isn’t true.’ What you had was night after night after night on television about the poor children and the ‘monsters.’”

Ms. Rabinowitz recalls the *frisson* of strangeness she experienced upon hearing one of the first nursery-terror accusations—that of a 26-year-old woman in New Jersey whose name will not be abused again by appearing in print here. She remembers thinking how extremely odd and unlikely were the woman’s alleged crimes—which also don’t bear repeating. But it was not until she heard about the Amiraults in Malden, Massachusetts, that what she calls “the moral significance” of the almost certainly false accusations was brought home to her.

As she probed these cases and others, she found that each followed a similar pattern: the lone parental accuser, like the proverbial tongue setting fire to the forest. The police who acted first and asked questions later, if at all. The communication of urgent alarm to the rest of the parents *en bloc*. The coaching of parents in what to look for in their children’s behavior. The interviewing of children by child-abuse experts to determine what they would later testify to having endured: evil clowns, secret rooms, magic drinks, animal torture. The grandstanding of the prosecutors. The harsh sentence, trumpeted by the triumphant prosecution as a victory for innocents everywhere.

Ms. Rabinowitz discovered, first, that for these child-abuse “experts” the most devastating proof that abuse had occurred was the child’s repeated denial that any abuse had taken place. She also discovered that the behaviors parents were told to look for were so general as to be diagnostically meaningless: refusal to eat peanut butter or tuna fish, bed-

wetting, nightmares, “changes in behavior.” (If there is one constant in the behavior of a five-year-old, it is change.) Ms. Rabinowitz further discovered, by gaining access to sealed transcripts of recorded interviews, that the children came in with no clue as to what the charges were supposed to be against their teachers. The charges, virtually word for word, were supplied by the expert interviewer in the course of a skillful Q&A that would initially elicit puzzled denials and finally lead to the desired acquiescence.

The experts’ own sick preoccupations are shockingly evident from these transcripts—if one is allowed to read them—which is why juries never saw them. An excerpt included in the book:

EXPERT: Was this a real elephant or somebody dressed up as an elephant?

CHILD: Somebody dressed up.

EXPERT: Was it a man or lady dressed up like an elephant?

CHILD: It was a lady dressed like an elephant.

EXPERT: Was it a NAKED elephant, did you say?

CHILD: [draws a blank]

EXPERT: What was the elephant doing?

CHILD: Just standing.

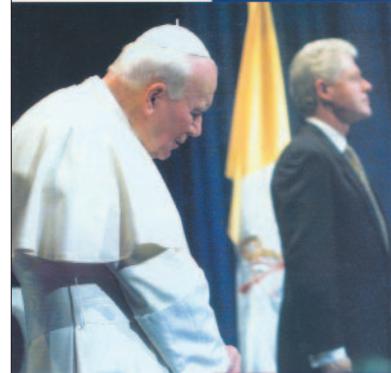
EXPERT: Oh, really. Were any of the private parts showing on the elephant?

CHILD: [draws a blank]

The author began writing about the case of Violet, Gerald, and Cheryl Amirault in 1995, after the two women had already served six years and Gerald had served eight for abusing scores of young pupils at the family’s upscale day school. Within a couple of months of her first *Wall Street Journal* article, Violet and Cheryl were released on a plea, although they were later re-incarcerated for a time. Gerald remained behind bars—where he remains yet.

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No Crueler Tyrannies' account of what Violet Amirault, then more than 60 years old, her just-married daughter Cheryl, and her son Gerald—who has missed his three children's entire childhood—have gone through at the hands of the state's "protective" apparatus is frankly terrifying and cannot be publicized enough. With not one iota of physical evidence for it and with the entire weight of reason against it, three blameless citizens were convicted of unspeakable acts and cast into nightmarish prison conditions. It is significant that the court responsible for prolonging their agony—the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court of recent "gay marriage" infamy—was established to put an end to the Salem witch trials. In his 1841 classic *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, Charles MacKay explored several dozen "moral epidemics" over the course of human history, and still managed to conclude, "The man now who imagines himself a wolf is sent to the hospital instead of to the stake, as in the days of the witch mania; and earth, air and sea are unpeopled of the grotesque spirits that

like the child-abuse scandals, complete suspension of disbelief still sets in among us periodically, and ordinary causality, logic, probability, rules of evidence, fair play, and common sense simply fly out the window. "War fever" also follows the same manic course. And when the bubble or fever or hysteria finally exhausts itself, people still wonder, dazed, what on earth happened.

The most moving parts of the book reveal the human cost of these anything but ludicrous trials: the young New Jersey teacher, her intelligence frayed daily by the idiocy of prison life. The inmates spitting on Cheryl and Violet Amirault and leaving the table whenever they sat down. Violet's death, hastened by the ruination of the beautiful life she'd built. But later: the inmates "roaring in exultation" as the exonerated Cheryl walks out of prison for the last time. And the dreaded day her new employers find out who she is—and tell her they are "proud to have her as an employee."

The message of *No Crueler Tyrannies* is that if the state can do such things to these people, it can do them to

still in prison because the state of Massachusetts won't let him go because of the 'integrity' of their case—he represents their 'victory.'"

"I could not have done it [spent so much time on these investigations] without being impelled by pure rage," Ms. Rabinowitz went on. "Of all of the emotions that you have, pity, it's not that, and you're not thinking of the victims. You're not thinking of poor Gerald That's behind you. What you're thinking about is the prosecutor. What you're thinking about is the totalitarian nature of this enterprise."

In the author's view, we are essentially getting what we paid for: you can't place what amounts to a bounty on a certain category of criminal, give bonuses for convictions, permit the creation of an unaccountable class of self-styled "experts," and turn winning prosecutors into popular heroes without engendering a "win at all costs" ethic. There was also a price to be paid for the *faux-naïf* notion that "children never lie." We have come a long way since the 1980s, and one thing we have all learned the hard way is that children *do* lie. They are in fact very good liars, because they still make only primitive distinctions between fantasy and reality, and because they are "gay and innocent and heartless," as J.M. Barrie observed in *Peter Pan*. They will lie to please an adult, they will lie to escape punishment, they will lie just because they like the sound of it; the one thing they won't lie about is whether they think you look ugly or fat.

When the incredible is believed and the believable discredited, the challenge is to explain how such an inversion could take place. This Dorothy Rabinowitz has done and continues to do in her examinations of other charges, e.g., that of Juanita Broadrick against Bill Clinton. (That one she finds credible.) She has trained empathy, anger, and an ordered intelligence upon our follies, and found truths that have set innocent people free. ■

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Md.

WITH NOT ONE IOTA OF **PHYSICAL EVIDENCE** FOR IT AND WITH THE ENTIRE WEIGHT OF REASON AGAINST IT, **THREE BLAMELESS CITIZENS** WERE CONVICTED OF UNSPEAKABLE ACTS AND CAST INTO **NIGHTMARISH PRISON CONDITIONS.**

were once believed to haunt them."

Unfortunately those "grotesque spirits" have just been reincarnated in modern forms, the better to loathe them by. Crowd characteristics, so vividly described by Gustave Le Bon in the late 19th century, have not departed from modern man by any means; two of the most durable are "excessive suggestibility" and "the prodigious perversions that events undergo in the imagination of a throng." Both in the case of speculative bubbles—from the Tulip Mania of 17th-century Holland to the dot-com stock market frenzy of 20th-century America—and in the case of mass hysterias

anyone. The book's title comes from Montesquieu: "There is no crueller tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of law and in the name of justice." And in Ms. Rabinowitz's view the most disturbing part of these cases—she details more than six, including the Wenatchee, Washington, travesty of justice that Paul Craig Roberts has also done so much to expose—is the tenacity with which police, "runaway prosecutorial zealots," and judges cling to their shamefully obtained convictions even in the face of overwhelming exculpatory evidence. As she told Brian Lamb, "Gerald Amirault is

Outsource the Neocons!



While flying back to the good old USA, I read a letter to a newspaper from an Illinois factory worker who had lost his job to some sweatshop out in the Far

East. He told of his efforts to keep some kind of dignity as well as the wolf from his door. The letter was well written, and the writer came through as a decent person who wanted to find work rather than a handout.

Although Pat Buchanan wrote about suicide by free trade in the last issue, a column by George Will compels me to comment further. Here's what he had to say about the perils of protectionism in *Newsweek*: "Protectionism is intellectuals' Louis Vuitton luggage—a luxury for persons comfortably placed in societies with social surpluses so large they can sustain the injuries protectionism does to economic growth."

Who are these purveyors of Louis Vuitton luggage? They turn out to be none other than ordinary American workers who find themselves thrown out of work as a result of being undercut by low-paid workers in Africa and Asia. The latter, poor wretches, are willing and ready to work in sweatshop conditions for \$1 an hour, if that.

"Workers disadvantaged by globalization," Will announces dismissively, "are few but concentrated, attentive and intense." Well, not as intense as George Will gets when face to face with, say, Lally Weymouth or some other hysterical but rich female. The message from Mr. Will is that these people should simply shut the hell up and be a lot more solicitous about the economic well-being of poor African countries, just like he is.

Now of course George couldn't care less about poor Africans. They come in handy in order to make a point but

hardly ever give a chic cocktail party inside the Beltway. But this column is not about Africa. (It would take a *War and Peace*-like opus just to list the murders and thievery of African leaders). It's about American jobs and American workers. And what I'd like to know is whose interests are being protected when corporations close down their factories in the United States and open them in Gabon because labor there is a lot cheaper? Whose interests are being protected when these corporations then re-import these goods into the United States at prices so low that they, in turn, help drive domestic producers out of business? Certainly shareholders do very well out of this. Without any extra work, labor costs are suddenly smaller, profits are larger, and the value of their shares is higher. American workers, on the other hand, are now out of work.

Please don't get me wrong. I'm all for shareholders' profits. I am, after all, the son of a capitalist. But with a difference. My family moolah comes from industries and ships. We created jobs and offered them to Greeks when in Greece, to Sudanese when in the Sudan, and to Americans when in America. We didn't close down factories at home and open them up abroad, like the Heinz corporation does in order to keep John Kerry's wife in the style she's never been accustomed to.

Once upon a time, the state was required to defend the nation's borders as well as the people's jobs. Now the crooks in Washington no longer protect the nation's borders, and the corporate crooks no longer give jobs to Ameri-

cans. What in hell is going on here? I'll tell you. People like George Will, that's what.

As a conservative, I favor social stability over shareholder value. The great bourgeois world of the past was built on families confident that the man of the house would always have a job and that his income would rise slowly but steadily. Nothing guarantees instability so much as unemployment or the fear of unemployment. The Wills of this world fulminate about cosseted Americans and extol the virtues of competition and suggest that there is something elitist and scandalous about wanting to ensure that American workers are not out of work and are paid reasonably. These champions of free trade claim that cheap imports mean cheaper consumer goods, but if people are out of work, they don't have the money to buy these goods. If people's pay is driven down every year because that's the only way that companies are able to compete with Third World sweatshops, then there won't be anyone to buy those cheap cars and DVDs—other than people like George Will who make their money by posturing and posing.

However, I do think free trade is sometimes reasonable. I propose that we outsource George Will, David Frum, and the rest of the neoconservative pack to India. There's probably a sweatshop in Bombay that can churn out neocon drivel at a far brisker pace and for less than 50 cents an hour. Imagine what ABC could do with all that money they would save by no longer paying George Will's exorbitant salary! The unemployed Illinois factory worker cum letter-writer made more sense than the fully employed but pompous George ever did. ■