

It is perfectly true, of course, that immigrants often “fertilize” the country to which they move. They bring skills and often a willingness to work very hard to improve their lot. The latter virtue can, of course, be sapped by a too-generous provision of welfare benefits, and this is precisely what has happened in Europe with the disastrous consequence that a large class of disaffected and resentful first-generation youth has been created with a propensity to crime and, in the case of Muslims, to listen to the siren-call of extremism. Nevertheless, cultural differences are very important: recently, for example, Britain has absorbed between 500,000 and 1,000,000 immigrants from Poland without, so far as I am aware, any serious difficulty. Immigrants are not created equal.

Multiculturalists talk in generalities, but they would be hard put to name any specific cultural or economic benefits to Britain that the mass immigration of Somali nationals, for example, has brought. In fact, they have no interest whatsoever in Somali culture. (At least I have been to the country, and one of my treasured possessions is a Somali-English phrasebook from the period of Soviet influence there, with such useful phrases as “Hand me the opera glasses, please” and “What is the total annual output of your collective farm?”) They wouldn’t be able to name a single Somali dish, let alone a book, and only the very best-informed would know that immigrant Somali nationals have introduced a new stimulant, khat, whose leaves they often chew for hours on end. As Phillips shows, multiculturalism is the latest form of nihilism: it is not love of other cultures for their own sake, it is hatred of one’s own.

Whatever else may be said of fierce Muslims, they are definitely not nihilists. They are not relativists either. They believe that they are in possession of the truth, one and indivisible. For them, compromise is at best a mere tactic or a temporary truce until the balance of forces changes, as they now believe it will—entirely in their favor. Putting up Church of England clerics against them is like sending a 70-year-old into the ring to fight

Mike Tyson in his prime. Phillips’s most hilarious quotations come from the C. of E. clerics, most of whom probably wouldn’t be able to give a straight answer to the question of whether or not there was a God. But the unctuousness of British politicians is no better.

One of the dangers of all this is that multiculturalists are actually playing a game; they have no more intention of studying Sufi poetry in Farsi or Buddhist scriptures in Pali than Marie Antoinette had any intentions of taking up shepherding as a career. When, as a result of their game-playing, their societies come under real threat, they are likely to react with the self-righteous viciousness of the spurned lover. Their tolerance of everything will thus have led directly to pogroms and perhaps even to genocide, without ever having passed through good sense or intellectual honesty.

Phillips shows that weakness, vacillation, exhibitionist self-doubt and pusillanimity go to the very top of British society, up to and including the prime minister, who finds it possible to take action on a problem in proportion to the square of the distance of the problem from his own front door. Bombing foreign countries is absolutely no problem for him, but finding a way to prevent city councils from bowing to the demands of Muslim political entrepreneurs is quite beyond him. To do so would take deep moral courage, precisely the quality that the long march through the institutions has so disastrously sapped in the members of the elite such as he, which is precisely as Gramsci, that unwitting ally of Muslim fundamentalism, predicted and wanted.

This book makes uncomfortable reading, relieved only by the unintentional humor of the churchmen whom the author quotes as the leading appeasers. The spirit of Neville Chamberlain lives on, but without the extenuating circumstances that made Chamberlain a weak and misguided, rather than a bad, man. ■

Theodore Dalrymple is a British psychiatrist and a contributing editor to City Journal.

[*A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now*, Peter Wood, Encounter Books, 303 pages]

Angri-cultural Revolution

By Florence King

WE DON’T HAVE TO READ very far into Peter Wood’s book before discovering that we are in for some deftly served-up fun. The author’s detached tone and understated approach to his subject of meltdown chic are deliciously evident in his story of Harvard administrator Norah Burch, who announced on her blog (AnnoyYourFriends.com) that she was ready to bomb the entire campus and hunt down with a shotgun everyone who dared to cross her. Later, after she was fired, she explained that she had merely been “calming my nerves” in what she described as “an electronic primal scream.” Wood writes,

Ms. Burch’s tone of wounded innocence—the death threats were, after all, a service to her employer, since they helped her return to productivity—is the crucial thing ... because she lives in a world where expressing anger—even in the hyperbolic terms of bombs and shotguns—is a legitimate form of self-expression. How can self-expression that doesn’t involve actual dynamite or bullets be taken amiss?

America has come a long way since George Washington made worried entries in his diary about his efforts to control his hot temper. In his time, displays of anger were regarded as evidence of lack of character, justifiable only by offenses against the code of male honor, an attitude that lasted two centuries and provided the plot for countless cowboy movies. In “Shane” and “High Noon,” anger is what the hero tries to avoid, maintaining a stance of quiet strength until, at last, he is forced

into “anger as a last resort...the kind of anger that, until just yesterday, Americans imagined as heroic.”

Just yesterday has vanished, taking with it what Wood calls the Old Anger. America is now an “Angri-Culture,” home to the New Anger, a stance of livid fury and churlish execration that is often given jaunty names like road rage, going postal, or Borking. The Angri-Culture’s movie hero counts to one instead of ten before going ballistic, and quiet strength, far from being proof of character, is a sin against the Sixties commandment to “let it all hang out.” As for the code of male honor, it is now observed only in criminal gangs.

When did the bee first fly into America’s mouth? Wood traces the onset of the Angri-Culture to the liberation movements of the Sixties, when constant marches, sit-ins, freedom rides, campus occupations, street theater, and “happenings” kept the national temperature at a permanent boiling point. The calendar filled up with “Days of Rage,” and ideas were replaced by obsessions, fixations, and monomanias: civil rights, Power to the People, oppression, irrelevance, “disrespect,” identity politics, unmeltable ethnics, and the mounting violence of antiwar protests.

There was also feminism, with consciousness-raising and anger workshops to help women get over being sweet ‘n’ nice. The longstanding theory that depression is the result of anger turned inward was dusted off for unliberated housewives around the same time that “women’s studies” hit the fan, inspiring feminist “herstorians” to claim that the world was once ruled by prehistoric battle queens with names like Castratrix who always turned their anger outward, like the scythe blades they attached to their chariot wheels, and who never spoke to men except in tones of sounding brass. That’s how you chased away the blues.

The upheavals of the Sixties made millions of Americans feel “empowered,” and it felt good. They had discovered that expressing anger was a new way of defining the self—“I’m angry;

therefore, I am”—and a lot easier than the old way of sacrifice and delayed pleasures. Preening themselves on what they called their “relevance” and “authenticity,” they were ready for the “human-potential movement” that sprang up in the Seventies, which came complete with its own anthem, “Free to Be You and Me,” rote chants of “I ... Am ... Somebody!,” and a movie that was the first to celebrate the New Anger.

“Five Easy Pieces,” in which Jack Nicholson wrecks a diner because he can’t get plain toast in place of a tuna sandwich, is a study in narcissism gone berserk. The “no substitutes” argument between Nicholson and the waitress, says Wood, “gives us an early version of anger as an egotistic performance of the liberated individual displaying his superiority to the dumb conformists who are aggravating props in his drama.”

THE ANGRI-CULTURE’S MOVIE HERO COUNTS TO ONE INSTEAD OF TEN BEFORE GOING BALLISTIC, AND QUIET STRENGTH, FAR FROM BEING PROOF OF CHARACTER, IS A SIN AGAINST THE SIXTIES COMMANDMENT TO “LET IT ALL HANG OUT!”

Wood finds the New Anger in all the expected places but what is surprising is the reaction to it: nearly total approval. Tennis ace John McEnroe, master of the screaming fit and unsurpassed in splanetic umbrage addressed to referees, “has been missed since his retirement,” lamented a sportswriter, “no one has so captured fans’ imaginations.” Olympic skier Bode Miller, who called his sponsors “unbelievable a--holes,” is called “refreshingly honest” and “petulant and engaging.” The rule seems to be, says Wood, “Play angry or don’t play at all.” His rule applies even to party favors and stocking stuffers. An online gift shop offers Happy Bunny insult buttons (“You Suck”) and, a chat room favorite, the “Give Me Your Lunch Money” lunchbox. If we reflect on the unacknowledged truth that a person’s sadism can be measured by how often he says “just kidding,” this may be Wood’s most disturbing example.

Music is no longer the food of love. As the art form most accessible to effortless emotional response, it can tell us exactly where we are as a people at any given time. The author runs such a test on two popular songs, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” from the Depression era, and the rap classic, “C.R.E.A.M.” (cash rules everything around me). The gap between the common humanity of the first song and the group identity of the second was bridged by Sixties folksingers, specifically Bob Dylan, who “helped teach a generation the imaginative possibilities of performed vexation,” and whose “Blowin’ in the Wind” was “one of those rare instances in which unspecified indignation actually works.”

Country music is relatively free of the New Anger. Nashville’s songs are not angry, Wood reminds us, they are songs

about anger. Their saving grace is that they treat life from childhood to old age and often include family values—Johnny Paycheck’s “Take This Job and Shove It” sounds angry, but there’s a catch: It’s about a man who no longer sees the point in working because “My woman done left an’ took all the reasons I was workin’ for.”

What makes country fans angriest is condescension by liberal elitists who call them dumb and make fun of their piety and patriotism. When we compare this reaction to the venomous alienation and contentious self-pity that pulsate through rap and hip-hop, we realize the extent to which popular music mirrors the red-state/blue-state cultural divide that is driving our politics.

The New Anger made its political debut when antiwar protesters stormed the 1968 Democrat convention. It achieved its first victory in 1987 when a rabid band of policy goths from every

salt lick on the Left joined forces to defeat U.S. Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork with a savage campaign of relentless vilification. All that remained after the dust settled was a new verb, “to bork: to destroy a political candidate without bothering to examine his qualifications for the job.” The lesson was learned, writes Wood. “Debate is unnecessary; anger is enough.”

In a normal political milieu, the Bork episode would be the acme of the New Anger, but starting in 1992 new summits rose up before us when we acquired the two most personally hated presidents in our history—one from each party. Between them they offered something for everybody. If you were into disgust and loathing, Bill Clinton was your man; if disdain and mockery turned you on, there was George W. Bush. What’s more, you could say it with music. Conservatives, constrained by strict upbringings and manly stoicism, came late to the paroxysms of New Anger, but the odium

they heaped on Clinton’s draft-dodging hippie past and Rhodes-scholar elitism was as unleashed as Merle Haggard’s threat-filled tribute to Okies from Muskogee. And when liberal Jonathan Chait led off his *New Republic* confession with “I hate President George W. Bush. There, I said it,” his puerile tone of sullen pride immediately conjured up a mental picture of Chait morphing into Eminem, nose ring, tattoos, and all.

“[T]he eruptions of anger against Clinton and Bush took us beyond vituperation to a kind of anger that luxuriated in its own vehemence,” Wood concludes. “Conservatives saw Clinton as a man seducing the country into a cheaper version of itself—and, what was more galling still, succeeding. Democrats see Bush as tricking the country into becoming a meaner version of itself—and using the war on terror to make that change permanent.”

Wood, the provost of King’s College and a professor of anthropology, has written such a provocative book that one wishes he had dwelled longer on some of the issues he raises. Noting that “the French Revolution licensed a frenzy of anger and cruelty that the American Revolution generally avoided,” he explains that Americans simply wanted a new government, while the French wanted “a new culture and a new emotional stance toward life.” This is true as far as it goes, but it begs the question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his influence on Western civilization’s attitude toward emotion. It was a lasting influence indeed—we see it on television all the time.

Rousseau was the 18th-century equivalent of a faddish self-help author on a book tour, a self-dramatizing babler who spoke in buzzwords. He believed that “natural man” had been ruined by civilization’s emphasis on polished formality and “insincere” good manners, and that he could never again be the happy “noble savage” he once was until he put heart over head, emotion over logic, nature over culture, and soul over all. To this end, he urged pre-Revolutionary French society to think sweet sad

thoughts and cry; to “let it wash over you” until you were “drunk with emotion”— clichés that are with us still. He kept flacking his war on self-control until he had the French as conditioned as Pavlov’s dogs. His message of “I feel; therefore, I am” encouraged a crude primitivism that spilled over into political anarchy and led to the sanguinary excesses of the Reign of Terror. Rousseau called his philosophy *sensibilité*; we call ours “getting in touch with your feelings,” but both are fraught with the same danger: When you unleash one emotion you unleash them all. If we had less soul-baring and indiscriminate hugging we might have less anger.

Wood also ignores the bee in the ear. Nowadays any display of anger, even a crisply delivered declarative sentence, is likely to be greeted with a diagnosis of “out of control.” It has joined the long list of euphemisms meaning crazy, and if enough armchair shrinks pin the rose on you, people will believe it. The blood libel is out and the Rohrshach libel is in, but the anger police are absent from Wood’s book.

Finally, the author’s efforts to connect identity crises and hysterical demands for one’s “personal space” with the growth of the self-storage business—and even with the cryonics movement—is, to put it mildly, a stretch, albeit an entertaining one.

But enough carping. *A Bee in the Mouth* is a thoughtful, disturbing, and well-written book that examines what too many Americans have become: inarticulate on-line furies incapable of venturing beyond the S-word, the F-word, and their lists of everyone and everything that sucks. Too shallow to match the towering rage of Lear or the baleful imprecations of Achilles, they indulge in the sputtering, foot-stamping tantrums of Rumpelstiltskin. ■

Florence King, a regular columnist for National Review, is the author, most recently, of two collections: Stet Damn! The Misanthrope’s Corner, 1991-2002; and Deja Reviews: Florence King All Over Again.

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[*Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics from the Great War to the War on Terror*, Michael Burleigh, HarperCollins, 557 pages]

Redeeming History

By Thomas E. Woods Jr.

BETWEEN RICHARD DAWKINS, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris, the past few years have witnessed a vitriolic string of attacks on organized religion, that terrible force from whose clutches the typical American teenager, full of knowledge and wisdom, never tires of announcing his glorious emancipation. These attacks went well beyond the usual claim that religion is a comforting, harmless delusion in which the weak or the intellectually deficient choose to take refuge. According to these critiques, religion is not only intellectually contemptible, but also a terrible scourge that with a few modest exceptions has produced nothing but misery for the human race.

These men are far from alone in taking such a stand. It has become increasingly common for intellectuals to extrapolate from the existence of Islamic terrorism the broader claim that religion per se amounts to little more than a source of irrationality and violence. In 2005, Muriel Gray declared in Scotland's *Sunday Herald*:

[T]he cause of all this misery, mayhem, violence, terror and ignorance is of course religion itself. . . . For the government of a secular country such as ours to treat religion as if it had real merit instead of regarding it as a ridiculous anachronism, which education, wisdom and experience can hopefully overcome in time, is one of the most depressing developments of the 21st century.

Likewise, Polly Toynbee wrote in the *Guardian*, "It is time now to get serious about religion—all religion—and draw a firm line between the real world and

the world of dreams." Matthew Parris suggested in the London *Spectator* that "what unites an 'extremist' mullah with a Catholic priest or evangelical Protestant minister is actually much more significant and interesting than what divides him from them."

Sacred Causes, Michael Burleigh's new book, is an implicit reply to these increasingly strident secularist claims. He finds that the most self-consciously secular regimes of the 20th century were not the beacons of reason and progress that the grand promises of secularism lead us to expect. The churches, moreover, have quite a bit to show for themselves other than obscurantism and violence. An important if hobbled counterweight to the totalitarian regimes, the churches, for example, played an important role in bringing down communism—not exactly an achievement to be sniffed at.

Burleigh is interested in chronicling the relationship between religious

forces (mainly Christian) and European regimes since World War I, and how the churches responded to the increasing claims of the political realm. He tells this important story superbly, with information and insight that can instruct even the expert. Burleigh is rightly contemptuous of the various strains of Christian leftism that became dominant in the 1960s, making it more difficult for the Christian world to operate as a counterforce to the secular state whose politically correct causes Christian leftists shared. He takes readers to the end of the Cold War and down through the present, with disorder in the Middle East and Islam challenging the tolerance of Europe.

Burleigh writes in an absorbing style and has a talent, reminiscent of Paul Johnson, for digging up long-forgotten historical episodes, though Burleigh is more organized and less idiosyncratic than his fellow British historian. Even

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