

supposes community or at least communities, some commonly accepted forms of belief and ideology. Absent "a common ground, common standards, a common frame of reference . . . society dissolves into nothing more than contending factions . . . a war of all against all." To see the process of social disintegration at work, and under government sponsorship, just glance at the categories of an affirmative action form (and no, you *can't* just tick "American").

Lasch traces the growing schism between elites and masses in several fine case studies, which consider, for example, the modern environment of journalism, the therapeutic "abolition of shame," and the world of "academic pseudoradicalism" (incidentally, this is far more than simply another parade of p.c. follies). Lasch also reasserts the virtues of religion against the secularism of the new elites. Of course, the two concepts are by no means mutually exclusive, as secularism as such neither prohibits nor restrains the emergence of religious or even apocalyptic visions of the world. It merely ensures that such ideas will emerge in surreptitious forms peculiarly marked by hypocrisy, faddism, moral confusion, and hucksterism, and that they will provide a moral justification for more or less any form of vulgar self-aggrandizement. Was organized religion any worse than the cultism and fundamentalism of the allegedly secular elites?

*Revolt of the Elites* shows some signs of patchworking, and can usefully be read as individual essays ultimately drawn together into the larger whole. This caveat apart, the book is a stimulating example of cultural criticism at its best, raising the sort of questions that should be central to public debate. Presumably they will be, once the media can turn their attention from such pivotal phenomena as the O.J. Simpson case. I would get more involved in local issues myself, but I just found this neat Web-site at the University of Osaka . . .

*Philip Jenkins is the author of Using Murder: The Social Construction of Serial Homicide (Aldine de Gruyter, 1994).*

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## The State of Union

by Allan Carlson

The Transformation of Rural Life:  
Southern Illinois, 1890-1990

by Jane Adams

Chapel Hill: The University of  
North Carolina Press;  
321 pp., \$49.95



"I grew up a few miles from the county this book deals with," anthropologist Jane Adams writes in her account of rural Union County, Illinois. "My family's farm, although dating only to the early 1940's, is now essentially abandoned, the community emptied." Her book describes this loss, serving both as indirect autobiography and scholarly investigation into the rise and fall of a small agrarian society.

I was at first uneasy with Adams's reliance on historical anthropology as a means of studying 20th-century American farm people. She uses aerial photographs from the 1930's and excavations by her graduate students to document the footpaths between farmsteads and the social fabric they represented. She dissects the Queen Contest of the Cobden village Peach Festival as though it were a South Sea tribal ritual. Yet the world that Adams knew as a child has seen its families dispersed, its values consigned to oral tradition, and its physical structure reduced to weathered and rusting relics. With sadness, I finished the book convinced that her techniques have become appropriate vehicles for grasping the identity and meaning of American rural communities.

Adams acknowledges her debt to a "feminist pedagogy group" at Southern Illinois University where she teaches, in this case turning feminist analysis to good use "to reclaim women's roles in Union County agriculture." She documents the vital part wives played in the farm economy between 1890 and 1945, through direct control of small dairy and poultry operations ("the butter and egg money"), regular fieldwork, and high fertility. The Union County wife also oversaw the maintenance of a home that was at once "workshop, warehouse, mess hall, dormitory, recreation center, infir-

mary, and funeral parlor" for the owners, tenants, hired hands, and children who resided on the farm. In addition, Adams shows convincingly that the misguided provision of an urban-oriented Home Economics program to farm women, through the agency of the United States Department of Agriculture's Home Bureau program, played a direct role in dismantling rural family life.

A fascinating portion of the book gives the detailed histories, based on interviews, archaeological digs, and documentary evidence, of seven Union County farms. These farms lay in that part of the state known informally since the 1840's as "Egypt." Settled primarily by migrants from Tennessee and Kentucky, Union County was always culturally tied to the Upland South. Adams reconstructs the development there of a diversified agrarian economy based on fruit and vegetable production, timber cutting, and hunting and fishing. This system reached its apogee between 1890 and 1920, when the countryside was fully populated and Union County farm products flowed northward, primarily to Chicago. Households were large and children ubiquitous. On the Walton Farm, for example, tenant Ed Brimm counted 100 children over several generations growing up on its bounty.

Two decades of agricultural depression, beginning in 1920, unsettled the class relations of Union County, but did not alter the social environment of its residents. That change came only after 1945, when "the entire structure and organization of daily life shifted." The industrialization of Union County agriculture accelerated, with the central government acting as a common agent of change. Cheaper fruits and vegetables from California, grown on land irrigated by federally subsidized water and carried over the new federal superhighways, displaced Union County produce in Chicago markets. School consolidation, commonly brokered by Extension Agents, undercut community ties. New dairy technologies and regulations drove small producers (mostly farm wives) out of the butter and cream business, while massive "chicken factories" displaced the small flocks. Draft horses, still the dominant source of field power in 1945, virtually disappeared, replaced by capital-intensive tractors enjoying favored tax treatment and catering to the fixations of the new "college-educated

farmer." Hybrid seed corn (price \$20 a bushel) drove out open pollination strains (\$3 a bushel), as standardization became the buzzword. At the urging of Extension Agents and bankers, most Union County farmers either modernized and expanded, or shut down.

The social effects were vast. Among women, some of the wealthier farm wives made the transition to full-time homemakers. But most eventually took off-farm jobs, simply to pay current bills. Industrially processed food and supermarkets replaced home gardens, smokehouses, and canning. Hog butchering, a community ritual as late as the 1930's, completely disappeared, as did other informal methods of economic cooperation. Children vanished as well, as rural fertility tumbled considerably below that of the state's urban areas. The age pyramid for the county's farm population—healthy as late as 1940—became a grotesque stick by 1960, dominated by a bulge among the older categories.

Adams also carefully documents the remodeling of rural houses under federal guidelines, as suburban designs, complete with dens, patios, and picnic tables, displaced layouts dedicated to home production. By the 1960's, "the farm home was as distantly related to the farm enterprise as the urban home was to the [city] family's workplaces." The towns and villages of Union County deteriorated over the same decades, as independent stores failed and a sense of community dissipated: "Antique and junk shops replaced the once busy stores, as if, no longer able to produce anything the nation wanted, people had only their history left to sell."

The 1980's destroyed what was left of Union County's agrarian society, as the agricultural credit squeeze, federal policies aimed at "easing out" small-scale farms, and a series of bitter winters and springtime floods converged. In the early 1990's, local industry faded as well, with the county seat's two significant factories—a shoe plant and a bakery—shutting down during the same week (shoe production going, it was rumored, to India). Significantly, the construction of nursing homes and the selection of the area as the site for a maximum se-

curity prison were the only countervailing economic trends. In 1990, 42 percent of the personal income of county residents came directly from government sources, primarily Social Security and Medicaid. A region known 50 years earlier for its agriculture and small-scale industry had become a ward of the central state. Consigned for the time being to tending to the elderly and to the incarcerated criminal class of the triumphant urban-industrial sphere, Union County faced a still cloudier future in what Adams labels "the post-Fordist regime of flexible accumulation in a globalist economy."

The author describes the failed efforts of some Union County residents to defend their small world, ranging from quiet resistance against "expert" pressure to adopt "labor-saving technologies" to the creation of the Peach Festival. But in the end, the surviving farmers of Union County succumbed to the modernist mentality, embracing a faith in expertise, the separation of work from leisure, and the application of monetary value to time. While other futures were possible, Adams concludes that Union County citizens had neither the intellectual means nor the public arenas through which to articulate those options. More fundamentally, they lacked the "powerful counterideology . . . which binds religious groups like the Amish and the Hutterites," and which she believes is necessary for the survival of alternative forms of production.

There are flaws in Adams's analysis. She too generously assesses the long-term impact of the New Deal on local communities, and she gives inadequate recognition to the role of the "homemaker" as a barrier to modernity in an urbanized setting. But these are minor annoyances. Adams's writing is crisp, the details of her narrative are at once familiar and remarkable, and the lessons that she draws are generally correct.

Jane Adams notes that "there appear to be particular periods when the common people, if they have sufficient vision and solidarity, might change the course of history." The reader can plausibly view *The Transformation of Rural Life* as a form of populist scholarship, helping to create the preconditions for just such a period in the future.

Allan Carlson is the president of The Rockford Institute and the publisher of *Chronicles*.

## Civis Romanus Sum

by Thomas Fleming

Being a Roman Citizen

by Jane F. Gardner

London: Routledge;

244 pp., \$49.95



What does it mean to be a citizen? The answer we give will depend on the nation we live in and on the age of the world in which we find ourselves. The French used to define citizenship not, as the English and Americans do, by the accident of birthplace, but by descent. Citizens were the children of citizens, and this *ius sanguinis* concept has been partially restored in France, and Governor Pete Wilson thinks it may be a partial answer to the United States' immigration crisis.

No people in the history of the world has ever wrestled so seriously with the concept of citizenship as the Romans. While most other ancient peoples (e.g., the Jews, the Athenians) were fiercely parochial in their eagerness to restrict citizenship rights, the Romans offered their allies and subject communities the possibility of incorporation into the Roman commonwealth. The process took time, usually involving the intermediate step of the Latin Right (the right to conduct commerce and intermarry with Roman citizens), and it was facilitated by the plantation of Roman colonies, but Rome's comparative generosity enabled her to create something like a universal empire whose subjects shared in the blessings, as well as the burdens, of citizenship.

The meaning of Roman citizenship has been investigated in detail by Claude Nicolet in a work translated into English as *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome* (1980). Jane Gardner has set herself the more limited task of examining groups that lay upon the fringes: freedmen, women, children, moral reprobates, and "the handicapped." This approach has a usefulness that extends beyond these borderline groups, since what is normal can sometimes be defined most easily by establishing the limits of normality.

The most interesting (at least to me) aspect of her work is the discussion of women and children, both of whom

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