

offers balm to the wounds in his last chapter, "Will American Culture Be Replaced?":

It can . . . be said with a great deal of assurance that cultures are exceedingly resilient and enduring. No people will change for slight or transient reasons the convictions that have been expressed through the behavior of many continuous generations of their cultural ancestors. And it must never be forgotten that a love of freedom does seem to be an enduring, universal trait of human beings. (209)

This summation gives us Americans reasons to endure the present malaise and to work our way back toward the beliefs that created this country and made it exceptional in the world. Every reader will find this or that point of disagreement in a book of this kind, but a wise reader will move beyond such disagreements to absorb the larger message.

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McKnight, Gerald D.
Breach of Trust: How the Warren Commission Failed the Nation and Why
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas
512 pp., \$29.95, ISBN 0-7006-1390-0
Publication Date: October 2005

The author of *Breach of Trust*, an emeritus history professor at Hood College, is codirector of the Weisberg Archive which, with 300,000 documents, is the world's largest private, accessible collection of government records pertaining to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Breach of Trust is the leading study of the inner workings of the Warren Commission, superseding and largely supplanting Harold Weisberg's *Whitewash* (1965), Edward Epstein's *Inquest* (1966), and Sylvia Meagher's *Accessories After the Fact* (1967). The book will enthral general readers as well as students of the assassination.

The astonishing follies of the Warren Commission are fully documented in *Breach of Trust*. Of the commission's seven members, only Georgia's Sen. Richard Russell, the commission's great dissenter, enhanced his reputation by serving on the commission. The Senator "was more outspoken than any of his colleagues in his displeasure about the quality of the FBI investigation and the information the FBI and the CIA fed to the Commission." After the Warren Report was issued, Russell was the only commissioner to publicly criticize the report or express support for commission critics. He unyieldingly opposed the report's preposterous single-bullet theory (which *Breach of Trust* justly labels the "single-bullet fabrication"). Chapter 11 of *Breach of Trust* is titled "Senator Russell Dissents."

Breach of Trust amply proves that the Warren Report "was a shoddily improvised political exercise in public relations and not a

good-faith investigation" and that "the Warren Commission . . . conspired . . . to hide the truth that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy." The identities of those who carried out the assassination will probably never be known, and the book does not tell us who plotted to murder JFK or their motivations. But it does, based on an exhaustive analysis of gigantic quantities of the government's own records, establish that the official investigation of the assassination amounted to a shamefully inadequate inquiry in which clear indications of conspiracy were purposely disregarded. For reasons fully explained in the book, the Warren Commission and other government agencies involved in the investigation were not committed to uncovering all the facts; instead, they were fixated on proclaiming the absence of any conspiracy and naming Lee Harvey Oswald as the sole assassin. During the official investigation, *Breach of Trust* convincingly demonstrates, important witnesses were not questioned; tantalizing leads were not pursued; scientific tests that should have been performed were omitted while some relevant results of tests that were performed were inexplicably ignored; credible testimony was often dismissed whereas doubtful testimony was frequently accepted as gospel; persuasive evidence that several gunmen fired at JFK was marginalized; improbable factual scenarios were embraced; and stark inconsistencies or gaps in the evidentiary record were left uncorrected. The Warren Report, the fruits of this sham inquest, is therefore a fraud.

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Ball, Howard
Justice in Mississippi: The Murder Trial of Edgar Ray Killen
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas
254 pp., \$29.95, ISBN 0-7006-1461-3
Publication Date: September 2006

Howard Ball is a leading expert on the U.S. Supreme Court who has published more than twenty books and dozens of articles in leading political science journals and law reviews. He is also a civil rights attorney and professor of political science at the University of Vermont. Professor Ball's most influential works include *Prosecuting War Crimes and Genocide* (1999); *Of Power and Right: Hugo Black, William O. Douglas, and America's Constitutional Revolution* (1992); *The Bakke Case: Race, Education, and Affirmative Action* (2000) and *A Defiant Life: Thurgood Marshall and the Persistence of Racism in America* (1999).

The work under review is an outgrowth of a previous monograph, *Murder in Mississippi* (2004), the last two chapters of which summarize the subject of this volume. *Murder in Mississippi* describes the events immortalized

in the 1988 movie *Mississippi Burning*, which despite its many failings as history, was a significant factor in bringing about the trial of Killen. Ball admits to hating the movie when he first saw it because of its "fictions about the FBI and its depiction of blacks as passive onlookers" (18).

Justice in Mississippi describes the 2005 trial of Klansman Edgar Ray Killen for the infamous 1964 murders of Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman. Acquitted in 1967, Killen, along with many of his Klan accomplices, remained in Neshoba County Mississippi for decades—an example of the continuing "culture of impunity" that existed in the Deep South since the end of Reconstruction.

The book is a broad-ranging academic study that seeks to understand the extraordinary social and political changes that took place in Mississippi and led to the indictment, trial, and conviction of Killen forty-one years after the murders. Ball attended the trial and interviewed the judge, attorneys on both sides, the jurors and community activists. He examines the trial strategies of both the defense and the prosecution as well as the social, political and theological roots of the crime. While an academic text with all the accoutrements of scholarship—extensive footnotes and bibliography—it is not a dry academic study. Ball has passionate views and a deep sense of outrage is evident as he describes not only his observations at the trial but his emotional reactions to the events described.

While this case has been extensively studied in both popular and scholarly formats, this is a major contribution, not just to our appreciation of significance of the trial, but more broadly to our understanding of the rise and fall of Jim Crow in the South. It would be useful in a large number of undergraduate and graduate courses on the South, Civil Rights, and the history of race in America.

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Chowning, Margaret
Rebellious Nuns: The Troubled History of a Mexican Convent, 1752–1863
New York: Oxford University Press
296 pp., \$35.00, ISBN 0-19518221-9
Publication Date: November 2005

Rebellious Nuns is a gripping and informative academic exploration of a series of rather bizarre events in a Mexican convent between 1752 and 1863. The convent, La Purísima Concepción, was founded by the teenage daughter of a wealthy landowning family to be the first female cloister in San Miguel el Grande and to be the town's crowning jewel, a testimony to the people's solid faith and dedication to proper Christian living. What transpired in the convent, however, was some-

thing altogether different. Infighting, secret alliances, mysterious afflictions, and political wrangling came to characterize life in La Purísima, crystallizing many of the concerns of a tumultuous New Spain at the decline of the colonial period. Chowning, a professor of history at Berkeley, skillfully presents this compelling story, embroidered with exquisitely rich and well-researched historical data, with a pace and organization that draws the reader eagerly through the book's 272 pages of main text.

The book itself is divided into two main sections. The three chapters in part 1 ("Rebellion") situate the convent (and religious life in general) within Mexican colonial life, recount the first rebellion of nuns against the strict reformist rule of the convent's foundress, and describe the subsequent ascendance of a "rebellious" and extremely controversial abbess who, by her actions, seemed to challenge the very authority of the church. Throughout these chapters, Chowning illuminates the tensions that infused both the inner life of the convent and the relationship between this female order and the patriarchal church hierarchy. The inclusion of the nuns' own words (culled from correspondence and other convent documents) lends a richness to the work that makes an already fascinating historical exploration particularly compelling.

The three chapters that make up part 2 ("Struggle") trace the trajectory of the convent after the "rebellious nuns" were defeated in a convent election and the original vision of the foundress restored—at least temporarily. As Mexico waged its war of independence from Spain beginning in 1810 and then struggled to develop its fledgling national identity, religious institutions all over Mexico encountered unprecedented challenges. In the end, mundane (rather than spiritual) matters decided the fate of La Purísima.

Chowning's book stands out as a useful companion to some other notable works that explore the specific experiences of individual nuns (for example, Bynum's *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*) or the politics of religious observance in New Spain (for example, Benitez's *Los Demonios en el Convento*), by bringing these two threads together within the context of La Purísima. This book will be of great interest to professionals in the fields of history, religious studies, women's studies, Latin American studies, anthropology, and sociology, as well as graduate and undergraduate students of the same.

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Taaffe, Stephen R.
Commanding the Army of the Potomac
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas
283 pp., \$34.95, ISBN 0-7006-1451-6
Publication Date: February 2006

Students of the Civil War are familiar with the problems associated with the appointment and performance of corps commanders in the often ill-starred Army of the Potomac, but Stephen Taaffe is the first historian to give the subject the systematic attention it deserves. He rightly believes that an examination of the selection and retention of corps commanders will shed light on that key army's failures and successes.

The Army of the Potomac's first commander, George B. McClellan, had the largest influence in the appointment of corps commanders, several of whom served in various capacities for a long time. Like most historians, Taaffe gives the "Young Napoleon" credit for organizational skills but notes how favoritism created disunity in the officer ranks and politicized the army. Taaffe awards generally low marks to Ambrose Burnside, notably for creating the cumbersome grand divisions and making several bad choices for corps commanders. Even though Burnside promoted some capable generals, he did not develop into an effective army commander. Nor did Joseph Hooker, although for different reasons. Like McClellan, Hooker showed some organizational skills but never developed a good working relationship with his corps commanders, a failure that bore bitter fruit during the Chancellorsville campaign.

In contrast, George Gordon Meade certainly had his faults, including an explosive temper and inability to work with difficult generals, but eventually won the respect of his corps commanders; under his direction, the Army of the Potomac functioned much better than ever before. When Ulysses S. Grant came east to become general-in-chief and traveled with the Army of the Potomac, his relationship with Meade was often awkward, but it worked. Grant made his share of mistakes in retaining some less-than-sterling corps commanders too long but had the unstinting confidence of Lincoln and generally made some good selections.

Many readers will be familiar with the broad outlines of this story, but Taaffe's solid primary research adds fresh detail, and he is especially good at crafting perceptive and balanced capsule biographies of all the corps commanders. It would be easy to quibble about the assessment of particular generals, but Taaffe is fair-minded in his judgments and always in command of his subject. The result is a highly readable and important book that both historians and buffs will want to own.

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Leaming, Barbara
Jack Kennedy:
The Education of a Statesman
New York: W.W. Norton
509 pp., \$26.95, ISBN 978-0-393-05161-2
Publication Date: May 2006

Do not be misled by writer Barbara Leaming's previous biographies of Orson Welles and Katherine Hepburn. *Jack Kennedy: The Education of a Statesman* is a serious book with a provocative thesis: John F. Kennedy brought to the White House a distinctive approach to foreign policy derived from his deep ties to Great Britain.

Kennedy spent time in England in the late 1930s while his father Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. was serving as United States ambassador to the Court of St. James. Jack made a host of British friends, including David Ormsby Gore, the future British ambassador to the United States. Meanwhile, Jack's favorite sibling, Kathleen, began an ill-fated romance with the aristocratic Billy Harrington. Leaming provides a meticulous picture of the rarified world of the prewar British aristocracy. It may be too meticulous for some readers; Kathleen shares center stage with Jack for the first half of the book. More to the point, Jack Kennedy witnessed firsthand the failure of a Conservative government's attempts to appease Adolf Hitler. In fact, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's refusal to risk his political career in the unpopular cause of rearmament embodied what Leaming sees as the central dilemma of Kennedy's career: Could political ambition be reconciled with a principled approach to politics?

A frail but attractive adolescent, Kennedy began to show potential as a Harvard undergraduate. His *Why England Slept* (1940) became a best-seller, and after the Japanese sank PT-109, he became at least a minor war hero. Elected to Congress in 1946, Kennedy made little impact in Washington, but in 1956, he published *Profiles in Courage*, which won a Pulitzer Prize, and in the same year, he was seriously considered for the Democratic nomination for vice president. Elected president four years later, Kennedy took office convinced the British experience with Hitler, as interpreted by Winston Churchill, could be applied to the cold war. Leaming argues that Kennedy took from Churchill the idea that a powerful Western alliance could negotiate with the Soviet Union, if Kennedy could summon the political will to do it. Leaming's treatment of Kennedy's presidency revolves around the Soviet threat to West Berlin and the Anglo-American belief that the key to reducing cold war tensions was to stop nuclear testing. Encouraged by Ormsby Gore and British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, JFK, despite considerable domestic opposition, eventually signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

It is an engaging story, but not one without problems. The failure of appeasement traumatized a generation of American policymakers,

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