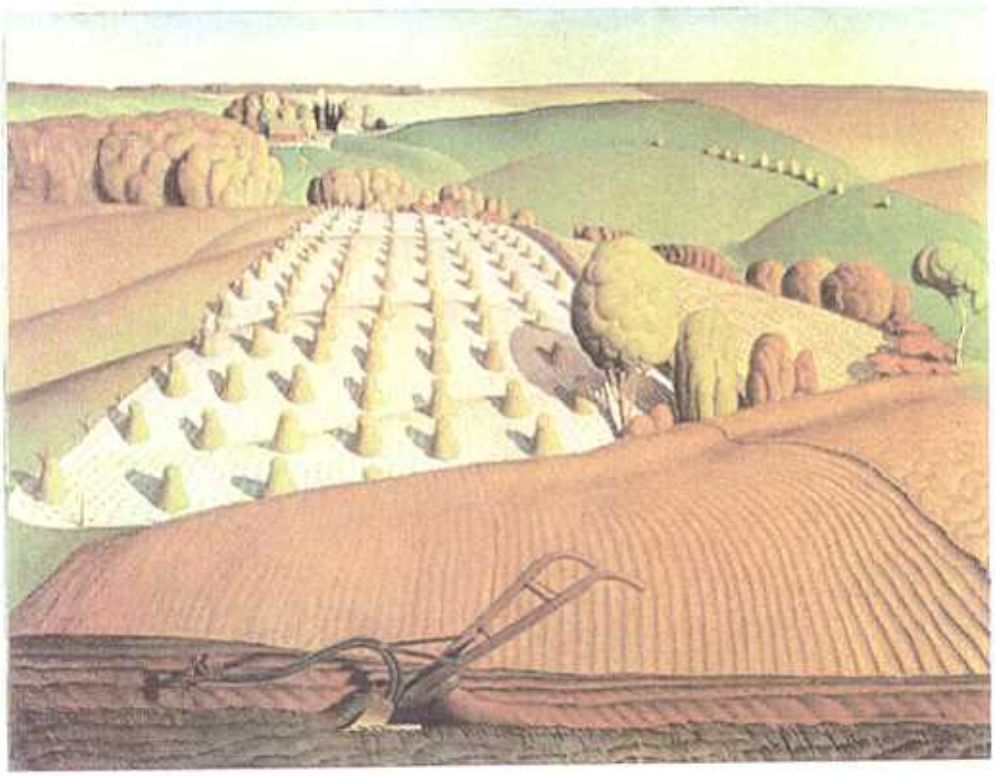
DOCUMENT 1

ELE 6



Fall Plowing, by Grant Wood (1931)

Document 2

AMERICA CHALLENGED

CHAPTER I

A SORT OF PROLOGUE

A CERTAIN rich man—the richest American of his time—was a farmer. He was a product of the farm and his wealth came from the land. He was born a farmer, lived by farming and died a farmer. The details of his life proclaim him as a man of the soil.

He was the type. He wore big clumsy shoes, so broad-toed that the city people laughed and the Indians called him "Brother Square Toes." He was sun-burned and tall and heavy, and he had big hands. He knew how to work with them and how to thrash a man when necessary. He knew horses and spent much of his life in the saddle. He had the notion that the country was the proper place for a man, and no power on earth could keep him away from his farm for longer than was absolutely necessary. He made his living there.

His home life was simple. Early in the morning he would ride out across the fields and see that the work was going well. He loved the sight of his crops growing under the sun, and his men working and his cattle fattening and the women folk busy about their cottages. His heart was out there in the fields and he didn't fit into the drawing room very well, though his breeding and accomplishments gave him a beating there. If his wife chose to wear her "checkedy" apron and to continue knitting while entertaining distinguished visitors, he was satisfied.

He was stubborn, which was very fortunate for his country. He was inscrutable, as men who tried to influence him found out. He was fair and just and honest in his dealings, calm and determined, slow to anger, but dangerous when aroused. He was very pertinacious of his rights.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

HERE is the question:

For three hundred-odd years, from Jamestown and Plymouth to 1928, the family farm has been the distinguishing feature of American life. It has provided the means for independent existence; it has given rise to independence of thought, leading to initiative and ingenuity; it has been the chief source of our national, independent, self-reliant type and has been largely responsible for the creation and nurture of the freedom-loving American spirit.

Further, the family farm has proved itself through three hundred years of existence as the one type of farm generally fitted to survive under American conditions. Labor in this country has always been high, and undoubtedly will continue so. The only farmer who has succeeded here has been the individual family farmer, who by doing most of his work himself has been able to operate with low cash expenditures for labor, and who has compensated the low money return for his own work by the intangible satisfactions of the life,—freedom, independence, peace of spirit.

And now, due to economic currents, the family farm is threatened. American industry, by its great efficiency, has so multiplied the effort of the workman that it can pay a wage many times the world wage. Because of its natural limitations, agriculture can not equal industry in efficiency; and thus it can not compete with industry in paying wages. It loses money on the wages that it has to pay. High wages, having formerly established the family farm as the only one that could survive under American conditions, now threaten the existence of it.

This is the clearly defined tendency under our present laissez-faire policy toward farm matters. And now it is proposed by those who favor the continuing of that policy that the difficulties of agriculture be overcome by the introduction of the commercial farm; which is to say, that that type of farm which in the past has failed and which universally had to yield to the family farm, shall now go ahead under even more difficult conditions and prove its superiority over a type that has proved superior to it in the past.

Granted for the moment that the large commercial farm is feasible in certain sections, does America want it to supersede the family farm? That is the first question. Shall we repudiate what seems to be the lesson of history and let the family farm go? Shall we say that from the beginnings of history up to the year 1929, the family farm was vital to the economic, social and national existence of any nation, but that after 1929 it shall no longer be of importance in these ways?

E173

Lewis Francis CARR, *America Challenged ; a Preface to a point of view*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1929, pp. 1-2 et 298-299

DOCUMENT 3

ELEG

The tractors came over the roads and into the fields, great crawlers moving like insects, having the incredible strength of insects. They crawled over the ground, laying the track and rolling on it and picking it up. Diesel tractors, puttering while they stood idle; they thundered when they moved, and then settled down to a droning roar. Snub-nosed monsters, raising the dust and sticking their snouts into it, straight down the country, across the country, through fences, through dooryards, in and out of gullies in straight lines. They did not run on the ground, but on their own roadbeds. They ignored hills and gulches, water-courses, fences, houses.

The man sitting in the iron seat did not look like a man: gloved, goggled, rubber dust-mask over nose and mouth, he was a part of the monster, a robot in the seat. The thunder of the cylinders sounded through the country, became one with the air and the earth, so that earth and air muttered in sympathetic vibration. The driver could not control it – straight across country it went, cutting through a dozen farms and straight back. A twitch at the controls could swerve the cat', but the driver's hands could not twitch because the monster that built the tractor, the monster that sent the tractor out, had somehow got into the driver's hands, into his brain and muscle, had goggled him and muzzled him – goggled his mind, muzzled his speech, goggled his perception, muzzled his protest. He could not see the land as it was, he could not smell the land as it smelled: his feet did not stamp the clods or feel the warmth and power of the earth. He sat in an iron seat and stepped on iron pedals. He could not cheer or beat or curse or encourage the extension of his power, and because of this he could not cheer or whip or curse or encourage himself. He did not know or own or trust or beseech the land. If a seed dropped did not germinate, it was nothing. If the young thrusting plant withered in drought or drowned in a flood of rain, it was no more to the driver than to the tractor.

He loved the land no more than the bank loved the land. He could admire the tractor – its machined surfaces, its surge of power, the roar of its detonating cylinders; but it was not his tractor. Behind the tractor rolled the shining disks, cutting the earth with blades – not ploughing but surgery, pushing the cut earth to the right where the second row of disks cut it and pushed it to the left; slicing blades shining, polished by the cut earth. And pulled behind the disks, the harrows combing with iron teeth so that the little clods broke up and the earth lay smooth. Behind the harrows, the long seeders – twelve curbed iron penes erected in the foundry, orgasms set by gears, raping methodically, raping without passion. The driver sat in his iron seat and he was proud of the straight lines he did not will, proud of the tractor he did not own or love, proud of the power he could not control. And when that crop grew, and was harvested, no man had crumbled a hot clod in his fingers and let the earth sift past his finger-tips. No man had touched the seed, or lusted for the growth. Men ate what they had not raised, had no connexion with the bread. The land bore under iron, and under iron gradually died; for it was not loved or hated, it had no prayers or curses.

John STEINBECK, *The Grapes of Wrath*, Penguin Classics, 1939, pp. 33-34. (chap. V)

The Drive-in Culture of Contemporary America

> The human animal has two profound and conflicting impulses; he wants to be safe and warm, snug, enclosed, 'at home.' And he wants to roam the wide world, to see what is out there beyond the horizon. The automobile is a kind of house on wheels, but it will take you anywhere you want to go. You can conduct your sex life in it, you can eat and drink in it, go to the movies, listen to Vivaldi or the Stones, and you can dominate others, if you have more power and are adept with the gearshift lever. It is a whole existence. Or it is till the gas runs out.
>
> —McDonald Harris
> *New York Times*, May 16, 1979

The postwar years brought unprecedented prosperity to the United States, as color televisions, stereo systems, frost-free freezers, electric blenders, and automatic garbage disposals became basic equipment in the middle-class American home. But the best symbol of individual success and identity was a sleek, air-conditioned, high-powered, personal statement on wheels. Between 1950 and 1980, when the American population increased by 50 percent, the number of their automobiles increased by 200 percent. In high school the most important rite of passage came to be the earning of a driver's license and the freedom to press an accelerator to the floor. Educational administrators across the country had to make parking space for hundreds of student vehicles. A car became one's identity, and the important question was: "What does he drive?" Not only teenagers, but also millions of older persons literally defined themselves in terms of the number, cost, style, and horse-power of their vehicles. "Escape," thinks a character in a novel by Joyce Carol Oates. "As long as he had his own car he was an American and could not die."

Unfortunately, Americans did die, often behind the wheel. On September 9, 1899, as he was stepping off a streetcar at 74th Street and Central Park West in New York, Henry H. Bliss was struck and killed by a motor vehicle, thus becoming the first fatality in the long war between flesh and steel. Thereafter, the carnage increased almost annually until Americans were sustaining about 50,000 traffic deaths and about 2 million nonfatal injuries per year. Automobility proved to be far more deadly than war for the United States. It was as if a Pearl Harbor attack took place on the highways every two weeks, with crashes becoming so commonplace that an entire industry sprang up to provide medical, legal, and insurance services for the victims.

The environmental cost was almost as high as the human toll. In 1984 the 159 million cars, trucks, and buses on the nation's roads were guzzling millions of barrels of oil every day, causing traffic jams that shattered nerves and clogged the cities they were supposed to open up and turning much of the countryside to pavement. Not surprisingly, when gasoline shortages created long lines at the pumps in 1974 and 1979, behavioral scientists noted that many people experienced anger, depression, frustration, and insecurity, as well as a formidable sense of loss.[1]

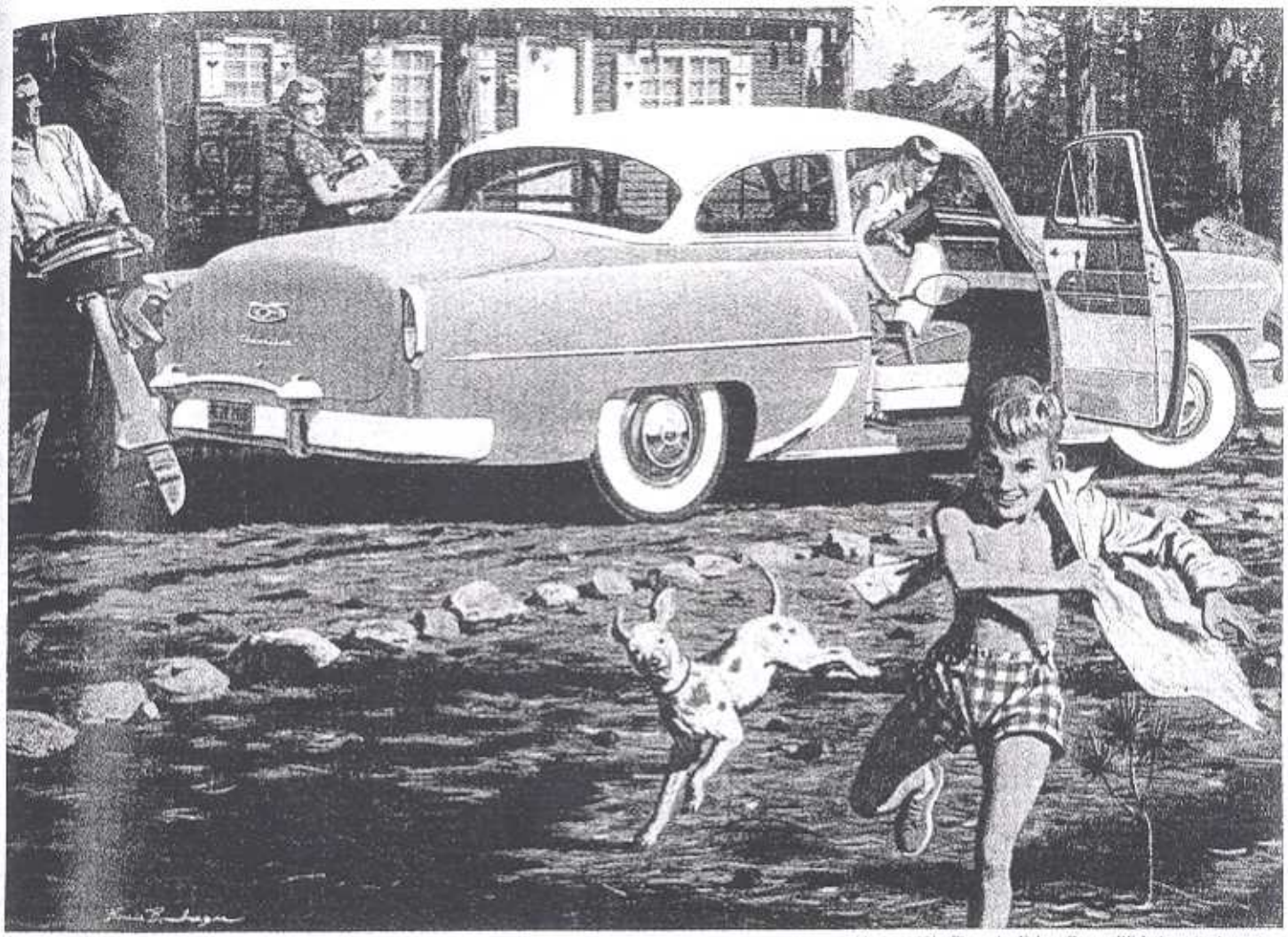
Such reactions were possible because the automobile and the suburb have combined to create a drive-in culture that is part of the daily experience of most Americans. Because of unemployment and war, per capita motor-vehicle ownership was stable (at about 30 million vehicles) between 1930 and 1948, and as late as 1950 (when registrations had jumped to 49 million) an astonishing 41 percent of all American families and a majority of working-class families still did not own a car. Postwar prosperity and rising real wages, however, made possible vastly higher market penetration, and by 1984 there were about seventy motor vehicles for every one hundred citizens, and more cars than either households or workers. Schaeffer and Sclar have argued that high auto ownership is the result of real economic needs rather than some "love affair" with private transportation. Moreover, the American people have proven to be no more prone to motor vehicle purchases than the citizens of other lands. After World War II, the Europeans and the Japanese began to catch up, and by 1980 both had achieved the same level of automobile ownership that the United States had reached in 1950. In automotive technology, American dominance slipped away in the postwar years as German, Swedish, and Japanese engineers pioneered the development of diesel engines, front-wheel drives, disc brakes, fuel-injection, and rotary engines.[2]

Although it is not accurate to speak of a uniquely American love affair with the automobile, and although John B. Rae claimed too much when he wrote in 1971 that "modern suburbia is a creature of the automobile and could not exist without it," the motor vehicle has fundamentally restructured the pattern of everyday life in the United States. As a young man, Lewis Mumford advised his countrymen to "forget the damned motor car and build cities for lovers and friends." As it was, of course, the nation followed a different pattern. Writing in the *American Builder* in 1929, the critic Willard Morgan noted that the building of drive-in structures to serve a motor-driven population had ushered in "a completely new architectural form."[3]

K.T JACKSON CRABGRASS FRONTIER
(THE SUBURBANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES)
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 1985 - CHAP 14

ELE 20

ELE 20



The new 1954 Chevrolet Delray Coupe. With three great series Chevrolet offers the most beautiful choice of models in its field.

Four good reasons why new Chevrolet families are "having a wonderful time". . .

That family up there has everything it takes to enjoy a wonderful vacation—a fine place to go and a fine new Chevrolet to get them there.

In fact, no other car fits so beautifully into all your family activities all the year 'round.

FIRST OF ALL, there's a lot of pride and pleasure for you in Chevrolet's lasting good looks. It's the only low-priced car with Body by Fisher. And *that*, you know, means smarter styling outside and in, and more solid quality through and through. You'll see it in the finer workmanship and materials, the greater comforts and conveniences.

THEN THAT FINE AND THRIFTY Chevrolet performance is always a special pleasure. Chevrolet's high-compression power—highest of any leading low-priced car—brings smoother, quicker response and important gasoline savings, too. Here's one car that's really easy to handle and park on shopping trips, and that gives you solid and steady big-car comfort on vacation trips.

AND BEST OF ALL, MAYBE, is the eager, quiet, uncomplaining way your Chevrolet keeps on going wherever and whenever you want to go. You can count on it to start quickly and run smoothly night or day, fair weather or foul. You won't find another car with such a great name for serving its owners reliably and economically over a long life.

FOURTH BUT NOT LEAST, your Chevrolet dealer will be glad to show you how beautifully a new Chevrolet will fit your budget, too. For Chevrolet is priced below all other lines of cars. . . . Chevrolet Division of General Motors, Detroit 2, Michigan.

BRIGHT NEW IDEA IN INTERIORS! The interior of the new Chevrolet Delray Club Coupe is all vinyl, in colors that harmonize with the exterior finish. It's as practical as it is beautiful, for the vinyl is easily washable and amazingly resistant to scuffing and wear.

YEAR AFTER YEAR MORE PEOPLE BUY CHEVROLETS THAN ANY OTHER CAR!

SYMBOL OF SAVINGS
CHEVROLET
EMBLEM OF EXCELLENCE

I

Running out of gas, Rabbit Angstrom thinks as he stands behind the summer-dusty windows of the Springer Motors display room watching the traffic go by on Route 111, traffic somehow thin and scared compared to what it used to be. The fucking world is running out of gas. But they won't catch him, not yet, because there isn't a piece of junk on the road gets better mileage than his Toyotas, with lower service costs. Read *Consumer Reports*, April issue. That's all he has to tell the people when they come in. And come in they do, the people out there are getting frantic, they know the great American ride is ending. Gas lines at ninety-nine point nine cents a gallon and ninety per cent of the stations to be closed for the weekend. The governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania calling for five-dollar minimum sales to stop the panicky topping-up. And truckers who can't get diesel shooting at their own trucks, there was an incident right in Diamond County, along the Pottsville Pike. People are going wild, their dollars are going rotten, they shell out like there's no tomorrow. He tells them, when they buy a Toyota, they're turning their dollars into yen. And they believe him. A hundred twelve units new and used moved in the first five months of 1979, with eight Corollas, five Coronas including a Luxury Edition Wagon, and that Celica that Charlie said looked like a Pimpmobile unloaded in these first three weeks of June already, at an average gross mark-up of eight hundred dollars per sale. Rabbit is rich.

He owns Springer Motors, one of the two Toyota agencies in the Brewer area. Or rather he co-owns a half-interest with his wife Janice, her mother Bessie sitting on the other half inherited when old man Springer died five years back. But Rabbit feels as though he owns it all, showing up at the showroom day after day, riding herd on the paperwork and the payroll, swinging in his clean suit in and out of Service and Parts where the men work filmed with oil and look up white-eyed from the bulb-lit engines as in a kind of underworld while he makes contact with the public, the community, the star and spearpoint of all these two dozen employers and hundred thousand square feet of working space, which seem a wide shadow behind him as he stands there up front. The wall of imitation boards, really sheets of random-grooved Masonite, around the door into his office is hung with framed old clippings and team portraits, including two all-county tens, from his days as a basketball hero twenty years ago – no, more than twenty years now. Even under glass, the clippings keep yellowing, something in the chemistry of the paper apart from the air, something like the deepening taint of sin people used to try to scare you with. ANGSTROM HITS FOR 42. *'Rabbit' Leads Mt Judge Into Semi-Finals*. Resurrected from the attic where his dead parents had long kept them, in scrapbooks whose mucilage had dried so they came loose like snakeskins, these clippings thus displayed were Fred Springer's idea, along with that phrase about an agency's reputation being the shadow of the man up front. Knowing he was dying long before he did, Fred was getting Harry ready to be the man up front. When you think of the dead, you got to be grateful.

Ten years ago when Rabbit got laid off as a Linotyper and reconciled with Janice, her father took him on as salesman and when the time was ripe five years later had the kindness to die. Who would have thought such a little tense busy bird of a man could get it up for a massive coronary? Hypertense: his diastolic had been up around one-twenty for years. Loved salt. Loved to talk Republican, too, and when Nixon left him nothing to say he had kind of burst. Actually, he had lasted a year into Ford, but the skin of his face was getting tighter and the red spots where the cheek and jaw bones pressed from underneath redder. When Harry looked down at him rouged in the coffin he saw it had been coming, Fred hadn't much changed. From the way Janice and her mother carried on you would have thought a mixture of Prince Valiant and Moses had bit the dust. Maybe having already buried both his own parents made Harry hard. He looked down, noticed that Fred's hair had been parted wrong, and felt nothing. The great thing about the dead, they make space.

ELE 20

While old man Springer was still prancing around life at the lot was hard. He kept long hours, held the showroom open on winter nights when there wasn't a snowplow moving along Route 111, was always grinding away in that little high-pitched grinder of a voice about performance guidelines and washout profits and customer servicing and whether or not a mechanic had left a thumbprint on some heap's steering wheel or a cigarette butt in the ashtray. When he was around the lot it was like they were all trying to fill some big skin that Springer spent all his time and energy imagining, the ideal Springer Motors. When he died that skin became Harry's own, to stand around in loosely. Now that he is king of the lot he likes it here, the acre of asphalt, the new-car smell present even in the pamphlets and pep talks Toyota mails from California, the shampooed carpet wall to wall, the yellowing basketball feats up on the walls along with the plaques saying Kiwanis and Rotary and C of C and the trophies on a high shelf won by the Little League teams the company sponsors, the ample square peace of this masculine place spiced by the girls in billing and reception that come and go under old Mildred Kroust, and the little cards printed with HAROLD C. ANGSTROM on them and CHIEF SALES REPRESENTATIVE. The man up front. A center of sorts, where he had been a forward. There is an airiness to it for Harry, standing there in his own skin, casting a shadow. The cars sell themselves, is his philosophy. The Toyota commercials on television are out there all the time, preying on people's minds. He likes being part of all that; he likes the nod he gets from the community, that had overlooked him like dirt ever since high school. The other men in Rotary and Chamber turn out to be the guys he played ball with back then, or their ugly younger brothers. He likes having money to float in, a big bland good guy is how he sees himself, six three and around two ten by now, with a forty-two waist the suit salesman at Kroll's tried to tell him until he sucked his gut in and the man's thumb grudgingly inched the tape tighter.

JOHN UPDIKE

RABBIT IS RICH. (1981)

p 8-10.

PENGUIN BOOKS

ELE 23

Doc A.

DIANE ARBUS. Child with Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park, New York City
1962
Gelatin silver print

One of the paradoxes of a culture of fear is that serious problems remain widely ignored even though they give rise to precisely the dangers that the populace most abhors. Poverty, for example, correlates strongly with child abuse, crime, and drug abuse. Income inequality is also associated with adverse outcomes for society as a whole. The larger the gap between rich and poor in a society, the higher its overall death rates from heart disease, cancer, and murder. Some social scientists argue that extreme inequality also threatens political stability in a nation such as the United States, where we think of ourselves not as "haves and have nots" but as "haves and will haves." "Unlike the citizens of most other nations, Americans have always been united less by a shared past than by the shared dreams of a better future. If we lose that common future," the Brandeis University economist Robert Reich has suggested, "we lose the glue that holds our nation together."

The combination of extreme inequality and poverty can prove explosive. In an insightful article in *U.S. News & World Report* in 1997 about militia groups reporters Mike Tharp and William Holstein noted that people's motivations for joining these groups are as much economic as ideological. The journalists argued that the disappearance of military and blue-collar jobs, along with the decline of family farming, created the conditions under which a new breed of protest groups flourished. "What distinguishes these antigovernment groups from, say, traditional conservatives who mistrust government is that their anger is fueled by direct threats to their livelihood, and they carry guns," Tharp and Holstein wrote.

That last phrase alludes to a danger that by any rational calculation deserves top billing on Americans' lists of fears. So gun crazed is this nation that Burger King had to order a Baltimore franchise to stop giving away coupons from a local sporting goods store for free boxes of bullets with the purchase of guns. We have more guns *stolen* from their owners–about 300,000 annually–than many countries have gun owners. In Great Britain, Australia, and Japan, where gun ownership is severely restricted, no more than a few dozen people are killed each year by handguns. In the United States, where private citizens own a quarter-billion guns, around 15,000 people are killed, 18,000 commit suicide, and another 1,500 die accidentally from firearms. American children are twelve times more likely to die from gun injuries than are youngsters in other industrialized nations.

Yet even after tragedies that could not have occurred except for the availability of guns, their significance is either played down or missed altogether. Had the youngsters in the celebrated schoolyard shootings of 1997–98 not had access to guns, some or all of the people they killed would be alive today. Without their firepower those boys lacked the strength, courage, and skill to commit multiple murders. Nevertheless newspapers ran editorials with titles such as "It's Not Guns, It's Killer Kids" (*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*) and "Guns Aren't the Problem" (*New York Post*), and journalists, politicians, and pundits blathered on endlessly about every imaginable cause of youthful rage, from "the psychology of violence in the South" to satanism to fights on "Jerry Springer" and simulated shooting in Nintendo games.

Two Easy Explanations

In the following discussion I will try to answer two questions: Why are Americans so fearful lately, and why are our fears so often misplaced? To both questions the same two-word answer is commonly given by scholars and journalists: premillennial tensions. The final years of a millennium and the early years of a new millennium provoke mass anxiety and ill reasoning, the argument goes. So momentous does the calendric change seem, the populace cannot keep its wits about it.

Another popular explanation blames the news media. We have so many fears, many of them off-base, the argument goes, because the media bombard us with sensationalistic stories designed to increase ratings. This explanation, sometimes called the media-effects theory, is less simplistic than the millennium hypothesis and contains sizable kernels of truth. When researchers from Emory University computed the levels of coverage of various health dangers in popular magazines and newspapers they discovered an inverse relationship: much less space was devoted to several of the major causes of death than to some uncommon causes. The leading cause of death, heart disease, received approximately the same amount of coverage as the eleventh-ranked cause of death, homicide. They found a similar inverse relationship in coverage of risk factors associated with serious illness and death. The lowest-ranking risk factor, drug use, received nearly as much attention as the second-ranked risk factor, diet and exercise.

Disproportionate coverage in the news media plainly has effects on readers and viewers. When Esther Madriz, a professor at Hunter College, interviewed women in New York City about their fears of crime they frequently responded with the phrase "I saw it in the news." The interviewees identified the news media as both the source of their fears and the reason they believed those fears were valid. Asked in a national poll why they believe the country has a serious crime problem, 76 percent of people cited stories they had seen in the media. Only 22 percent cited personal experience.

Dx B

DOCUMENT B

Gary GLASSNER The Culture of Fear – Why Americans are afraid of the wrong things.
[illegible] 1999 ppxviii-xx

ELE 23

ELE 23

Doc C.

Advent 1966

Because in Vietnam the vision of a Burning Babe
is multiplied, multiplied,
the flesh on fire
not Christ's, as Southwell saw it, prefiguring
the Passion upon the Eve of Christmas,

but wholly human and repeated, repeated,
infant after infant, their names forgotten,
their sex unknown in the ashes,
set alight, flaming but not vanishing,
not vanishing as his vision but lingering,

cinders upon the earth or living on
moaning and stinking in hospitals three abed;

because of this my strong sight,
my clear caressive sight, my poet's sight I was given
that it might stir me to song,
is blurred.
There is a cataract filming over
my inner eyes. Or else a monstrous insect
has entered my head, and looks out
from my sockets with multiple vision,

seeing not the unique Holy Infant
burning sublimely, an imagination of redemption,
furnace in which souls are wrought into new life,
but, as off a beltline, more, more senseless figures aflame.

And this insect (who is not there –
it is my own eyes do my seeing, the insect
is not there, what I see is there)
will not permit me to look elsewhere,

or if I look, to see except dulled and unfocused
the delicate, firm, whole flesh of the still unburned.

Denise Levertov

Selected Poems

Newcastle upon Tyne : Bloodaxe Books
1986