

William O'Rourke. *The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012) Pp. 344. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, \$27.00.

Nineteen-seventy-two in Harrisburg? Why, that was Hurricane Agnes, of course, when the Susquehanna crested fifteen feet above flood stage and the region sustained billions of dollars in damage. But there was another inundation just before the June flood, as the national press, FBI agents, and Harrisburg Defense Committee workers descended on Pennsylvania's capital from January to April for the trial of a loose-knit group of opponents of the Vietnam War who became known as the Harrisburg 7. The prosecution of these (mainly) Catholic religious activists, accused by FBI director-for-life J. Edgar Hoover of plotting to kidnap Henry Kissinger and blow up heating tunnels under the nation's capital, was one of several high-profile trials of antiwar activists on conspiracy charges. The Chicago 8 (who allegedly planned to disrupt the 1968 Democratic convention), the Boston 5 (opponents of conscription, one of whom was pediatrician Benjamin Spock), and Daniel Ellsberg (who leaked the "Pentagon Papers") are better remembered today, but the Harrisburg trial deserves recognition as well. As this evocative account by William O'Rourke reveals, it underscores the intersection of the local and the national during this turbulent era.

O'Rourke was a twenty-six-year-old aspiring novelist in 1972, a friend of one of the defense lawyers and immersed—like some of the defendants—in an ambivalent relationship with the Catholic Church. He came to Harrisburg with a small publisher's advance to write about the trial, and the book appeared later that year in the "new journalism" style just becoming popular. For this fortieth-anniversary edition, O'Rourke, now a veteran professor of English at Notre Dame, has added an afterword on the writing and reception of the book, along with a rather cynical synopsis of the trajectory of American politics, dissent, and the Catholic left from 1972 to the present. Though not a historian, O'Rourke is a gifted writer, with a sharp eye for the telling detail and for apposite historical and cultural allusions. His impassioned account, framed around a narrative of the courtroom proceedings, makes for compelling reading.

O'Rourke's sympathies are hardly in doubt. He blames the trial on Hoover's need to justify increased funding for his agency, which led him to fashion a conspiracy from a few offhand conversations and letters by radical priests Philip and Daniel Berrigan (who had previously been convicted for the public destruction of draft board files) and several associates. O'Rourke

draws a devastating contrast between the bungling efforts of the prosecutors and the skill and eloquence of the defense attorneys, a radical dream team that included Ramsey Clark, Leonard Boudin, and Paul O'Dwyer. The longer that Boyd Douglas, the prosecution's main witness, remained on the stand, the more the government's case crumbled. Douglas, a fellow inmate of Philip Berrigan's at the Lewisburg penitentiary who was permitted to take classes at nearby Bucknell University, had won the trust of some of the defendants and other local antiwar activists. However, during seven days of withering cross-examination, the defense caught Douglas in significant discrepancies regarding dates and conversations, and revealed him as a habitual liar. The defense rested without calling a single witness.

On the other hand, O'Rourke also shows the naiveté of some defendants—especially Elizabeth McAlister, a young nun, and Philip Berrigan himself—for trusting Douglas to pass letters in and out of prison, and for assuming, despite their history of civil disobedience, that their discussions of escalating protest would not draw government reprisals. O'Rourke portrays McAlister's bravado in committing such thoughts to paper as intended to impress Berrigan; indeed, the two—by then ex-priest and ex-nun—married a year after the trial. At one public meeting during the trial, McAlister revealed the historical ignorance and self-centeredness of some in the “new Catholic left” when she asserted that repression of dissenting voices was greater in the 1970s than it had been during the McCarthy era. O'Rourke notes in his afterword that his book “was never a favorite . . . of the Berrigan group” (287).

The verdict was a stunning blow to Hoover, with a hung jury on most counts (ten members favored acquittal), and convictions only on the charges of letters being passed to and from prison. But O'Rourke argues that the Catholic left suffered, too, as the revelation of even the contemplation of violence cracked “its pillar of moral superiority” (267). O'Rourke's reflections forty years later include many such astute observations, but they are impressionistic and meandering rather than rigorously presented. For example, his failure to discuss the substantial Catholic opposition to Reagan's policies in Central America and his suggestion that the Berrigans' precedents underlay the Catholic right's attacks on abortion clinics show missed opportunities for more sustained analysis.

Jack Nelson and Ronald Ostrow's *The FBI and the Berrigans* (1972) contains a superior account of the prosecution and of Bucknell's radical milieu. Chapter 14 of Murray Polner and Jim O'Grady's *Disarmed and Dangerous: The Radical Life and Times of Daniel and Philip Berrigan* (1997) is the best

short account of the trial and makes excellent use of archival sources from the FBI and the Berrigans. But O'Rourke excels at bringing Harrisburg into the story. His expansive accounts of jury selection in this conservative region show what the defense had to overcome. O'Rourke poignantly describes several antiwar vigils in the Harrisburg area during the trial, but he also documents the difficulties of the Defense Committee in reaching out to local residents. He makes acerbic asides about local citizens and politicians who found themselves in the national limelight, and he captures the mood of a city struggling with white flight and economic decline.

While one would have hoped that a fortieth-anniversary edition would contain a clearer historical perspective, the republication of *The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left* should help introduce a new generation to these important events and to refocus attention on how the Vietnam War and the antiwar movement affected the home front.

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Lisa Levenstein. *A Movement without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) Pp. 320. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth \$47.50.

Tracing the multiple contexts through which African American women endured and subverted racialized poverty in postwar Philadelphia, Lisa Levenstein examines their efforts to create more responsive social welfare policies throughout the city's public institutions. She dismisses the "underclass" thesis, which diminishes African Americans' complex socioeconomic responses to the changing postwar urban paradigm, by framing working-class African American women as proactive agents, who pursued government assistance to support themselves and their families amid structural (namely deindustrialization and racial discrimination) and personal impediments consuming their lives. Levenstein chronicles African American women's daily struggles and their evolving relationships with various welfare and government agencies, initially focusing on their contentious encounters with state-administered welfare and judicial programs and then shifting her attention to their campaigns for greater access to better housing, healthcare, and educational facilities. Quietly