

new and unpredictable multimedia beings of different sizes, shapes, and ownership models that blend print, TV, radio, and the Internet—or die.

McChesney and Nichols don't buy any of this trust-the-free-market, embrace-the-creative-destruction-of-capitalism stuff for one second, but Jeff Jarvis does. A former newsman who's become a guru of digital journalism, Jarvis has been a sharp and brutal critic of newspapers for failing to adapt to the Internet 15 years ago. Unlike McChesney and Nichols, who quote the creator of BuzzMachine.com in passing, Jarvis is not afraid of the radical changes that are coming in the news media. Although he is a liberal, he has no urge to control or shape them with government subsidies or bailouts.

Jarvis thinks the production of journalism in the mostly digital future might end up looking like the decentralized Hollywood movie-making companies that replaced the old studio system: multi-skilled journalists will become freelancing entrepreneurs who are hired for short periods to work on stories and projects the way producers temporarily hire cameramen and set directors to make a movie. As for good journalism, he sees no crisis on the horizon. In fact, he told me, he thinks journalism is going to get better. "It's going to reinvent itself" and "even improve itself and grow and become more targeted and deeper in the community. It's going to be very different." Neither Jarvis nor anyone else can predict the ways in which the digital revolution is going to "begin the world again" for journalism and the news media, but it's inevitable that big changes will come. Based on a reading of *The Death and Life of American Journalism*, it's also inevitable—and encouraging—that McChesney and Nichols will hate most of them. ■

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[A Bomb in Every Issue: How the Short, Unruly Life of Ramparts Magazine Changed America, Peter Richardson, The New Press, 247 pages]

A Fistful of Dynamite

By Daniel McCarthy

"IT'S AS IF Norman Mailer, Thomas Pynchon, and Doris Lessing had decided to collaborate on a true-life story," says Todd Gitlin. That's overrating *A Bomb in Every Issue*, but not by much. Peter Richardson's book vies with Gitlin's own *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* as one of the most vivid accounts of the antiwar and eventually anti-American New Left. Richardson tells the story in miniature—in little more than 200 pages—through the rise and fall of the radical magazine *Ramparts*, which blazoned on one cover in 1969, "Alienation is when your county is at war and you want the other side to win."

After Che Guevara was killed in Bolivia, Fidel Castro chose *Ramparts* as the American outlet for excerpts from Che's diary. Years earlier, the magazine had scored a coup against the CIA, and the mainstream press, by uncovering the agency's hand in the National Student Association. Before he became minister of information for the Black Panther Party, Eldridge Cleaver was an editor for *Ramparts*, where many of the pieces that became *Soul on Ice* first appeared. Though the magazine survived just 13 years, it's had a long legacy, with *Rolling Stone* and *Mother Jones* as direct descendants—both were begun by disgruntled *Ramparts* editors and based in part on its cutting-edge graphic design—and spiritual heirs as divergent as the *Daily Kos* and the neoconservative *FrontPageMag*, whose founder, David Horowitz, was as a young leftist one of the last editors of *Ramparts*.

No one could have foreseen that an austere literary publication launched in

1962 as "a forum for the mature American Catholic" would turn into the muck-raking equivalent of a Molotov cocktail. Certainly California businessman Edward Keating, the passionate convert who created *Ramparts*, imagined no such thing. "Keating's keen sense of justice attuned him to racial inequality and civil rights issues," Richardson writes, "but his other views could be conservative, even reactionary." At a party Keating announced that if he were president, "he would jail J.D. Salinger 'because he's dirty.'" Early issues of *Ramparts*—which "according to one designer ... looked like the poetry annual of a mid-western girls school"—flailed Salinger and Tennessee Williams for their apparent nihilism. Williams's characters, Keating thought, were "psychotic or merely wretched" and attested to a despairing view of mankind. As Richardson notes, the magazine's take on the rather more right-wing Wyndham Lewis, on the other hand, was "more complimentary."

But Keating was no rightist. He fired an associate editor thought to have ties to the John Birch Society after rumors of that connection frightened away liberal Jesuits. If the first incarnation of *Ramparts* had a philosophical lodestar, it was the serene but intensely reformist Trappist monk (and bestselling author of *The Seven Storey Mountain*) Thomas Merton, whose involvement "strengthened [the magazine's] standing in the liberal Catholic and peace communities." Merton counseled strong support for civil rights, but warned of "a serious possibility of an eventual civil war that might wreck the fabric of American society" and feared "there might be a danger of Marxist elements 'capturing' the revolution."

One of Keating's first recruits was a twenty-something journalist named Warren Hinckle, a lapsing Catholic, recent graduate of the Jesuit University of San Francisco, and monophthalmic since a childhood car accident. Hinckle had an outsized personality and a knack for publicity to match. Even before he became the magazine's executive editor in its second year, he started taking

Ramparts in a more confrontational direction. The October 1964 issue carried a cover story tagged as “An extraordinary account of the Harlem Riots—told by the people who were there—in words few white men have ever heard” and featured on its back cover “a large photo of a black man with a nasty head wound holding a bloody handkerchief; a helmeted white policeman loomed over him.” The next issue assailed Barry Goldwater and Cardinal James McIntyre, with an increasingly radical Keating declaring, “If both had their way, Church and State would be carried back to those tranquil days where six-guns and the Inquisition settled matters both quickly and unequivocally.”

The '60s were breaking loose. But as Richardson documents in his brilliant description of the milieu that gave birth to *Ramparts*, the radicalism of the era didn't begin with Kennedy's assassination and President Johnson's escalation of the war in Vietnam. Revolt against the complacent, corporatist liberalism of the early Cold War was already simmering when JFK visited the University of California, a Berkeley in 1962 to stump for Gov. Edmund Brown's re-election. The university had become a “multiversity,” in the argot of UC president Clark Kerr; in the eyes of young critics, it had become an appendage of the military-industrial complex. The year of Kennedy's visit, two Marxist graduate students, David Horowitz and Robert Scheer—both future editors of *Ramparts*—helped launch *Root and Branch: A Radical Quarterly*. A black activist they brought to campus declared, “I'm for Castro because Castro is for the black man.” The Left burned with moral fire, while establishment liberals like Kennedy—well, the president burned with something else. “After his remarks,” Richardson writes, “President Kennedy headed south for Palm Springs, where he stayed with Bing Crosby. The next day, he called on Dwight Eisenhower, his White House predecessor, and had sex with Marilyn Monroe, another Crosby houseguest. The following day, he attended mass.”

Hippies didn't invent free love or hard drugs. The latter came courtesy of the U.S. Army, which promoted research into LSD. “I do not contend that driving people crazy—even for a few hours—is a pleasant prospect,” one officer wrote in defense of the practice, “But warfare is never pleasant. ... Would you rather be temporarily deranged, blinded, or paralyzed by a chemical agent, or burned alive by a conventional fire bomb?” Ken Kesey, then a student at Stanford University, had an answer to that question. He took his first tabs as a volunteer in a clinical trial at a VA hospital. The CIA might not have trucked crack to the inner cities, but it was the Army that turned the original Merry Prankster on to acid. He introduced LSD to Jerry Garcia, who introduced it to millions.

Richardson doesn't waste words moralizing. He draws a picture and leaves the reader to draw conclusions—one of which might be that you could hardly blame a young man for wanting to take a blowtorch to the entire puking establishment. That was how many of the youthful writers at *Ramparts* felt. Its circulation was growing—Hinckle almost doubled it, to 4,000 subscribers, in his first year—and thanks to the addition of a brilliant graphic designer named

Dugald Stermer, it was on its way to revolutionizing the look of magazines. Soon circulation was more than doubling—rocketing to 149,000 by January 1967, then 229,000 two months later. But it was a financial disaster. Like almost all political magazines, *Ramparts* never turned a profit, and expenses proved proportional to growth.

Hinckle spent extravagantly—he told a journalist from the *New York Times* that, contrary to reports, he had not flown from Chicago to Paris to New York to circumvent an airline strike. He had flown from San Francisco to Paris to New York—if he had been in Chicago, he said, he would have taken a taxi. Keating quickly exhausted his own fortune and his wife's, but Hinckle's fundraising almost kept pace with his burn rate. “I like the way you spend my money,” one millionaire donor reportedly told him. Hinckle covered the budget's shortfalls by making cuts—not to his expense account but to funds earmarked for paying the printers. *Ramparts'* publishing schedule, notionally monthly, could be erratic.

Ramparts rose in part because it didn't flinch from damning the bloody business in Vietnam. Robert Scheer made his mark with a 1965 cover story

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debunking Thomas Dooley's *Deliver Us From Evil*, an almost decade-old book that Scheer argued had "served to greatly confuse the American public on the true situation in Vietnam. It gave the delusion that we were simply helping a whole people along the path to *their* freedom when for better or worse they wanted to travel the other way." "We had come too late to Vietnam," Dooley had written, "but we had come. And we brought not bombs and guns, but help and love." *Ramparts* put the lie to that, as much by the photographs it ran illustrating the "collateral damage" of the war—civilian men, women, and children dead, mutilated, and burned—as by essays like Scheer's. The magazine's coverage was instrumental in driving Martin Luther King Jr. to speak out against the war in the year before his assassination.

Scheer went to Vietnam as an independent journalist; soon he was *Ramparts*' foreign editor. He became as important to the magazine as Hinckle—"Hink/Scheer" was Jessica Mitford's term for the evolving editorial duumvirate. In 1966, Scheer mounted a

affair with another pro-Castro journalist, Michèle Ray, in Havana—and Scheer had broken with Democratic Party precedent by inviting Communists to support his primary challenge. But neither he nor the magazine accepted the anti-American label in 1966. "Scheer's main point," Richardson writes,

was that other countries, including Cuba and Vietnam, should be allowed to make their own histories without interference from the United States. In the context of the cold war, that position was widely regarded as procommunist, but it outlasted that conflict and eventually extended to nations like Iran, where, Scheer later wrote, U.S. mischief beginning in the 1950s had produced 'a sorry history.'

"Hinckle and Stermer were rebels, not leftists, and they tempered Scheer's radical tendencies," says Richardson. *Ramparts* walked a narrow line between an all-American anarchism—akin to what the arch-individualist Benjamin Tucker had called "unterrified Jeffersonianism"—and Third World

itly anti-American and pro-Communist. *Ramparts* was sucked into the vortex—though to be sure, it had contributed to the currents that created maelstrom in the first place.

Keating had been thrown overboard years before. Hinckle jumped ship in 1969, leaving first Scheer, then Horowitz in charge. "Forged in the violence and despair of 1968, the magazine's new line rejected anything short of revolution and explicitly conceded the symbols of patriotism to the right wing," Richardson writes, and a little more than halfway through, his book becomes exceedingly depressing, a chronicle of murder, misogyny, Maoist self-criticism sessions, collectivization of the *Ramparts* staff—except for Dugald Stermer, who was offered a cozy "separate and unequal" deal by Horowitz if he would stay on staff; Stermer told him to get stuffed—and eventually, inevitably, the rise of neoconservatism. The New Left, Richardson observes, "had exposed the weakness of American liberalism but hadn't replaced it with anything stronger. Moreover, its attacks had alienated mainstream America and made a successful new coalition unlikely." A successful new coalition on the Left, that is—instead, Richard Nixon built a successful coalition on the new Right.

We've all had to live with the consequences for 40 years. Weatherman self-destructed, blown up by its own bombs. Horowitz found a new, post-Marxist faith in a nationalist right-wing creed that looks a lot like the old Cold War liberalism. Huey Newton, the thug hailed by his admirers as the black Lenin, was shot and killed in 1989 by 24-year-old hoodlum in West Oakland. But the myth of a revolutionary, Marxist, America-hating Left survives and continues to push ordinary Americans into supporting new Vietnams and the nation-building, social-engineering projects of former revolutionary, Marxist, America-hating leftists. Somebody should have listened to Thomas Merton. ■

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RAMPARTS WALKED A NARROW LINE BETWEEN AN ALL-AMERICAN ANARCHISM—AKIN TO WHAT THE ARCH-INDIVIDUALIST BENJAMIN TUCKER HAD CALLED "UNTERRIFIED JEFFERSONIANISM"—AND THIRD WORLD REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM.

quixotic—but almost successful—challenge to an incumbent Democratic congressman. His objective was to pressure Rep. Jeffrey Cohelan into opposing the war. Scheer also appeared on William F. Buckley Jr.'s "Firing Line" to debate the question, "Is *Ramparts* Magazine Un-American?" He didn't give an inch to Buckley—either on the substance of the question or in the style of the debate, which devolved, says Richardson, "into an intellectual food fight at a time when such spectacles were rare on broadcast television." *Ramparts* more than flirted with Fidel Castro—indeed, Scheer would shatter his marriage by having an

revolutionary communism. The year of Martin Luther King's murder (and Robert Kennedy's) and the police riot at the Democratic National Convention, 1968, would be the tipping point. Already the antiwar movement and the civil-rights struggle were becoming more violent and revolutionary. King's assassination kick-started a new, more intense round of confrontations between police and the Black Panthers (to which *Ramparts* was connected through Eldridge Cleaver), while the radical Students for a Democratic Society morphed into incompetently terrorist Weatherman. The Tom Hayden Left was explic-

[*Stylized: A Slightly Obsessive History of Strunk & White's The Elements of Style*, Mark Garvey, Touchstone, 240 pages]

What Are Words Worth?

By Peter W. Wood

"OMIT NEEDLESS WORDS"—the gnomic Rule Thirteen in William Strunk's original 1918 self-published edition of *The Elements of Style*—is the kind of advice that means less and less the more you think about it. Which words are needless? What need are we talking about? Just conveying information or mood, too? Sublunary matters or glimpses of God?

Strunk's exposition of Rule Thirteen seems sensible, at least initially:

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.

But these sentences soften under steady gaze. Vigorous writing is not always concise. Gibbon is not concise. Dickens can be, but isn't always. Unnecessary sentences abound in good writing, or some kinds of good writing—the kind that is companionable, humane, allusive, and willing to treat the reader as a friend, not a customer.

Catch Strunk's metaphors: no unnecessary sentences "for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts." This is a man writing at the dawn of the machine age. Aesthetic modernism is in the air, and it looks a lot like the noonday sun, blinding its devo-

tees to the joys of checkered shade, nature's profusion of unnecessary lines, and the delights of machines scrolled with ornament and exuberantly ticking parts that are added because they are possible, not because they are necessary.

Strunk's is the voice of stern minimalism, a reaction against overstuffed Victorian furniture and a culture blurred into rhetorical complacency. Strunk (1869-1946) was a near contemporary of the famously laconic Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933)—one of the few observations about Strunk's Great Rule that Mark Garvey does not make in *Stylized: A Slightly Obsessive History of Strunk & White's The Elements of Style*.

Garvey, however, is at his best in those passages where he attempts to take the heft of Strunk's preference for the spare. *The Elements of Style*, he says, "embodies a worldview." He explains:

It is a book of promises—a promise that creative freedom is enabled, not hindered, by putting your faith in a few helpful rules; the promise that careful, clear thinking and writing can occasionally touch truth; the promise of depth in simplicity and beauty in plainness; and the promise that by turning away from artifice and ornamentation you will find your true voice.

Garvey is surely right to locate the enduring appeal of *The Elements of Style* in these largely unspoken promises. He is also right to pick out "Omit needless words" as the pivot of the Strunkian universe. That three-word command, he says, "continues to ring like a Lao Tzu aphorism at the book's center." I have known academic colleagues in whom this Zen-like rule, in its exacting, Bauhaus-on-the-page austerity, has taken full possession. They comb and re-comb every paragraph seeking perfect nudity. They do not rest until every vestment is torn away and every noun and verb stands blushing naked. And what remains is indeed clear and readable, like tracks in the desert sands.

Garvey never quite comes to terms with the desertification of English prose wrought by Strunk & White cultists. Perhaps it is because he is himself a devotee—though not the hard-core sort whose adoration of the purging of needless words leads their prose ever closer to that epitome of concision, the white pages of the telephone book. Instead, Garvey pleads the case that, rightly understood, Strunk's edict is capacious. It allows for good writing of many types and in many voices. Rule Thirteen is about clearing away clutter, uprooting obstacles, and bringing blessed order to the roiling chaos of our unfinished thoughts.

When Garvey urges this winsome Strunk—Strunk-the-judicious—my heart melts. But then I wonder: why have so many earnest people studied *The Elements of Style* and come away convinced that good writing involves squeezing every last drop from the grapefruit and then eating the rind? Do Strunk and his famous student E.B. White bear no responsibility for this heresy? After all, they preached a creed of clarity. Shouldn't their book be clear about its purpose? But if Garvey is right, a lot of readers have gone astray in *The Elements of Style*. They have imagined it a fundamentalist sect, when it is truly just an older brother's counsel.

I am unsettled on this point. As a sometime teacher of English rhetoric, I have had students who benefit from Strunk's edicts. But what today's students seem to need most is hard practice under the close supervision of someone who helps them see their mistakes.

Students also need to come to terms with metaphor. Almost everything we write, if it is any good, points beyond itself to larger realities. Even if an essay doesn't deploy noticeable metaphors, it can lift the reader and carry him somewhere only if, deep down, it is metaphor. So when Garvey reads *The Elements of Style* as a metaphor for the goodness of clear thinking, simplicity, and truth, I sigh in admiration. Yes, Garvey has read *The Elements* aright. But *The Elements of Style* itself is unwilling to avow this truth. Nothing in the original