

and their ilk who can afford to maintain permanent lobbying representation in [Washington]."

One important group of PACs escapes Sabato's usually thorough coverage: the pro-Israel organizations like National PAC. In 1984 \$9 million went through these groups, primarily to defeat Senators Charles Percy and Jesse Helms and other "enemies" of Israel. Helms proved much more successful than his opponent in raising money. Percy lost in good measure because of the defection of Jewish voters in Chicago.

The best news Sabato presents is that PACs have helped the national party organizations to become powerful forces for the first time. The Republican party has been the chief beneficiary. The \$215 million it raised in 1982 (and much more in 1984) funded an elaborate program of polling, training of candidates, computerized issue files, data banks of voters and constituency characteristics, direct mailings, TV ads, and \$20 million in direct aid to candidates. This has given Republican senatorial candidates a decisive edge in close elections. Of the 29 close races in 1980, 1982, and 1984, the Republicans won 21 and lost only 8, thus accounting

for the GOP control of the Senate.

The bottom line is that PACs are probably a force for the good. By providing the "United Way" for citizens to contribute money, they have enlarged the scope of popular support for the political process. By mandating detailed disclosures, the PAC system has largely eliminated the illegal under-the-table contribution. The parties have successfully responded to the PACs by treating them like another set of interest groups to broker, and by strengthening their own party services. PAC money accounts for only a small fraction of the money in politics—their total spending is less than the advertising budget of Procter and Gamble. PACs have much less influence on legislation than do lobbies or the parties themselves. Finally, they have helped tilt the political dialogue in America to the right. Ronald Reagan in 1983 said he was "a little amused that suddenly our opponents have developed a conscience about political action committees. I don't remember them being that aroused when the only ones you knew about were on their side. Now they're on our side and they want to do away with them. Well, they're not going to do away with them." □

## FALWELL: BEFORE THE MILLENNIUM

Dinesh D'Souza/Regnery Gateway/\$14.95

Malcolm T. Gladwell

"In a rare and inexplicable moment" when Jerry Falwell was but a child, his father put his hand on his son's head and said: "This one will be my preacher." And when, in his early twenties after a wild and high-spirited youth, Falwell was born again, his mother "merely smiled to herself, as if she had expected it all along."

These were the portents of Falwell's youth, the signs he added up at the beginning of his ministry that made him sure, so very sure, that he was right with God. Others have paused, agonized, unsure of God's purpose, before accepting a vocation. But not Falwell. He charged headlong into the ministry with the same brash determination that was later to assure him that his followers were moral and in the majority. As a boy he was the prankster, the

sports hero, the life of the party. He was reckless and daring because, in the end, he had complete confidence in himself. That brashness made him popular, made him king of his class, but when he brought it to do the Lord's work was it out of place?

Certainly to those of us schooled in the studied humility of the older churches—of a Catholic priest, of an Anglican curate—Falwell, his attitude, his *chutzpah* come as a shock. Are the deeply religious to be so competitive, so driven? Should they gloat, as Falwell does, that "I have always been full of ambition"? Falwell compares himself to his contemporaries, and says he's at the top because he works harder than *anyone* else. As a young pastor "there was something obsessive" about the way Falwell went about. "Few of the other preachers were as hungry for souls" as he was, and it is that hunger that has made him what he is.

These are worldly virtues Falwell has

brought to preaching. It is said that in his frantic soul-saving Falwell "seemed to need measurable indices of his success: ten more students this week, four people accepting Christ after a service, etc." For Jerry Falwell it is "as important to count new heads as it had been for his father to count income at the end of a workday." Falwell has a genuine business sense. It is he who is credited with starting "saturation evangelism" which means he didn't just preach on Sunday, or just have a radio ministry, or just have people witnessing door to door—he did everything, all at once, so that if he didn't get you at home, he got you on TV, or in your car, or in a shopping mall. Falwell brought the ministry into the twentieth century. He crossed the line from religious to secular and brought back all kinds of new ideas. So much so, in fact, that when you look at Falwell and his TV show, his mailing lists, and his outreach programs, you know that in the end he isn't so much a preacher for the Lord as he is a salesman.

How much has religion changed Jerry Falwell? Has it left any imprint on him at all? When Falwell was young and wild, he would skip Sunday school and scorn religion "as something women did." Now, though, now that Falwell has accepted Christ, he insists that "Christ wasn't effeminate. Christ was a he-man." Could Falwell, the high-school star once invited to a St. Louis Cardinals tryout, only accept a God as manly as himself? Today he has a "theology of sport"; he calls his congregation to be "champions for Christ," and at his Liberty Baptist College moral admonitions rank up there with the construction of a new gymnasium. If Jerry is a jock, does his Jesus have to be one too? In short, did Christianity change Falwell or was the reverse true? Did Falwell himself change the effeminate religion of his youth to fit his own masculine dimensions? So it seems fair to ask when Falwell says that "I have always liked what I do, whether it is sports or being a minister," whether he sees a difference between the two, and if he doesn't, whether that means, in the sum of all Falwell's contradictory parts, he is more a creature of the secular world than the kingdom of God.

That is a question Dinesh D'Souza doesn't answer in *Falwell: Before the Millennium*. This is a case of the right dealing with one of its own, and despite the book's subtitle—"A Critical Biography" (which one assumes to be ironic)—it never pretends to be anything but a defense of Falwell. To his credit, D'Souza treats his subject with grace and thoroughness, and turns what could easily be shrill justification

into a genuinely good read. But in the process he steers clear of the implications of Falwell's move into the political arena. D'Souza doesn't seem to want to acknowledge that the Falwell who once held to the fundamentalist orthodoxy that Christians were not called upon to "wage wars against bootleggers, liquor stores, gamblers, murderers, prostitutes, racketeers . . . or any other existing evil as such," and now does precisely that with his political lobby group Moral Majority, is no longer in the great tradition of fundamentalist preachers from Dwight Moody to Billy Sunday and Billy Hargis. D'Souza doesn't want to believe that Falwell's secular activities have tainted him and pushed him in any way from the traditional fundamentalist pattern. Wasn't Falwell's move into politics simply a natural outgrowth of the old fundamentalism? Isn't Falwell's constituency those whose beliefs have made them the political and social outcasts of the last fifty years? And weren't they, D'Souza asks, those who were laughed out of the Scopes trial in 1925, and whose convictions for a moral and upright America were mocked and violated in the sixties and seventies? The Bible says to turn the other cheek, but sometimes even for the very Christian enough is enough. D'Souza says that Falwell simply realized that getting the Christian message across in the eighties required moving to a higher stage and regaining some respect for Christian beliefs. That was a change of style, but not of content. With the Moral Majority, the book tells us, Falwell pursues the same evangelical goals of putting morality back into everyday life and bringing America closer to fundamentalism that underlie his ministry at Thomas Road Church in Lynchburg.

This is a beguiling thesis, especially because it so closely correlates with the Falwell of liberal legend—the man imposing his religious beliefs on the rest of America. But I wonder. If Falwell is so bent on bringing America closer to the fundamentalists, then why has his primary achievement been to do exactly the opposite? Why has Falwell's most significant contribution to his faith been in making it more aware of and more compatible with the outside world? It is Falwell who has led the fight in his own church, and later in fundamentalist churches throughout the South, for an end to segregation. Now "he speaks of race almost in the vocabulary of civil rights leaders." It is Falwell who, with his gentle wit, has mocked the strictness of his followers, urging each of them to "worry a little less about the length of your son's hair." It is Falwell whose vigorous support of Israel has confronted much of fundamentalism's

barely suppressed anti-Semitism, and whose open admiration for Catholic social conservatism has inaugurated a new ecumenism in both churches.

The fact is that the political world has changed Falwell. His worldliness does matter; it is at the very center of his message and appeal. As with so many other modern evangelists, the television ministry is the basis of his popularity. Yet he alone gives it a secular twist. His contemporaries on television are "hot" in the sense that TV performers, in the McLuhanesque parlance, are never meant to be—

shouting, blustering, and gesticulating wildly. Falwell is "cool" with a softness and humor rare in those circles. He exploits television in a way few other preachers do. He has used it as it is used by the mainstream media, so that he doesn't just get visibility out of his TV appearances, he gets the glamour and prestige of being associated with big-time TV.

This is the association that Falwell works at time and time again. And on the countless occasions that he speaks at Harvard and Yale, to the *Times* and the *Post*, and on the major networks,

he creates in the minds of his followers the idea that he is the equal of his forum in worldliness and sophistication. Falwell never ceases to play up his own celebrity. D'Souza calls him a "shameless namedropper" who, to his congregation, will boast of his close friendship with Menachem Begin or that he has the ear of the President. He is aware that what fundamentalists admire in him is that he has made it in the other America. He is the man who brings the world to fundamentalists. He is the little bit of secular they will let creep into their lives.

This doesn't mean that Falwell's peo-

ple want to make it in America just as he has, but simply that he is the embodiment of fundamentalism's unexpressed desire to be on the inside, not the outside. The religious right's long exile didn't just make them angry at the rest of America in the manner that D'Souza and some of today's populists would have us believe. Sometimes, they're just like the child with his nose pressed up against the window. Sometimes, as Falwell makes clear, when fundamentalists tire of their endless wars and their forced exclusion, they really don't want to fight the establishment, they want to join it. □

## THE TALKIES



### LITTLE DUMDUM GIRL

by John Podhoretz

It usually takes between six and eight months to produce a book from an author's manuscript, what with the editor's pen, the typesetter's lies, and the binder's delays. It takes at least eighteen months, and usually much longer, for a movie based on such a book to hit the theaters, what with the screenwriter's compressions, the moneyman's anxieties, the star's drug habit, and the fights between production company and distributor.

In the fullness of time, between the first edition and the first-run release, what was once considered a "hot book," a book that had Hollywood's finest bidding on it for months before publication, can often have descended into a peculiar, dated irrelevancy.

The most startling example of this was *Ragtime*, the most trumpeted novel of the 1970s. Yet it was such a creature of its time, with its queasy radical chic posturing, that when the movie came out five years after its initial publication, yawns were barely stifled across the country, and \$32 million went sailing down the tubes. But even more instructive, and delightful, is the journey of *The Little Drummer Girl* to the screen.

John le Carré's vicious, mildly anti-emitic, wildly pro-terrorist 1982 novel

John Podhoretz is critic-at-large and capital Life editor of the Washington Times.

about Israel and the PLO garnered an unprecedented amount of media attention for what was basically a potboiler of a spy novel. In fact, *The Little Drummer Girl* is easily the least compelling and most self-indulgent of le Carré's often engaging and moving studies of espionage.

But it was brilliantly timed, and timing is everything. It appeared in the wake of the Israeli war in Lebanon and the Sabra and Shatila massacres, when most of the civilized world allowed its moral sense to atrophy and joined the braying of those hoping for Israel's destruction—although in the West the hope was less for political destruction than spiritual destruction, a fervent desire that Israel be rended by the self-hating pressures that its fellow democracies underwent in the 1960s.

In the novel a radical British actress named Charlie, whose resemblance to Vanessa Redgrave, Yasir's own Unity Mitford, is all to the point, suffers a "false flag" recruitment by the Israeli Mossad. She is convinced that the dark, brooding stranger she calls Joseph who is courting her from afar is a PLO operative, and falls in love with him. In fact, he is a Mossad agent named Gadi Becker, and by withholding sex from her he wins her completely.

Joseph and his Mossad confrères, including the spectacularly creepy Colonel Kurtz (as in Joseph Conrad's corrupted imperialist Mistah Kurtz, he dead), keep her awake for days, break

down her defenses, and offer her the greatest "acting" job she has ever had. She is to convince the PLO that she is on their side, while helping the Israelis to move in on and capture the elusive PLO leader.

First from the Israelis, and then from the Palestinians, Charlie receives boring, endless lectures on Semitic history. From the Israelis she hears of the Holocaust, and never again, and we will do what we must to save our country, and those lousy Arabs. From the Palestinians she hears of all that suffering, and the camps, and the 1948 war, and all those massacres, and all we want is a country where we can hang our hat, and do we begrudge the Israelis their country, of course we don't.

Eventually the Israelis succeed in killing the Palestinian, covering Charlie's body in blood, and in some way "killing" her soul—how exactly is never clear, since blood can be washed off in a bathtub and the man killed before her eyes is responsible for the despicable murder of a family with a little boy at the opening of the novel, not to mention all sorts of terrorist acts. Oh, that complex Middle East! Everybody there is right, nobody is wrong, and one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. We all know the drill.

Mr. le Carré, who is not exactly a Conrad, or even a John Buchan, invents characters who lie there on the page like—you should excuse the

expression—unleavened bread. The plot is, to put it as mildly as an ulcerate's dinner, implausible. But this was all to the good, in the eyes of its celebrators. For *The Little Drummer Girl* was really a good introduction for the illiterate masses, of those issues about the Middle East we all really needed to know about, especially with the Israelis committing all kinds of Holocausts of their own over there.

In fact, *The Little Drummer Girl* was so deliriously received because it brilliantly captured the romantic ambivalence so many progressive Westerners were feeling about the Middle East. On the one hand, Israel was a fact of life, and even something of a free country. On the other, the PLO had somehow become a romantic institution, the little guy battling the powers-that-be, the underdog. And this was especially true after the PLO fighters left Beirut with their tails between their legs. The Israelis succeeded in destroying the PLO as a potent political/military force, and that made it all the more romantic. *The Little Drummer Girl* was the epitaph on the PLO tombstone: *They gave it their best shot. A terrible beauty was born.*

Two years later the movie is before us, and it is a stiff, despite director George Roy Hill's best efforts. Hill may be Hollywood's best hack, so his failure to make le Carré's plot come alive on the screen is testimony