

I knew nothing about it.”

As an extra lagniappe to the proceedings, the question soon loomed: who exactly is to pay whom after many loving years of litigation expected to ensue from this tragedy? When the famed burly figure of leftist lawyer William M. Kunstler appeared on the tube (one of the few whites except for police spokesmen), the knowledgeable viewer realized that there were high stakes involved. It turns out that Kunstler is the attorney for Heavy D, co-promoter of the ballgame. Kunstler also spoke up for Puff Daddy, who badly needs an attorney, since he was supposed, according to his contract, to take out insurance for the game and somehow neglected to do so. Kunstler tried to pin the blame on the college authorities, who should have supervised young Puff Daddy and made sure that insurance had been secured. Moreover, finances played other important roles in the proceedings. The promoter and/or student government was accused of overselling tickets, thereby helping cause the stampede. Also, the rap basketball game had been billed as an AIDS charity; but, in the event, no one could find the named charity, which was apparently unknown to the “AIDS community.”

All in all, just another day in the Big Apple.

Finally, in early January, turf was popped up again, this time in the Albanian part of the Williamsbridge section of the Bronx. Four members of an Albanian-American youth group called the Albanian Bad Boys caught two black youths, a boy and a girl, on their turf, and spray-painted them with white shoe coloring, shouting, “You black [censored] are going to turn white today by the Albanian Bad Boys.” In the course of events this crime does not appear very serious, but of course the press started howling about “race hatred and brutality.” A massive police search is now on for the Albanian lads, and there are dark hints that all this is connected to a dread Albanian wing of the Mafia.

To the average New Yorker, however, the word “Mafia” does not really inspire the proper terror. It is well-known, for example, that the only really safe streets in New York are those Italian neighborhoods where alleged Mafia *capos* and their families live. No

muggings take place on those streets, no rapes, no hassles. A legendary incident occurred a few years ago when muggers invaded a convent in the Italian section of East Harlem and raped and murdered several nuns. The Mafia sent the word out on the street: “The killers are dead in twenty-four hours.” The murderers, one of whom had fled to Chicago, voluntarily turned themselves in the next day. Clearly, they would rather embrace the criminal justice system than brave the wrath of the Mafia. It is intriguing that the villains realized that the Mafia knew who they were, without benefit of meticulous detective work. And New Yorkers should blanch when the Mafia is mentioned?

All New York looks forward to July, when the Democratic presidential convention comes to town. The last time the Democrats arrived, the city authorities cleaned the streets, the clerks were actually polite, and even the muggers were sternly ordered by the authorities to cease and desist for that week, or else. But that was years ago, and these days the bums and muggers are a lot feistier, and far less under control. Cynics speculate that the *real* reason Mario Cuomo bowed out is that, after the Democratic delegates encounter The Community on the streets of Manhattan, Mario would be lucky if he left the convention hall alive, much less as prospective President of the United States.

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Letter From Ireland

by George Watson

The Easter Rising and the IRA



In April 1991 an aged Rolls Royce, vintage 1949, drew up to a small crowd outside the post office in Dublin. The president of the Irish Republic, Mary Robinson, stepped out for a brief ceremony, lasting less than half an hour, to

mark the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1916, when a group of armed separatists seized the center of Dublin and declared independence from Britain at the height of the World War I.

The myth of Irish nationalism is based on that dramatic event and its proclamation of independence. The Provisional Irish Republican Army, or Provos, who in its name still maintain a violent campaign in the north, hailed the 1991 anniversary and condemned the Irish government in routine terms for having consistently, and over many years, betrayed the republican tradition. The Irish government, by contrast, faced the day with some apprehension. A quarter of a century earlier it had greeted the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising with pageantry, and it had no wish to leave the celebration to others. But to celebrate against a background of terrorism in Ulster might appear to support the “obscene atrocities” (as one of its back-benchers put it) of the Provos; and Des O’Malley, a government minister, announced that what in his youth he had been taught to think of as a “glorious adventure” now represented, as he saw it, a dangerous model for the young of Ireland.

What neither side of the controversy is likely to have known is the astonishing fact that in 1916 the IRA did not support or favor the Easter Rising. It is a fact that, duly considered, might have let the Irish government off the hook and even given it a message to preach, which if not enough to stop the Provos in their tracks might have seriously embarrassed their campaign of intimidation and violence. It is not that this matter has never been mentioned: it is just that it has not sunk in. It is only known at all for the odd reason that in 1966 a priestly professor of early and medieval Irish at University College, Dublin, Father Francis Shaw, S.J., offered an article to *Studies*, a Dublin Jesuit journal. The article was called “The Canon of Irish History—a Challenge,” and in it he convincingly documented the absence of the IRA from the Rising of 1916 and the contempt of its leaders for the IRA. The article was a reckless act, no doubt, for a medievalist and a man of God, and his spiritual fathers seem to have thought the challenge needlessly provocative at a time of relative quiet in Irish affairs. The article, at all events,

was not published. Father Shaw, known to his friends and students as Father Frank, died soon after, aged 63, in December 1970, by which time the troubles in the north had been renewed. Two years after his death *Studies* published the article, in the belated hope of bringing the extremists to their senses.

Father Frank's argument was blunt. At no time had independence from Britain been the chief or only goal of Irish nationalism. The Irish Party in the British House of Commons, like Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) before it, had been consistently against independence and had sought nothing more than local autonomy or home rule. Meanwhile, Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, had been founded mainly by Arthur Griffith as "a constitutional, nonseparatist association," and it had "no connection with the Rising of 1916." Some of the leaders of the Rising, indeed, felt it to be hostile to them, and in any case useless and in terminal decline. The implication of the article was clear. The IRA could claim no credit for the act that led to the creation of an Irish state in

1921.

Credit, nonetheless, had been claimed. The confusion apparently arose because the name "Sinn Fein" ("Ourselves Alone") had somehow captured the imagination of the British, who came to use it carelessly as a broad term for Irish nationalists in general. In other words, the Irish mistake may have been in its origins a British mistake, much as President Robinson's official car in April 1991 was a British car. "It may come as a shock to some readers," Francis Shaw wrote in the mid-1960's, to know that as long ago as 1919 P.S. O'Hegerty, writing a history of Sinn Fein, confessed that it had "nothing to do with the insurrection," which in inspiration was Fenian. The Fenians were romantic nationalists from the Victorian Age. Only one of the seven men who signed the republican proclamation of 1916, Sean MacDiarmada, had ever in his life been a Sinn Feiner, and he had severed connections years before; while most of the remaining six would have objected strongly to being identified with that movement. The IRA took no part in plotting for arms with

the Germans in 1916, seizing the Dublin post office, or killing some 300 civilians in the Rising, along with 130 British troops. Patrick Pearse, executed as a ringleader in May 1916, had told Arthur Griffith four years before, in an open letter, that he had "never had much affection" for Sinn Fein, and hoped the movement would soon die out. "It's about time for them," he wrote with satisfaction, noting their decline in Irish affairs. As the survivors of the Rising surrendered to the British in April 1916 and were led off as prisoners, an Irish crowd jeered at them, spitting on them as traitors who had taken innocent Irish lives, wrecked the main street of Dublin, and collaborated with the Germans in time of war; and it is possible that there were IRA supporters there, jeering and spitting with the rest.

None of this is now much remembered, in Ireland or elsewhere. The heroic IRA myth survives, and I doubt if Father Francis Shaw, that courageous priest-professor now twenty years and more in his grave, would have been at all surprised at the near oblivion into which his discovery had fallen. As he must have known, it is a rare article in a scholarly journal that changes the course of events or even the course of opinion, and he was a modest man and nothing of a politician. He loved an argument, however, by all accounts, though he is best known as a careful editor of medieval Irish texts. A sickly man, ascetic and humorless, he spent many hours visiting the dying in Dublin, eventually becoming a Superior in his order, and he died uncelebrated, though he is still remembered with affection by his colleagues and pupils. But if he cannot now speak, at least others can.

Ireland, it is said, is in all the world the saddest victim of history. But the real cure for bad history is not silence or the bomb but good history; and at least Francis Shaw, in his day, showed how potent facts can be, if you let them, and how much the past can do to enslave or make us free.

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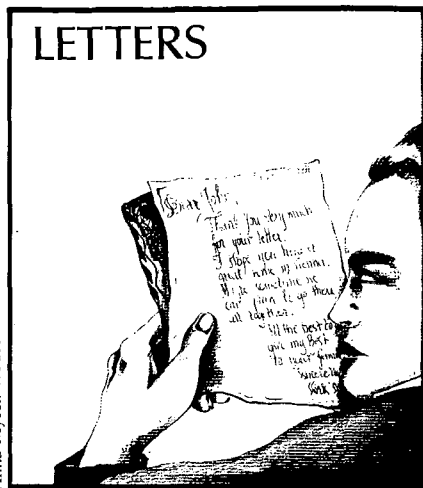
LIBERAL ARTS



CAR SURFING

A "car surfing" accident claimed the life of a 16-year-old girl in Wisconsin last winter. According to the *Capitol Times* last December, Fawn Cheyenne Mylenbusch was "on her stomach on top of the roof . . . clinging to the ridges in the roof" of a car approaching speeds of up to 55 mph when Joni Linster, the driver and a "best" friend, made a U-turn causing Mylenbusch to fall to the road and strike her head. Those attending the funeral said "car surfing was popular among bored teenagers." Mylenbusch was reportedly a part of a high school group called the "Too Stupid Society" and had car surfed "for more than a year."

LETTERS



The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name

by Stephen Proizer

"Snap out of it, they're only a pair of pants. . . . That's what I keep telling myself. Actually, they're a pair of linen pleated trousers I bought at Louis last spring. Little did I know what I was getting in for. The more I wear them, the more I love them, the more I wear them. And it's not as if they're my only pair of pants. But when I go to get dressed, it's like I don't have anything else in my closet."

—an advertisement for Louis clothing store in the *Boston Globe*

Thirty-one days in hell; lost my girl, my job, my apartment; on the nod, drinking Old Crow out of the bag. An old Army buddy in Men's Haberdashery sneaked me into the boiler room at Saks, where I sleep on a flea-bitten cot and sweat from the heat, but it's all scum like me deserves; a guy who'd give it all up for—a stinking pair of pants.

When I think about the first time I saw those babies—laying on top of the 34-inch waist pile, their fresh flaxen smell curling up into the air like a spring morning that had sex written all over

it—they almost looked like they were ready to leap off the counter and pull themselves up over my tasseled loafers. I hesitated to even touch them, for fear I would mar their perfection, but when I finally dared to lift them up, they sprang to life beneath my touch and, at that moment, we began to breathe as one.

In a kind of trance, I brought them to the dressing room, but I had no doubt that they would wrap my body as no one, or, rather, nothing ever had. I looked at my old pants with disgust; sure, they were 100 percent wool, but so what? Wearing them now made me feel like a vegetarian buried in a pile of pork rinds. They had become contemptible and vile and I knew they were headed for the Goodwill pile, where all unclean things end up.

I shed them quickly and when I slipped my legs slowly into the new object of my affection, I knew how Mario Andretti must feel sliding into a highly strung Ferrari—"Be careful," she will purr to you, "I can be dangerous. But if you treat me right, I'll give you the ride of your life."

The waist and length were perfect and no anticlimactic alterations necessary. The line, as it fell over my hips, was careless and subtle, like Brancusi's birds. The cuffs broke exactly at the shoe top and I knew instinctively that when I sat, they would rise to reveal a perfect three inches of imported beige silk stocking.

In an exalted state, the most important events of my life flashed through my mind—my first pair of wing tips, my graduation from the Young Men's Department, my first cummerbund. Tragic memories, too, rose up from my unconscious—beloved argyle socks lost, cashmere sweaters clumsily snagged, white bucks negligently scuffed. A wave of guilt overcame me.

"God, I am unworthy!" I cried and started hastily unzipping the fly. But just then, I heard a voice, which was coming from somewhere near the double-sewed crotch: "We are bound together forever," it said, and I knew it had to be so.

Our first appearance was an immediate sensation: when we entered the bar

at the Ritz, a hush fell over the hors d'oeuvres table. Half the crowd burst into applause and the other half ran to telephones to scream at their tailors. At that moment, we had it all. We were Tristram and Isolde, F. Scott and Zelda, all tied together in one neat bundle. Every Gibson I drank was as clean and dry as the Sahara; every bon mot shone like the spire on the Chrysler Building. That night, all was heaven.

The second evening, we still made an impact, but the keen edge was slightly dulled. I heard a stray comment about my wardrobe getting repetitious, and the bartender put only two onions in my Gibson. Having worn the pants since I bought them the day before, they didn't drape quite as well, but the crease was still as sharp as aged Roquefort.

The next day at work, my secretary began shooting meaningful glances at my legs. I glared back at her but knew what she was trying to say. I had now had Them on continuously for 72 hours, but refused to admit that anything out of the ordinary was going on.

That night, I saw my fiancée, Rowena. Madly in love as we were, neither of us thought much about my pants. We progressed through a candlelight dinner and kissed passionately by the fireside. We both began to disrobe, but when I tried to take Them off, some powerful force stayed my hand. "It's me or her," it said and I was powerless to disobey. I pleaded with Rowena to give me time to figure out the situation, but she was adamant.

"Lookit, bud, I'm not interested in a *ménage à trois*. I hope you and your trousers will be very happy. I'd suggest you go to Hong Kong for your honeymoon and have them make you up a couple pairs of cheap in-laws."

Things spiraled down faster and faster from that point. First, the pleats started to sag, then the crease began to lose its keen edge. Gin and coffee stains mottled the beautiful crème color until I became too embarrassed to show up at work. Every day, I saw my pants degenerate a little more and my life with it. I lost my job and was barred from the Ritz. I took to drinking in