

This well-written, compact, and well-researched book offers a glimpse into a seldom-seen corner of the Cold War. Both specialists and general readers will profit from it.

Hog Ties: Pigs, Manure, and Mortality in American Culture, by Richard P. Horwitz. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. xv, 312 pp. Illustration, notes, index. \$27.95 cloth.

Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities, edited by Kendall M. Thu and E. Paul Durrenberger. Albany: SUNY Press, 1998. vii, 208 pp. Illustrations, tables, graphs, figures, references, index. \$17.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ALAN I MARCUS, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

At the time they wrote these books, Richard Horwitz and Paul Durrenberger were both based at the University of Iowa, but they don't like each other. To be sure, some of their differences stem from personality. Horwitz judges Durrenberger officious and dismissive. Durrenberger apparently views Horwitz as scatterbrained and undisciplined. But the dislike goes far beyond those superficial designations. At the heart rests a potent disagreement about people, academia, farms, capitalism, and rural America. These fundamental cleavages are revealed in two books: Horwitz's *Hog Ties: Pigs, Manure, and Mortality in American Culture* and *Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities*, which Durrenberger edited with his Iowa colleague Kendall M. Thu. Although these two volumes were written independently of each other, they nonetheless form a neat union by which virtually all positions on the "hog question" are exposed. Ironically, the sole exception is that of the large corporate hoglots, which paradoxically purports to be the predominant focus of the books.

Of the two volumes, Durrenberger and Thu's is by far the more conventional. Using traditional social science methodologies, they cover the tried and true topics—environment, quality of life, persistence of traditional rural community groupings and social structures, small farmsteads, incidences of disease and political power—to conclude that large-scale hoglots are an utter disaster, fit for neither man nor beast. Durrenberger and Thu's solution is to use state power to outlaw or at least severely regulate and circumscribe these monolithic nuisances. While this part gets murky, Durrenberger and Thu apparently believe that the introduction of state authority would not only end large corporate hoglots but also go a long way toward restoring rural America to its nurturing and storied past.

Horwitz, on the other hand, goes out of his way to remind readers that his tale will follow none of the fad and fashion of academia. He begins each section of the book with a natty series of quotes, some of which actually pertain to matters under consideration. Rather than use scrupulously tested theories and methods, Horwitz claims to offer his audience his years of experience—he has worked part-time on a hog farm for over a decade in addition to tending to his duties in the American Studies program at the University of Iowa—and common sense as well as a healthy dose of emotions. Indeed, Horwitz makes reliance on emotions a strength, testimony to his concern, objectivity, and passion. And he refuses to stick to a nice concise or organized narrative. *Hog Ties* wanders to consider all things piggish while never being priggish. In the Horwitz pantheon, all things piggish stand as a potent metaphor or some such thing for all things human. Pigs, how humans relate to pigs, how pigs relate to humans, and every other possible permutation fall within Horwitz's gaze and in some fashion—this reviewer remains mystified—form a sort of coherent corpus of knowledge and feeling.

Putting aside the question of a difficult-to-find, overarching, unifying synthesis, Horwitz is quite clear in how he approaches his material. He seeks to channel readers into the minds of hog farmers. The story he tells is based at least as much in the humanities as it is in the social sciences. He wants readers to experience the angst of a farmer as he witnesses the onset of a potential epidemic of transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE), a nearly always fatal disease affecting whole herds of piglets. Readers must also understand the desperation (and sometimes triumph) of a single mother left on a farm to raise children and pigs.

In the closest thing to a test, Horwitz set up a field-test procedure with one of the purportedly most reputable corporate hoglots. Yet this project came a cropper, in Horwitz's eyes, directly because of the irresponsibility and ideology of Durrenberger. According to Horwitz, just before he approached the firm, Durrenberger launched a very public attack on the very hoglots that Horwitz sought to examine. The assault made the firm skittish, and it refused to allow Horwitz the access he thought he had gained through years of painstaking conversations.

Horwitz's frustration and fury with Durrenberger exacerbated Horwitz's assumption that Durrenberger's attack was the product of his politics, not evidence, experience, or rational thought. Rather than testing a hypothesis, something that Horwitz would claim that he himself was not required to do, Durrenberger, in Horwitz's view, rushed to judgment without following social science dictates or procedures. The charge is ironic, of course, and originates in part from the vast distance

between the academic disciplines of American studies and anthropology and the very real belief among the adherents of each that the other is misled, misinformed, and misguided. But the craziest thing of all is that the scholar who espouses a social science methodology is at least as dependent on emotions and ideologies as the poet who embraces those softer, warmer tests. Durrenberger and Thu's book relies on the stories of longtime farmers discussing the good old days and how the huge corporate hoglots have put them out of business or have not been good rural citizens. The edited volume is a pastiche of testimonies from interests at least as jaded—not disinterested or dispassionate—as any that appear in Horwitz's volume. The reminiscences of persons who organize to fight the hoglots are provided as evidence of the pathology of the lots. The pronouncements of groups, such as Marty Strange's PrairieFire, dedicated to the creation of a rural America that probably never existed except in people's fondest memories, are treated as if they are dispassionate seekers of the truth, while places that investigate large hoglots and often come up with the "wrong" answers—land-grant colleges, the USDA, and the Farm Bureau—are rejected as hopelessly biased pawns of the megahoglots.

Durrenberger and Thu's use of first-person anecdotes reminds me of President Ronald Reagan, who never saw an anecdote that he could not position as typical practice, normality. In this regard, academic leftists have now met political conservatives at the crossroads. Both argue from anecdote and analogy, and both seek to restore rural America to some sort of glory. Neither necessarily lives or acts in the here-and-now. While it is not clear that Horwitz does either, at least he deserves credit for not claiming that his conclusions are unassailable.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.