

Reading Other People's Mail Essay, John Gardner Essay

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In 1976, at the time of America's Bicentennial, John Gardner wrote an essay entitled "God Damn the Bicentennial: A Patriotic Essay." This essay was never published.¹ In his essay, Gardner condemns both popular trends of American political thought: blind patriotism from the Right and blanket American shame from the Left. He makes these arguments in the context of telling an anecdote about a conversation with an eleven-year-old, blending truth with fiction. He goes on to define American history in a more moderate way, explaining the sordid backgrounds of many of the Founding Fathers, while, nonetheless, paying respect to them where it is due, for their many intellectual and political accomplishments. In this way, the essay can be seen as representing the essential John Gardner; with a controversial point to make and an indictment of those who think differently. The story told with the style of a very bizarre conversation that may or may not have happened.

John C. Gardner Jr. was born on July 21, 1933 in Batavia New York, the son of a father who was both a lay preacher and a dairy farmer, and a mother who taught English at a local school. Both of his parents held a particular fondness for Shakespeare and would often recite literature together, which helped to shape Gardner's interest in literature and writing. John Gardner was named after his father, and worked on his father's farm when not attending the local schools. At the age of 11, Gardner's younger brother Gilbert was killed in an accident involving a cultipacker² that Gardner had been driving. As a result, Gardner carried with him feelings of tremendous guilt for causing his brother's death; these feelings followed him for the duration of his life. His guilt manifested itself in nightmares and flashbacks that in turn influenced his writing. Most notably and directly, Gardner gave a fictional recounting of the accident in his short story "Redemption" (1977).

John Gardner began his undergraduate education at DePauw University, where he browsed through Katherine Mansfield's journal and realized "how to get more out of his own

¹ I say this definitively because looking through all available lists of Gardner's work, this particular essay remains absent. It is possible that it was made public through some avenues, but I cannot find proof of this through traditional research means.

² A piece of agricultural equipment that removes air packets, crushes dirt clods, and removes stones to create a flat seedbed. It's attached to a tractor and taken over the fields prior to planting.

journal.”³ This discovery led to experimentation in his own journal, using different styles of prose to describe events that would under different circumstances seem boring and make them unique. For example, on September 29, 1952, he describes his roommate's personal life which by most standards was unremarkable. Instead, Gardner weaves the tale by describing his roommate as “my boy Goosebury,” turning him into a character and evoking sympathy through humor, while also including a lascivious and mischievous caricatured illustration of his roommate on the next page. Gardner's journal was not all fun and games; he also devoted entries to serious criticism of works he read, of his teachers, and would even analyze his own writings; holding himself to the same standard as he held everybody else.

Gardner left DePauw University and received his undergraduate degree in 1955 from Washington University in St. Louis. He then went on to receive his M.A. from the University of Iowa. After finishing his formal education, Gardner became a teacher of fiction writing, a profession he would hold for the duration of his life. He also spent much time studying and lecturing on literary criticism. He was a particular favorite at The Bread Loaf Writer's Conference.⁴ And he was a real master of the craft, able to write on a number of levels and touch upon a number of topics in each of his stories, so that a variety of audiences had the potential to appreciate his work.

Gardner possessed a very strong personality, often combative as well⁵, and was a most controversial teacher and author. He stirred up controversy with his interpretations of literature, which is often seen as the purpose of literary criticism, and with the books he wrote. His desire to rile others up can be seen even in his appearance. He was a queer looking individual, choosing to wear a leather jacket and long hair, which brought with it echoes of revolution and rejection of traditional values, thanks to both the bikers of 1950s, like Marlon Brando in “Easy Rider” and to the hippies of the 1960s. And yet, Gardner himself would speak on serious subjects, with legitimate opinions and ideas, and a self-confidence that forced his students and readers to look past his appearance and focus on his thoughts instead.

Gardner's peculiar personality came through especially in his teaching, where he succeeded in both inspiring and intimidating his writing students. When teaching at Chico State University, Gardner had a student named Raymond Carver who mentioned to

³ Lies! Lies! Lies! A College Journal of John Gardner. From the University of Rochester Press, 1999. Entry of September 26, 1952, pp. 6-7

⁴ Which is the oldest writing conference in the United States; held every summer at the Bread Loaf inn, east of Middlebury Vermont.

⁵ In *On Becoming a Novelist*, Gardner himself relays an anecdote where he appeared at David Segel's office (a New York book editor) carrying three manuscripts, and wearing his leather jacket. He said to Segel, "I want you to read these novels...now."

Gardner that he had read, but not liked, the assigned short story, "Blackberry Winter," by Robert Penn Warren. Gardner responded, without smiling, "You'd better read it again." Yet on another occasion, when he saw that Carver required a place to write undisturbed, Gardner gave him a key to his office.⁶

John Gardner was a strong believer in the redemptive power of art. His ironic writing style has caused many people to classify him as a Postmodernist, as his writing often involved existentialist characters.⁷ As well, his field of literary criticism was very much affected by Postmodernism, transformed so that the reader now held power over the meaning of the story, rather than the author. As such, many of his writings, even now, are judged to be postmodernist.

Despite these interpretations, Gardner himself was reluctant to identify as a Postmodernist. In fact, Gardner was quick to criticize Postmodernism, writing that "the classification 'post-modern' / 'modern' applied to the art of his time was an evasion, a stab at nothing"⁸; he believed that this classification was a move meant to elude the basic function of criticism, which Gardner believed is to judge art's moral value. In 1978, he wrote *On Moral Fiction*, a book-length essay in which he attacks what he sees to be the lack of moral content in contemporary literature. He believed that moral fiction "attempts to test human values, not for the purpose of preaching or peddling a particular ideology, but in a truly honest and open-minded effort to find out which best promotes human fulfillment."⁹

As with all of Gardner's work and opinions; his critique of Postmodernism was not met without reply. Silvio Gaggi, in his book *Modern/Postmodern: A Study in Twentieth Century Arts and Ideas* answers Gardner's criticisms by calling his indictment of postmodern fiction "an academic striving for opacity {that} suggests, if not misanthropy, a perversity of shallowness."¹⁰ Gaggi went on to declare that Gardner's opinion in and of itself was not necessarily incorrect, however, it was his means of critiquing postmodernism which manifested itself in problems. "It may not be that Gardner's notion of contemporary art and criticism are so wrong; it's just that by neglecting to really engage modern and postmodern art and criticism, by refusing to treat them at least seriously as they really are...Gardner's book is likely to remain an impotent polemic in the face of twentieth century

⁶ Anecdote from "John Gardner" entry on wikipedia.com.

⁷ Such as the title character in *Grendel*, who is strikingly similar to Meursault (From *The Stranger* by Albert Camus), in both speech and thought patterns, reflecting a disregard for all thoughts beyond himself and his realization that in the end, there is little meaning in life. In fact, *Grendel* is hailed as his most postmodern novel; incidentally, it is also his shortest.

⁸ Wikipedia entry on postmodernism: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism>

⁹ John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction*. Basic Books: 1978.

¹⁰ William V. Spanos, *What was Postmodernism?* Contemporary Literature. The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. University of Wisconsin Press: 1990. pp 114.

skepticism...”¹¹

Gardner seemingly self-identified as a modernist, rather than as a postmodernist; and his general attitude and behavior can support this identification. Gardner's work tended towards moralizing, and his lectures on literary criticism often opted for a moralization of work, rather than simply accepting the world for what it was. His work was complex, touching on a number of different subjects. This can be seen to parallel how modernism rejected the straightforward messages of art and literature; nothing was to remain static. Furthermore, his moralizing embodied the fear of many modernists about the abyss which they faced after life. Gardner was never simply content in what was; his work betrayed the fact that he fret over the state of the world.

In 1977, Gardner published a book entitled *The Life and Times of Chaucer* which upon review by *Speculum* author Sumner J. Ferris included a number of lines and passages which had been lifted from other authors without proper citation. Ferris suggested that Gardner had published too hastily, but a 1978 *Newsweek* article by Peter Prescott accused Gardner of plagiarism. Gardner met these accusations with a sigh. This incident shines additional light on just what sort of controversy Gardner could stir up, either intentionally or unintentionally. There is a question as to whether or not Prescott would have been more sympathetic to Gardner if he had not been the controversial author he was.

It is curious as to who the intended audience of Gardner's essay “God Damn the Bicentennial: A Patriotic Essay” was meant to be. From Gardner's journal, it is evident that Gardner enjoyed writing on any subject, realizing that the act of writing could help to improve his skills. Furthermore, if it was controversial, so much the better, as Gardner enjoyed causing controversy and reveled in it. Perhaps he simply wrote the essay for himself, either to hone his writing skills or to simply get his thoughts down in a cohesive manner, on a subject he knew would most likely bring heated debate from both sides of the American political spectrum.

In this attempt to heat up both sides of the political spectrum, Gardner's essay can be seen as a rejection of both rising neo-conservatism and politically correct American liberalism.¹² He outright criticizes both the Right Wing and the Left Wing numerous times in the essay. Most notably, this occurs when he refers to them as “pseudo-patriotic movements”¹³ which he intends to expose as “frauds.” The movements he describes are the movement of blind patriotism, the “love it or leave it” sort of patriotism that he admits gives him “hot

¹¹ William V. Spanos, *What was Postmodernism?* pp. 114.

¹² This is not to be confused with the liberalism of individuals like John Dewey or Lyndon B. Johnson. Rather it refers to the impulses of political correctness, which serve to undermine everything that one has achieved because one did something bad along with the good. This impulse is most often associated with liberalism.

¹³ John Gardner, *God Damn the Bicentennial: A Patriotic Essay*, 2.

flashes,” makes his “skin crawl,” and causes him to “go blind with rage.”¹⁴ The second movement is that of anti-patriotism, which moves “to ‘demythologize’ the founding fathers and “supplant their myth with a new myth, America as bullshit.”¹⁵ Gardner refers to these movements as the serpent on the Right and Left, respectively. The indictment of these movements demonstrated what Gardner felt was the problem with the American political spectrum at the time, and his frustration comes clear. It is quite possible that Gardner felt that he, and those who thought like him, were not being represented by American democracy, which is why he focuses on the subject for so long.

Perhaps his essay was meant to be read by his students, in an attempt to make them better appreciate America. For one cannot love something or somebody if one refuses to acknowledge its faults. It is only through acknowledgement and acceptance of faults, and the realization that its greatness is not diminished, that one can truly love and appreciate. This is a complex view of love, at odds, perhaps, in some ways with the traditional view of love of perfection, or love turning a blind eye to faults. But Gardner was a very complex man, with a number of views that had legitimacy, despite being contrary to what many others held to be true.

The essay itself is filled with irony and sarcasm, making it difficult at first read to tease out exactly where he stands on the subject of American patriotism.¹⁶ What Gardner appears to favor is a true patriotism in America: a realization that what makes America the country that it is, is not simply its history, but in the rights that the country affords to its citizens. Those rights, Gardner pointed out, despite being the subject of great controversy at the time when the Constitution was written, are now so highly coveted to be deemed “human rights,” and countries and peoples around the globe desire them as well.

This true patriotism is one with great respect for the ideals upon which America was founded, and great respect for political freedoms. These freedoms include the right to be free from politics. Indeed, he states that “the most vulgar and unpatriotic thing you can do...is indiscriminately [sic]...making every citizen pull his voting-booth lever, whether or not he gives a damn.”¹⁷ This line can be interpreted in two ways. The first is that it is unpatriotic to force others to engage in behaviors they do not wish to, because America is based on freedom; particularly negative freedom, as in freedom from interference. The second is that it is unpatriotic to encourage apathetic citizens to vote. Although it is a democracy, change cannot occur when the system is bogged down by individuals who both do not understand the issues and did not bother to try, or who do understand the issues but

¹⁴ Gardner, God Damn the Bicentennial, 1-2

¹⁵ Gardner, God Dam the Bicentennial, 2

¹⁶ And I'm still not 100% certain that I interpreted it correctly. But I tried.

¹⁷ Gardner God Damn the Bicentennial, 3.

just do not care enough either way. Although Gardner acknowledges that the American democratic “system frequently doesn't work”¹⁸ that does not mean that he believes that this is a free pass for the system to become further flawed. Gardner believes in the system as a whole, and appears to want others to do the same.

When Gardner touches on the subject of “America as bullshit,” and calls this view a fraud, it can be said that Gardner is very much a social realist. The tone of the essay, and his own body of work, makes it clear that he believes in equal rights for all, and wants nobody to be denied their rights.¹⁹ However, it appears in some ways that he objects to the undermining of the American image by counter movements. He admits that America is flawed, that the Constitution itself was not written by a group that truly represented American demographics. But his hope can be said to be a counter to many of the more radical agendas of groups based on political representation. Although it cannot be said for certain, it is possible that Gardner objected to Malcolm X's claim that blacks were not really Americans, since Gardner appears to say that to be here is to be an American, and one can be one without spewing love every five seconds. And likewise, one can understand the faults of American history without undoing all of its achievements.

Gardner died on September 14, 1982 at the age of 49. His death was the result of a motorcycle crash that occurred outside of Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. He is buried beside his brother Gilbert in Batavia's Grandview Cemetery. In a way, it can be said that his life has come full circle. In death, he was rid of the guilt he faced from the accident that killed his brother. He, too, died of an accident, and found himself once again on equal ground with his brother, near him, until time itself runs out. It can be said in some ways that this is the sort of smiling into the abyss that supposedly defined Postmodernism, as he is free of the moralizing he did in life. In other ways, his death can be seen as more modernist, as he himself would most likely consider himself to “moralize into the abyss” rather than smile; to be contrary to popular opinion even in death. It is only fitting to describe Gardner's death in such a way, so as to complicate something so generally straightforward. He most likely would have done the same if writing his own obituary.

¹⁸ Gardner, God Damn the Bicentennial, 3.

¹⁹ As far as Americans are concerned.

Transcription of GOD DAMN THE BICENTENNIAL: A PATRIOTIC ESSAY by John Gardner

A month or so ago I had an all-night, relatively drunken conversation (I was drinking, not he) with an eleven-year-old about Patriotism. He, I should mention, is one of your more brilliant eleven-year-olds, a promising philosopher, a young man who's lived most of his life in New York, whereas I was born and raised in what New Yorkers malevolently describes as "Upstate" and at the age of seventeen left even that cultural and spiritual twilight for the incomparable darkness, from the New Yorker's point of view, of the Midwest. (I even spent six years in California, but I'm much, much better now). My friend told his mother the following day "You know, John Gardner's a patriot!" She consoled him and heroically defended me. We're old friends and liberals: I speak only praise of her ethnic background, the reason the remains of her family fled Germany; I know, with a novelist's divine certainty, she never describes me as a wasp.

But how queer that a love of one's country should require defense! Even I, I confess, endure a shudder of revulsion when I go into some foul, white hamburger hole and find gritty Bicentennial placemats all cluttered up with flags and idealized portraits of the founding fathers—George Washington with his teeth in, Samuel Adams looking honest, Ben Franklin with his clothes on (among other crank opinions, you may recall, Ben Franklin held that it was healthful to go around bare-naked), or that huge drunken ox Ethan Allen looking sober as a church. Even I, I confess, go pale with rage when I see bumper stickers saying, "This is My Country," implying, of course, "Not Yours." My skin crawls when Presidents speak affectionately of "God" or car-salesmen speak of "This Great Country of Ours." I get hot flashes when American Rifleman's Association, number one defender of the vote by assassination, writes in antique italics, "O'er the ramparts we watch." But I get equally hot flashes when I hear on every side, not just from children, but from intelligent, sophisticated adults—as they'll tell you themselves with full confidence—that the American dream is dead.

The American Dream, it seems to me, is not even slightly ill. It's escaped, soared away into the sky like an eagle, so not even a great puffy Bicentennial can squash it. The American Dream become a worldwide dream, which makes me so happy and flushed with partly chauvinistic pride (it was Our Idea!) that I sneak down into my basement and wave my flag. People all over the world have decided they have a God- or Allah- or Buddah-given right to a more or less decent existence here on earth, right now. To Richard II of England, who had the God-given right to kill any man he pleased, as long as he was English, and no questions asked (not even Chairman Mao can do that with impunity), or even to the noblemen who wrung from King John the overfamous Magna Carta, the "self-evident" idea of the American founding fathers would have seemed flat-out insanity. That idea—humankind's inalienable

right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—coupled with a system for protecting human rights--Was and is the quintessential American Dream. The rest is greed and pompous fool-ishness -at worst, a cruel and sentimental myth, at best, cheap streamers in the rain.

Two great pseudo-patriotic movements are gathering their coils to strike, these days, inspired by Bicentennial fervor. One is a movement to celebrate and enforce without mercy or thought all that's foul and mindless in the American heritage. (The serpent on the Right.) The other is a movement to "demythologize" those eighteenth century heroes who've been foully, mindlessly adored, and supplant their myth with a new myth, American as bullshit. (The serpent on the Left.) I come, flag covertly waiving, to expose those frauds— expose, I mean, both frauds.

When the Liberty Bell rang out victory for America's revolutionary forces (that "filthy rabble," as their Commander in Chief, George Washington, called them) the noise did not mean victory for the American Dream but only victory for those hoping to pursue it. The success of the idea of government "of the people, by the people, for the people," in Lincoln's phrase, meant in fact the success of government by flawed people,--even terrible people because there have never been, anywhere on earth, perfect human beings.

The first principle of American democracy is that given the basic freedoms, majority rule is right even when it's wrong (as often happens), because it encourages free men to struggle as adversaries, using established legal means to keep government working at the business of justice for all. The theory was and is that if the majority causes too much pain to the minority, the minority will scream (with the help of a free press and the right of assembly) until the majority is badgered or shamed into changing its mind. To put it another way, most people are indifferent most of the time, and rightly so, to what the government does; on any given issue, only those citizens who are really hurt, one way or another, are likely to write articles, make speeches, crowd in force to the polls, or se fires in taverns. (The most vulgar and unpatriotic thing you can do--worse even than putting on a three-cornered hat--is indiscriminately "get out the vote," making every citizen pull his voting-booth lever, whether or not he gives a damn.)

It's true that the system pretty frequently doesn't work. For decades, pollsters tell us, the American people have favored gun-control by 3 to 1—law enforcement officials have favored it by as much as 9 to 1—but powerful lobbies and cowardly politicians have easily thwarted the people's will. Nevertheless, the American democratic "adversary system" clearly beats kingship from across the Atlantic, and surely beats the system in modern China, which achieves efficiency and unanimity by the destruction of something like "sixty million bandits"—the entire Chinese middle class.

The grand promise of the American Revolution was that people here (except for slaves and women, who were legally defined as moderately subhuman) should have the right, guaranteed by law, to live, to be free, and to struggle for happiness. Once that incredible promise was made, people everywhere began howling for their “rights.” The French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions were direct results. If none of these later revolutions was as successful as ours, the reason is that, for all its faults, the American system pitting pressure group against pressure group (Nader and the consumer against Volkswagen, city against country, women against men) came close, at least, to keeping the revolutionary promise. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (as well as the flotsam of the American dream, wealth, lots of sex, and the all-white neighborhood) took root in this country and flourished.

These are not his truths of the fast-foods patriot, with his flag-cluttered placements, his idealized portraits of the heroes. Someone has been telling that patriot lies. There was never unanimity. Hundreds of the wealthiest New Englanders slipped off, in 1775, for Canada and King George, and the founding fathers spent their whole lives fighting down citizens' revolts like the Farmer's Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion. There was struggle and political trickery from the start. When Sam Adams organized the Boston troops, well before the victory of '76, he told outrageous lies, exactly like a communist agitator, tricking Bostonians into taking, out of terror, his side. (When Adams was invited to head the commission which was to write the American Declaration of Independence, he argued for Tom Jefferson on the grounds that he himself was “obnoxious” to all decent men—as indeed he was.)

“Murder will out,” as Chaucer wrote. That may be optimistic, but nevertheless it's a bad idea to tell sentimental lies about America's founding fathers. George Washington was a man passionately devoted to a philosophical idea, the notion of a society of reasonable men; but it is also true that he once got so angry at his soused, grubby, disorganized, noisily disrespectful troops that he stood stammering in rage, unable to speak, for a full thirty minutes. Thomas Jefferson, the greatest idealist of them all, and a man who tried to make slavery unconstitutional, was nevertheless a slave holder, and in all probability, a man tragically comprised by his love for his “dusky Sally.” There has always been such conflict. Abraham Lincoln, for all his good humor and lofty idealism, did not in fact free all the slaves, only the ones in the Confederacy.

It's right to demythologize those heroes, as long as we remember those rough, contradiction-filled idealists were, for their time and in some ways for any time, heroes. It's right to insist that when we talk about the “good old days”—when we look up in awe at those Yankee demigods—we should remind ourselves that it's partly illusion: things were not as good then, and are not as bad now, as we pretend. The American dream of justice for all is

only an ideal—a thing we strive for and must continue to strive for but a thing we have never, at least for far, completely achieved.

But the myth of the mindless patriot is no worse than the myth of the cynic who speaks with a sneer of America on automatic. Because America has committed crimes against humanity—against blacks and American Indians, against Mexicans (long before Chicanos were invented), and recently against some of the Vietnamese—mainly it may be, the Vietnamese on our side—the cynic claims the American Dream was a lie from the beginning. If someone has been lying to the cream-puff patriot, someone has also been lying to the American left, NS. Thanks to our polite + civilized détente we have forgiven Russia for, for instance, her tanks in Hungary, forgiven China for the rape of Tibet (to say nothing of all those bandits).

Granted—though I haven't heard anyone argue it—America is more guilty for the murder of the American Indian than Germany is for the murder of those six million Jews; but the reason is that Germans can plead more or less innocent: announced + unannounced, Germany's principle was “The fatherland Right or Wrong: have it or leave it: The Government knows things we don't.” Americans on the other hand, claimed belief in the individual citizen's responsibility for government, belief in the principle of inalienable rights. We killed the Indians largely in violation of American law. When the Indians who survive cry out in anger, and when we who agree with them express our anger turned inward, we both appeal to the same principle, inalienable human rights. The lie to the American left is this: that the American theory promised such-and-such, and has sometimes not delivered, whereas We Deliver. The truth—a metaphysical truth, in fact—is that nobody deliver. Each group struggles, in whatever way it must, to achieve what is at least fair. Since unfortunately if everyone wants more than what's fair: there's as foreseeable and to the struggle.

But the American system provides, at least as a visionary goal, fair + legal means of fighting. And fighting to capture or keep what we've learned to call our rights is what this country is about. Now the world-(?) (Cut off by copy)

We believe in fairness, our American obsession, and our belief in fairness makes us cringe in embarrassment when any foreign government, however repulsive, is compared unfavorably with our own. The result is that we are sometimes inclined to forget, and our children may never hear, that our nation is one of the most decent this planet has ever known. Why do we have our crime rate? Partly because with mostly good intentions, we promise more than anyone can deliver, and partly because our legal system is dangerously fair to even the repeatedly criminal. China has hardly any crime at all, partly because it was common until recently to try 10,000 people at a time and then mow them all down. Comparisons may be odious, but it's important that we make them now and then quietly,

not on vulgar Bicentennial grandstands draped in bunting and half-naked girls. Only by making comparisons can we measure - or even notice - worth. Knee-jerk fairness, in fact, is unjust.

The fight for the basic human freedoms is a continuing, intensely serious business, and theoretically, at least, the occasion of America's Bicentennial might be a sensible time for us to pause + take stock of where we've come from + where we're bound. That's happening to some extent. But serious discussion of what America has meant-and should mean more purely to future generations-is mostly drowned out by obscene commercial chatter about "America's 200th Birthday Party," with clowns and cupcakes, rock-and-roll versions of the Star Spangled Banner, and a trashy carnival eyesore of a train which carries authentic documents and a simulation of the "historic" baseball Hank Aaron hit. Such a party the uncles and aunts should put on blinking back tears, for a hydrophilic infant. (No serious eleven-year-old is fooled by strigindity(?).)

A hundred years ago, at the time of the Centennial--and the Reconstruction--no one had the nerve to have a Birthday Party. America was in trouble, as an honest democracy always is. They let the great occasion slide and got on with the labor of trying to fix things, each group putting the screws on every other, insisting it had certain inalienable rights, struggling—to some extent by legal means—for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It's a tedious and fairly discouraging process, and in the days of Reconstruction, as we all now admit, it was a ghastly failure and a colossal bore, not at all like watching some grocer fall off his horse while galloping hell-for-leather down a roped-off highway, playing Paul Revere. But the jockeying for rights, the continual process of trying to make things fairer - despite such impediments as drunken congressmen and brawling mobs, despite the sly drone of the unspeakable rich + the penchant for murder in the blue-eyed CIA-in short the as yet unabandoned the American Dream of liberty + justice for all is worth waving a flag at.

(The very last page had scribbles over it, indicating its contents had been removed from the manuscript by the author)