

Cold War (p. 143). Randy Rudder's discussion of post-9/11 country music is informative but lacking in analytic rigor. Akenson concludes the collection with a useful essay on employing popular music in middle-school and high-school classrooms.

If several contributors explore areas that might be profitably revisited by future scholars, the smell of antiquarianism permeates too many pieces. Some contributors offer interesting stories but never present readers with either a thesis or statement about why their topic matters. The omission of the Vietnam War is grievous, as no conflict has inspired more high-profile country songs or proven more critical to the cultural and political positioning of contemporary country music. If it did not speak with one voice regarding Vietnam, taken as a whole, country music—fully recognizing the erosion of the cultural consensus that informed earlier songs such as “There’s a Star

Spangled Banner Flying Somewhere” or “God, Please Protect America”—lent support to the narratives America brought to that war and excoriated those who challenged and imperiled “traditional American values” in ways that both anticipated and helped bolster the conservative ascendancy in national politics. *Country Music Goes to War* fails to examine the cultural ruptures introduced by Vietnam, the efforts of country music to redress and repair these fissures, and the legacies of these endeavors. At its best, however, this collection offers a solid starting point for examining the meanings various country performers have assigned to combat, citizenship, and patriotism.

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### *The Fate of Family Farming Variations on an American Idea*

By Ronald Jager

(Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2004. Pp. xx, 244. Notes. \$26.00.)

This highly readable book invites readers to question the idea that family farming is simply a subject for nostalgia. Farm families' adjustments are numerous—niche farming, organic farming, integrated pest management, and community-supported agriculture—but there is also help available, such as

the “beginning-farmer networks” operated by county extension agents and the women-in-agriculture networks. Thanks to these and other programs and strategies, family farming remains alive and kicking in America.

Ronald Jager grew up farming in Michigan during the World War II era,

which he described in his book *Eighty Acres* (1990). His way with words and his turn of thought resemble those of Wendell Berry and Indiana's Scott Russell Sanders. Jager writes warmly about agrarian values and offers a substantial account of American agrarianism, from Jefferson, Crèvecoeur, and Emerson, through Liberty Hyde Bailey and Louis Bromfield, down to Berry and the iconoclastic California grape grower Victor Davis Hanson, whom Jager quotes: "That the land is now nothing is the real diagnosis of modern man's mysterious spiritual illness" (p. 72).

Jager is pleasantly mellow; rather than harangue with jeremiads he treats the reader to subtle ironies. Besides delving into the intellectual history of U.S. agrarianism, he tells the history of farming in New England from colonial times onward, focusing on how the Midwest's cornucopia invaded the East on canal boats and railroad cars, leading to the abandonment of many New England farms in the latter 1800s.

Jager's four major case studies all omit Indiana. Instead, they highlight southern New Hampshire, where Jager bought an old farm and started large-scale gardening, apparently before he retired from teaching philosophy at Yale. I once lived in southern New Hampshire and worked in its apple harvests for many years and helped put an eighty-year-neglected sugarbush back into production, so I know some specifics about two of Jager's four case studies and can vouch for their general accuracy. His

other two case studies deal with a dairy farm and with a corn-and-eggs farm that also operates a large year-round retail farmstand. Jager's moral seems to be that "where there's a will there's a way [at least sometimes]."

All four of the southern New Hampshire operations are multi-generational family farms, and they are at the heart of Jager's book. It is fascinating to see the adjustments and re-adjustments that each of the four families has devised to keep itself in business and even to flourish.

In 1950 the average American family spent over thirty percent of its income on food; by 2000, about ten percent. In 1950, farmers received over fifty cents of every dollar spent in the U.S. on food; now their share is less than twenty cents of every dollar (p. 195). Such figures reflect how far U.S. farm policies are from the kind of European policies that made the news in 1999 when France's minister of agriculture told the World Trade Organization that "the decision to preserve the family farm is the choice of an entire society." What is at stake, as Jager makes explicit in his last chapter ("The Soul of Agriculture") isn't just the future of American agriculture but the future of American culture.

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