When Demons Project

“The conservative movement is primarily a means by which the wealth of rabid right-wingers is redistributed to celebrities.Sometimes the money comes from billionaires, who know exactly what they’re buying when they fund advocacy groups and think tanks; but the whole scheme is basically powered by regular right-wing folks who are kept riled up and angry enough to keep sending checks to frauds and buying books full of alarming lies… Virtually everyone who is famous for being conservative—or simply famous and conservative—is making a killing, or at least attempting to.”

–Alex Pareene, Salon.com

A tactic employed by some witch-doctors is to point to the past successes of legitimate medicine, and say, “Behold!See how wonderfully my methods work? That’s why you should believe my claims.”This is called a “bait and switch”.

Other witch-doctors will point to disastrous consequences of the very medical “cures” that they are now peddling, and say: “Look. See what happens when you listen to conventional doctors!That’s why you should not listen to them…and listen to me instead.”We could call this a “switch and bait”.

The latest cringe-inducing screed from shock-jock, Ann Coulter, has arrived on bookshelves across the country.**Demonic** employs a “switch and bait”.The book recycles the enticingly psychotic thesis of Jonah Goldberg’s long-forgotten **Liberal Fascists**.(Long-forgotten, except for you, dear reader, who was just reminded of it by me.)Each Coulter book could just as well be titled, **More Memes For The Right-Wing Echo Chamber**.This one’s a doozey.

Perhaps Coulter figured that, since people have by now passed over Goldberg’s absurdist diatribe from three years past, the time was ripe to try to sell the idea again…with new packaging.It’s one thing to be a scam artist.It’s quite another thing to be someone who merely regurgitates a con man’s con long after the con has been exposed.Miss Coulter presumably hopes that her target audience hasn’t gotten the memo on the Goldberg con.And so the witch-doctor goes to work: first the switch, then the bait.

(Recycled scams are quite common.When the pyramid scheme Amway got it's bad rap, it was repackaged as "Quixtar".The ruse worked like a charm.Xe hopes we don't notice that it's Blackwater.The Department of Defense is just the War Department with an Orwellian title.The disgraced Project For A New American Century is now operating under the moniker "The Foreign Policy Initiative". Same garbage, new branding.The Vatican's "Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith" hopes nobody notices it's just the renamed Inquisition. To push an old scam, simply repackage it, and peddle it all over again: it's a time-honored tradition.)

I apologize for bringing Goldberg's book up, but I simply can't resist.**Demonic** is essentially **Liberal Fascists: Part II**.Even the most despicable books, it seems, have sequels.The Secret has now had two sequels.Surely, some people somewhere are still waiting for Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion: The Return and Even More Dianetics.Stay tuned.

Ann and I come from different worlds.On a daily basis, I do something that someone like her would find downright bizarre: I study peer-reviewed publications from world-renown scholars.While I'm busy learning political and economic theory from the most revered experts in each field (those who've been proven right time and time again), Ann is—shall we say—occupied with other activities.Her days are devoted to devising new ways to take preposterous claims and sell them to her target audience (presumably, in order to augment the balance of her bank account). The Ann Coulter Retirement fund now has its latest cash cow: capitalizing on the credulity of those ensconced in the the right-wing echochamber.

Miss Coulter's capacity for mendacity knows no bounds.Her craven subreption is masked by a deliciously snarky bombast.A snide comment here, a supercilious dig there… That it's all balderdash is beside the point; her fans relish every underhanded jab at each carefully-caricatured straw man. Her caustic one-liners are gratifying for those eager to believe that Ann has—once again—hit the nail right on the head.It's hard to resist cheering her on when one has already planted a flag in each conclusion.It's like a congregation shouting "Amen!" at whatever profound-sounding verbiage their trusty preacher is spouting.To the untutored ear, it all seems marvelously spot-on. She seems to CONFIDENT. She must be on to something, right?Hallelujah.

Ann knows her target audience very well by now: America's credulous and ill-educated.She loves her target audience for a single reason: there are millions of them…which means one thing: millions of wallets.Those who buy **Demonic** will

contribute to the Ann Coulter Retirement Fund…and Ann will have that much more revenue at her personal disposal the day she finally decides to disappear.In return, her fans will have their coveted ideology reinforced with a new book filled with biting zingers, enticing fables, and a contorted taxonomy of good and evil that will suit their worldview.Meanwhile, people like me will throw their arms up in exasperation and wonder: How on Earth does someone like this even get published?

Yet, then we'll recall the obvious answer: MONEY.It seems that if someone could make a fortune selling astrology books, they'd even start doing that someday.(Wait, that already happens too?Eeesh.)If America had a large enough "Pigs Can Fly" lobby, we can rest assured that either Simon & Schuster (via Threshold Editions) or Random House would capitalize on that audience as well.Before long, we'd see books like, The Wonderful Success of Trickle-down Economics: Irrefutable Proof That Pigs Can Fly.And so it goes with Threshold Editions: anything to add to corporate profits is fair game.

Exploitation of ignorance is a booming business these days.

Mendacity knows no bounds when there's money to be made off of credulity.Coulter seems to bank on her followers being suckers, because she doesn't even try to mask the absurdity of her rants.Sadly, her mind is as emaciated as her anatomy.To her friends, one might say, Miss Coulter needs nutritional help, not a book contract.Yet she will continue to provide us with rants instead of providing her poor body with food.Mental and physical malnourishment are a tragic combination.As usual, she flaunts the former in her prose, and the latter on the book jacket.God have mercy.

Hearing an avid right-wing ideologue accuse "the left" of the very crimes that are endemic to the right, then take credit for all the achievements of Progressives is–well–exasperating. In **Demonic**, what does Ann insist?Fasten your seatbelt…

The Reign of Terror following the French Revolution was—get this—**a LIBERAL phenomenon.**

Read that sentence twice, just to make sure it sinks in.

Whereas Goldberg made Nazism the prototype for contemporary liberalism, Coulter selects the Reign of Terror in France as the prototype.Spinoza?Nope.Kant? Nope.Thomas Paine?Nope.Eleanor Roosevelt?No way.FASCISM accounts for the

genesis of progressive ideals.These etiological myths work magnificently for those who are hell-bent on demonizing Progressives (while rationalizing their own right-wing sentiments).

One can imagine Ann's internal monologue: "Those horrible things weren't RIGHT-wing in nature; for that would mean that MY ideology is horrifically defective.So I must attribute such atrocities to the principles of those with whom I disagree.Then I and my right-wing brethren can get to sleep at night."

To repeat Coulter's thesis: The regime responsible for Paris's infamous Reign Terror (following the overthrow of the monarchy) was a demonstration of what happens when people become too LIBERAL.In other words, what Robespierre did, when he jettisoned **The Declaration of the Rights Of Man** and did the exact opposite of what it said, illustrated the consequences of PROGRESSIVE ideals—and, by implication, the modus operandi of the Democratic Party.

Never mind that Thomas Paine articulated the **The Rights of Man** in what may be one of the most important Progressive treatises in human history as a direct response to what Robespierre did.Never mind that Paine's treatise was a rebuttal to the CONSERVATIVE evaluation of the French Revolution that drew regressive conclusions, penned by the patron saint of America's right wing, Edmund Burke. (Burke's take-away lesson of the Reign of Terror: The peasantry should have acquiesced to the monarchy and stuck with the feudal system.Because…well, SEE what happens when you complain about an aristocracy.Everything goes to shit.Long live the plutocrats!)

The implication of Miss Coulter's claim is deliciously surreal: If only Robespierre had gone further to the right, everything would have gone splendidly.The alternative was to stick with the monarchy, Burke's prognosis, because at least they had law and order.(Law and order, you say?Burke would have loved INGSOC.)

But, wait: I must repeat myself.Even as I write it, I'm still flabbergasted by it: Ann Coulter's contention is that depriving people of civil rights, not tolerating dissent, strictly enforcing conformity to prescribed norms, engaging in hyper-militancy, and demanding loyalty to the anointed nation are things that PROGRESSIVES do (in the tradition of their model: the Jacobins).Yes, you read that correctly.

Of course, even a cursory survey reveals that this is a description of right-wing ideals.

So it goes: Measures to foster social justice?“Just a bunch of crazy liberals engaging in mob activity—a la Robespierre!”This, I kid you not, is what Ann Coulter is contending.The metaphor of the arsonist blaming the fire department for the burning house comes to mind.(One pictures Ann witnessing a Pentecostal church service, and concluding: “Behold the odd behavior of secularists!See what free-thought does to people; it makes them speak in tongues!”)

Ann Coulter would have the reader believe that a draconian penal system that goes after subversives (those showing insufficient fealty to the divinely-ordained cause), that refuses to look out for the disenfranchised and the destitute, that is oligarchic in nature, and that invokes militant super-patriotism, is NOT an absolutely perfect description of America’s right wing.

In fact, she insists, not only is this NOT an exact profile of right-wing ideology, it is an example of what happens when society’s become too “liberal”.The most flagrantly right-wing mob activity in history, then, is proof that liberalism is a bad idea.Got it?

So, to review: Goldberg held that the progenitor of liberalism was Nazism; Mark Levin held that liberals are “statists” plotting to install a tyranny; and Coulter now holds that liberals (e.g. civil rights activists) are nothing but violent mobs.Yes: those known for anti-war positions, membership in humanitarian organizations, and involvement in human rights activity are violent mobs.(Quick, notify Amnesty International, Doctors Without Boarders, the NAACP, and the Big Brother / Big Sister organization of this new development. Warn them before liberals can do any more damage!)

Alas, even after having repeated her thesis several times now, the full nuttiness of this book has not been adequately captured.To not know the difference between Thomas Paine’s message and Maximilian Robespierre’s agenda is quite a feat.Such ignorance disqualifies one from being able to comment on the fall-out from the French Revolution.Ann Coulter decided to designate Robespierre as the quintessence of “liberalism”, thereby replacing Thomas Paine with his opposite.She has forfeited her right to talk about right-wing vs. progressive ideals because she can’t discern between the consequences of one and the consequence of the other.

Vegetarians eat only meat; carnivores eat only vegetables; so if you don’t want to kill any animals, eat as many hamburgers as possible.Follow?

It’s one thing to argue against Progressivism and for right-wing policy. Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity do it every day.It’s quite another thing to call what right-wing policy entails bad, attribute it to Progressivism, then conclude that because the opposite of what you’ve just labeled “Progressivism” is the real right-wing ideology, right-wing policy must be the way to go.

Queerly, this tactic is now en vogue with right-wing pundits.At one point, Glenn Beck invoked Thomas Paine for his own propaganda.His book, **Thomas Paine’s Common Sense** was like a ravenous carnivore appropriating the diet of a famous vegan luminary in an effort to promote eating steak.Glenn Beck may have just as well written a book called **Michael Jordan’s Slam Dunks** to promote the view that black men don’t know how to play basketball.

Coulter has called up, “down”…and called down, “up”…and then made an entire book out of it.She has taken the hallmark attributes of right-wing ideology (concentrated power in the hands of a privileged few, marginalization of the rabble, militarism on steriods) and imputed them to “liberals”.Meanwhile, she’s then taken the hallmark attributes of progressive movements (advocacy for civil rights, empowering the disenfranchised, embracing those who don’t “fit in”, helping the marginalized) and ascribed them to her own right-wing ideology.Just when we thought right-wingers were proud of their own ideals, they’re now taking credit for progressive accomplishments while blaming the consequences of their own ideas on liberal malfeasance.

This inversion of Reality is reminiscent of the 2009-10 “Tea Party”, a movement that appropriated the moniker of the Boston protest in 1773 for purposes that were the exact opposite of the Boston protest in 1773.These new “Tea Partiers” tossed around loaded terms they didn’t understand and walked around with placards worthy of an SNL skit; but that wasn’t the unusual part.What was weird was that they invoked a movement that was vehemently AGAINST corporate tax-breaks in order to FIGHT FOR corporate interests.To those of us living on Earth, this was a befuddling thing to witness. The original tea-party was, of course, against corporate tax-breaks and State-corporate collusion: the very thing that DEFINES the G.O.P. today. And yet there they were, people fighting FOR corproate interests in the name of the original tea party. Alice had gone completely through the looking glass.

Such odd scenes were quite disconcerting for the rest of us: Crowds of uneducated, pissed-off people under the impression that they were standing up for the same principles that instigated the protest of the same name 236 years earlier.In other words, these people didn't know the difference between protesting against corporate power and doing its bidding.These people are Ann's target audience.

In the end, Ann's verdict is this: The Great Terror demonstrates what happens when societies become too progressive."Liberals", she insists, get their blueprint from France's Reign of Terror…while "conservatives" embody the true spirit of civil society.To prove this, simply juxtapose the outcomes of the American and French Revolutions.Q.E.D.

But here's the real zinger: Coulter has done this with the approval of a major publisher, Random House's Crown Forum.(It seems she started getting a little nutty for its Three Rivers Press division.)And, to top it all off, some people are actually buying it: it debuted at #2 on the NYT Bestseller List and remained in the top 10 for six weeks.How disturbed should we be?Well, not necessarily VERY disturbed.At least Coulter expects some of her readers to recognize that Robespierre's movement was a BAD thing.That's a start, I guess.

By the same token, at least Goldberg didn't overtly endorse Nazism…though the ideology he espouses entails a diluted version of fascism (even as he dismisses fascism as "liberal").Yes, Random House published Goldberg's abomination as well—via its Doubleday imprint.Between Random House and Simon & Schuster's Threshold Editions, we've got all the major right-wing pulp covered.(For more, see my review of Goldberg's magnum opus.)

Maybe later, Coulter's readers will recognize that everything that characterizes mass mania and mass hysteria is found in right-wing movements because that is what right-wing movements are.But, of course, these are the same people that allowed Goldberg to convince them that Nazism was "liberal".So don't hold your breath.

Perhaps we of civil society should take heart.It seems that the only people who would endorse this peculiar book are people who are so far to the right that they are a "lost cause".So maybe no additional harm will be done by Demonic.What is disturbing, though, is—while this book may not do further harm to the already-too-

far-gone—it does show how outrageously loony the lunatic fringe of the right wing has become.Heaven help them…and heaven help us to not be harmed by their views.

Here are four gems from Demonic:

1“Just as fire seeks oxygen, Democrats seek power.”Clever.That would be a great point, except that progressives—being vehemently anti-corporatist—rarely covet the very thing that imbues politicians with the most power: moneyed interests.Currying favor with the corporate lobby is what corporatists do, and that’s why progressives are typically grossly out-powered.Coulter has forgotten who the Big Business party is.(Hint: It’s not the Green Party.)Many Democrats do succumb to the trappings of corporatism, but they do so insofar as they move to the RIGHT.Corporatism is very tempting for careerist politicians of any stripe, so it is a problem in both parties; but it’s a RIGHT-wing phenomenon, even when Democrats are guilty of it.That’s why the DP drives Progressively like me up the freagin’ wall.

2“The liberal tradition comes from the French Revolution.”That would be an important point to make, except it’s the exact opposite of the real case.The French Revolution STARTED as an appeal to usher in liberal democracy, but underwent a drastic lurch to the right, becoming a proto-fascist cult movement.It started with The Declaration of the Rights of Man (a la Thomas Paine), then transitioned to a radical right-wing tyranny (thereby imprisoning Thomas Paine).In order to make her theory work, Ann is required to utterly disregard this transition.

3“Liberals use mobs to seize power and impose their theories.”That would be a fantastic point, except that it this is a perfect diagnosis of all notorious right-wing movements.From Hitler to Stalin, from Mao to Pol Pot, anti-progressive movements are based on precisely the things Coulter desperately wants to attribute to Progressivism—yet are flagrantly right-wing in nature.What, exactly, do liberals “impose”?Social justice?Civil liberties?Human rights?Education?Democratic principles?Empowerment of the rank and file?Consumer protections?Accountability?Restrictions on abuses of private wealth?Public health?Understanding of science?

4“The Declaration of Independence is a religious document through and through.”Deism isn’t a religion, Ann, but nice try.I was surprised not to see David Barton referenced in the end-notes here.It seems Ann made it up all by herself. One

pictures non-religionists Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, the letter's primary authors, wondering in bewilderment how on Earth someone could read what they wrote and think that religion was its basis.

It is difficult to go to a G.O.P. event and not see the glaring parallels between the American right-wing and every other right-wing movement in history.Alas, Ann Coulter goes to an ACLU meeting and sees the legacy of the Great Terror.Go figure. One wonders what Miss Coulter thinks the right wing IS. Certainly, she doesn't think it's the world's primary symbol of humanism…or of human rights activism…or of standing up for the little guy. When Eleanor Roosevelt shepherded the U.N. Declaration For Human Rights, does Ann think this was a RIGHT-wing effort? And has it been liberals or conservatives who have pushed for civil rights for the past two generations? According to Ann, the liberal agenda is one of mob violence…which means the Freedom Riders and Harvey Milk and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. represented RIGHT-wing values.

This is all quite baffling, until one realizes that Coulter has an indefensible position that can only be rationalized via some strange kind of inverted logic.So don't be dumfounded; be sympathetic.In Coulter Land, strident militarism, gross inequality, and rampant corporatism aren't the problem; insufficient tax-breaks to the super-rich, food stamps, too much funding of public infrastructure, and organized labor are the problem.In Coulter Land, zygotes are humans, poor people are chattel, homosexuality is a sin, corporate interests represent the national interest, and all our economic woes are caused by Keynes instead of Friedman.

So, according to Coulter, how do we AVOID a repeat of the Great Terror? It's quite simple, really.We privatize everything under the sun, do the bidding of Big Business, and inaugurate a Christian nation.Coulter's utopia is a country run by plutocrats, theocrats, and super-patriotic exceptionalists.Those she wants in power: those who fetishize militarism, guns, the Pentateuch, and corporate power.Her prescription for social democracy: leaving the rabble to fend for themselves in an unregulated marketplace.Sounds marvelous!Where do I sign up?

A maneuver Ann continues to use is to equate Progressivism with "the Democrats", as if the two were the same thing.Memo to Ann: the DP is not ipso facto liberal, and is certainly not the embodiment of Progressivism.As it happens, this is because the DP is too far to the right.To the degree that the DP is right-wing, it exhibits faults similar to those found to a greater degree in the G.O.P.

Finally, Miss Coulter makes the mind-bending contention: **Only liberals commit violence these days.**Really, Ann?Hmm.Congressman Gabrielle Giffords may beg to differ with you on that one.And I guess Timothy McVeigh's problem was that he was too liberal.(This from the women who insists that the KKK was a liberal phenomenon.)Let's leave aside the fact that "the left" tends to really, really not like guns, and to be horrified as any policy based on militarism.Let's leave aside the fact that "the left" is, almost by definition, the anti-war party, home of peaceniks and artists and egg heads and crunchy, tree-hugging granolas who'd rather read literature than arm themselves with guns.

Should we mention James Earl Ray's murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr…or the chronic hostility of white supremacists in general?What about violence at abortion clinics?Do we really need to compile a mile-long list of counterfactuals to demonstrate the absurdity of Coulter's thesis?Let's take the five major politically-inspired acts of violence since Obama came to office: Jim David Adkisson (right-winger), Richard Poplowski (right-winger), Byron Williams (right-winger), Gerald Laughner (right-winger), and Joseph Stack (the right-winger who crashed his plane into Austin's IRS building).See a pattern?

And what about violent activity overseas? Has Miss Coulter ever heard of Pinochet, Milosevic, or the Judean Settler Movement? But here's the kicker. The month after "Demonic" was released, a radical right-wing fanatic in Norway, Anders Brevik, perpetrated a massacre at a youth camp for EXPLICITLY right-wing reasons. Meanwhile, "leftist" movements throughout Europe currently abound–yet none have engaged in violence. It never occurs to right-wing apologists like Coulter that the very essence of right-wing ideology is hyper-militarism (guns, guns, guns) and hyper-nationalism–a vile cocktail if there ever was one. Meanwhile, anti-war, anti-gun peace-niks, pacifist artists, and tree-hugging, human rights activists are the prototypes of the left. Anders Brevik, meanwhile, is the quintessence of right-wing fanaticism.

How many far, far right-wing examples shall we name before we may safely conclude that it's not liberalism that is generally responsible for violence? Ann seems to forget that Salafism / Wahhabism the world over is a far, far right-wing movement. After all, right-wing is right-wing, regardless of the brand. The Sierra Club, Doctors Without Boarders, Engineers Without Boarders, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Oxfam, the Peace Corps: these are LIBERAL movements. Shall we compare the tendency for violence between liberal and right-wing movements?

It seems no amount of evidence could possibly persuade a woman who is convinced that the NRA will help mitigate gun violence.Seriously.How about the militarism, fear, and anger endemic to the right-wing mindset, on display every day of every week of every year?According to Miss Coulter, that's actually a profile of the typical liberal activist.Has she ever met a counter-culture, pacifist, environmentalist humanities major? An anti-war, anti-gun, tree-hugging, vegan computer geek who's existence is antithetical to systems of highly concentrated power?Because that's the most extreme to the left that I can possibly imagine…and such a person would be about as prone to militancy as a Jain. Such a person's temper may flare when someone insinuates that Dostoyevsky was superior to Hesse, or that boy bands may be here to stay, but that's about it.

What about the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle?Ah, yes: liberal hostility, indeed.But here's the catch: The hostility during those protests was directed at CORPORATIONS, not at humans.Therein lies the rub: The Reign of Terror went after regular people, not after highly-concentrated centers of power that were exploiting regular people.More to the point, in Seattle, it was the police who resorted to violence first, and a few protestors who retaliated after being viciously attacked.Prior to being assaulted, the demonstrators were almost entirely pacifist. With the Reign of Terror, it was those with the power that unleashed the violence, with self-aggrandizement as the motivation.

Coulter would have us believe that engaging in fanatical cult activity is a "liberal" phenomenon.(This is the thesis put forth in her previous book, Godless; so we can't say she's not being consistent.)Yet the capacity to not be defined by what others say one is "supposed to" be, but to define oneself, is a central tenet of liberalism.

One must wonder: What does Ann think "liberal" means?According to her thesis, if more people thought like, say, Noam Chomsky, there would be a repeat of the Reign of Terror here in 21st century America.Well, I'd imagine that Ann couldn't possibly really think that.So what, then, does she think would actually happen if, tomorrow morning, most people—including most public officials and lobbyists—woke up and adopted the ideals that someone like Chomsky espouses?What would actually happen?Nazism?Communism?Tyranny?Some kind of dictatorship?

Don't be ridiculous.

What, then?Coulter may well tie herself in knots trying to wrap her mind around such a hypothetical, but it's really not that difficult to answer—if one is honest with oneself.I suspect that deep down she knows the answer, but she despises the answer.The answer is stupendously inconvenient for her purposes.So her hand is forced: In order to stick to her guns, she must engage in provocative obscurantism, and fabricate history.It's like the witch-doctor who—deep down—knows he's full of shit, yet is compelled to perpetrate his fraud anyway…to his own benefit…by using a sly gimmick.

Coulter's gimmick: Pass the snake oil off as "medicine" while labeling the real medicine "snake oil".The switching and the baiting go hand-in-hand.We've seen this many times before.For example, declarations that Progressivism caused the economic cluster-fuck of 2008; so more Neoliberal economic policy will fix it.The medicine is unpalatable, and the toxic elixir tastes like candy.The labels are swapped, so take your pick.

This isn't to say that there aren't any idiots who endorse liberal ideals; there are.Unfortunately, there have been people who succumb to groupthink and zealotry while promoting progressive causes, and end up acting quite nutty.I've encountered all-too-many such tragic cases.After all, it's possible for one to be both a nut and endorse civil society.But the key is that militancy and reactionary thinking are not the essence of progressivism.When those unfortunate cases occur, they occur in spite of the ideals, not as a logical consequence of the ideals.

Here's the rub: When a progressive exhibits idiocy, the idiocy is not attributable to the fact that he/she is being too progressive.By stark contrast, collective idiocy (i.e. the mob activity Coulter alarms us about) is the very essence of right-wing movements: it's how they operate, it's their nature, and it's their source of power.

Without herd mentality, progressivism would still be progressivism.Without herd mentality, right-wing ideology would cease to exist.History has demonstrated this over and over again.Perhaps Ann is confusing groupthink with civic-mindedness…or mobs with human solidarity…or she is just dyslexic.Perhaps Ann is afflicted with what psychiatrists call reaction formation.Or perhaps Ann is just making shit up as she goes.Liberals are evil, and that's all there is to it.

But how on Earth does Ann define “liberals”?According to her, they have a “fetish-like respect for tradition”.What?It’s like the arsonist saying that the fire department is comprised of those who love to start fires.The outlandish case of projection goes on and on, page after page.

Ann’s shtick has always been vituperative zingers.Typically, she entertains her fans with amusing invective—even as her views are so preposterous, it can be dismissed as just a bunch of silliness.But sometimes, in order to make her zingers work, Miss Coulter is forced to fabricate entire alternate realities.Demonic’s alternate reality enables her to concoct new zingers, and appease her fans.

Is Coulter for real?You betcha.She hates Democrats, so her tirade makes strange sense.Of course, Ann’s characterization of “Democrats” is preposterous: They want to “block” and even “roll back” all “scientific progress”.They do?Why?Because universal public healthcare would mean “the end of innovation in medicine”!What?(Has Miss Coulter heard of the NIH?)Ann’s evidence for this peculiar contention is that progressives want to invest in R&D in clean energy technologies (like new light bulbs and new modes of transportation), thereby rendering old technologies (incandescent bulbs and the internal combustion engine) obsolete.According to Ann, this endeavor makes Progressives “anti-science”.One wonders if Ann understands what “science” is.

Let’s foll&nbow Ann’s fuzzy labeling scheme: Progressive ideals are equated with political “liberals”…who are—in turn—conflated with the Democratic Party, which is demonic because some members of the Weather Underground used violence.It’s all one big jumble of anything that’s not ultra-right-wing—smushed together and labeled “demonic”.

Employing this muddled taxonomy, Miss Coulter blames the famine in Ukraine (orchestrated by Stalin’s mendacity) and the famine in rural China (caused by Mao’s idiocy) on those regimes being too “liberal”.In what distorted taxonomy are Robespierre, the KKK, and Stalin “liberals”?In Coulter’s new taxonomy.One is tempted to ask: By what criteria should they categorized?Per Coulter: Because these notorious villains were so horrific, they need to be pigeonholed with the Republicans’ contemporary political antagonists.

The pre-LBJ “Southern Democrats” were, of course, prototypes of right-wing ideology.It was with the civil rights legislation passed under LBJ that they realized that their true home was the G.O.P.—that the Democratic Party would no longer

accommodate right-wing views.So a mass exodus subsequently occurred: right-wingers migrating from the antiquated “Southern Democrat” label to the more accurate “Republican” label—finding a platform germane to their “traditional” positions.

Political parties undergo metamorphoses, it’s an ideology that remains the same.Remember, Ann, the Progressive party at the beginning of the 20th century was the “Republican” Party.Teddy Roosevelt’s domestic policy was good not because he was to the right.If he were alive today, he’d be deemed a fanatical communist, according to Coulter’s taxonomic shenanigans.

At one point, Ann refers to John Maynard Keynes as a “documented crackpot”.What? Well the motive behind this sophomoric invective is straight-forward: If you disagree with right-wing economic policy, then you’re either part of a violent mob (a mob of socialists, nevertheless) or a “documented crackpot”.I’m actually surprised that Ann didn’t just cut to the chase, and call Keynes a communist faggot.Maybe she’s saving that for her next book.

At another point, Ann calls “the belief that Germany had been treated unfairly after World War I” an “insane thesis”.Come again?Who disagrees with that thesis?It couldn’t possibly be more firmly established.(See, Peter Scheff’s Bloody Revenge.)After World War II, we DID treat Germany well—via the Marshall Plan.The outcome of that speaks for itself.The juxtaposition between the treatments of Germany following each war, and the divergent outcomes, is as clear as day.Is Coulter really that clueless?

The “Mob”:

Taking her lead from Gustav Le Bon’s nomenclature, Ann’s pet buzz-term in Demonic is “mob”.She has fetishized and reified the word, “mob” with staggering aplomb.It’s a debaucherous-sounding word, so it suits her purposes magnificently.The gimmick here is to dismiss progressives because they’re “just another mob”.Perfect.But how will she accuse them of being a “mob”?Easy.Go to Paris in the 18th Century.

As already stated, Ann sees “mobs” in the radical right-wing movement that was France’s Great Terror, so she merely needs to call it a “liberal” movement.Then she can simply say: “See!LOOK at what liberalism does!MOBS.Therefore, the DP is just a mob.”That’s her argument.That, really, is the entire book in a nutshell.No kidding.

From the angry mobs that attacked the Freedom Riders in 1961 to the ones that burned the Dixie Chicks albums in effigy over four decades later, one can survey right-wing protests.One can then juxtapose them against the anti-war protests and civil rights protests during the same period.What can one conclude from the comparison?Certainly, not that the former were Progressives.Certainly, not that the latter were the epitome of militancy.Yet Ann adamantly insists that it is liberals who embody the herd mentality and bellicosity—and the right wing that has cornered the market on civility and compassion.

So what lesson does Ann pray we take away from her history lesson?If we agree to go through the looking glass with her, we may conclude the following: When right-wing activity goes haywire, it's the liberals' fault.We saw this maneuver with the economic implosion of 2008: a catastrophe clearly caused by Neoliberal economic policy.As far as Ann and her ilk are concerned, the lesson to be taken from the private sector shenanigans was that economic policy just hadn't gone far enough to the right.More deregulation, more financialization, more speculation, more regressive taxation, and more corporate power: THESE are the solutions to our economic problems.

This brazen switch-and-bait was bizarrely effective.The witch-doctor's "medicine" sold like hotcakes…and people imbibed more of the toxin that had caused their woes in the first place.As for those who complained about malfeasance in corporate boardrooms, well, they could be summarily dismissed as "the angry mob".

At one point, Ann notifies us that Thomas Jefferson was a "mob sympathizer".Hmm.Ok.While right-wingers typically bend over backwards trying to adopt Jefferson as one of their own, Coulter openly bashes him.This actually makes sense, since Jefferson was an intellectual—and if there's anything right-wingers despise, it's intellectual elitism.Coulter's contempt for smart people is illustrated by her target audience—an audience that would believe her when she tells them that Thomases Paine and Jefferson were just minions of a mindless mob.Were they great minds who trail-blazed mankind's understanding of democratic principles?Nope.Just two brainy bookworms who weren't right-wing enough.

At another point, Ann notifies us that liberals are characterized by "simplistic, extreme, black-and-white thinking; fear of novelty; inability to follow logical arguments; acceptance of contradictory ideas; being transfixed by images; a religious worship of their leaders; and a blind hatred of their opponents."Ring any bells?It should.It's the textbook definition of the right wing.But in Coulter Land,

groupthink is the province of the bleeding heart liberal.As for blind hatred for those with whom one disagrees, which right-wing pundit comes to mind first?(There are many from whom to choose.Ann Coulter is one of them.)

Ann thus takes the signature traits of the far-right, and assigns them the moniker, “liberalism”.The only item on this list of traits that might apply to some liberals is “acceptance of contradictory ideas”, which—the case can be made—applies to hard relativists.This is, indeed, a problem with relativism—just as it is with right-wing doublespeak.But what will Ann say next?That liberals are simply serving corporate power (a claim made by Glenn Beck)?That liberals don’t value human life (a claim made by Michelle Bachmann)?That liberals aren’t looking out for the working class (a claim made by Paul Ryan)?One must wonder: How far can projection go before it morphs into boarderline personality disorder?

For Ann’s fans, reading her prose is like a shot of Novocain for cognitive dissonance.Demonic provides an ample dosage.Yet for those of us who know better, reading her text is like watching someone flagellate themselves with their own nescience.I’ve witnessed the same woebegone self-flagellation by such benighted charlatans as Dinesh D’Souza and Glenn Beck.They seem to literally get off on parading their colossal ignorance.(It’s like an exhibitionist…except they’re flaunting their well-endowed stupidity.)Whether this is masochism or sadism is difficult to ascertain; but—whatever it is—Ann Coulter is addicted.

What is the problem with liberalism, then?Groupthink.This may seem to be a potent indictment…until one realizes that the very essence of liberalism (many would say, it’s Achilles Heal) is that it’s not sufficiently unified.As they say, trying to herd liberals is like trying to herd cats.Ann may be surprised to have it brought to her attention that the problem with Progressives especially is that the can’t manage to become galvanized enough.Why not?They don’t even have a political party to call home.

Obama-mania in 2008 notwithstanding, liberals are notoriously horrible at mobilizing people en masse, keeping them in line, and rallying crowds…as such behavior is antithetical to their modus operandi.Meanwhile, such an m.o. is the very essence of the far right.The notoriously angry Tea Party is an obvious example, but there are many others.

There can be little doubt that the Democratic Party is a horribly flawed party—but not for the reasons Ann stipulates.Where its policy defects exist, they exist because the party is too far to the right.Unlike the G.O.P., it has no fire in its belly.So to even insinuate that the Democrats' biggest problem is that they're somehow too aggressive is rather comic.(If only!)For decades, the DP has mastered the art of caving in to pressure and intimidation from the right.The last Democrat to play hardball was LBJ, and he was himself a very flawed man.(His greatest blunder was getting involved in Vietnam—which resulted from his tragic Cold Warrior proclivities.)Since Johnson, the DP has had almost no backbone—rendering it Republican-Lite.For a Republican to accuse Democrats of being overly belligerent is laughable.

We Progressives have often been a timid bunch.Our aversion to cult activity seems to be built into our bones.Soft-peddling and capitulation run in our blood.Our modus operandi is fundamentally antithetical to going along with the crowd or threatening to put our boot on the neck of our political opponents.We are not known for conforming to ambient norms and marching in lockstep.Doctrinal discipline is not our cup of tea.Meanwhile, going along with the crowd and conforming to ambient norms is the very definition of right-wing activity.Its very essence is strict adherence to anointed doctrine.Want to study crowd theory, Ann, go to a G.O.P. event.It would make Eric Hoffer's jaw drop.

Right-wing policy only garners support to the degree that credulous people allow themselves to be fired up and corralled by impresarios like Ann Coulter.Ann's Great Terror is her own terror of the fact that things like Paris's "Committee of Public Safety"—replete with a self-aggrandizing, super-patriotic oligarchy—result when Republican talking points are taken to their logical conclusion.Right-wing policy, after all, entails highly-concentrated power in the hands of a privileged few and the marginalization of subalterns.Could there possibly be a better description of the Jacobins?

Progressives don't establish loyalty tribunals and committees to root out dissidence; they become community organizers and humanitarian activists.Want to see how militant the typical liberal is?Then join the Peace Corps, Human Rights Watch, or a conversation at Bard College.Liberals are found in P-town art houses and the East Village coffee shops.Right-wingers are found at NRA conventions, in corporate boardrooms, and in militias.Want to observe militancy, don't hang out with liberals, visit the Heritage Foundation.

Alas, it's the Weather Underground and the Jacobins that Ann holds up as prototypes for liberalism.According to this logic, the 18th century Reign of Terror in France was an exemplar of the kind of activity one finds should one attend, say, a Gay Pride parade or a colloquium on environmentalism.(The only aggression I've witnessed when lots of liberals commune is aggressive hugging.)According to Miss Coulter, it was "the mob" that was responsible for be-headings in Paris over 220 years ago, so that's why liberal policy is wrong-headed now, here in the U.S.She may have broken the world record for largest non sequitur ever attempted.

But are Progressives the modern-day analogue of the Jacobins?The self-appointed oligarchs in Paris established "The Committee of General Security" to prosecute subversives, not programs to help the disenfranchised.They demanded strict compliance; they didn't strive to empower "deviant" minority groups.So naturally, the question arises: Which end of the spectrum did this represent?Who aims to prosecute "un-approved" behavior today?(Hint: not the gays in Chelsea.)

"Liberals" don't demand compliance with a sanctified doctrine.Heck, their very existence—their source of empowerment—is predicated on celebrating diversity and individuality.What would have the Committee On Public Safety thought of that?The Jacobins demanded conformity to prescribed norms.Who do we find making such demands today?(Hint: not the hipsters in Williamsburg.)

If Robespierre pushed his agenda today, would he attend right-wing functions or liberal functions?Is it possible for the answer to be more obvious?Even Code Pink, the most "militant" of liberal rabble-rousers, are more comparable to the civil rights demonstrators and anti-war protestors of the 60's (i.e. peace-mongering hippies) than Robespierre's "General Police Bureau".

"But what about the Weather Underground and the Black Panthers?!" protests Miss Coulter.She thereby fixates on well-known anomalies within "The New Left", then maps each anomaly to a wholesale generalization about "liberals".The fact that she can fit such anecdotes into just a few chapters is quite telling.If one were to catalogue the blatant examples of right-wing militancy, it would require not just volumes upon volumes, but row upon row of bookcases that would fill a warehouse.

The fact of the matter is, we all covet some a kind of collective identity: to be part of a community and engage in a shared experience.Everyone seeks peer acceptance in one form or another.We all tend to find solidarity with a group that resonates with us (for cosmopolitans and humanists, the group is humanity itself).We engage in

collective action (e.g. organized labor) so that otherwise powerless individuals can stand up to systems of consolidated power.We partake in activities that foster camaraderie.We pursue communal endeavors via a shared purpose.To dismiss all of this as “mob activity” is naïve—even dangerous.

Humans are social creatures, and often need to do things together, especially if it means bucking “the powers that be” in order to avoid exploitation / subjugation.Communal solidarity doesn’t necessarily translate to groupthink and violent mobs.Civic-mindedness and tribalism are two very different things.Ann Coulter seems not to comprehend the meaning of EITHER, so she is unable to grasp the fundamental difference between them.That’s why neither term has ever appeared in anything she’s ever written.

Progressivism is largely about human solidarity, which entails giving a shit about other people—all other people, not just certain other people.This means caring about the well-being of one’s fellow man qua fellow man…and recognizing when communal participation makes sense: “when we’re all in this together”.Does this sound like the approach of either the G.O.P. or the Jacobins?

One need not compromise one’s personal autonomy in order to partake in pro-social collective activity.What someone like Ann Coulter may tend to castigate as “groupthink”, I would call civic-mindedness, common decency, or just a healthy sense of community.What is dismissed by Ann as “mobs” is sometimes just principled collective action—something that need not be militant to be effective.

The Great Terror involved violent mobs, but the lessen Coulter gleans from this is problematic.Here we encounter another mistake with Ann’s faux history.She conflates a system of highly-concentrated, top-down power with the activity of crowds.It wasn’t the “mob” per se that was the problem with the Great Terror, it was the machinations of a handful of self-important, uber-paranoid, manipulative, power-hungry oligarchs who pursued self-aggrandizement by drumming up mass hysteria.Sound familiar?

The Reign of Terror in Paris was the result of something relatively straight-forward: Doing precisely what the right wing tries to do today, then taking it to the nth degree.The Koch brothers don’t use guillotines, they use corporate propaganda: one kills people, the other brainwashes them.Admittedly, the latter isn’t as horrible as the former.In that sense, the right wing seems to be improving.But the American

Enterprise Institute or American For Prosperity are just the kind of thing French plutocrats would have established: propaganda mechanisms to get the rabble to go along with the anointed oligarchs.

One can imagine if Robespierre had been successful and continued his reign: France circa 1800 would have essentially turned into 1930's Germany.That, dear Ann, is not liberalism…unless you believe Jonah Goldberg's ramblings.(Note to Ann's readers: Progressives don't try to start their own religion—unless you believe the thesis of her last book, Godless.Rather, Progressives tend to want religion out of their hair.So starting a new religion is not at the top of their to-do list.)Alas, Coulter concludes: "If Democrats knew who he was, they'd admire Robespierre."Really, Ann?Is that your explanation for Tony Judt?

At the end of the day, we find that there are two basic kinds of political stances one can take: One that values highly-concentrated power and one that values human life—all human life, even that of poor people.(The former only seems to value "life" when it's that of a zygote or an affluent, white person.)

In the bizarre-o-world that Ann creates for the reader, those who are advocating for civil rights and for empowering the disenfranchised are DEMONIC…while militarists, corporatists and Christian theocrats here in the U.S. are the shining embodiment of democracy.Welcome to Coulter Land…land of Liberal Fascists (Goldberg), Statists (Levin), socialists (insert name of Republican here), and—gasp!—secular humanists.Booga-booga.In this world, Robespierre was a progenitor of liberalism and Pol Pot an exemplar of Progressive ideals.It's also a world where the Koch brothers are freedom-fighters and trickle-down economics happens.Just close your eyes and believe.You've just entered the Twilight Zone that Republicans call home.

The most amazing part of the book is the final sentence.After devoting 295 pages to accusing the "Democrats" (i.e. anyone not vociferously Republican) of being a violent mob, Miss Coulter concludes with the following lesson—and implied recommendation: "The mob can only be smashed."

They are violent, so we should smash them.That's Ann Coulter's last word.That's how the book ends.Such a conclusion would be remarkable even for a schizophrenic.For Ann, it's par for the course: Disproving her thesis with the last statement in the book.Oops.

There isn’t an undergraduate majoring in sociology, political science, or modern European history on the planet who wouldn’t look at Coulter’s thesis, and respond with a dumbfounded, “WHAT?She can’t be serious.”Well, yes: She is serious.Perhaps she’s only serious insofar as she anticipates that Demonic will be purchased by enough credulous followers to earn her a boatload of money.“Thanks, fans!”She can now use the proceeds to retire with a little more luxury.Maybe she’ll attend to her physical and mental anorexia.Maybe she’ll finally take her ill-gotten millions and retire now.

Pop Quiz Based On Stereotypes:

1. The Jacobin regime was based on principles similar to A) Hippies sitting in a circle, singing John Lennon’s “Imagine” or B) The evangelical Christian Neocons in the G. W. Bush administration?
2. Did the Jacobin regime concern itself with A) How to provide poor people with healthcare or B) How to consolidate the power of a few men who were well-positioned within the system?
3. The “Revolutionary Tribunal” was an authoritarian institution employing top-down command in an effort to dominate the rabble.Was this more like the Chamber of Commerce or a group of bohemians at a book club meeting formulating ways to help the downtrodden?
4. The Club For Growth is concerned with devising ways to make highly-concentrated power even more highly concentrated.Liberals make Sierra Club donations when they’re not taking humanities classes.Which group is closer to modern-day Jacobins?
5. Which was more reminiscent of the Jacobins, labor union demonstrators or Pinkertons?(Hint 1: Which ones had the weapons?Hint 2: Which ones were NOT advocating for the interests of the little guy?)
6. Who resembled Robespierre more: Joseph McCarthy or Eugene McCarthy?

A SURVEY OF DEMONIC’S SOURCES:

Demonic was inspired by Ann’s reading of Gustav Le Bon’s 1896 The Crowd, so Le Bon’s description of “mobs” serves as the backbone of her entire book.Meanwhile, she cites as her most influential personal sources three men: Professor Jeremy Rabkin of Cornell (who had Ann in his class at one point, but doesn’t seem to have either contributed to or endorsed this book), an Australian politician named Stan Evans, and a man named Allan Ryskind.Ann also thanks two right-wing libertarians

for their help: a lawyer named Bill Otis and former Scalia clerk (and founding member of the Federalist Society) Gary Lawson.So it’s no secret how the theme of the book was molded.

The end notes of Demonic are quite revealing.As is standard practice for Miss Coulter, 95% of the references were carefully selected anecdotes from media outlets.When she wants to defend her points, her go-to sources are the National Review and The Weekly Standard.(Surprise.)When she wants to extract isolated nuggets of liberal-ness, her new favorite is Rachel Maddow, a woman with double Ann’s IQ, orders of magnitude more knowledge, and epically superior ideals.Alas, Ann’s snark is relentless, so her zingers keep her audience cheering.

Ann knows how to sift through transcripts for dirt, yet one must wonder: Does she ever actually read books?Well, apparently, she sifts through some of those as well.Fundamentalist Christian, M. Scott Peck, penned a fanatical religious polemic, People Of The Lie…so Ann couldn’t resist using that to make some key points.(I cringe at the prospect of what her bookshelf at home may look like.)The infamous right-wing diatribe, The Black Book Of Communism, is also referenced, as needed, as if it were an esteemed source of historical scholarship.And, to top it off, Ann uses the militant—if comic—anti-intellectual screed by Thomas Sowell, Intellectuals & Society.Miss Coulter was obviously grasping at straws.We can only speculate what else is on her nightstand.

Peculiarly, at one point Ann cites a sentence in Andrew Hacker’s Two Nations in an attempt to vilify black men.At another point, she quoted Leslie Harris’s In the Shadow of Slavery, then imports her own vulgar message to it: Since some of the people in the pre-civil-rights-era who were involved in the KKK and lynchings were “Southern Democrats” (i.e. proto-Republicans), we should conclude that contemporary Democrats belong to the same legacy of bigotry.Coulter would have made Martin Luther King Jr. so proud.

Ann also cites a book called Saddam’s Secrets by a man named Georges Sada: one of a slew of alarmist pulp published by Neocon apologists in the years following the 2003 invasion of Iraq.Presumably, she does this just to scratch that foreign policy itch in a book otherwise devoted to domestic politics.(Right-wingers still can’t get over the fact that, yes, the U.S. went into Iraq based on a flagrant lie.)

Lastly, Miss Coulter opted to cite Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion & Politics in Europe by Michael Burleigh.(Finally, a reputable scholar!)However, it is unclear what information—if any—Ann may have gleaned from this worthwhile book.After resorting to the likes of Thomas Sowell for ammunition, simply noting a paragraph from a legitimate book isn't quite enough to redeem her.Even an astrologer cites some bona fide astronomy sometimes—just to appear remotely credible.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION:

For commentary on the French Revolution, a book called The Blood Revolution (by Erik Durschmied) was Ann's primary source—not the most esteemed work on the subject.To her credit, Ann seems to have devoted at least a little time to perusing The Days of the French Revolution by Chris Hibbert—a slightly biased yet respectable work on the subject.

She also cited from Marie Antoinette: The Portrait of An Average Woman by Stefan Zweig, The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution by Michael Kennedy,The Legacy of the French Revolution (ed. Ralph Hancock), The French Revolution As Told By Contemporaries (ed. E.L. Higgins), The Tribunal of the Terror by G. Lenotre, Reflections On the Revolution in France by monarchist Edmund Burke (!), and a few unpublished things she found on the web.That's it: A few passing references to passages from these eight books.

As far as I can ascertain, only in the first case (Durschmied) did Miss Coulter even try to apply the overarching insights offered by the work.Yet even here, she failed, as Durschmied's point seems to have been that many revolutions—even with initially noble causes—go bad due to con men, opportunists, and fanatics of various kinds capitalizing on the turbulence and seizing power: from Robespierre to Hitler to Ayatollah Khomeini (all three, right-wingers).

It seems that instead of gleaning any erudition from these books, she just went on a cherry-picking expedition.Employing this method, one could extract isolated snippets from almost any book in order to make a case for that book's anti-thesis.It's a fun game, if you have a lot of time to kill…or Random House is offering you lots of money to do it.

Unsurprisingly, only in a couple places did Ann cite Simon Schama's Citizens, the pre-eminent book on the French Revolution.Even then, she used it for fleeting references, not for the fundamental insights it offers.In other words, Miss Coulter devoted about as much research to her book as would an average high school

student writing a paper for history class.(The Oxford History of the French Revolution would also be a crucial work to reference if one is going to write a book about the French Revolution—but that one's harder to cherry-pick.)

In order to make her narrative seem to have an iota of credence, it was necessary for Ann to completely disregard the role that Thomas Paine played in supporting the initial protest against the French monarchy.An icon of Progressivism, Paine was—of course—soon branded a traitor (and imprisoned) for sticking with the Rights of Man that had inspired the overthrow of the aristocracy in the first place.This crucial point is omitted.*

The explanation for this category transition (from champion of the cause to enemy of the cause) must be completely ignored in order to sustain Coulter's theme that the Reign of Terror was guided by (rather than a betrayal of) Paine's humanist principles.In reality, the Revolution started out as a Progressive cause (based on the principles articulated by Paine), yet then mutated into the grotesque RIGHT-wing movement that was antithetical to what Paine represented.Ergo his imprisonment and near-beheading by those who represented the exact opposite of what he advocated.

Ann's approach to conducting her polemical tirade seems to be quite simple: Step 1: Ignore inconvenient facts.Step 2: Make up your own facts to take their place.Step 3: Repeat steps 1 and 2 ad nauseum.Step 4: Insert snarky comments, and declare victory.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION:

So what did Ann use as sources for her depiction of the American Revolution?A single work dominated her screed: Paul Revere's Ride by David Fischer.You read that correctly: a hyper-romanticized caricature of Paul Revere was her primary source for understanding the Revolutionary War.Thomas Paine's Common Sense?Nope.That would have thrown a gigantic wrench into her argument. How about Paine's The Rights of Man?Nope, that reflected the abiding progressive sentiment following the American Revolution—a sentiment that was jettisoned in Paris following the 1789 coup.She certainly doesn't want that pointed out.How about The Age of Reason?No way.That actually explains why institutionalized dogmatism (like that found in both the Reign of Terror and the G.O.P.) is a bad thing—thus decimating Ann's narrative.

In fact, none of the following landmark works on the topic were used as references: The Glorious Cause by Robert Middlekauf; 1776 by David McCullough; Revolutionaries by Jack Rakove; The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution by Bernard Bailyn; Empire of Liberty, The Radicalism of the American Revolution, or The Creation of the American Republic by Gordon Wood; or American Creation by Joseph Ellis.This is like discussing perspectives on evolutionary theory without mentioning the work of John Maynard Smith…or perspectives on early sci fi without mentioning Isaac Asimov…or perspectives on complexity theory without mentioning Stuart Kauffman.To not reference such resources when discussing each topic is to demonstrate that one likely doesn't know what the heck one is talking about.

A single passing reference to George Washington from Joseph Ellis's biography His Excellency was used…as well as a single passing reference to John Adams from David McCullough's biography, John Adams.Each fleeting citation was inconsequential to her argument.In addition, Miss Coulter cited a few excerpts from the Federalist Papers—again, with no implications for her thesis.That's it.

Most comically of all, in her evaluation of the American Revolution, there was no discussion of Thomas Paine.*Trying to understand the American Revolution without Thomas Paine is like trying to understand the beginning of evolutionary theory without Charles Darwin, ancient Greek philosophy without Plato, or Relativity Theory without Einstein.The mere fact of NOT discussing Paine reveals that Ann Coulter hasn't the faintest clue what the most salient points of her subject-matter really are.

So there you have it: An absurdly distorted depiction of the French Revolution is contrasted with a laughably deficient depiction of the American Revolution in order to support a completely preposterous thesis about the modern-day Democratic Party…and by implication: "liberals".

* In six places, there are passing references to Paine, but no consequential statement about him.He is mentioned in trivial ways on pages 108, 112, 114, 135, 139, and 140.There is one place that Coulter actually mentions him in more than an inconsequential way:On page 145 there are two sentences that reveal a horrible misreading of Paine.

Note to Ann: If there was any human being in recorded history that represented the antithesis of groupthink and crowd behavior, Thomas Paine would be at the top of the list.This is why he was so revered by Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, George Washington, and almost every great thinker since.It is virtually impossible to be

more the embodi&nbment of thinking-for-oneself (and not just following the crowd) than was Paine. (Coulter is forced to ignore this, because acknowledging Paine would entail the implosion of her thesis, as Paine was the quintessence of Progressivism.)

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT:

How about Miss Coulter's discussion of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's?She boils the entire movement down to one thing: the Weather Underground.Consequently, her primary source for capturing the role of liberal reform during that era was Family Circle by former Weather Underground member, Susan Braudy.The progress made during that fateful decade is thus encapsulated by anecdotes about Weather Underground transgressions.This is, of course, absurd—but it's the only way Ann can make her preposterous narrative seem marginally coherent.

Elsewhere, Ann also cited Thai Jones' scandal-oriented memoir, A Radical Line, for additional dirt on the Weather Underground.Meanwhile, to get some dirt on the Black Panthers, Ann extracted a couple carefully selected passages from David Hilliard's This Side of Glory.No kidding: this accounts for Ann Coulter's scope of comprehension of the civil rights era.

Aside from an essay by Nathan Glazer, four other books are cited in the notes: Conrad Black's laudatory book on Nixon, The Invincible Quest; an obscure book on reconstruction called White Savage by Lawrence Jacob Friedman; Thomas Sowell's ridiculous book, Black Rednecks & White Racists; and—unsurprisingly—Paul Johnson's right-wing diatribe, Modern Times.Go figure.

So there we have it: Seven carefully-selected books were used to help the reader completely miss the point of the civil rights movement.Demonic rests on the assumption that the process to advance civil rights during the 60's can be distilled by scandalous anecdotes about the Weather Underground and the Black Panthers.But why such brazen obfuscation?Because the civil rights movement was a PROGRESSIVE movement—a movement that had to struggle against entrenched right-wing forces (including, yes, right-wingers who at the time operated under the rubric, "Southern Democrats").Alas, such acknowledgement would completely undermine the thesis of Coulter's entire book.Consequently, the whole Civil Rights era must be reduced to the exploits of a few deviant radicals.

But take heart, dear reader: There were two works of genuine scholarship that were briefly cited in that chapter on the 60’s: Robert Caro’s The Years of LBJ and Taylor Branch’s Parting the Waters.Nevertheless, the tangential references to these works ignored any over-arching insights that an honest reading would have yielded.Her obscene encapsulation of the 60’s is testament to the capacity for homo sapiens to engage in stupendous feats of cognitive dissonance.

Ann Coulter is a joke.That her fans are under the impression that she should be taken seriously is no laughing matter.