

Jason Byassee's Christmas list

by [Jason Byassee](#) in the [December 10, 2014](#) issue

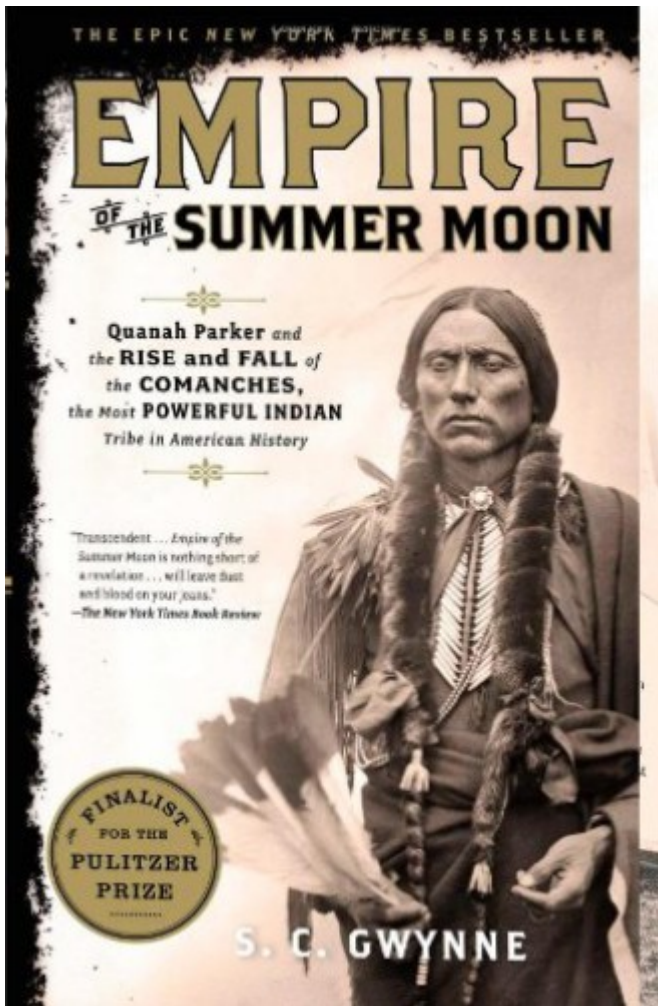
## In Review



### **Jesus: A Pilgrimage**

James Martin, SJ

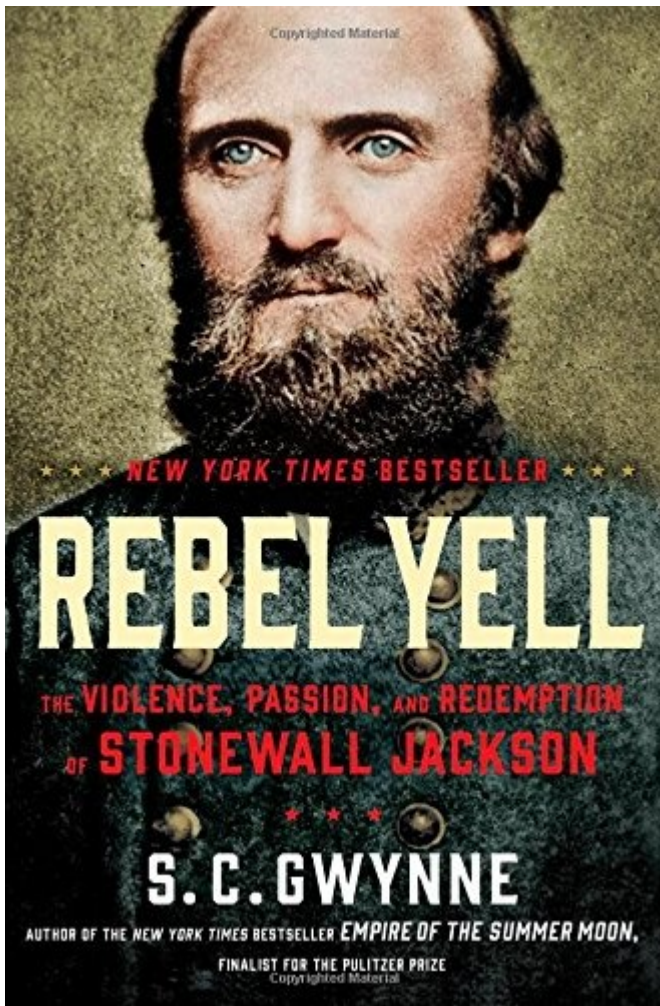
HarperOne



## Empire of the Summer Moon

by S. C. Gwynne

Scribner



## Rebel Yell

by S. C. Gwynne

Scribner

# Passenger

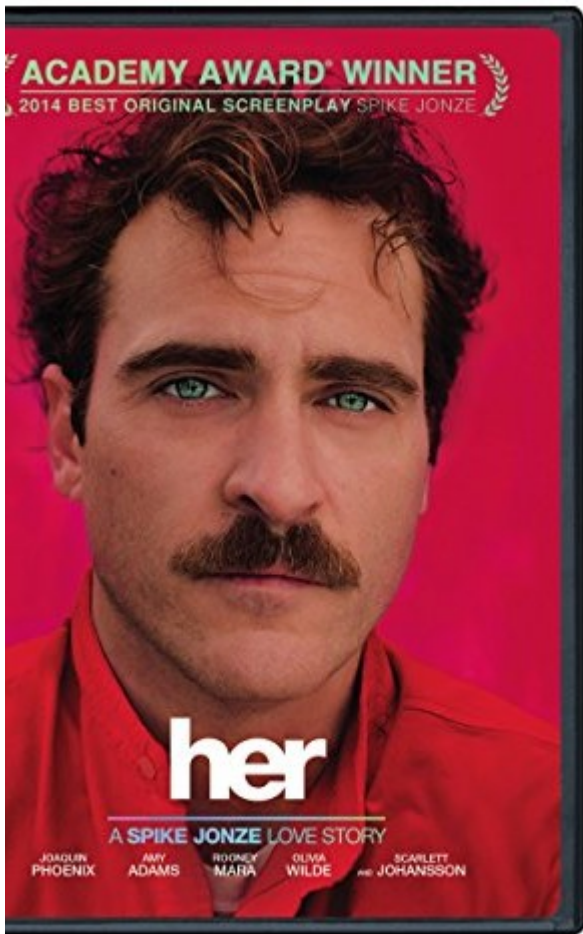
## Whispers



I

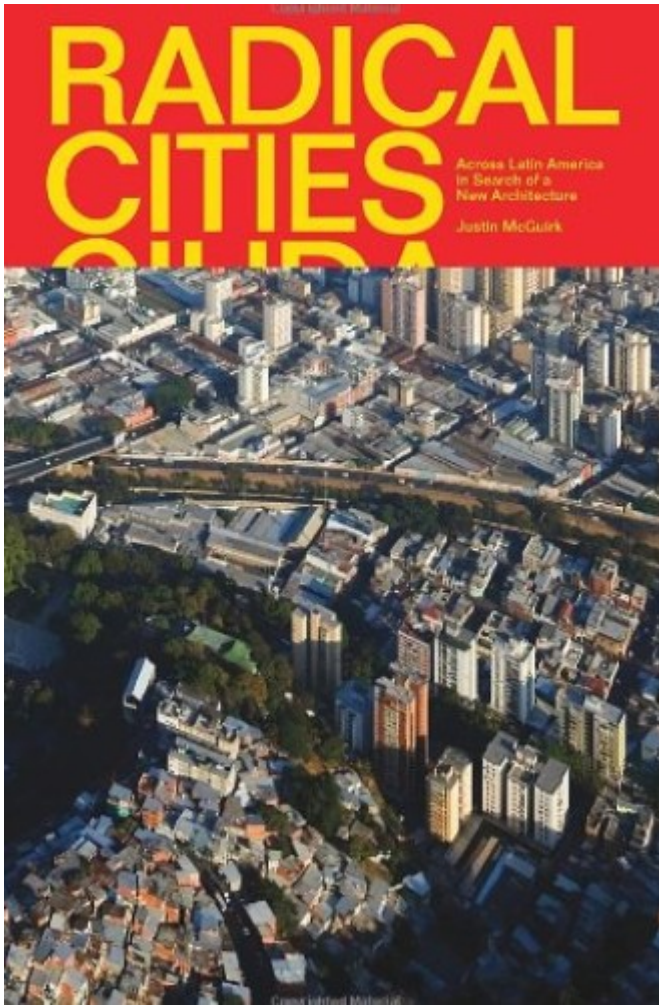
## Whispers

by Passenger  
Netzwerk



## Her

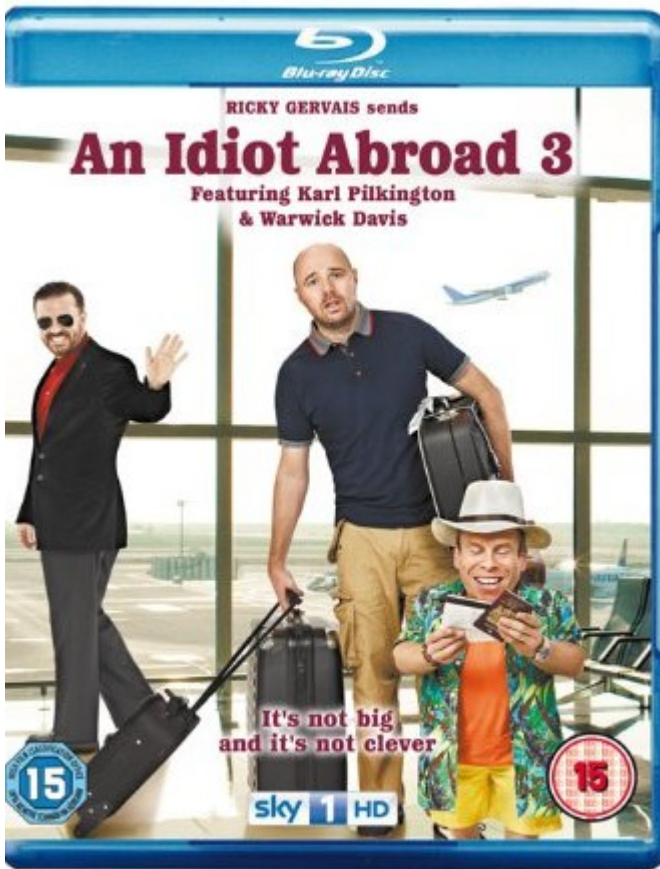
Warner Home Video



## **Radical Cities**

by Justin McGuirk

Verso



## An Idiot Abroad

Ais

### **To give**

How did Father Martin hock this book to Harper? "I want to write a commentary with my personal take on the gospels after you send me to Israel. It'll be nearly 600 pages." I bought *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* in order to prepare for my own upcoming pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I intended to skip most of those pages but became engrossed. Martin reads scripture with joy, surprise, humility, and deep insight. The printing of the biblical passage after each meditation made me wonder if we preachers should read the scripture after talking about it.

S. C. Gwynne made professional historians crazy mad (or maybe just crazy jealous) with his book *Empire of the Summer Moon*. Now he's written *Rebel Yell: The Violence, Passion, and Redemption of Stonewall Jackson*. I live in a part of the

country where the war isn't really over (a parishioner claims to have the rifle that fired the first shot in Stoneman's Raid at the end of the war). Our recent politics show that matters of violence, redemption, and what it means to be a white Southerner are as contentious as ever.

A friend in campus ministry describes Passenger's music as the best possible portrayal of life without the gospel. The music in the album *Whispers* is wise, angry, tender, and ferocious. Michael Rosenberg has a strange voice that won't leave your head, and does something really well that the church does really poorly: he laments. The single "Bullets" leaves me sympathetic to the sort of person I usually spend my time avoiding.

### ***To receive***

I keep hearing that *Her*, with Scarlett Johansson's voice as an artificial intelligence operating system and Joaquin Phoenix falling for her, is difficult viewing but that the film won't leave you alone after you've seen it. Our lives are filtered through our devices and so dependent on them that this story strikes me as plausible.

In *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture*, Justin McGuirk explores innovative urban architecture throughout Latin America, from an athletic facility that allows barrio kids to play soccer in the rainy season to a gun buy-back program in Bogotá that gives donors a spoon from the previous year's scrap, each with the inscription, "I was a gun."

Two things I can't get enough of: British humor and travel. They combine in *An Idiot Abroad*, when comedian/actor Ricky Gervais tells writer/actor Karl Pilkington what he should do while he's visiting the Seven Wonders of the World. I can't believe I'm suggesting a reality show, but the Brits do everything smarter and funnier, right?

*This article was edited for clarification on December 10, 2014.*