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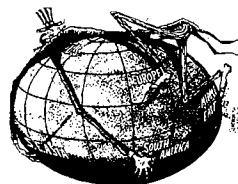
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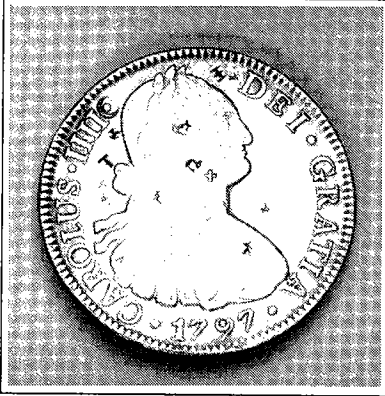
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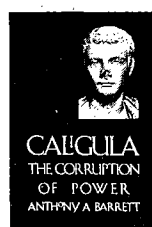
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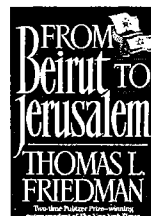
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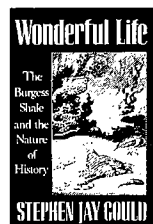
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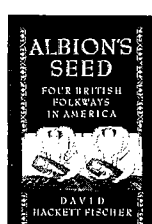
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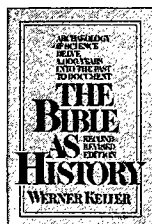
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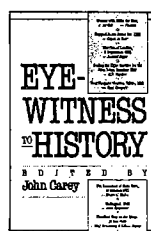
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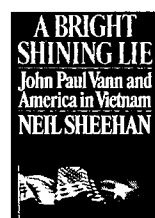
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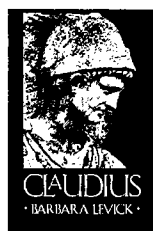
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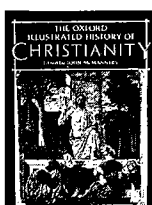
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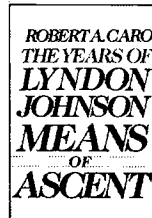
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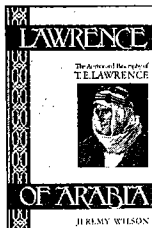
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Editor's Comment

As recent events in the Middle East have shown, the end of the Cold War has not meant the end of history. Indeed, to a nation now heavily committed to checking a tyrant's ambitions, talk about the end of history sounds as obsolete as talk about the peace dividend. America's inordinately large role in the current crisis may have been necessary, but it should not encourage Americans or others to think of the United States as the lone enforcer of international law. If there is truly a law among nations—a law of nations—then it must be upheld by all states that claim to be part of the global community. This is not only a matter of sound principle. It is a matter of equity. Partly because of its costly investments in the Cold War struggle, the United States now confronts formidable problems within its own house. Some scholars have concluded that these problems—including a huge national debt, a decaying infrastructure, and educational decline—have edged the country into irremediable decline. Others argue that America can continue to prosper. The Woodrow Wilson Center has played host to several leading participants in this debate. Three of them air their views in this issue. The debate takes up on page 67.

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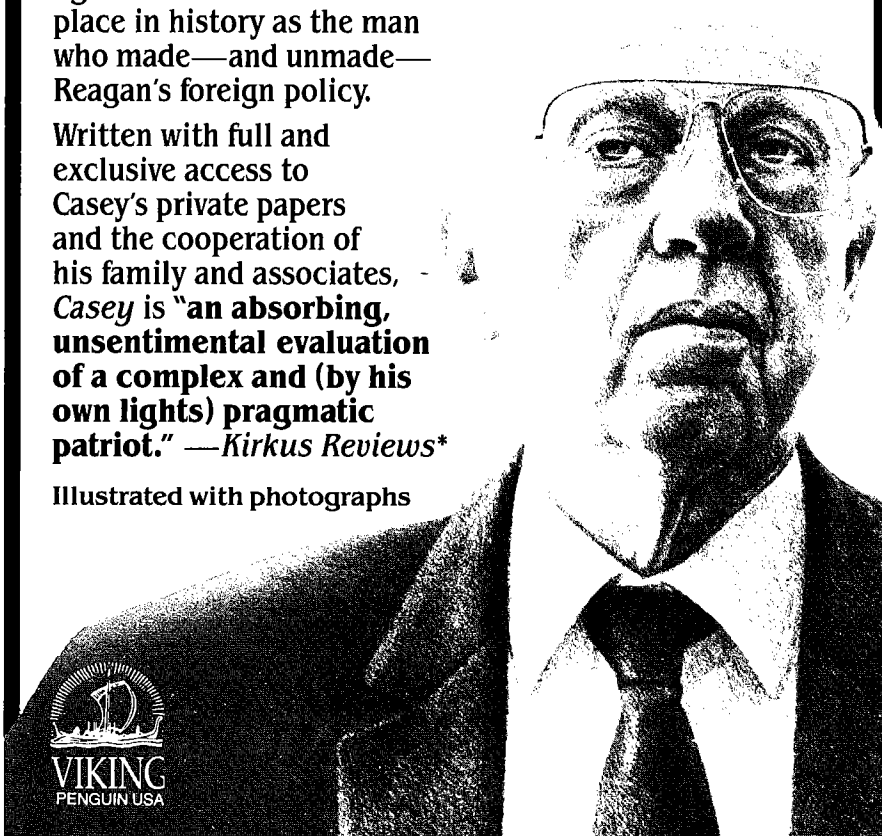
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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Does Congress Need to Be Fixed?

"The Congressional Brainwashing Machine" by James L. Payne, "The Permanent Democratic Congress" by Norman Ornstein, and "Public Opinion and the 'Congress Problem'" by Everett Carl Ladd, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1990), 1112 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Who is to blame for Washington's long deadlock over the federal budget deficit and other national issues? Congress has emerged as the favorite culprit of many critics. They tend to think that only structural changes—limitations on congressional terms, campaign finance reform, line-item veto authority for the president—will get the federal government moving again.

Payne, director of Lytton Research & Analysis, is one of those critics. Contrary to much popular supposition, congressmen, he finds, do not become big spenders because they are corrupt or cynical. Rather, in the inbred political world of Washington, virtually nobody tells them to tighten the purse strings. Payne surveyed 1,060 witnesses who testified at 14 congressional hearings dealing with spending programs: Only seven people opposed the spending. Which is hardly surprising considering that 53 percent of the witnesses were federal bureaucrats and congressmen and 10 percent were state or local officials.

Payne regards such practices as part of a "culture of spending" that eventually ensnares most congressmen. One recent study, for example, shows that new congressmen with no prior government experience are more likely to oppose spending programs than are their elders. But after 12 years in office they become very generous with the taxpayers' money. Re-election pressures are not responsible, Payne says. Retiring congressmen do not

suddenly become tightwads. "Brainwashing produces genuine attitude changes," he writes. He believes that only a six term limitation on congressional service will fix the problem.

But Ornstein notes that Republicans have lived to regret their last experiment with fixed terms—the 22nd amendment of 1951, which made Ronald Reagan a lame duck for his entire second term. Moreover, says the American Enterprise Institute researcher, such a limitation would be superfluous. The high (98 percent) reelection rate of congressional incumbents has obscured steady turnover due to retirement and other causes; 55 percent of current members of the House of Representatives were sworn in during the 1980s.

Ornstein also gives short shrift to GOP claims that the advantages of incumbency are responsible for a "permanent Democratic Congress." Even in elections with no Democratic incumbent, Republicans run poorly. Since 1954, they have won only 77 open House seats vacated by Democrats, while Democrats have won 101 open Republican seats. The real problem, Ornstein says, is that the GOP has failed to recruit good candidates. If it wants to win control of Congress, he says, it should plan to do so the old fashioned way—by earning it.

Polls show that Americans actually are quite content with the current "divided" government, with a Republican executive and a Democratic legislature. Ladd, of the

University of Connecticut, argues that this reflects an ambivalence about activist government. The public holds Congress in very low esteem, and a solid majority fa-

vors limits on congressional terms. Americans think that "Congress is a problem," Ladd says, "but they don't know why, or where to turn for answers."

A Kind Word For Benedict Arnold

"Why Benedict Arnold Did It" by Willard Sterne Randall, in *American Heritage* (Sept.-Oct. 1990), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

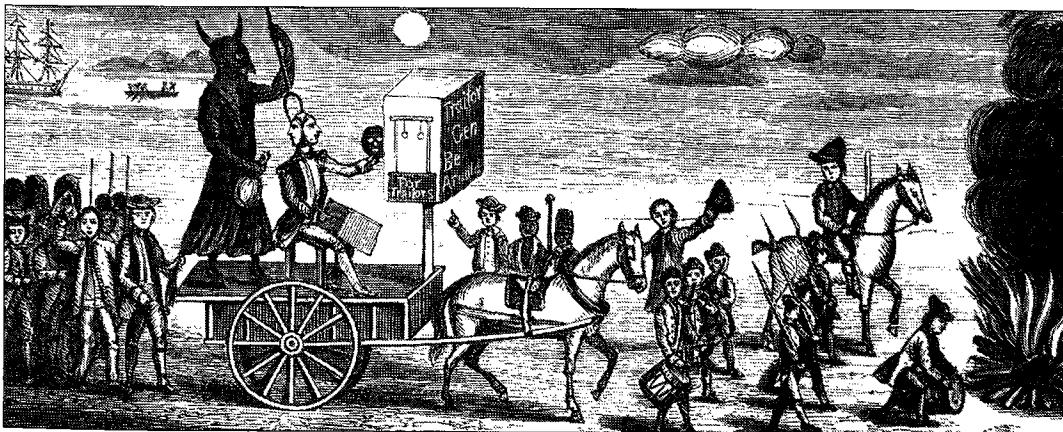
In grade school, every child learns about the treacherous Benedict Arnold, who coldly sold out his country for £20,000. But Randall, a historian at the University of Vermont, writes that Arnold's treason can be explained, if not excused, by a "long fuse of bitterness."

Arnold's vanity and brashness made him an outsider throughout his military career. His brilliance as a commander was unquestioned. He led the stunning 1775 raid on the British fort at Ticonderoga, which supplied cannon for the siege of Boston, and he headed the bold but ill-fated American advance on Quebec in 1776. When a British force threatened to sail down Lake Champlain and split the colonies, Arnold built a small fleet and turned it back.

But many of his colleagues resented him. Ethan Allen, leader of Vermont's Green Mountain Boys, was the most persistent enemy. The two men squabbled bitterly at Ticonderoga, and in 1776 the envious Allen tried to get Arnold court-martialed for misconduct and misappropriation of funds at Ticonderoga.

Arnold's rivals would call for his court martial at least three more times, accusing him, among other things, of looting in Canada and lining his pockets as military governor of Philadelphia in 1778. His past as a smuggler in New Haven, Connecticut, did not help his credibility. And because many of his personal records had been burned or lost, Arnold was hard pressed to defend himself. "Now found," Randall writes, the papers include "documents that could have saved Arnold endless trouble and that might even have prevented his treason."

The indignities continued to pile up. Congress repeatedly denied Arnold promotion, refused to reimburse his considerable out-of-pocket expenses, and officially reprimanded him for two trifling offenses he committed as governor. Twice wounded in battle, Arnold complained in a 1779 letter to Washington that he had "become a cripple in the service of my country," and "little expected to meet the ungrateful returns I have received from my countrymen."



A contemporary print suggests the violence of popular revulsion at Benedict Arnold's treason.

That year, Arnold sent word to the British that he wanted to defect. After betraying his men at the American stronghold at West Point, New York, to the enemy, and nearly delivering Washington into British hands, Arnold fled to a British ship waiting on the Hudson River. He remained in the

United States until 1781, leading a series of bloody Loyalist raids in Virginia and Connecticut. He lived out his remaining 20 years in England, Canada, and the West Indies. Arnold died a poor man, Randall writes, but "never ceased to see himself as a hero."

The New Politics Of Reform

"Solving the Riddle of Tax Reform: Party Competition and the Politics of Ideas" by David R. Beam, Timothy J. Conlan, and Margaret T. Wrightson, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1990), 475 Riverside Dr., Ste. 1274, New York, N.Y. 10115-0012.

There used to be only one way to enact radical reforms in Washington: Elect a new president who sweeps into office and rallies Congress to his cause during his figurative first 100 days.

Recently, a second style of reform has emerged. Because of the explosive growth of congressional staffs, think tanks, and other institutions, media-savvy "experts" and "policy entrepreneurs" (including academics and legislative staffers) have gained power. As an example of the new "politics of ideas" that they practice, authors Beam, Conlan, and Wrightson cite the 1986 Tax Reform Act.

In the words of Representative Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, it was "the bill no one wanted." Except tax experts. They were virtually the sole authors of the U.S. Treasury Department's model tax bill of 1984, which became the ideal against which subsequent efforts were measured. They agreed on a few key features. The ideal tax code should be "horizontally equitable" so that people with comparable

incomes would pay comparable taxes; it should not distort investment decisions and it ought to be efficient to administer. But it was their proposal to create only two income-tax rates—along with a sharp nudge from President Ronald Reagan—that caught the attention of Rostenkowski and others.

The public never enthusiastically backed the 1986 reform, which eliminated or curtailed many popular tax breaks. Because it raised corporate taxes by \$120 billion over five years, much of the business community was opposed. But the policy entrepreneurs prevailed.

It was not the first time that they had done so. Environmental protection, welfare reform, and the deregulation of airlines and other industries are also achievements of the "politics of ideas." The authors are somewhat ambivalent about the new politics. On the one hand, it is possible only because of the "fragmentation" of the nation's traditional governing institutions. But it also shows that the system still has some life in it.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

After Anticommunism

"Defining Our National Interest" by Irving Kristol, in *The National Interest* (Fall 1990), 1112 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

As the victors in the Cold War, writes Kristol, a Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Americans "are naturally

inclined to think that our principles have been vindicated. But if one asks what these principles are, one gets a cacophony of re-

Auld Lang Syne

Not everyone is cheering the end of the Cold War. Writing in *International Security* (Summer 1990), John J. Mearsheimer, a University of Chicago political scientist, argues that we may soon miss the East-West rivalry.

There is no doubt that the costs of the Cold War have been substantial. It inflicted oppressive political regimes on the peoples of Eastern Europe It consumed national wealth, by giving rise to large and costly defense establishments in both East and West. It spawned bloody conflicts in the Third World Nevertheless, the net human and economic cost of the Cold War order has been far less than the cost of the European order of 1900-45

The demise of the Cold War order is likely to increase the chances that war and major crises will occur in Europe. Many observers now suggest that a new age of peace is dawning; in fact the opposite is true.

The implications of my analysis are straightforward, if paradoxical. The West has an interest in maintaining peace in Europe. It therefore has an interest in maintaining the Cold War order, and hence has an interest in the continuation of the Cold War confrontation; developments that threaten to end it are dangerous. The Cold War antagonism could be continued at lower levels of East-West tension that have prevailed in the past . . . but a complete end to the Cold War would create more problems than it would solve.

sponses. It isn't that we didn't know what we were doing this past half-century. It's just that we had so many good reasons for doing it."

Since 1917, he writes, U.S. foreign policy has been informed by four principles that now seem about to unravel.

Wilsonian liberal internationalism was based on the utopian notion that nations would subordinate their interests to international law and institutions. After World War II, Washington found it impossible to defend U.S. policy with anything but Wilsonian abstractions about the defense of the "free world." Americans, Kristol says, knew that in fact they were defending U.S. interests. Their tolerance for Wilsonianism ended when Washington justified U.S. intervention in Vietnam with another abstraction, the need to counter "unjust" aggression.

Revised liberal internationalism was a reaction to Vietnam and other new realities—as suggested by the fact that Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Jeanne Kirkpatrick became national heroes by denouncing the United Nations, the great monument of postwar Wilsonianism. It emphasizes America's role as the promoter of democracy abroad, and it remains the dominant motif of U.S. foreign policy. Kristol points out that the United States is the only democracy that takes this view, and he be-

lieves that policies defined in such "moralistic-idealistic terms" are bound to be self-defeating. For example, Washington endured a huge public embarrassment when, for good reason, it refused to recognize the elected government of Lithuania.

Such failures of ideological foreign policy have helped revive *isolationism*. Why, many Americans ask, must we maintain hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops in Europe now that the Soviet threat is rapidly dissipating? A good question, in Kristol's view. But a total U.S. withdrawal from the world is impossible.

That leaves *the national interest* as the only possible guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy. How is it to be defined? Kristol says that it changes as the world—and we—change. The national interest cannot be merely the pursuit of *realpolitik*, because Americans will always insist on a moral component in their foreign policy. The national interest clearly lies in preventing the emergence of a hostile new superpower and in protecting nations that share our basic values. But human rights must be weighed pragmatically. Pursuit of the national interest, Kristol concludes, will leave "plenty of room for failures as well as successes. But both . . . would flow from errors of judgment, not from illusions about the world and the people (including Americans) who inhabit it."

Searching for A Latin Policy

"Latin America and the End of the Cold War" by Jorge Castañeda, in *World Policy Journal* (Summer 1990), 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, and "Rediscovering Latin America" by Abraham F. Lowenthal, in *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1990), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Will the end of the Cold War finally free the United States of its last inhibitions against wholesale military intervention in Latin America? That, apparently, is what some Latin Americans fear.

Castañeda and Lowenthal both cite this minority view to show how low Latin-Americans' trust in the United States has sunk. In fact, they agree, the future is likely to be quite different. What the end of the superpower conflict really means, writes Castañeda, a political scientist at Mexico's National Autonomous University, is that "Washington's accustomed ideological justification for involving itself militarily in Latin American affairs is simply no longer available or credible." But there the two part company.

Last December's U.S. invasion of Panama suggests to Castañeda that Washington may temporarily replace the specter of an "evil (Soviet/communist) empire to the east [with] the evil (drug-producing/immigration-generating) slum to the south." But over the long term, he predicts, Latin America will find itself in the unaccustomed position of worrying about U.S. indifference to its fate, especially as Eastern Europe's appetite for U.S. trade, investment, and (particularly) aid grows.

Lowenthal, a political scientist at the University of Southern California, is more optimistic. At first, he says, the Bush administration seemed happy merely to get Latin America—especially the sticky situations in Nicaragua and El Salvador—off the front pages. But last June, the president delivered a speech that seemed to

promise a new U.S. attitude. He sketched a tantalizing vision of a regional free-trade zone. He also promised \$100 million to promote privatization and other reforms by Latin America's new market-oriented leaders, such as Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico and Fernando Collor de Mello of Brazil. And he made what Lowenthal considers the first step toward a realistic approach to the region's \$400 billion foreign debt by promising to seek legislation in effect forgiving \$7 billion of it.

"The U.S. government now recognizes, after nearly a decade of tacit denial," writes Lowenthal, "that Latin America's economic downturn is the fundamental problem that needs to be addressed." More and more issues are "'intermestic'—based on the international spillover of domestic concerns." When the United States worried only about such matters as obtaining military bases and access to raw materials in Latin America, it could afford to ignore internal conditions. But today's Latin American problems (economic stagnation and poverty, the drug trade, political instability) rapidly become the United States's problems. The renewed U.S. emphasis on trade likewise is bound to put Latin America in the spotlight. During the late 1970s, before the debt crisis, it was the fastest growing market for U.S. exports.

But Lowenthal warns that the ball is now in Latin America's court. If the region's leaders want a true partnership with the United States during the 1990s, they cannot afford to stand around and wait for Washington alone to create it.

Missile Envy

"Third World Ballistic Missiles" by Janne E. Nolan and Albert D. Wheelon, in *Scientific American* (August 1990), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

By now the world is painfully aware of Saddam Hussein's stockpile of ballistic missiles. It is not generally recognized, however, that many other Third World

countries have also built large arsenals.

Nolan, a Fellow at the Brookings Institution, and Wheelon, a former U.S. Central Intelligence Agency analyst, point out that

the number of countries armed with missiles more than doubled during the past decade, to 18. The United States and the Soviet Union began developing ballistic missiles in 1953, and until recently they shared the missile manufacturing monopoly only with France and China. All four became active missile merchants. And now new missile makers are emerging.

The list of Soviet customers is daunting. Libya, Syria, Iran, North Korea, Algeria, Egypt, and Iraq are among those who have obtained the Soviet Scud B. The North Koreans made an enhanced version of the missile, with Chinese help, and now they are peddling it in the world arms market. Iraq also modified the Scud B, doubling its range to 375 miles, and is working on three other missiles based largely on Scud technology, including the three-stage Abid, which was successfully tested last December. Iraq, of course, is also working on nuclear weapons.

In 1972, the United States provided Israel with 160 Lance missiles, which can travel up to 70 miles. In 1988, China sold Saudi Arabia powerful CSS-2 ballistic missiles, putting parts of Europe, the Soviet Union, and much of the Middle East within the Saudi's range. And while the French have so far refused to export ballistic missiles, Argentina used a French-built Exocet cruise missile to sink a British cruiser during the 1982 Falklands War, and an Iraqi Exocet badly damaged a U.S. destroyer five years later, during the Iran-

Iraq War.

Recently, some smaller countries have launched their own missile development programs. Israel's nuclear-tipped Jericho II can fly 900 miles, far enough to reach Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, the Gulf States and parts of the Soviet Union. With a range of 1,500 miles, India's Agni missile, based on French and Soviet technology, can easily reach Pakistan, India's long-time antagonist.

Pakistan's less powerful Haft I missile can destroy a target 62 miles away, and the Haft II, which is under development, reportedly can fly 180 miles. And India and Pakistan are both believed to be capable of manufacturing nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, building on technology from their own space programs, Argentina and Brazil are developing missiles intended primarily for export. Argentina's Condor I has a 60-mile range, while Brazil's forthcoming Avibra has a range of 180 miles. Libya and Iraq are interested in buying it.

Unfortunately, the authors say, it is much too late to put the genie back in the bottle. The U.S. strategy of trying to prevent missile proliferation is obsolete. Rather, they conclude, the major powers must work harder to prevent regional conflicts from erupting into war. And they ought to try to reduce military uncertainty—perhaps by making satellite surveillance data available to all—that might encourage Third World leaders to launch their deadly new weapons.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

A Century of Scandal

"Is Deposit Insurance Necessary? A Historical Perspective" by Charles W. Calomiris, in *The Journal of Economic History* (June 1990), Folsom Library, Rensselaer Polytechnic Inst., Troy, N.Y. 12180-3590.

Greedy bankers, sleepy regulators, and sleazy politicians are the usual villains of America's savings-and-loan debacle. Maybe so, many economists say, but the real root of all evil is far more banal: government deposit insurance.

Such insurance encourages high-risk ventures, especially by banks with little capital left to lose. Calomiris, an economist at Northwestern University, writes that it also allows "unscrupulous, or simply inexperienced, entrepreneurs to enter

banking as a means to finance their risky enterprises." Insured depositors have little incentive to move their money elsewhere; bankers have little reason to crack down on their colleagues.

All of this has been known for more than a century. In 1829, the state of New York created a Safety Fund for its banks; it collapsed only 13 years later under the weight of accumulated bank failures. Vermont and Michigan established similar systems, which suffered the same fate. Indiana, however, established a private co-insurance scheme in 1834. (Iowa and Ohio later set up successful private systems.) Instead of making limited contributions to a state-run fund, all member banks were liable for the losses of any one bank in the system; the banks set up their own regulatory authority. "Unlimited mutual liability provided bankers the incentive to regulate and enforce properly," Calomiris observes. During the panics of 1854-1857, not a single member bank failed, but 69 of the remaining 126 Indiana banks did.

History repeated itself during the early 20th century, when eight states followed the New York example. Banks in these states were smaller but grew faster than those in other states, and they maintained lower capital ratios—both danger signs. During the farm crisis of the 1920s, all

eight deposit insurance systems collapsed.

Calomiris hopes that the lessons of the past won't be forgotten this time. Self-regulation and co-insurance would work as well for banks today as they did in the past. (In fact, today's futures clearing-houses operate successfully in this way.) Washington would need only to regulate the private insurance groups, not thousands of individual banks. But Calomiris does say that it ought to step in to prevent a systemic collapse if more than a few banks in a group fail. For as the Great Depression shows, no insurance scheme will work if the government itself is reckless.



A cartoon suggests that the cost of the nation's savings and loan disaster has reached outer space. The latest estimate: up to \$500 billion.

Fortress Europe?

"Europe 1992: Opportunities and Challenges" by Gary Clyde Hufbauer, in *The Brookings Review* (Summer 1990), 1775 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Judging by the headlines, you would think that Japan is this nation's only major trading partner and competitor. It is easy to forget that the 12 nations of the European Community (EC) purchase a quarter of all U.S. exports, more than any single nation. And nearly half of the \$76 billion that the EC spends in the United States buys high technology products.

While fears of a Fortress Europe have subsided, notes Hufbauer, an economist at Georgetown University, new rules formulated by the EC as it moves toward political and economic integration in 1992 and beyond threaten to erode these valuable

markets. And if that integration is successful, Europe soon could pose as great a challenge to U.S. economic leadership as Japan does now.

The short-term threat to U.S. markets is posed by the formulation of EC policy in five areas: reciprocity, national quotas, technical standards, rules of origin and local content, and government procurement. Some EC protectionist measures are aimed at Japan but hurt the United States. For example, the EC recently revised so-called rules of origin so that manufacturers must actually lay semiconductor circuits on the chip in Europe (rather than

Kids And Capital

A surprising remedy for Americans' notoriously low rate of personal savings is perceived by James McNeal, writing in *American Demographics* (Sept. 1990).

Today, children are viewed by business as independent customers. But just how much clout do children actually have? Almost \$9 billion worth, according to a nationally representative sample of children ages 4 to 12 surveyed in 1989. This figure is up from \$4.7 billion in 1984, an 83 percent gain.

Children's income averaged \$4.42 a week, or \$229.84 a year in 1989. . . . Allowances

have increased from 49 percent to 53 percent of children's total income

The overall saving rate of 30.5 percent is the highest recorded for children in two decades. Between 1968 and 1984, the saving rate was fairly steady, at around 15 percent, so the doubling of the rate in five years is remarkable. It could be that parents are providing children with more money, and children are spending more and saving more. Or children might be learning the virtue of savings. As more parents work, they may be encouraging their children to become more self-reliant by managing money at an earlier age.

just assembling them there) to win a precious "made in the EC" label. Japanese products that don't have at least 60 percent European content are subject to antidumping duties. The result: Computer makers have stopped buying U.S.-made chips for computers sold in Europe; U.S. and Japanese chip-makers are now building factories in Europe rather than the United States. Thus, concludes Hufbauer, the new technical rules "will very likely shift the balance of the world's trade in semiconductors."

In the new world-trade environment, Hufbauer continues, the flag a corporation flies does not necessarily mean much. Thus, the EC seems likely to impose quotas on imports of Japanese cars. Ford's European division is a strong backer of such a measure; the U.S. plants (and workers) of Honda and Nissan are likely victims.

Indeed, says Hufbauer, one of the larger questions raised by European integration is whether certain U.S. policies are outmoded. Do tough U.S. antitrust laws make sense if they merely hamper U.S. corporations, and if corporations are dividing up markets on a global rather than a national scale? Do Depression-era laws restricting the commercial activities and geographical scope of major U.S. banks still make sense now that European banks are operating freely throughout Europe and are growing larger than their U.S. rivals?

Hufbauer says that the United States has already lost its monopoly on leadership in world economic policy. The largest question now is whether Washington will find the wisdom to share power with Tokyo and Brussels, or whether the United States ultimately will be left with none of the marbles.

SOCIETY

Women and Wealth

"The Changing Fortunes of American Families in the 1980s" by Katharine L. Bradbury, in *New England Economic Review* (July-Aug. 1990), Research Library-D, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 600 Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass. 02106.

The poor got poorer and everybody else got richer. There is no longer much question that that is what happened in America during the 1980s. Now the politically

charged question is, why?

One answer is provided by Bradbury, an economist at the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. She begins by making two

points. First, the poor got poorer because of losses they suffered between 1979 and 1984; they actually began gaining ground again in 1985. Second, thanks largely to increases in social security payments, the elderly did spectacularly well during the decade. In 1979, 42 percent of the elderly were in the poorest "quintile" of the population; by 1988, only 30 percent were.

Most of the losses by poor nonelderly families are explained by reductions in the contributions of men to family income. As is well known, more and more families are poor because they lack a male breadwin-

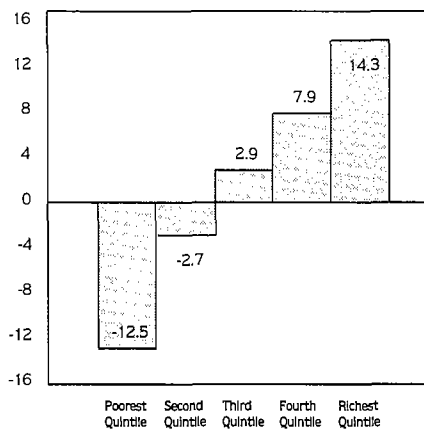
ner; by 1988, 60 percent of all families in the bottom income quintile (average income: \$9,150) were female-headed. But that is not the whole story. Unemployment among men in poor families also grew. Even more alarming, however, is the fact that poor men who did work earned less. Their annual incomes dropped from \$8,600 in 1979 to \$7,550 in 1988. One reason may be the disappearance of many factory jobs during the 1980s.

In fact, men in every quintile but the wealthiest experienced a drop in earnings during the 1980s. But even men in the top group (average 1988 income: \$83,400) increased their earnings by only a relatively meager seven percent.

The gains of the most affluent families were chiefly due to the fact that more women in these families went to work, and that employed women in general brought home bigger paychecks than they had before. In the top quintile, the proportion of women with jobs grew by 11 percent. By 1988, 80 percent of all women from these "wealthy" families were working, more than in any other income class. The earnings of these women also grew appreciably, jumping from \$17,650 in 1979 to \$23,300 in 1988.

In short, Bradbury says, most of the families that got ahead during the 1980s did so because of "increased family work effort." Whether that translates into increased family well-being, however, is another debate entirely.

The Change in Family Incomes, 1979-88
(Nonelderly Families)



The stark portrait of inequality above changes if the elderly are included: Then, only the poorest quintile loses ground (five percent).

Enlightening New England

In 18th-century France, embittered intellectuals who were excluded from the higher circles of the literati stayed in Paris and helped incite a revolution. In America, writes Jaffee, a historian at City College, many of their frustrated counterparts became rural cultural entrepreneurs, "adopting and enlarging for mass consumption the democratic impulses of the American Revolution." They achieved nothing less than a marriage of commerce

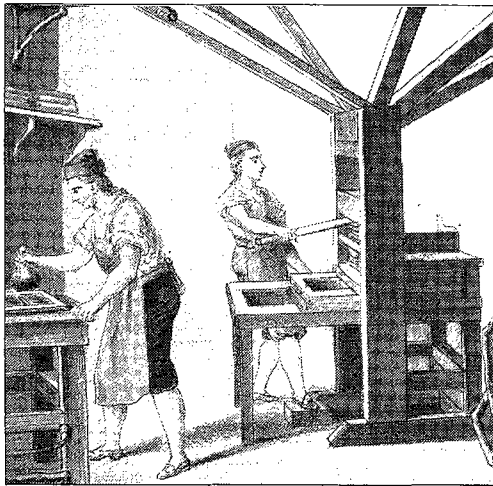
and culture, kindling what Jaffee calls the Village Enlightenment.

One of these new entrepreneurs was Robert Thomas, a Sterling, Massachusetts, farm-boy-turned-merchant who founded the *Farmer's Almanack* in 1793. Thomas went beyond the astrological and weather predictions that were almanac staples, filling his *Almanack* with advice about such matters as child-rearing and farming. "The knowledge he promoted was preeminently

"The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820" by David Jaffee, in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (July 1990), P.O. Box 220, Williamsburg, Va. 23187.

practical," writes Jaffee, "and the practical intent of that knowledge, for heedful and literate young farmers, was economic empowerment in the emerging world of the market."

The new republican popular culture was literally carried to the hinterlands by the likes of Amos Taylor, a former New Hampshire schoolteacher who took to peddling books and pamphlets during the 1780s. Taylor traveled the back roads of the Northeast selling such items as 17th-century English chapbooks, Indian captivity narratives, and even some of his own literary efforts. Taylor thought of his own role in heroic terms. Such "men of an excellent character," he wrote in *The Bookseller's Legacy* (1803), "may do much good in the christian world."



The "business of Enlightenment" was a growth enterprise. In 1760, Massachusetts had only nine print shops; by 1820, it had 120.

Massachusetts shopkeeper Silas Felton was a typical consumer of the new republican culture. In 1802, he formed the Society of Social Enquirers, which met weekly to discuss science, new farm methods, and foreign lands. "Doct. Franklin relates, in his life, that he received a considerable part of his information in this way," Felton

wrote, citing the hero of these men. "Will not every true Republican encourage all sincere social enquirers, who form themselves into societies like this?" From 1790 to 1815, some 500 New England towns created local libraries.

Ultimately, writes Jaffee, cultural entrepreneurs spread the Village Enlightenment throughout New England, and, more peaceably than their counterparts in France, swept away a world of traditions.

Learning by Race

"Multiculturalism" by Diane Ravitch, in *The American Scholar* (Summer 1990), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

America's public schools have long been the stage for conflicts over race, ethnicity, and religion. By the late 1960s, writes Ravitch, a historian of education at Columbia, the curriculum's old evasions (elite political history and the melting pot myth) no longer worked and a new "multicultural" perspective was introduced. In new textbooks, the experiences of blacks, immigrants, Indians, women, and other groups were written into American social and political history. Racism was acknowledged; the melting pot was discarded in favor of a new pluralistic view suggesting that variety is the spice of life. Ravitch sees it as a change for the better, providing a much richer portrait of America's com-

mon culture.

But "almost any idea, carried to its extreme, can be made pernicious," she writes, "and this is what is happening now to multiculturalism." In order to combat the so-called Eurocentrism of the schools, activists now advocate an approach to education which rejects any notion of a common culture. At the heart of what Ravitch calls "particularistic multiculturalism" is the unsupported assertion that minority students will have higher self-esteem and learn best when they are immersed in an ethnocentric curriculum that emphasizes the achievements of their own racial or ethnic groups. Thus, black students should be taught Afrocentric history rather than

Western history; Mexican-American students, it has even been suggested, ought to study Mayan math, the Mayan calendar, and Mayan astronomy.

What is being advocated, Ravitch continues, is not merely an extension of such things as Black History Month, which teach that dignity and success can be achieved by all. The idea is to teach children that "their identity is determined by 'cultural genes.'" More pernicious still, the particularist vision implies that "American culture belongs only to those who are white and European," and that all others can belong only to the culture of their ancestors. Aiming to foster self-esteem among minority youth, the particularists wind up telling them instead that their choices and prospects are limited by birth. Aiming to stir racial or ethnic pride, they fan ancient animosities by reducing everyone to a victim or an oppressor.

Ravitch warns that the particularists are no mere fringe group. The school districts of Atlanta, Detroit, and Washington, D.C., are already developing an Afrocentric curriculum. Last February, New York's Board of Regents endorsed a proposal to revise the state history curriculum, based

Debating the Canon

Allan Bloom, the author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, from an essay on "Western Civ—and Me" in *Commentary* (Aug. 1990):

The fact that I am doubtful about the non-Western craze suggests automatically, even to sympathetic critics, that I am promoting Western Civ or the like. Yet the very language used reveals how enslaved we have become to the historicist assertion that all thought is decisively culture-bound. When Averroes and Thomas Aquinas read Aristotle they did not think of him as Greek and put him into his historical context. They had no interest in Greek Civ but treated him as a wise man, hence a contemporary at all times.

We smile at this naiveté, but they understood Aristotle better than do our scholars, as one can see simply by perusing their commentaries. Plato and Kant claim that they speak to all men everywhere and forever, and I see no reason to reject those claims a priori. But that is precisely what is done when they are taken to be parts of Western Civ. To the extent they are merely that, the appeals against them are justified, for Western Civ is clearly partial, demanding the supplement of all the other Civs

The serious scholars in non-Western thought should bring us the powerful texts they know of to help us. For the true canon aggregates around the most urgent questions we face. That is the only ground for the study of books Nietzsche reflected on Buddha when he wanted to test the principle of contradiction. That is a model of the way things should be. The last thing we need is a sort of philosophic UN run by bureaucrats for the sake of representation for all peoples.

in part on a report that lambasted the three-year-old pluralist curriculum as a legacy of centuries of "intellectual and educational oppression" of minorities.

Unfortunately, Ravitch concludes, particularism appeals to many in the education establishment precisely because it promises a simple solution—inflating the racial pride of children—to the crisis of American education.

PRESS & TELEVISION

The End of Debate?

"Journalism, Publicity, and the Lost Art of Argument" by Christopher Lasch, in *Gannett Center Journal* (Spring 1990), 2950 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

The ignorance of the American people has reached astonishing proportions. Millions of Americans would be stumped if asked

what the Bill of Rights contains. A majority recently assured pollsters that Israel is an Arab state.

Lasch, a historian at the University of Rochester, is one of the few authorities who refuse to blame the schools for this depressing state of affairs. The fault, he asserts, lies squarely with the American press. Once the great inciter of public debate, it has settled into the role of mere purveyor of information. "When we get into arguments that focus and fully engage our attention," Lasch writes, "we become avid seekers of relevant information. Otherwise we take in information passively—if we take it in at all."

Lasch identifies 1830–1900 as the golden age of the press, the period when famed editors such as Horace Greeley and E. L. Godkin launched newspapers that were unabashedly opinionated without, like their predecessors, following a party line. Politics during this era was high drama, with public debates, torchlight parades, and massive voter turnouts (80 percent) for presidential elections.

After the turn of the century, however, press and politics alike succumbed to the Progressive impulse, with its emphasis on "scientific management" in public affairs. During the 1920s, journalist Walter Lippmann published several important books

arguing that public debate was not democracy's great virtue but its great defect, a disagreeable necessity to be allowed only when "exact knowledge" did not allow for scientific resolution of public questions. Arguments, Lasch notes, "were what took place in the absence of reliable information." The role of the press, in Lippmann's view, was to circulate neutral information in order to preclude argument.

The rise of a disinterested press, Lasch says, was encouraged by the emergence of the advertising and public relations industries. They put their money where the well-heeled readers were, in the "responsible" newspapers. Ever since, Lasch adds, information and publicity have become harder and harder to distinguish.

Increasingly, he writes, "information is generated by those who wish to promote something or someone . . . without arguing their case on its merits or explicitly advertising it as self-interested material either. Much of the press, in its eagerness to inform the public, has become a conduit of the equivalent of junk mail. [I]t now delivers an abundance of useless, indigestible information that nobody wants, most of which ends up as unread waste."

Puritan Journalism?

"Teleology and News: The Religious Roots of American Journalism, 1630–1730" by David Paul Nord, in *The Journal of American History* (June 1990), 112 N. Bryan St., Bloomington, Ind. 47408.

It was big news in Boston when Mary Dyer delivered a hideously deformed stillborn child on October 17, 1637. John Winthrop, the governor of Massachusetts, conducted an investigation. The Dyers were followers of the heretical Anne Hutchinson, recalls Nord, who teaches journalism at Indiana University, and Winthrop was certain that he saw in this strange birth "the designing hand of God and a message for the commonwealth of Massachusetts."

The event may now seem only like fodder for the *National Enquirer*, Nord says, but it contains a clue to the nature of contemporary mainstream journalism. News, he notes, is simply "the reporting of current public occurrences." But how does

one "report"? What is a newsworthy "occurrence"? What is "public"? The Puritans were the first Americans to confront such questions, and some of their answers are still with us, Nord believes.

To Winthrop and his Puritan contemporaries, all of the defining elements of the news "were shaped by the belief that everything happened according to God's perfect plan." News was teleological, so that with proper reporting and minimal interpretation its meaning ought to be accessible to all. Thus, says Nord, "New England generated a kind of news that was oriented to current events, yet conventional, patterned, and recurrent in subject matter." There was an emphasis on getting the facts

Periodicals continues on page 122

Behind the Miracle

Everyday Life in Japan

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The success of Japan's postwar economy has caused many in the West to form a somewhat distorted picture of the Japanese and their society. We envision a land populated almost exclusively by docile industrial workers and driven white-collar "salarymen," bound together by their unstinting loyalty to Japan, Inc.

What this picture ignores is the variety within Japanese society, a society that both sustains and is sustained by ancient cultural traditions. Anthropologist David Plath here discusses the difficulty Westerners have long had in separating images from a more complicated reality. His colleagues look at the various worlds that constitute contemporary Japan. Theodore Bestor examines the workings of the urban family firm. William Kelly explains how the highly venerated rice farmers are adapting to a changing rural economy. And Margaret Lock analyzes Japan's current debate over the health of the family.

As management specialist Peter Drucker recently observed, Japan for the past 35 years has been guided by a social, not an economic, policy. Its aim was, above all, "to protect domestic society, especially domestic employment," and, secondarily, to promote a few export-oriented industries. But economic success, demographic change, and demand from abroad for fair treatment in Japan's domestic market now force Tokyo's leaders to reconsider their policy of social protection. These articles show what is at stake.

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"Samurai Jogger," a contemporary watercolor by Masami Teraoka.

FROM *THE MIKADO* TO *GUNG HO*

IMAGINING THE JAPANESE

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by David W. Plath

Lines of neat script fill the New Year's postcard that came last January from a Japanese colleague. He reports travelling in China four times in 1989 to lecture about economic policy. "In the developing country of China," he goes on to explain, "I am repaying the help I received years ago as a graduate student in the United States. I would be grateful for your guidance."

Like Christmas in Europe and America, only more so, New Year's in Japan is a time to rejuvenate culture, society, and self. Such renewal calls for an exchange of messages among friends and acquaintances. Beneath the printed clichés of a commercial greeting card, one jots down a few words about personal activities, a micro-installment towards an autobiography. And like autobiographical writing anywhere, these words amount to a treatise on one's place amid the larger movements of society—at once a report on things that happened and a plea for things to go on happening.

My colleague's message is open to many interpretations. Perhaps—to take one possibility—he is hoping that his efforts in

China will add points to Japan's tally on the international scoresheet of aid-program altruism, even though he is aware that the Western media tend to view Japan's overseas aid projects as driven more by economic self-interest than by good will.

What matters most to my friend, however, is not that he be seen as a nationalist or an internationalist. What he wants most is to be recognized as a maturely responsible individual, which in Japan means a person who never fails to repay favors that have been bestowed upon him.

The debt he incurred as a graduate student has nothing to do with me personally: I was not his mentor. We are about the same age and became acquainted only in recent years. But as an American, I am an especially appropriate witness to his determination to repay, after 30 years, help received from Americans. Notice that he solicits my advice—though advice about what he doesn't say. The sentence is an invitation to rejuvenate our relationship, with my colleague on the receiving side. He will accept further favors, go deeper into debt. In other words, he intends to expand his capacity for mature obligations. If one wants to understand Japanese character, said Ruth Benedict in *The Chrysanthemum*

and *The Sword*, writing at the end of World War II, one has to begin with the idea that the truly mature individual knows his place within the great web of mutual human indebtedness.

All of this robust attention to the interpersonal, this Japanese concern for civility in an energetically entrepreneurial society, has been rankling the Western mind for decades—indeed, for more than a century. By the middle of the 19th century in Europe and the United States, most apostles of Progress took for granted that “ritualistic” human bonding only delayed the evolution of industrialism. It was wasteful (so much money spent on gifts) and inefficient (so much time spent using go-betweens merely to save face). Thanks to science and technology, the West was rapidly shaking off such “tyrannies of custom,” as they were called. In parts of the Old World and in most of the “timeless” Orient, however, people apparently would need our help in order to extricate themselves from such entangling human alliances.

Since the Japanese were farthest east in the Far East, it was easy to cast them in the role of the West’s logical opposite. British writers referred to Japan as Topsy-Turvy Land. (Except that they don’t walk on their heads, said one, they do everything the reverse from our way.) And yet within a generation the Japanese had outdistanced all other Asian nations and had scrambled several rungs up on the ladder of Progress. To the Western mind this was reassuring historically but confusing geographically. Japan’s experience was evidence that the route to modernity was not accidentally Western but universal. However, did this mean that Topsy-Turvy Land was antipodal—or not?

In his recent study of *Japan in the Victorian Mind* (1987), Toshio Yokoyama traces the curve of change in popular British writings about his homeland from 1850 through the 1880s. During the 1850s, citizens of the most powerful empire of the 19th century looked out figuratively from the Crystal Palace and saw Japan as “singular.” They found the Japanese to be more likable than other Asians they had met. True, the samurai seemed prickly, but the common people were “amiable,” bourgeois, actually rather familiar. Japan might be antipodal, but English writers found parallels—New Year’s there is like Christmas here, and so on—in order to render “quaint” customs and mores less exotic.

Thirty years later the grip of British imperium had weakened under competition from new industrial powers on the European continent as well as from the United States. Japan itself would not become a rival for another 30 years. But as Yokoyama notes, “The increase in anxiety about British civilization in the minds of British writers on Japan was linked to the development of their sense of remoteness from Japan.”

To put this in my terms, the closer actual Japan drew to Britain in the shape of its modern institutions, the less edifying it became to the British mind. Even though first-hand reports on Japanese life had become plentiful by the 1880s, British writers seemed less interested in them and less inclined to cite European analogues. The British grew increasingly nostalgic about the traditional (antipodal) Japan that had been left behind and began to use it as a hammer of satire against modern British society. The year 1885 saw the pre-

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miere of what has become the most popular English operetta of all time, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*. Set in the Oriental pomp and circumstance of the ancient Japanese royal court, *The Mikado* parodies the ritualism that lingers, inefficient and outmoded, in industrial England. British writers of the 1880s still spoke of Japan as "singular," Yokoyama concludes, but the emphasis had shifted to the unfamiliar, the antipodal, the "unreal."



A performer in an early staging of Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado.

One hundred years later, the citizens of the most powerful empire of the 20th century took their turn. Now it was up to Americans to reconcile antipodal and actual Japan.

Confident that the postwar Allied occupation had "demilitarized and democratized" the Japanese, Americans of the 1950s were ready to help their erstwhile foes up the next rung of the ladder of Progress. This

task would involve eliminating whatever tyrannies of custom still remained. Industrial experts such as James Abegglen discovered a reason for early postwar Japan's slow growth in productivity. Japanese factories had too many tenured workers, and everybody knows that giving a man job security turns him into a time-server. The Americans coined a term for it—the Lifetime Employment System—there being no label for the phenomenon in the Japanese lexicon. In fact, at the time, Japan's own industrial experts were more troubled by what they perceived as a rate of labor mobility that was too high, not too low.

American research by David McClelland and others in the field of motivational psychology helped reinforce the diagnosis. Americans scored high on a scale that was said to measure Need for Achievement, but low on a scale of Need for Affiliation. Our heroes had always been cowboys—and still were, it seemed. Japanese scores turned out almost the opposite. This indicated a problem for Japan, investigators said, because modernization is driven by a population that values achievement. Affiliation motives are "orthogonal," which in researcher jargon means that they run at cross purposes with achievement.

Thirty years later the argument against affiliation motives had lost its teeth. Instead of retarding Japan's economic growth, it appeared by the 1980s as though those intricate nets of human relations had been sustaining it. Perhaps affiliation was less a need, a primal urge, than a well-shaped human achievement all its own. American business schools suddenly discovered virtues in Japanese styles of management. And Japanese capitalism, unhyphenated up till then, was renamed Confucian capitalism, even though throughout the previous century the Confucian heritage had been de-

nounced as a drag on Progress. The country that our journalists of the 1950s hailed as The New Far West had begun to look Far Eastern after all by the 1980s.

義理

Americans of the 1980s had to wrestle with a more complicated repertoire of images than the one the British had grappled with a century earlier. Americans, for one, came to see actual Japan as a threat to their economic dominance, something the British had never seen in the actual Japan of the 19th century. To Americans, furthermore, antipodal Japan had fragmented into a collage of images, some suggesting a feudal past full of samurai and shoguns, others evoking a postmodern future filled with robots and workaholics. All of these images appeared in social commentary on American life, but there was little *Mikado*-like spoofing.

In American popular culture, for example, the centennial of the *Mikado* saw the release of the slapstick film *Gung Ho*, directed by Ron Howard and starring Michael Keaton. On the surface, the goats of the story are Japanese auto executives, but they seem to be little more than stand-ins for managers from anywhere, as seen through the eyes of men on the shop floor.

Gung Ho takes place not in the ancient Japanese royal court but in the modern American rust belt, in an antiquated cathedral of once-proud U.S. engineering, an automobile assembly plant. The Japanese managers have come to make the plant efficient once again by imposing their brand of teamwork upon the natives. The managers win—but only by losing. The assembly line

hums once more only after the managers stand aside and let the workers return to their American style of country-boy teamwork, which Detroit's managers had earlier suppressed in their own misguided search for excellence.

The point of *Gung Ho* is that today's tyranny of custom has less to do with culture than with social class. Japanese or American, the yuppie managers have lost touch with the laid-back, localized world of ordinary men, who need to achieve and affiliate on their own terms. The title of the movie says it all: "Gung-ho" is a Chinese phrase for enthusiastic teamwork—a phrase imported into the American vernacular by U.S. Marines who fought alongside Chinese troops against the Japanese enemy in World War II.

The film skewers Japanese managers for misjudging the American gung-ho spirit, a mistake their fathers made during the war. But it indirectly makes the same charge against U.S. executives. The bosses in *Gung Ho* wear company uniforms, not military ones, and the setting is peacetime. The scenario, nevertheless, is familiar to anyone who has sampled one major genre of Hollywood films about the U.S. military. I am thinking of movies in which uptight, rank-proud officers (especially careerists from the military academies) personify a ruling caste whose privileges and powers are not easy to justify in a classless America. G.I. Joe—Bill Bendix, Gary Cooper—shuffles and drawls and works in unorthodox ways, but he accomplishes the mission while the officers around him blunder.

Less than flattered by the way it has been depicted in popular productions such as *Gung Ho*, the American managerial class has tended to present another story. It is a story that thrusts actual Japan out towards the antipodes. Emphasis is put on presumed Japanese differences, as evidence of how far Japan deviates from the orthodox

way of running an industrial society. Japan's "low" rates of job turnover are often cited by way of example. In fact, labor mobility in Japan during recent decades has been about the same as in virtually all other industrial nations—the exception being the United States. The "high" American rate, not the "low" Japanese one, is singular.

Intellectual authority for this new version of antipodal Japan is currently being drawn from the works of "revisionist" Japan-watchers such as James Fallows in the United States and Karel van Wolferen in Europe. Their premise is that Japan has evolved into a species of industrial nation-state fundamentally unlike any other. Hence we must revise the nice-guy assumption that Japan can be dealt with like other countries that play by "our" rules.

While this revisionism does not represent a crude return to racist thinking (the differences are said to be cultural, not racial), it does offer ammunition to Japan-bashers, and it is being widely parroted by op-ed cartoonists and sensation-seeking reporters. Worse yet, it encourages among Americans an undeserved complacency and smugness about their own society. A review of van Wolferen's recent book, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, in the *Christian Science Monitor* concluded with this dubi-

ous piece of wisdom: "In economics and in politics, we would all be better off if Japan became more like the United States, and not vice-versa."

It is difficult to gauge how widely the American populace shares the revisionist stance. It blurs into a broader current of image-work that has been underway for a generation, creating a new antipodal Japan that I call Jawpen. Fabricated by the wagging of American jaws and the scratching of American pens, Jawpen is a chilling high-tech society of the future, a society that sharply contrasts with the folksy warmth of America's imagined Lake Wobegon past. Jawpen looks like Japan, with the same efficient factories and schools, the same safe streets. But it is made in America, assembled from imported Japanese parts, and styled for our domestic market of ideas.

Above all, it is a rhetorical device that interest groups in the United States employ in their battles not just over trade policy but over the very nature of American domestic life and social institutions—and over who shall define what they are to be. Jawpen becomes what we variously need Japan to be at the moment: a model to emulate when we lament the state of our schools, an unfair player to castigate when we lament the loss of jobs.

East meets West uneasily in Ron Howard's Gung Ho, a comic film about a Japanese take-over of an American auto firm. Here the character played by Michael Keaton argues with his new Japanese boss.



During the 1970s, for example, U.S. management blamed declining productivity on its employees: people deficient in the kind of loyalty and dedication evident in Jawpen. U.S. labor responded in kind, noting that Jawpenese executives had no segregated lunchrooms or toilets, and enjoyed only a fraction of the pay and perks of their American counterparts. Both sides were happy to shift the blame during the 1980s to American teachers and students and *their* lagging productivity. Not being politically mobilized, fifth-graders are now taking the rap.

The trade-war atmosphere that has prevailed for 20 years has encouraged Americans to make the same error about actual Japan that an earlier generation of Americans made during the war. In *War Without Mercy* (1986), his study of the images Japanese and Americans formed of each other during the Pacific conflict, John Dower explains the dual misconceptions: "It was not that the Japanese people were, in actuality, homogeneous and harmonious, devoid of individuality and thoroughly subordinated to the group, but rather that the Japanese ruling groups were constantly exhorting them to become so. Indeed, the government deemed it necessary to draft and propagate a rigid orthodoxy of this sort precisely because the ruling classes were convinced that a great many Japanese did not cherish the more traditional virtues of loyalty What the vast majority of Westerners believed the Japanese to be coincided with what the Japanese ruling elites hoped they would become."

Perhaps the most self-deceiving feature in our fable of Jawpen is the vision of a society in which the corporate-career lifestyle not only holds the high ground but has

triumphed. It is a world where alternative ways of living barely survive (homogeneous Jawpen) or, if they do, need not be taken seriously (harmonious Jawpen). In Jawpen everybody either is on the yuppie fast-track or is scrambling to get on it. And there is no widening gap of unequal opportunity.

That, of course, is no more the reality of most people in actual Japan—the kinds of people you will meet in the essays that follow—than it is of most people in the actual United States. Ordinary Japanese would like to believe that the distance between rich and poor, between fast-track and laid-back, is not so great in their society as it is in America. But they know that the gap exists in their own society, and they fear it may be widening.

The ordinary Japanese in the essays that follow are less enthralled by the fable of Jawpen than Americans seem to be. These merchants, farmers, and housewives do not need the sophisticated critics of post-modernism to tell them that a high-tech, commodified atmosphere is constricting the potential for human diversity everywhere. In their little daily engagements with the large institutions that dominate their world, they are working to preserve niches of variety and civility—to sustain a refuge where they can, like my economist colleague, renew autobiographical confidence at New Year's and reach past parochialism into the more intimidating global arena. We would do well to curb revisionist impulses to erect new intellectual trade barriers. By listening carefully to actual Japanese as they conduct their own domestic discourse on the meanings of modernity, we may come to a better understanding of our own.

TOKYO MOM-AND-POP

家 業

by Theodore C. Bestor

The American bestiary identifies two sub-species of the Japanese economic animal. The more familiar is the company employee, recognizable by its collar (white or blue) connected by a short leash to its employer, Japan, Inc. The second sub-species, only recently discovered, is the small shopkeeper. Its haunts are marked by the little non-tariff trade barriers that these creatures erect around their abodes, the hundreds of thousands of mom-and-pop stores that dot the Japanese landscape. The first species is predatory and most fearsome when, in herds, it stampedes through foreign marketplaces or burrows under otherwise level playing fields; the second is protectionistic and most dangerous when confronted by large stores or foreign products.

To most Americans, the company-employee variant of the economic animal seems familiar in broad outline, if puzzling in behavioral detail. Our society, too, has its large organizations, and the organization man (now joined by woman) is a fixture in our image of modern society. While it may be hard for most Americans to comprehend the docile diligence of the Japanese employee, we still broadly understand what the company employee is about.

The shopkeeper, the proprietor of a family business, is another story. Gone are the days when the family enterprise was a reliable part of the American scene. To most American consumers, particularly those living in or around cities, small shops are increasingly marginal to the business of daily life. They are convenience stores for the occasional last-minute purchase, or they are

Painting of an Edo marketplace at the Ryugoku bridge, by Utagawa Toyoharu (1735-1814).



quaintly ethnic or highly specialized. Most serious retailing takes place in national or regional chains, where consumers deal with branch managers and employees, almost never with proprietors or their kin.

But in Japan, this is not the case. More than in any other advanced industrial society, consumers are likely to do their shopping in tiny, family-run stores, and the proprietors and family workers who operate those businesses constitute a large segment of society. According to one recent analysis, self-employed entrepreneurs and family members who work with them make up almost 20 percent of Japan's urban, private-sector labor force. In 1988, Tokyo had some 178,000 retail and wholesale establishments, of which 117,000—a shade under two-thirds—were tiny shops with four or fewer employees, almost all of them family members. Tokyo, moreover, averages 767 shops per square mile (without counting bars and restaurants), or one shop for every 47 residents of the city.

But Japan's small businesses are significant not simply because there are so many of them. Americans may view small shops as further evidence that Japan is a society organized against consumption. After all, we quickly surmise, the hold that small businesses have on the Japanese economy forces most consumers to forego the conveniences and economies of scale provided by large retail chains and shopping centers.

But the Japanese don't see things this way. Shopkeepers, for one, perceive themselves as upholders of a traditional way of life. At the same time, their existence profoundly affects the quality of life of all Japanese, particularly those living in cities. The social patterns and cultural values that sus-

tain small businesses are deeply woven into the fabric of Japanese life. Indeed a Japan without such firms would be a radically different society.

Firm as Family

Scholarly studies and even popular-culture imports such as Yoshimitsu Morita's film, *The Family Game*, have provided Westerners with the outlines of the stereotypical Japanese family. It is, first of all, a middle-class professional household. The father, a white-collar managerial type, is generally absent; the mother, attentive to the point of monomania on issues of education and domestic management, is always present; the children, well-behaved and obedient, are always in school.

But this compartmentalized life does not characterize the entrepreneurial family. The Onuma household, pseudonymous but real, is a case in point. The Onumas run a small Tokyo textile company that specializes in preparing fabrics for formal kimono. As kimono have become less and less a part of daily life for most Japanese, their business has prospered by handling the brocades that go into the most expensive wedding kimono, some of which rent for thousands of dollars a day.

Their business employs about a dozen people, five of them Onumas. These five represent three of the four generations of Onumas who live together a few steps from the workshop. As with most such household firms, it is difficult to separate family and business, home and workplace. Masao and Chieko Onuma, husband and wife both in their fifties, work together most of the day alongside their 30-year-old son and his

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wife. Grandmother Onuma, in her eighties, packs boxes, answers telephones, cooks meals, and keeps an eye on her two great-granddaughters, the younger Onuma's toddlers who scamper around the bolts of exquisite, expensive silk. The younger Mr. Onuma's day seldom ends before nine or 10 o'clock, when he finally finishes making deliveries in his expensive 4-wheel drive RV. The elder Mr. Onuma's days often last longer, ending with extended drinking bouts with the many suppliers and clients whom he must entertain almost daily.

Theirs is a volatile business. The long period of public restraint that preceded the death of the Shōwa Emperor in January 1989 was a bleak time for the Onumas. Weddings, festivals, and other celebrations were canceled or curtailed. Fortunately, the Imperial wedding in June 1990 set off a minor boom in the kimono business, and the Onumas found themselves busier than ever. But despite their long hours and the uncertainties of their business, the Onumas are almost smug in their feeling of superiority toward the salaried middle classes. They regard company employees as drudges and prize the flexibility and autonomy that comes with running their own business. They smile over the tax breaks self-employment offers. And they take quiet pride in their knowledge of themselves as a special kind of family.

The family of the family firm doesn't figure very prominently in Western images of Japanese life, but it comes closest to fulfilling the ideal of the traditional Japanese family. According to this ideal, young and old live and work together, caring for one another across generations. And for tradi-



In a Tokyo kimono shop, a customer casts an appraising eye.

tional families, whether the urban mercantile family of today or the peasant family of pre-modern Japan, the business of the family is the family business. Fundamental issues of kinship—marriage, inheritance, succession—are inextricably linked to economic issues of property, capital, and labor.

The matter of inheritance is particularly important because the heir sees to it that the family, its enterprise, and its property are transmitted intact to later generations. Japanese kinship provides several means of ensuring an heir besides the obvious one. For example, the present Onuma line was secured by adoption. Masao, the patriarch of the family, is a *mukoyōshi*, an adopted son-in-law. The eighth of nine children from a poor farm family far to the north of Tokyo, he met Chieko, herself an only child, when he came to Tokyo for college (remarkably enough, on a basketball scholarship). They fell in love and Chieko's parents, recognizing the need for an heir to carry on the family and its business, adopted him. Thus, old grandmother Onuma is, to an American way of thinking, his mother-in-law; in Japanese terms, she is his adoptive mother.

The practice of adopting a son-in-law, old-fashioned but by no means moribund,

is most common today (at least in urban areas) among entrepreneurial households like that of the Onumas. Conventional wisdom is divided on the subject of *mukoyōshi*. Proverbial advice to young men contemplating an adoptive marriage tells them, "If you have even a cup of rice to your name, don't become a *mukoyōshi*." On the benefits to a family, however, the proverb is positive: "Three generations of *mukoyōshi* ensure a family's fortune." The case of the Onumas would seem to confirm this part of the proverb.

Community as Market

Neighborhoods organized as discrete social and economic units date back to pre-industrial Edo (as Tokyo was called before 1868) and to the feudal regulations that kept samurai and craftspeople separate and segregated in distinct areas. A few mercantile districts still retain an identity from Edo: Kiba, the old lumber district, or Tsukudajima, where delicacies of salted, smoked, and pickled fish have been made for centuries. Other areas, whether venerable or not, are known for their contemporary commercial specialties: Jimbo-chō, full of bookshops; Inari-chō, known for Buddhist altars; Akihabara, with its wall-to-wall electronics stores.

But even where a particular occupational or commercial coloration does not exist, Tokyo neighborhoods are economic zones of considerable importance. Unlike most American cities, Tokyo has few exclusively residential areas. Most neighborhoods mix housing with commerce, and what largely distinguishes richer and poorer neighborhoods is the intensity of local industrial activity. This intermingling of commerce and community, however, is less a legacy of pre-industrial guild mercantilism than a reflection of the fact that Tokyo is built on top of a pre-industrial city

that functioned largely without wheels. Most pre-industrial Japanese walked; only an elite few rode horseback or were carried in palanquins. The distances covered in daily life were necessarily short. The narrow, disjointed, suddenly twisting and turning remnants of the Edo street plan give ample evidence of a city based on pedestrian life, and as Tokyo developed in the 20th century, cars never fully demolished this orientation. Streetcars, then trains and subways, became the favored means of public transportation. As a result, Tokyo remains focused on its 500-odd stations and the pedestrian corridors—the shopping arcades—that lead to them.

Even now, with Tokyo's streets clogged to near paralysis with cars, the automobile and the culture of commerce have not merged as they have in much of American life. Car culture exists for the young who consider a trip to Denny's, or to one of its Japanese imitators, a *naoii* ("now-y") experience; for the James Dean look-alikes who cruise in souped-up Mazdas sporting window decals with slogans like "Lonesome Car-Boy"; for the professional truckers who festoon their gleaming chrome rigs with colored lights and hang their cabs with brocade drapes; or for yuppies who buy BMWs and Mercedes with savings that a family of an earlier generation would have spent on buying a house. But for daily life in Tokyo, the car is practically useless. Housewives and other shoppers rely on the neighborhood stores and the local *shotengai*, or shopping arcade. Market researchers report that the average housewife goes shopping at least once a day, on foot or bicycle, and it is a rare neighborhood that cannot provide all daily necessities.

The cluster of shops and arcades around major stations—anchored by one or two large department stores or major discount supermarkets, surrounded by swirls of boutiques, bars, and charge-by-the-hour love

hotels—taper off into tendril-like shopping streets that stretch across the residential landscape of the city. Brightly lit streets and alleys beckon with ornate neon arches, garish cubist street lights, plastic decorations keyed to seasonal motifs, or loudspeakers booming out popular songs and shopping jingles. Sunday excursions to major department stores and trendy boutiques notwithstanding, these shopping arcades are where Japanese consumers consume. One shopping street runs into the next, the only distinction between neighborhoods being the styles of lampposts or arches erected by local merchants.

Subtle though the boundaries are, they are still significant. Within them, local merchants act decisively to protect both their own interests and those of the community. They may oppose or force modifications of plans for a nearby supermarket or discount store. They may assist a neighborhood noodle manufacturer who has fallen on hard times (and count on being repaid in years and years of free noodles). They may match up a local businessman who has been forced out by a *jiageya* (a real-estate speculator) with another family firm located a few blocks away.

In addition to tending to business matters, merchants form the backbone of local community activities, participating in everything from political clubs to volunteer fire brigades, from shrine parish boards to Little League teams. The self-employed entrepreneurs, working according to their own schedules, are always present in their communities—something factory or office workers can never be. Merchants clearly have ulterior motives behind their good works, but as Adam Smith suggested, it is not the butcher's benevolence but his self-interest that makes the world go around, in Tokyo as elsewhere.

With their claims to represent the legacy of Japan's pre-industrial merchant class,

the neighborhood shopkeeper is the bulwark of tradition and the sustainer of cultural identity. His or her presence assures that the communal traditions of the past will continue to give some order and meaning to what often seems a chaotic urban existence. And while there may be some nostalgic myth-making at work here, the myth is still a real force affecting the lives of all local residents, shopkeepers or not.

Market as Community

Throughout Japan, Tsukiji—Tokyo's vast wholesale fish market—conjures up the same images: frenetic morning auctions where the price of a single gigantic tuna may exceed \$10,000; endless sheds housing hundreds of tiny wholesale stalls hawking every conceivable kind of seafood; bustling crowds of fishmongers and sushi chefs carrying off a day's supply of fish. Each year, the market's seven large brokerage houses sell almost 450 varieties of fresh and processed marine products worth over \$5 billion. But despite the scale of the market as a whole, it is a bastion of small family firms. The engines of the market are its dozens of morning auctions, where throngs of wholesalers bid intensely against one another. In turn, the wholesalers—1,100 strong, operators of tiny, family-run stalls in the marketplace—compete fiercely for the patronage of some 14,000 restaurateurs, sushi chefs, and retail fishmongers who purchase their day's supplies at one or another of Tsukiji's 1,677 stalls.

The transactions that make the market—from the bluntly competitive bidding of the auctions to the more subtle haggling that keeps customers returning to the same stalls year after year—are part of the complex social fabric of the marketplace: elaborate rules governing auctions, systems of stall rotations, minutely wrought agreements on credit and settlement, carefully

tended patterns of long-term reciprocation among trading partners, and hundreds of other understandings and agreements.

At Tsukiji, the buying and selling does not pit all 1,100 wholesalers against one another. More limited trading communities exist among the wholesalers and buyers of particular kinds of seafood, whether tuna or shrimp or salted fish or *sushi no tane*, the highest quality products destined for



Selling squid in Tokyo's busy seafood market.

sushi bars. Within these specialized groups of traders, the character of social ties becomes most visible.

For example, the trading communities are organized around the auction arena for a particular commodity—fresh salmon or *kamaboko* fish pâté or live eels—and the rules and techniques for each auction have over time been delicately hammered out by the parties to those auctions. For some

commodities, buyers are expected to top a stated asking price; for others, the auctioneer lowers the price every second or so until a willing buyer is found. Some auctions involve open bidding, verbal or hand signals, while others use secret written bids. The varying forms of auction clearly create different kinds of competitive relationships among rival buyers and different kinds of relationships between auctioneers and buyers. Through adjustment and calibration of the auction rules over time, buyers and sellers are able to maintain stable long-term ties with preferred trade partners and to minimize the tensions that result from competition among buyers to purchase at the lowest prices.

And, indeed, this careful concern to dampen the negative consequences of competition is one hallmark of the market's operations. Almost all wholesalers come away from the day's auctions with something. Few are driven out of the market. Like New York City taxi medallions or seats on the stock exchange, the wholesale licenses required for trading in the market are limited in number and intrinsically valuable. No new slots have been created since the late 1940s. Yet there is little demand for them outside the marketplace. And within the market there has been little competitive pressure leading to concentration; the 1,677 licenses issued to 1,677 firms in the late 1940s still remain in the hands of 1,101 firms, only a handful of which control more than three licenses (and hence three stalls).

The survival of all traders is ensured through a number of mechanisms. For example, at four-year intervals, all 1,677 stall locations are reassigned through a complex system of lotteries. This eventually corrects inequalities resulting from a stall's location in the huge fan-shaped sheds that house the wholesalers. Even to a casual observer, there are clear differences among the stalls.

Those on the narrow front edge of the fan attract buyers making daily visits for small quantities of high-quality, sushi-grade fish. But wholesalers whose business is based on bulk sales to supermarkets find that the back edge of the sheds—farthest from the market entrance for walk-in customers but most convenient to loading docks—is the ideal location. Regardless of specialty, a location at the intersection of two aisles in the market is preferable to a mid-block location, which can be reached only by passing many other stalls.

The quadrennial stall lotteries correct long-term locational inequities, but they also create shorter-term inequalities. To limit those effects, the wholesalers' guild has devised a system of rents and rebates apart from the flat rents charged by the municipal government. The wholesalers' federation grades each stall on its location and assigns each stall-holder a monthly assessment or credit. This amount is paid to (or received from) the association as tax upon (or compensation for) a stall's location. Against a base rent of about \$100 a month, a wholesaler with a good location may pay a surcharge of around \$100 per month for his stall, while the worst situated stall-holder may receive \$600 a month in compensation.

What holds for the wholesalers also holds for the auctioneers. To ensure that monopolies will not accrue to particular auctioneers, the sites and sequencing of the various auctions are also rotated. For example, the stretches of quayside where frozen tuna are auctioned each morning are rotated every few months among the seven auction houses, and the sequence of auctions changes on a daily basis, so that of four auction houses offering the same products for sale, each will sell first once in ev-

ery four days.

The exquisite care with which the rules, alliances, and institutions of the marketplace seek to protect all participants must of course be seen against the fact that the market is a closed system. Insiders are ensured survival; outsiders are denied access. Within the closed system of the Tsukiji marketplace, business is never a zero-sum game. All players go away with something; no one is forced to leave the game.

American trade officials who have been pressing the Japanese to correct "structural impediments" to free trade point to the distribution system, with its multifarious layers of small family firms, as the prime offender. Not only does such a system effectively impede the sale of foreign goods on the Japanese market, it also limits the choice of goods to Japanese consumers and thus keeps prices needlessly high. To date, however, most Japanese consumers have been more willing to put up with higher costs of goods and services than to threaten the institutional and social patterns that sustain the present system. What and how much this social compact gives them in return may at times be unclear, but apparently it is enough.

It is apparent, too, that despite the ferocious competitive strengths of the Japanese economy and its ability to exploit minute increments of efficiency, economics to most Japanese is not ultimately the measure of all things. Rather, as is the case with the survival of the small family business, economic behavior can be understood only within a larger framework of social relationships and obligations, and patterns of reciprocity whose demands are just as telling and just as intractable as the cold logic of economic calculation.

JAPANESE 農 FARMERS 民

by William W. Kelly

One of the several split images we Americans have of Japan is that of city-Japan, country-Japan. Millions of zealous factory and office workers are packed into sprawling cities, while beyond them lie fields of glistening rice, diligently tended by declining numbers of aging farmers. Appreciating such contrasts, many Americans also feel that city and country in Japan have one thing in common: the vigilant protection of the state. Even as it promotes efficient industrial corporations in the international marketplace, the paternal Japanese state shields the highly inefficient farmers from the challenges of the same global market.

Indeed, for over a decade, the principal irritant in U.S.-Japanese economic relations has been Japan's protection of agriculture, particularly its lavish support of rice farmers. Throughout the postwar decades, the government has guaranteed the purchase of all rice produced in the country. Operating through the national agricultural cooperative network, it sets a price that guarantees a profit to farmers. The rice is then marketed to consumers at a somewhat lower price, which is nonetheless many times the world market price. This gap has produced major government deficits and growing reserves of rice. Meanwhile, the average Japanese's appetite for rice has declined from about six bowls per

day in the mid-1960s to about three bowls per day in the late '80s.

The trade friction arises from the repeated and thus far unsuccessful efforts of U.S. rice millers to gain access to the closed Japanese markets. Farmers in the United States and the European Community also enjoy generous government subvention and so are not immune from criticism. But the Japanese case, many Americans feel, is egregious. Current efforts by Japan to limit rice acreage and reduce its price subsidies are judged woefully inadequate. Undersized and overmechanized, the Japanese farms still produce huge surpluses of extremely expensive rice. They are further encouraged to hold on to their plots by laws that prevent consolidation and by a tax code that greatly undertaxes farmland and discourages its conversion to badly needed residential land. Not only would imports of their cheap rice benefit the beleaguered urban consumer, the American millers argue, but the collapse of price supports and reform of the land tax would encourage farmers to sell some of their land. This would drive down astronomical land prices in and around the cities and help many young urban couples to realize the now-impossible dream of home ownership.

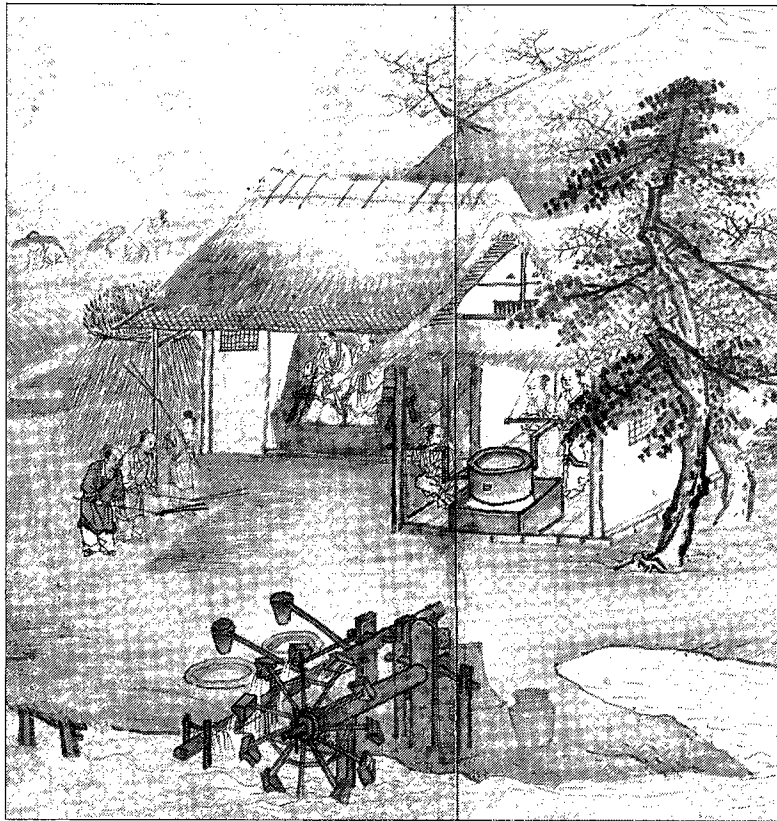
What stands in the way of this market sanity? Ardent defenders of the status quo claim that the obstacle is cultural. Rice is central to Japanese values and Japanese lifeways, and the destruction of Japan's rice

farming would mean the loss of its national identity. The emperor transplanting seedlings each spring in his ceremonial plot within the Tokyo palace grounds is a perennial photo-opportunity for the media. But there is also a skeptical view. According to many critics, the real obstacle is crass politics—namely, the special relationship between the farmers and the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). For 35 years, they argue, the LDP has traded expensive rice prices for the farm vote, vastly overrepresented by postwar districts that have never been redrawn to reflect rural-to-urban migration.

To an American anthropologist with a number of years of experience in rural Japan, both apologists and skeptics seem long on polemics and short on understanding. Their central character, the rice farmer, is generally a stock figure drawn to convenience. And while there is some truth to what the polemicists say about the role of rice both in culture and in domestic politics, the truth is more complicated than they would suggest.

It is certainly easy for any visitor to Japan to elicit a litany of banalities about rice, monsoon society, and Japanese national taste—about rice as the sustenance of the Japanese soul. And it is certainly true that

for 2,000 years, wet-rice has been the mainstay of Japanese farming. However, this is not because of Japan's environment; in fact, in much of the country neither topography nor climate naturally favors rice. Nor is there anything special about the Japanese constitution that makes rice the national staple, despite an argument made several



A scene of village life, in ink and colors, attributed to Kusumi Morikage (c. 1620–90), an artist from Kaga in northern Japan.

years ago by the Japanese agricultural minister in his effort to discourage Australian beef imports. (He maintained that the intestines of the Japanese were shorter than those of Westerners and therefore ill-suited to digesting beef and other staples of the Western diet.)

Political will, rather than geography or physiology, has put rice at the center of Jap-

anese society. The rice paddy is an efficient, albeit labor-intensive, calorie machine. Rice also transports and stores well. For these and other reasons, political elites have for centuries promoted rice cultivation through their tax demands and their allocations of prestige. In the early modern Tokugawa period, for example, taxes for all crops and even for fishing and forest products were calculated and levied in rice. The relative social status of the 250 domain lords was determined by the official rice yields of their lands. Thus postwar agricultural policies promoting rice monoculture reflect a longstanding elite bias. But this bias has always gone against rural wisdom. The cultivators themselves have usually preferred a more diversified agriculture, with rice as only one part of a broader regime of crops and animals.

In fact, the cultural significance of rice to most middle-aged and older people in rural Japan lies elsewhere. Rice for them evokes both pain and pride in their personal memories of the 1930s and '40s, the 15 years of the Pacific War and the American occupation in its aftermath. Their memories are of the often-severe food shortages during those 20 years, the requisitions of farm horses and cooking-pots, the drafting of all able-bodied men, and the farming burdens borne by the women and elderly who were left behind. To have survived, to have kept the paddies producing, has created a tenacious will and a healthy skepticism about their present good fortune. To this day, most Japanese will never leave a single grain of rice in their bowls.

The occupation's land reform had an equally powerful impact, transforming a

countryside of tenants into one of proprietors. In effect, the farmers' life work was enfranchised, and very few Westerners recognize the extent to which this has set farming apart from other postwar occupations. Simply put, most of the latter have been effectively depoliticized. Shorn of fascist patriotism, the incentives of public service and corporate employment are now economic growth, job security, and organizational loyalty. Even the Confucian familial metaphor of the workplace has been pruned of its imperial aspects. The farmer, however, stands as a striking exception. Agricultural work was, in subtle but enduring ways, politicized. The land-reform program itself linked it prominently to democratic principles; the associated Agricultural Cooperative Law of 1947 emphasized a democratic association of independent smallholders; and political party reorganization linked it to a party machine, the LDP. Even if the realities have changed, these associations remain strong, and they explain much of the farmer's reluctance to yield his identity.

By its voting habits, the rural population shows its appreciation of the government's agricultural munificence. Indeed, this symbiosis is the basis of critics' charges that collusion between farmers and politicians has perpetuated a system of subsidized inefficiency. However, the size and power of this voting bloc is exaggerated, as census figures show. In 1950, one in three Japanese households was a "farm family,"* but that proportion dropped rapidly in the 1960s,

*The Japanese term, "farm family" (*nōka*), is the linguistic reverse of our "family farm." Census figures attempt to distinguish between full-time farm families, those part-time farm families whose farm income exceeds their nonfarm income, and those part-time farm families whose nonfarm income exceeds their farm income.

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and by 1985 it had fallen to one in eight. Moreover, in 1985, only 610,000 of the 4,300,000 farm families were full-time—which is to say, 1.6 percent of all Japanese households. These numbers hardly indicate a potent voting bloc.

Karel van Wolferen comes closer to the mark in *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (1989). He observes that the real power lies in the national federation of agricultural cooperatives, the Zenkoku Nōkyō Chūkai, or Zenchū. This federation handles most of the rice marketing, and retails farm and consumer products to its members—virtually all 4.3 million farm households. Through its associated banking network, it provides credit, insurance, and other services to its membership. Indeed, it is by far the largest insurance company in the world. Zenchū is thus a powerful voting machine and lobbying organization. Whatever ambivalence ordinary farmers may feel about agricultural policies, Zenchū's very existence depends on the government's rice programs. For its own survival, van Wolferen argues, Zenchū mobilizes and rewards a large "tribe" of LDP politicians.

But even this view of rural support for the LDP is too cynical. The party's support outside the major cities is much more broadly based and has to do more with public works than with rice prices. Since at least the late 1960s, agricultural mechanization and improvement programs have provided the opportunity for a far wider modernization of regional infrastructure. Directly and indirectly, 25 years of farm aid have permitted a vast program of public works construction: roads, railroads, communications, schools, medical clinics, town offices, and a host of other public facilities.

While it was not their architects' intent, postwar agricultural policies have contributed to a major redistribution of tax revenues from metropolitan Japan to regional Japan. Tokyo remains the political, market,

media, and educational capital of Japan. It attracts—perhaps one should say compels—the best and brightest from all prefectures. However, by a number of indicators—house ownership, car ownership, air quality, per household disposable income, per capita domestic space—rural regions offer better living conditions than do urban areas. The LDP's electoral success and political action derive less from what the LDP has done for Japan's farmers than from what it has done for Japan's regions.

It is not, then, a special Japanese affinity for rice or the LDP's embrace of the farmer that has perpetuated the peculiar pattern of postwar farming. Cultural memory and political calculations are at work in different ways. Yet even this overstates both the distinctiveness and importance of rice in rural Japan. It also overlooks the richer texture of regional lifeways. For the last 15 years, I have been returning periodically to the northern coastal plain of Shōnai, one of the few areas where large-scale rice farming remains viable. For the Itōs, one of the families with whom I live during my Shōnai visits, rice farming is still central, but a short profile of their lives and circumstances may serve to illustrate the new shape of the changing countryside.

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The Itōs have lived for five generations in the 100-family settlement of Watamae, now part of Fujishima Town in the fertile center of Shōnai Plain. Fujishima lies between Shōnai's two rival cities—the old castle town of Tsuruoka, nestled at the southern edge of the plain, and the commercial port of Sakata, an important harbor in the pre-modern sea trade.

Administratively, Fujishima is a small town center surrounded by 3,500 hectares of rice paddyland and about 50 nucleated villages like Watamae. Some 5,000 persons live in the town center, and another 8,500 in the perimeter villages.

In the early 1980s, a fad for renaming swept through the Japanese corporate world. (Americans experienced this as the replacement of the Datsun name with Nissan.) Municipalities across the country joined this "CI (for corporate image) boom" in a rush to gain a slight public-relations advantage over neighboring towns.

corporation. Some 15 years ago, the company bought up rice fields on the edge of Watamae village and has since been gradually expanding the plant. The total output of the plant's 800 employees now exceeds the total value of Fujishima's rice production. What was rural Japan 40 years ago is now more properly regional Japan.

The Itōs are one of those few full-time farm families. Their three-generation household includes an older couple, their son Noboru, his wife Keiko, and the young couple's three school-aged children. Noboru is himself the oldest of three siblings.



Thanks to mechanization, the rice farmers of modern Japan produce more rice than the nation can consume. Government protection and subsidies help keep the highly venerated farmers in business.

Fujishima adopted the slogan "Home of Rice and the Lion Dance," an ironic choice considering that both rice-growing and the traditional ritual Lion Dance are greatly endangered even in this rice bowl. Shōnai-mai, or Shōnai rice, is one of Japan's favorite brands, and 1,500 of Fujishima's 2,800 households still identify themselves as *nōka*, or farm families. However, only 110 of these claim to be full-time farm families. Residents prefer to softpedal the fact that since the mid-1980s the largest contributor to the town's economy has been a factory belonging to a Tokyo-based electrical parts

He was born in 1949, a member of Japan's baby-boom generation. His birth coincided with the postwar land reform that gave his grandfather clear title to the two hectares of rice paddy the household had tenanted. Noboru's grandfather and his parents farmed this land through the 1950s and early 1960s, while encouraging the three children to finish high school.

Noboru's younger brother, Shōji, born in 1950, graduated from the regional technical high school and went to work in a Yokohama auto-parts factory. After a series of machine-shop jobs in the Tokyo area, he

settled into long-term employment with a small pollution control company in Yokohama. He now lives in a public rental apartment with his wife, who works part-time, and their two middle-school children. Like most renters in metropolitan Tokyo, they have all but given up hope of buying a home, although they still enter the periodic lotteries for state-subsidized housing.

Noboru's sister, Yumiko, was born in 1953, and graduated from Shōnai's commercial high school. She left immediately for Tokyo to find work as a buyer for a Tokyo department store. In 1982, after an elaborate Tokyo marriage, she joined her husband in his family's small clothing business. Together they purchased a modest condominium in eastern Tokyo and had a child. In the mid-1980s, however, the business went bankrupt and the couple moved into a small apartment with Yumiko's mother-in-law (who cares for their child during the day). The couple now manages a small pet shop and plan one day to open their own.

Noboru's own decision in the 1960s to go to the agricultural high school was a difficult one, but he has stuck with farming long after most other young men of the settlement have given up. With a full complement of machines, Noboru now handles four hectares of paddyland by himself, an acreage that would have required at least four adults of his parents' generation. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, he had to work half of the year making deliveries for a city bookstore, but he was always trying to come up with ways to make a living by year-round agriculture in a northern climate whose snowy winters allow only a single rice crop. After several experiments, he hit upon a scheme for growing and picking organic vegetables. Bypassing the agricultural cooperative, he joined with two acquaintances from nearby villages to negotiate a long-term contract with a To-

kyo-area consumer cooperative. For his business, Noboru seasonally hires several older men and women of the village, including his mother.

Noboru and Keiko, a year younger, were married in 1973, after introductions through mutual friends of their parents and a very brief courtship. She agreed to the marriage on the condition that she be able to continue as a full-time salesperson at what was then the only department store on the plain. The Itōs readily accepted. Machines made her labor unnecessary, and her job brought the household a regular cash income. Today, with much of Noboru's farm income going directly to the household account at the Agricultural Coop, Keiko's is the largest cash contribution to the family budget.

After nearly 20 years with the department store, she remains on the sales floor. She was offered advancement to the managerial staff but declined because it would have required taking assignments away from the region. Now heading one of the floor sales units, she is required to work ten, sometimes 12, hours a day, and often more hours at home scheduling her unit's overtime.

Both of Noboru's parents (Grandpa Tokuzō and Grandma Fusae) turn 60 this year. They are members of the "Shōwa single-digit generation", as those born in the first part of Emperor Shōwa's era (1926–1934) are called. This is Japan's equivalent of what sociologist Glen Elder has called our "Children of the Depression," and in the Japanese imagination, it embodies the spirit of postwar Japan—committed, hard-working, both proud and wary of the affluence it has produced. The two older Itōs finished elementary school and worked as adolescent field hands during the war years. Grandma's fondest childhood memory, which she retells over and over, is of receiving the certificate of perfect fourth-

grade attendance, earned despite the long walk to school from her upland home. Mutual in-laws brokered their young marriage just after the war ended, and Grandma entered her husband's household as bride, daughter-in-law, and older sister to several of her husband's six siblings who were still in school and at home.

Grandpa Tokuzō never was enthusiastic about farming—he had a bad back and weak stomach—and his wife still complains that he left much of the field work to her and his father. As soon as Noboru's marriage was arranged and he seemed set on farming, Grandpa turned to his real passion, which is dedication to local "good causes", particularly school programs and senior-citizen activities. In 1990, he finishes his fourth four-year term as a Fujishima town councilman. Such longevity is a considerable achievement, especially because he has consistently refused to engage in the usual practice of vote-buying. He is an indefatigable and thus widely liked small-town politician.

His family, it must be said, is more ambivalent about his public activities. They appreciate the status such involvement brings, but Grandma still suspects her husband is malingering, and the younger Itōs see his generosity as a drain on family finances. More seriously, it has meant delaying for a decade or so their hopes of substantially remodeling their house. Twenty years ago, they were among the first to modernize and enlarge their thatched-roof farm house, but now Noboru and Keiko look enviously at the more contemporary living arrangements and amenities in their neighbors' homes. Not surprisingly, they were delighted when Grandpa announced his decision to retire in the fall of 1990.

In the years since her own contributions to the paddy fields became unnecessary, Noboru's mother Fusae has risen most mornings at five o'clock to earn a bit

of money doing piece work at home. For several years, she did small-wire soldering for the electric parts company; recently she has been doing finish work for girls' clothing at 200 yen per piece. At 6:30, she stretches her sore back with the radio exercise program, and then she and Keiko prepare breakfast. While the children are at school, she tends the family's large vegetable garden and continues her piece work. Grandma Fusae has been generally happy to assume much of the burden of raising her three grandchildren. As a young bride, she had to return to the fields immediately after giving birth to her own three children, who were looked after by her mother-in-law. So now she enjoys this long-delayed chance to be a mother.

Keiko and Noboru's three children all moved up the educational ladder this year. The oldest, a daughter, passed a highly competitive exam to enter Tsuruoka South, the region's preeminent high school; the second, a son and putative household successor, entered Fujishima's junior high school, while the youngest, a second son, began elementary school in Watamae. (Regional public works programs have rebuilt all three schools within the last five years.)

The Itōs' present educational concerns focus on the older two. Unlike the graduates of other Shōnai high schools, those of Tsuruoka South are expected to go on to college, but Shōnai's best school is still far from the top of the national pyramid. Personal ambitions and adult expectations push the students to achievement that even Tsuruoka South's regular, fast-paced curriculum cannot prepare them for. This year, fully 120 of the 220 graduating seniors chose to take an extra year for intensive exam preparation, either by themselves (as so-called *rōnin*) or at special academies. As high-school graduates, Keiko and Noboru improved upon their parents' elementary education, and they would be proud—

though also saddened—to see their daughter earn a college degree. While the diploma will be a great honor, it will almost certainly lead to their daughter's leaving the region for work or marriage.

This heightens their anxieties about their older son. Given the three-year junior high system, they have 18 months before they must decide which high school entrance exam he will sit for. Is there a future in the family's farming? Is he interested? Should he be encouraged? Noboru has a new-found enthusiasm for farming and the experience to develop a farming business partially independent of the cooperative network. This still does not give him the confidence to imagine a long-term future for Fujishima agriculture. Like virtually every other parent in Watamae, he will probably urge his son to consider other work.



For the moment, though, rice, and rice farming, remain central to the fortunes and feelings of the Itōs. There are many ways in which Noboru's life has diverged from that of his younger brother and sister in metropolitan Tokyo. However, even to members of this "full-time" farming household, the satisfactions and concerns of daily life are far more broadly defined by their place in regional, not rural, Japan. Grandpa Tokuzō's local good works, Grandma Fusae's efforts to keep working, Keiko's current overtime pressures, the children's educational

choices, the plans for remodeling the house—all are conditioned by, and expressed in, the terms of mainstream Japanese life. This is true even for Noboru's farming and food processing. For economic advantage and ideological satisfaction, his personal occupation remains the family's image. His case demonstrates, however, the anachronism of the notion of a full-time farm family, even for those few who still claim such an identity.

It would be a mistake to conclude from the Itō's lifeways that there is no future for farming in rural Japan. Farmers like Noboru now believe that national overproduction and international demands for rice imports make eventual liberalization of the rice market inevitable. With that will come the collapse of rice-based policies and rice-centered farming. To these farmers, however, the issue is not the stark opposition of cultural sentimentalism or economic rationality posed by urban commentators and foreign critics. The farmers recognize that in postwar Japan, agriculture has been a catalyst in regional development, while rice has carried a heavy symbolic load in defining that agriculture. "Home of Rice and the Lion Dance" is as effective—and misleading—a tug on urban heart-strings as were American news reports of bankruptcy auctions of family farms in the Midwest. The future the farmers now expect only heightens the contradiction they must resolve. If any farming is to remain viable in regional Japan, rice will have to be much less important economically, even while continuing to enjoy cultural preeminence. Both the profits and prestige that farmers need to survive will depend on their ability to manage this paradox.

RESTORING ORDER TO THE HOUSE OF JAPAN

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by Margaret Lock

In a study conducted six years ago, a team of Japanese researchers asked children in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan to draw a picture of a typical evening meal. Although most of the children depicted a family sitting together around a dinner table, a significant number of the Japanese children drew a single child holding a bowl of noodles while seated in front of the television set. These results reinforced a concern already voiced by influential commentators in Japan, including government officials, that the modern family was in trouble, its individual members too occupied with their own activities to find time for each other.

Not everyone shares this concern, of course. Nor does it conform with what many Japanese, from farmers to small business owners, see in their own daily lives. Nevertheless, the sentiment that Japan may be paying too high a human price for its economic "miracle" is certainly in the air.

If, for example, one scans the headlines of newspapers and popular magazines published during the past 15 years or so, one is left with a distinct impression of unease: "More Girls, Housewives Becoming Drug Addicts"; "Schools Reverting to Corporal

Punishment"; "The Dying Family"; "More Family Suicides"; "More Middle-Aged Men Killing Themselves"; "Housewife Anxiety Rate Rises to 98%." In one article that appeared in a 1984 edition of the influential *Asahi* newspaper, "Japanese Youth Unhappiest, Despite Economic Growth," the author worried that young people were part of "a floating generation, without any sense of purpose. And the real problem lies in the family."

Yasuhiko Yuzawa, a sociologist of the family at Tokyo's Ochanomizu University, cautions that the media frequently take statistics out of context, creating the mistaken impression that the family is developing along pathological lines. He claims that the incidence of serious family disorders, including infanticide, parricide, family suicide, illegitimacy, and divorce, has not increased in absolute terms. In his view, the modern Japanese family is not in crisis.

But such voices of moderation are increasingly drowned out by a chorus of high-placed worriers—government bureaucrats, leaders of the long-reigning Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), commentators from various academic disciplines and professions known collectively as *hyōronka* (social critics). In official documents and



Painting of a traditional family scene by Miyagawa Chōshun (1682–1752).

the media, these commentators, mostly conservative, tend to advance a common critique. They charge that the social and psychological maladies that accompany modernization—alienation, depression, assorted neuroses, anti-social and even criminal behavior—have been aggravated, if not caused, by the disappearance of the traditional “extended” family and its replacement by the modern “nuclear” family: a household restricted to parents and children. According to the *hyōronka*, the modern family, by failing to cultivate traditional values, has allowed selfish individualism to erode concern for the well-being of the family group. And without strong group loyalties, the commentators caution, the health of the nation is itself at risk.

Not surprisingly, Japanese mothers receive much of the blame for the family crisis. Social critic Jun Etō offered what may be described as the typical conservative diagnosis in his widely discussed 1979 article, “The Breakdown of Motherhood is Wrecking Our Children.” Etō argued that danger-

ous “ideologues” had encouraged people to think that women who devote their lives to raising children are victims of a “feudalistic, slavish, and humiliating” patriarchal system. If too many women come to accept this ideology, he warned, Japanese children would inevitably suffer.

Critics of the reactionaries, including Yasuhiko Yuzawa, say that the contemporary family deserves praise not blame. In addition to playing a crucial role in Japan’s postwar recovery, it reduced the exploitation and abuse of women and children. Yet other commentators, particularly women critics such as Keiko Higuchi, believe that while the structure of the family has changed, the old gender inequities persist. They endure, they say, because traditional values, particularly notions about women’s “natural” inferiority and subordination, have not significantly changed.

Debate over the family—and women’s role in it—has intensified during the last decade, but it is not new. In some respects, the most recent round began as early as

1868, at the beginning of the Meiji Restoration. Setting out to create a modern nation-state, a process already set in motion by the preceding Tokugawa regime, the Meiji leaders at first appeared to commit themselves to certain liberal reforms. The inferior position of women immediately became a bone of contention, and a number of influential Meiji politicians such as Yukichi Fukuzawa and Arinori Mori called for fairer treatment of women and the abandonment of such practices as the keeping of concubines.

Masanao Nakamura, another prominent Meiji statesmen and a Christian convert who traveled extensively in the West, helped popularize in Japan the contemporary European notion of "the affectionate wife, wise mother." Translated as *ryōsai kenbo*, the phrase was used by Nakamura much as it was used in 19th-century Europe: to promote the idea that education would make women better able to nurture and educate their children at home. Nakamura made his position more palatable to conservatives by arguing that such education would emphasize moral values and domestic science. Partly in response to foreign pressure, the Meiji government took steps to implement some of Nakamura's suggestions.

Modest though it may seem, the status accorded the *ryōsai kenbo* represented a vast improvement over that of women in most pre-Meiji samurai and merchant households, a status crudely summed up in the epithet "borrowed womb." At the very least, the good wife and wise mother was able to exercise authority in her own household. She did not exist simply to produce offspring for the paternal line.

Encouraged by such progress, women themselves began to campaign for their

rights, but their efforts soon came up against a rising tide of criticism directed against liberalism and the "unsettling" influences of the West. Conservatives, particularly discontented samurai, gained greater influence within the Meiji leadership, and when the Meiji Civil Code was instituted in 1898, it stripped women of almost all of their gains. Despite liberal-sounding language and certain concessions to the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal, the code effectively denied women any legal standing, relegating them to the same category as the deformed and mentally incompetent. Furthermore, the code imposed on all of Japanese society the family order of the warrior samurai class, an arrangement that gave the male head of the household all power and left women with virtually no control over their lives, property, or families.

Above all, the Meiji Civil Code reflected the regime's growing concern for standardization and social control. Before its adoption, family arrangements had been quite flexible in Japan. Inheritance practices were loose enough to provide for the needs of individual families, and marriage and courtship customs were subject to local variations. People living in some rural areas were allowed to choose their own marriage partners, for example.

But various as Japanese family arrangements had been, all of them could be broadly subsumed under the concept of the *ie* (pronounced *ee-ay*), which roughly translates as "household." Referring both to the house and its residents, the *ie* emphasized the ties of the living family, a property-owning corporate group, both to its ancestors and to the generations to come. The *ie* did not extend lat-

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erally. Only the married couple, their children (biological and adopted), and grandparents lived under one roof. All children except the one designated as heir were expected to marry out of the *ie* and become incorporated into other households, often at some distance from their birthplaces. (Modern Japanese cities are largely populated by descendants of sons who could not expect to inherit property.) Unlike the peasant families of China, in which the division of patrimony gave rise to large, extended clans, Japanese families tended to be small, self-contained economic units. But, again, the make-up of the *ie* varied considerably according to region and class.

To eliminate such variety, the Meiji leaders imposed the rigid discipline and formality of the samurai class on the families of farmers, artisans, and merchants. Inheritance was formally restricted to the eldest son, who, unless he was mentally incompetent, assumed complete responsibility for the stewardship of the family fortune and for the well-being, behavior, and marriages of other family members. Women were no longer allowed any say in choosing a spouse, and were not even secure within a marriage until they had successfully produced a male heir. The Confucian tenets of filial piety and unquestioning loyalty governed family relationships, and the primary obligation of all family members was to preserve the continuity of the *ie*.

Thus organized, the *ie* served as a highly effective tool for the promotion of loyalty and patriotism. By fusing the ethos of emperor worship with the new household ideal, the Meiji rulers fostered the concept of a family-state (*kazoku kokka*). Each *ie* became a microcosm of the nation, the all-encompassing family unit of which the Emperor was the parent figure.

The Meiji strategy of state-building, with the highly formalized *ie* at its center, sur-

vived up until the end of World War II. Not all Japanese families conformed to the samurai *ie*, despite the wide influence of the Meiji bureaucracy, but it is this arrangement that most people have in mind when they talk about the traditional family.

The end of World War II was the beginning of the end of the Meiji *ie*. Among the many reforms the Allied Occupation forced the Japanese to adopt were laws and codes affecting the family order and women's rights. The Revised Voting Law of 1945 gave women the right to vote and run for electoral office, and subsequent legislation established the principle (if not the reality) of equal education and equal pay for equal work. The Revised Civil Code of 1947 dealt directly with family matters. It dismantled the legal foundation of the Meiji *ie* by assuring women the right to marry whom they chose, to sue for divorce, and to inherit, own, and control property.

It would be naive to assume that the traditional family disappeared overnight, but change was under way. In certain respects, however, the nuclear family was nothing new. Households had begun to shrink well before World War II. During the 1920s, only about 30 percent of all families had three or more generations living under one roof, compared with 20 percent today. The mean size of households went from five in 1930 to three by the early 1980s, in part because of the growing number of single-family households. As such figures suggest, the transformation of the prewar extended family into the postwar nuclear family was far less dramatic, at least demographically, than conservative rhetoric would lead one to believe.

The "nuclearization" of the family during the postwar years was accompanied by a related phenomenon: the rise of the New Middle Class. Indeed, in the usage of many Japanese social analysts, the modern nuclear family and the New Middle Class have

become almost synonymous. This often makes it difficult to determine what the label refers to—class, family arrangements, values, or all three. Reality and rhetoric are further confused by the fact that, in polls, 90 percent of all Japanese respondents identify themselves as thoroughly middle class. (And while there is much less of an income spread in Japan than in the United States, the gap between the salaries of, say, business executives and factory workers is wide enough to make such survey responses almost meaningless.)

Despite its imprecision, the term New

and Westernized behavioral patterns—all of these, claim the conservative *hyōronka*, have disrupted the traditional forms of control formerly exercised by the powerful head of the *ie*. They point to the fact that the *ie* of old was not only an economic unit but the locus of spiritual values, prominent among which was veneration of the ancestors. The felt presence of the ancestors legitimized the authority of parents and made the fulfillment of parental obligations a sacred duty. The moral and spiritual training of children was considered the most important task not only for parents but also for



The typical nuclear family of Japan's New Middle Class: father, mother, and two children.

Middle Class appears frequently in the media, where, like the *ie* of prewar days, it is taken to mean the living arrangements and the ethos of the majority of the population today. The average New Middle Class household—inevitably suburban—includes a white-collar salaried husband (the “salaryman”), a homemaker wife (an updated good wife and wise mother), and two studious children. And it is this family that commentators point to when they discuss Japan’s declining spiritual health.

Gender equality, liberalization of parent-child relations, egalitarian inheritance laws,

grandparents.

Not so in the modern household, say the *hyōronka*. The elderly have been abandoned, condemned to “dying alone and unwanted.” And without the watchful gaze of the ancestors, young couples, especially wives, are inadequate to the task of raising the future citizens of Japan.

Some Westerners may be surprised to learn that the modern Japanese housewife has been judged so deficient. After all, in our press and even in scholarly studies, the Japanese housewife appears to be the model parent, the real secret behind Ja-

pan's postwar success. In a recent *National Geographic* article, for example, journalist Deborah Fallows reports that "it is a commonplace statement in Japan that the nation's hardworking housewives are its secret weapon . . . the backbone of the nation that enables its men to perform their economic miracle, and the insurance that the next generation of Japanese will behave in the same hardworking way." Many in the West have read that the Japanese mother is impeccable in her housekeeping, tireless in the care and education of her children, and stoical in her acceptance of the fact that she must do all of this on her own. While her husband is gone all day, she scrupulously attends to the family budget, works for the PTA, or drills her children so they can pass the stiff school entrance examinations.

While this image, and the praise that attends it, may still be "commonplace" among some Japanese, the conservative political establishment and a growing number of social critics present the housewife in a far less flattering light. One stereotype that frequently appears in the media is that of the new housewife in her fully automated household, a creature of luxury and ease who enjoys *san shoku hiru ne tsuki* (implying an easy, permanent job with three meals and a nap thrown in). Conservative commentators blame these "professional" housewives for what is called the "feminization" of the family. Modern mothers, they say, are preoccupied with their children and enter into a "symbiotic" relationships with them. Several writers, including the physician Shigemori Kyūtoku, author of the best-selling *Illnesses Caused by Mother* (1979), have suggested that young women have lost their "natural child-rearing instincts" and begun to treat their children like "pets."

By many accounts, suburban mothers themselves are suffering. Prominent Japanese psychologists claim that young moth-

ers are excessively controlling and compulsively fastidious. As a result, they are particularly vulnerable to a host of new *bunmeibyō* (diseases of civilization), including "high-rise apartment neurosis," "moving-day depression," the "kitchen syndrome," and "menopausal syndrome." But, to most *hyōronka*, women's liberation is not the solution. One Tokyo physician explained to me that even though women had become neurotically obsessed with "trying to create a good child," they had also lost their ability to persevere. "They've lost all that since women's lib," he concluded. "They have poor self-control now."

What, then, is a suburban Japanese mother to do? Damned if she stays at home, she is damned if she ventures out. Seeking employment outside the home, most conservative *hyōronka* say, is both unseemly and unnecessary. It leads to the "masculinization" of women. Fortunately, one respectable option now exists: that of the "New Mother." According to professor and author Masatoshi Takada, the "New Mother" skillfully balances part-time work, hobbies, and family life. The "New Mother" is deemed successful if she can negotiate the narrows between selfishness on one side and obsession and loneliness on the other. It remains to be seen whether the "New Mother" will become a workable model of motherhood for future generations of women, but at least it offers a possible escape from the present double-bind.

In some ways, fathers receive even harsher blame for the perceived family pathology. Their greatest fault is absenteeism. Casting what critics call "a thin shadow," modern fathers are seldom at home. When they are, they serve as weak role models, failing to apply discipline when it's needed. Recently, a widely circulated Health and Welfare Ministry document called on men

to demonstrate more masculinity in what it implied were mother-centered families.

The question, of course, is how they will do this. It is difficult, if not impossible, for most salaried employees to spend more time with their families. Their normal days are long, and evening drinking bouts are considered part of an executive's responsibilities. Salarymen are also required by their companies to be away from their homes for extended periods, often for months and, in the case of foreign assignments, for years at a time. (It is widely believed that refusing such assignments jeopardizes one's chances for promotion.) To make matters worse, families are seldom given a relocation allowance, and even if they were, most parents would be reluctant to disrupt their children's schooling. As a result, temporary single-parent families are quite common in Japan. But while many critics lament the problem, few closely scrutinize its connections with the demanding corporate culture that governs the lives of so many Japanese men.

The media are also quick to point to the various "stress-related ailments" afflicting businessmen, including heart problems, loss of appetite, impotence, and insomnia. Again, however, *hyōronka* lay the blame on overwork and "weak personalities." Ridiculed even in the comics, the "worker bee" of today is cast as an incompetent husband and father. Gone, critics suggest, is the controlled samurai masculinity that characterized fathers of earlier generations.

Given their views of modern mothers and fathers, it is hardly surprising that professional critics think that Japanese children are also in trouble. One topic lately receiving wide media attention is the "school-refusal syndrome." A child suffering from this affliction typically remains in bed all day, listless, depressed, and unable to face the challenge of school. While some commentators claim that this syndrome is

rampant, I suspect that its incidence is such that a similar rate would cause little concern in North America.

However widespread, the "school-refusal syndrome" is one of those maladies, so beloved by the media, that crystallize a society's anxieties about itself and its health. The typical school-refusal child comes from a nuclear family; he (for it is nearly always a boy) has an Absent Father and either a Selfish or an Obsessive Mother. He may well be fed pre-packaged food by his mother, and his brain functions poorly as a result of countless hours spent in front of a television. He is bad at playing with other children, does not get on well in groups, "sticks out" inappropriately, and may even be physically weak. His personality is dangerously deficient. He may be stubborn, timid, withdrawn, or egotistical, and he sometimes becomes violent. He suffers from stomach problems, headaches, and even kidney or heart disease.

It is easy to see how the school-refusal child reflects all that is thought to be wrong with the New Middle Class. It is also obvious why the school-refusal syndrome serves as an ideal rhetorical device in the conservative critique of Japan's social ills. Not everybody believes the rhetoric, of course, but very few Japanese dismiss it out of hand, for at least two reasons. First, the rhetoric is used by people in positions of authority, and respect for authority, political as well as professional, is still strong. Second, there is a kernel of truth to it. Modern "professional" housewives do lead lives of comparative ease, certainly more comfortable lives than were led by most women who went before them (with the possible exception of the aristocracy). While most people in Japan—men, employed women, and children—are worked to the limit of their endurance, the housewife has time to play tennis or decorate sugar cubes for her afternoon cup of tea. Even suburban house-

wives confess to some guilt about their condition. When surveyed, such women report that they believe that running the household and raising children is crucial; nevertheless, most of the women I interviewed characterize themselves as being (at times) weak-willed, lacking in self-control, and inferior to their own mothers.

But there is also a third reason why so many people are listening to the worried *hyōronka*. By the year 2025, people 65 and over will make up a remarkable 23.4 percent of the Japanese populace. Government officials view this “graying of Japan” with something close to panic. What, they wonder, will be done with all of these old people if the nuclear family of the New Middle Class makes no place for them?

In recent media discussions of the issue, government and conservative commentators have called for a return to the traditional extended household—the *ie*—with one rather important modification. Instead of the authoritarian father, the good wife and wise mother will be the center of the revived *ie*. Rather than making plastic flowers or decorating sugar cubes, she will become the primary provider of services to her extended family. She will look after her aged parents-in-law and take care of any family members who have chronic illnesses or disabilities. She will continue to invest much of her time caring for and educating her children. And she will practice frugal home economics to accumulate savings that can be used to supplement meager old-age pensions.

What goes generally unacknowledged in the official literature is the fact that many women already do all of these things—and

often hold down jobs in addition. Studies indicate that married couples quite often take in their elderly relatives, usually after their children have married and left the household. Nor does one have to look very far to find a middle-aged woman who has spent years of her life nursing an incontinent parent-in-law.

There is no question, though, that Japan faces the same decision all other modern societies face: It must determine how the burden of caring for dependents such as children, the sick, and the elderly should be divided between the family and the state. Japanese social and economic policy, as promoted for most of the postwar era by the ruling LDP, extracts a large amount of labor from its workers, keeps taxes reasonably low, and carefully limits social services on the assumption that the family should be willing to take up the slack.

But in any postmodern society, particularly one that is rapidly “graying,” such a system leaves many people uncared for. If present trends continue, it is estimated that by the year 2008, the number of full-time housewives will equal the number of elderly suffering from senile dementia or other serious infirmities. This doesn’t sound like the harmonious extended *ie* that the ideologues invoke when they call for a return to the “good” old days. Nor does the rhetoric square with the fact that at present the majority of women work out of economic necessity and that many men are deprived of a family life altogether. It is little wonder that a growing number of people are beginning to wonder what economic growth and development are really all about, and for whose benefit they race blindly on.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

EVERYDAY LIFE IN JAPAN

Japanese culture may ultimately thwart Western efforts to comprehend it, but the Western urge to "read" Japanese society has become, if anything, even keener during recent years. The reason is obvious. Americans and Europeans want to understand the engine that has powered Japan's economic ascent during the postwar era.

Anyone curious about the workings of this complex social machine would do well to start with the late Edwin O. Reischauer's **Japanese Today: Change and Continuity** (Harvard Univ., 1988). Reischauer, who was a Harvard professor of history and served as U.S. ambassador to Tokyo, was born in Japan, the son of a Protestant missionary. His knowledge of his subject is intimate, almost familial. But while his view of Japanese "otherness" is more sympathetic than that of the current "revisionist" scholars, he pulls no punches when he treats Japanese foibles and follies: "It is not easy for them to give up their past cozy life, safely insulated by their language barrier and thriving economy, for a more adventurous life dealing with the problems of world peace and the global economy. To put it in dramatic terms, they find it hard to join the human race. For one thing, they still have inadequate skills of communication. More seriously, they have a strong sense of separateness." This extensive revision of his earlier book, **The Japanese** (Harvard, 1977), provides a survey of Japanese history from the third century A.D. through the late 1970s and a shrewd discussion of contemporary political and economic life. Reischauer is at his best, however, when decoding the intangible qualities of Japanese society—interpersonal relationships and values.

Unlike Reischauer, the anthropologist Ruth Benedict never lived in Japan. Her knowledge of the culture was based on extensive reading and on interviews with Japanese-Americans. But though she treated her subject from afar, her book, **Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture** (Houghton Mifflin, 1946; 1989), has become an indispensable introduction to the complexities of the Japanese people. Writing around the end of World

War II, Benedict set out to interpret the contradictions suggested by her book's title: How could a people of such sensitivity and aesthetic refinement also sustain a cult of the sword? To find answers, she explored Japan's hierarchical social system, the importance of reciprocal obligations in relationships, the power of shame, and the related necessity of clearing one's name through revenge or suicide. Self-discipline, Benedict discovered, was the true "sword" of Japanese character: "Japanese of all classes judge themselves and others in terms of a whole set of concepts which depend upon their notion of generalized technical self-control and self-governance."

Scholars generally agree that the strength of Benedict's book is her interpretation of traditional society, but many fault her efforts to show how traditional notions continued to shape modern Japan. Here, clearly, her lack of direct contact proved to be a handicap. Fortunately, it is not one that has afflicted most postwar Western students of Japanese life and culture. Perhaps the best single introduction to their work is Robert J. Smith's **Japanese Society: Tradition, Self, and the Social Order** (Cambridge Univ., 1983). In four masterful lectures, Smith, a Cornell anthropologist, explains how modern Japan became a mass industrial society significantly different from its Western counterparts. Traditional values, including the urge to create a "perfect society," are decisive, he argues. The great difference between Japan and the West "lies less in its organization and institutions than in the way all of its history shows how the Japanese think about man and society and the relationship between the two."

The people who have come to typify the postwar Japanese are, of course, the members of the New Middle Class. During the 1950s, Harvard sociologist Ezra Vogel studied five families in suburban Tokyo, and though his work is now somewhat dated, **Japan's New Middle Class: The Salary Man and his Family in a Tokyo Suburb** (Univ. of Calif., 1963; 1971) remains a valuable portrait of white-collar employees (government and corporate) and their "nuclear" families. Vogel's dissection of chang-

ing family relationships is particularly astute: "It may seem paradoxical that even though the salaried family represents the most radical departure from tradition in many ways, the opportunity of the wife of the salary man to be home and devoted to the children has made the mutual dependency of the mother and child even stronger in the salary-man families than in other occupational groups." For a more extensive (and recent) look at these middle-class housewives, one may turn to Anne E. Imamura's **Urban Japanese Housewives: At Home and in the Community** (Univ. of Hawaii, 1987).

A book that succeeds brilliantly in tracing the lifeways of individuals who were born and raised in prewar and wartime Japan but came to maturity during the postwar years is David W. Plath's **Long Engagements: Maturity in Modern Japan** (Stanford Univ., 1980). Plath, an anthropologist at the University of Illinois, mixes oral autobiographies of four middle-aged men and women residing in the Osaka-Kōbe area with stories from four contemporary novels and short essays bearing on Japanese society. For each of his subjects, including a former "suicide cadet," he shows the sustaining power of "long engagements"—relationships with friends, co-workers, and relatives. Plath's book is most instructive about the ways in which people preserve meaning and individuality as they age, even in a culture so often perceived as group-dominated and conformist.

Other excellent ethnographic studies point

to a similar variety within Japanese society, a diversity stemming from regional as well as occupational differences. To understand the changes in rural Japan during the last 60 years, one should begin with John Embree's **Suye Mura: A Japanese Village** (Univ. of Chicago, 1939; 1964). Embree, the only Western anthropologist to conduct fieldwork in prewar Ja-

pan, produced this study after spending a year in a southern Kyūshū farming village with his wife, Ella Lury Wiswell. During that year, Wiswell kept an extensive journal, rich in details about women's lives. More than 40 years later, Robert J. Smith organized these notes into **The Women of Suye Mura** (Chicago, 1982). One finds no delicate flowers here. The hard-drinking, independent farm women of Suye Mura long resisted Meiji-inspired efforts to make Japanese women into submissive housekeepers. Two other noteworthy studies of rural Japan are Ronald P. Dore's **Shinohata: Portrait of a Japanese Village** (Pantheon, 1978), a wittily drawn portrait of the central Honshū farming village that the author, a British sociologist, visited several times between 1955 and 1975, and **Haru-**

ko's World: A Japanese Farm Woman and Her Community (Stanford, 1983) by Gail Lee Bernstein, a professor of anthropology at the University of Arizona. Both show how mechanization, modernization, and growing prosperity have altered the work habits and outlooks of the nation's highly respected farmers.

When one thinks of Japan's postwar boom,



one thinks primarily of the cities. Today, 31 million people, or roughly one quarter of all Japanese, live in metropolitan Tokyo alone. The growth of the suburbs has been steady, but so far this centrifugal pressure has not killed the inner cities. A resilient urban culture still shapes the lives of many Japanese, providing a sense of order and tradition amid the commercialism and congestion. Theodore C. Bestor, a Columbia University anthropologist, details the daily workings of a middle-class residential and commercial district in **Neighborhood Tokyo** (Stanford, 1989) to show just how vital neighborhood life remains. His book nicely complements Ronald Dore's earlier study of the life in a lower-middle-class neighborhood, **City Life in Japan: A Study of a Tokyo Ward** (Calif., 1958).

Bestor's book shows how the family firm merges work and family life in ways reminiscent of the traditional home. But for most other Japanese, work takes place in spheres completely separate from the household. In **Japanese Blue Collar: The Changing Tradition** (Calif., 1971), based partly on his own experience as an employee in two Japanese factories, sociologist Robert E. Cole deals with everything from wage-scales and promotion to the paternalistic style of company-worker relations. A worker's-eye view of life within a public corporation can be found in Paul H. Noguchi's **Delayed Departures, Overdue Arrivals** (Hawaii, 1990). Noguchi, a Japanese-American, hired on with the Japanese National Railways shortly before it was broken up into several private corporations. His novel approach to Japanese corporate life explains what daily reality is like for someone whose greatest ambition is to rise to the position of stationmaster. To succeed requires not only high examination scores but prodigious stamina: Assistant stationmasters routinely work the 24-hour *tetsuya* shift, which includes only four hours of sleep.

The Japanese work hard, but they do occasionally break for other rituals of everyday life, including marriage. In premodern Japan, weddings were modest household ceremonies that sealed what were often arranged marriages. But today more than 90 percent of all unions,

whether arranged or elected, take place in "wedding palaces," complete with Shinto or even Christian trappings. Walter Edwards, another Japanese-American ethnographer, worked for a time in one of these palaces. His **Modern Japan Through Its Weddings: Gender, Person, and Society in Ritual Portrayal** (Stanford, 1989) shows how commercialization affects, and reflects, the changing symbolic content of the Japanese wedding. His analysis of ceremony leads Edwards to conclusions about the meaning of marriage to contemporary Japanese: "Thus while the legal form of the *ie* [the traditional family extending across generations] has been abolished, its underlying principles of hierarchy and harmonious interdependence—principles that inevitably deny the autonomy of the individual—survive in its successor as basic [husband-wife] unit."

Before work or marriage comes schooling, and a vast literature on Japanese education now exists. One book that probes beyond the clichés and generalizations about the nation's postwar educational triumphs is **Japan's High Schools** by Thomas P. Rohlen (Calif., 1983). The author, a Stanford anthropologist, investigated five different high schools in the industrial port city of Kōbe. As well as describing school organization, classroom instruction, teacher and union politics, textbooks, and extracurricular activities, Rohlen reveals the chasm separating a fast-track prep school at the top of Kōbe system from a technical school at the bottom. One leaves this book with a keen appreciation of the extent to which examinations are fate in modern Japan.

The competitiveness bred in Japanese schools translates well into economic competitiveness in the global marketplace. But as many of these books suggest, competitiveness can foster individualism, and a too-powerful individualism threatens the very core of Japanese values: the group loyalties expressed through powerful connections with family, neighborhood, region, and nation. For all of Japan's differences, then, its fate is not so different from that of other nations that have achieved prosperity and global influence. It must avoid becoming the victim of its own success.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This bibliography was put together with the assistance of Frank Joseph Shulman, author of *Japan*, Vol. 103, *World Bibliographical Series* (ABC Clio, 1989).

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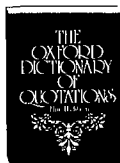
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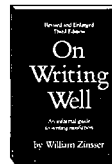
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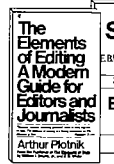
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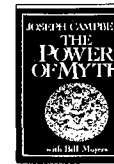
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IN PRAISE OF THE ESSAY

Philosophy begins in response to the Delphic injunction, "Know Thyself." The essay begins more modestly, with Montaigne's question, "What do I know?" The tentative, questioning nature of the essay permits it to explore the doubts, terrors, and hopes that arise during periods of great change. According to O. B. Hardison, this explains why the essay—along with the office memo—is the most widely read form of writing today.

by O. B. Hardison, Jr.

The ancient god Proteus knew the secrets of the past and the future. Those who would learn them were required to bind him with chains before asking their questions. When bound, Proteus would change into all manner of shapes to escape. Menelaus visited Proteus when becalmed at Pharos and forced him to reveal the fates of Agamemnon and Odysseus. Aristaeus, a shepherd of Tempe, was told by his mother Cyrene to visit Proteus when Aristaeus's bees were dying. As Vergil announces in the *Georgics*, she advised: "The more he turns himself into different shapes, the more you, my son, must hold on to those strong chains."

Writing an essay on the essay is appropriate in an age that delights in strange loops and Gödelian recursions and that has announced, more often perhaps than it really needs to, that every art form is first and foremost a comment on itself. More than any other literary form, the essay, like Proteus, resists all efforts to contain it.

Let me put one card on the table immediately. There is a rumor going about that the essay is an endangered species. There have even been calls to "save the essay," as if it were a sensitive species on the point of extinction. Nothing could be more absurd. The essay is tough, infinitely adaptable, and ubiquitous. It has more in common with the German cockroach than with the Tennessee snail darter. The analogy has hidden relevance. The cockroach is a primitive creature. It appears very early on the evolutionary chain. The essay is also primitive. Roland Barthes suggests that, in the evolution of projections of the imagination, it may precede the formation of all concepts of genre.

I recall that the newspapers of my childhood, in addition to printing letters to the editor, regularly paid homage to "literature" by including poems. The poems were often maudlin and sometimes egregious, but they were recognizably poems.

Today, how many poems do you find in the newspaper? Unless you read a paper

that comes out once a week in a remote rural county and has a name something like the *Culpeper Eagle*, you do not find a single one. Instead, in any up-to-date newspaper, you find essays. They are called op-ed pieces, and their authors are nationally syndicated. These authors do not need support from foundations. Some earn more in an hour than many Americans do in six months. People read these essays. Today, the essay is one of only two literary genres of which this can be said, the other being the memo.

I return, now, to the myth I have invoked. The chief characteristic of Proteus is elusiveness. If there is no genre more widespread in modern letters than the essay, there is also no genre that takes so many shapes and that refuses so successfully to resolve itself, finally, into its own shape.

Francis Bacon concludes in *The Wisdom of the Ancients* that Proteus symbolizes matter. He adds, "If any skillful servant of Nature shall bring force to bear on matter, and shall vex it and drive it to extremities as if with the purpose of reducing it to nothing," it will assume all shapes but return "at last to itself."

I take heart from Bacon's *Wisdom*. In spite of the danger that the essay may fight back, I propose in the following pages to vex it and drive it to extremities in the hope that by the end it will return to itself and reveal something of its true nature.

The word "essay" comes from the Old French *essai*, defined by Partridge as "a trial, an attempt." From this meaning comes the English "to essay" in the sense of "to make a trial or an attempt," as in Emerson's statement, "I also will essay to be."

The word also comes into English via the Norman French *assaier*, "to assay," meaning to try or test, as in testing the quality of a mineral ore.

German has two words for essay, *Abhandlung*, a "dealing with" something, and *Aufsatz*, a "setting forth." Herder's "Essay on the Origin of Speech" is an *Abhandlung*; Martin Heidegger's essay on thingliness—"The Thing"—is an *Aufsatz*. *Abhandlungen* tend to be ponderous and, you might say, Germanic. *Aufsätze* have an

altogether lighter touch—a touch, one imagines, like that of Goethe tapping out the rhythms of the hexameter on the back of his Roman mistress.

As far as I have been able to learn, the first use of "essay" to mean a literary composition occurred in the title of the most famous collection of such compositions ever published, Montaigne's *Essais*. If you look for the first English use of the term in this sense in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, you may be surprised at what you find. Instead of a majestic series of entries marching forward from the Middle Ages, you encounter the following

statement: "Essay. A composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of a subject; originally implying want of finish . . . but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style though limited in range. The use in this sense is apparently taken from Montaigne, whose *Essais* were first published in 1580."

In other words, Montaigne invented the term, and the English took it directly from him. Another surprise: In English the term was first used on the title page of the *Essays* that Francis Bacon published in



1597. It made its second appearance on the title page of John Florio's translation of—you guessed it—Montaigne's *Essayes; or, Morall, Politike, and Militairie Discourses*, published in 1603. Thereafter, the term was applied more and more broadly to any composition that did not fall obviously into some other, better-defined category. It plays the same role in literary criticism that the term "miscellaneous" does in budgeting.

Three historical facts supplement these lexicographical observations. First, the essay did not appear out of nowhere. Montaigne's principal guide in the art of the essay was the Greek writer Plutarch, whose *Opera Moralia* consist of short compositions on topics of general interest, such as the cessation of oracles, whether fish or land animals are more crafty, whether water or fire is more useful, the reasons for not running into debt, and the man in the moon. According to Montaigne, "of all the authors I know, [Plutarch] most successfully commingled art with nature and insight with knowledge." Another writer much admired by Montaigne and more so by Bacon is Seneca, whose unfailingly uplifting letters often come close to being essays.

Second, in spite of this and other precedents, the essay is something new. In the 16th century, the standard prose form was the oration. Orations are utilitarian; they seek to accomplish something. As the rhetoric books say, their object is to persuade. Montaigne calls this characteristic the *Hoc age*—the "Do this!"—impulse. To persuade efficiently, orators developed a standard kind of organization called *dispositio*. *Dispositio* is the literary equivalent of the foregone conclusion.

Montaigne carefully disavows all such advance planning. In the essay "On Education," he quotes with obvious relish the comment of the king of Sparta on a long speech by the ambassadors from Samos:

"As for your beginning, I no longer remember it; nor consequently, the middle; as for the conclusion, I do not desire to do anything about it." In "On the Resemblance of Children," he asserts, "I do not correct my first ideas by later ones . . . I wish to represent the progress of my moods, and that each part shall be seen at its birth." In another context he adds, "I have no other drill-master than chance to arrange my writings. As my thoughts present themselves to my mind, I bring them together." So much for *dispositio*.

As Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* shows, orations can be impressive and informative. They can even, on occasion, be persuasive. There is little room in them, however, for spontaneity. They move ahead with the elephantine thump of the *Abhandlung* rather than the butterfly tango of the *Aufsatz*. The point of orations is not to reveal private feelings but to make things happen.

In fact, the essay is the opposite of an oration. It is a literary trial balloon, an informal stringing together of ideas to see what happens. Let's be frank. From the standpoint of the oration, the essay is feckless. It does not seek to do anything, and it has no standard method even for doing nothing. Montaigne calls essay writing "that stupid enterprise" ("*cette sottie entreprise*"), and when Roland Barthes delivered an oration indicating his acceptance of a chair at the College de France, he apologized for his literary philandering. "I must admit," he said, "that I have produced only essays."

Third fact. Even in its infancy, the essay shows its Protean heritage. Montaigne's essays are associative, discursive, informal, meandering, and slovenly. Being the first of their kind, they ought at least to have become models for what followed, in the same way that even disreputable people—muggers, prostitutes, con men, and so forth—will become models if they are

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really good at what they do. They did not. Bacon's essays were inspired by Montaigne's but are, if anything, anti-Montaignian. Especially in their 1597 form, they are aphoristic, staccato, assertive, hortatory, abrasive.

This brings us to style.

Morris Croll wrote the classic study of 16th-century prose style. He calls Montaigne's style "libertine" and Bacon's "Tacitean." Libertine sentences slither along from phrase to phrase with no proper ending. They are just what you would expect from writing that uses quotations promiscuously and refuses to organize itself. "Tacitean" comes from the name of the Roman historian Tacitus. Tacitus was curt to the point of obscurity, and his name has the same root as English "taciturn." That too is appropriate. In their first edition, Bacon's *Essays* are curt and businesslike. Not a word wasted. Time is money.

In fact both Montaigne and Bacon were reacting not only against the oration but also against the rhetorical exhibition of the periodic sentence. In the earlier Renaissance, Cicero was the preeminent model for such writing. His sentences make language into a kind of sound sculpture, whose closest English equivalent is found in the elegantly figured prose of John Milton's *Areopagitica*.

Montaigne and Bacon, however, were anti-Ciceronian. In "Of the Education of Children," Montaigne recalls, "At the height of Cicero's eloquence many were moved to admiration; but Cato merely laughed at it . . . I would have the subject predominate, and so fill the imagination of him who listens that he shall have no remembrance of the words." And again, in "Of Books": "To confess the truth boldly . . . [Cicero's] manner of writing seems to me irksome . . . If I spend an hour reading him . . . , I find oftenest only wind."

Bacon put the same idea in terms of *res* and *verba*, in terms, that is, of meaning and hot air. In the *Advancement of Learning* he observes that the Ciceronian humanists searched "more after wordes than matter, and more after the choisenesse of the Phrase, and the round and cleane composition of the sentence, and the sweet falling of the clauses . . . than after the weight of

matter, worth of subject, soundnesse of argument, life of invention, or depth of judgement."

His style enacts this rejection of humanism. Its harshness is a way of announcing his contempt for Ciceronian flatulence—his commitment to weight of matter rather than to choiceness of phrase.

Does this mean that the early essay abandons rhetoric? Absolutely not. It means, first, that the early essay substitutes one kind of rhetoric for another. Since the new kind of rhetoric is unconventional and thus unfamiliar, it means, second, that the early essay seeks to give the impression of novelty. And since the impression of novelty depends on the use of formulas that are unfamiliar and therefore not obvious to the reader, it means, third, that the early essay seems to create the illusion of being unstudied and spontaneous. It pretends to spring either from the freely associating imagination of the author or from the rigid grammar of the world of things.

There is a formula for such a style: "*ars celare artem*," art that conceals art. Montaigne announces: "The way of speaking that I like is a simple and natural speech, the same on paper as on the lips . . . far removed from affectation, free, loose, and bold." The statement is charming, but it is demonstrably false. Both Montaigne and Bacon revised their essays over and over again. The lack of artifice is an illusion created by years of effort.

I think we have some chains around Proteus. Now let us begin to vex him.

The first edition of Montaigne's *Essays* appeared in 1580. It lacked the present Book III. Another, moderately augmented edition appeared in 1582. A third version, with a new book (incorrectly labeled "Book V") and with major revisions and additions, appeared in 1588. Finally, Montaigne's famous "fille d'alliance," Marie de Gournay, issued a posthumous edition in 1595, which with further major changes was the basis of standard editions of the *Essays* until the 20th century.

The record shows that Montaigne was a familiar type, the literary neurotic who can never let his works alone, even after they are published. In general, as he revised, the self-revelation of the essays became more

overt. That is, the more clothes he put on, the more he dressed up, the more he exposed himself as a man of conflicts.

Bacon's first 10 essays may be said to initiate literary minimalism. They seem to consist chiefly of sayings from his commonplace book. The Renaissance would have called the sayings "flowers" or "sentences." Bacon's strategy may owe something to the hugely successful collection of aphorisms made by Erasmus—the *Adagia*—but Erasmus could never resist the temptation to gild every aphorism with a commentary. In the first edition of the *Essays*, Bacon offers his flowers plain.

Like Montaigne, Bacon revised compulsively. By 1625, the 10 original essays had grown to 58 plus an incomplete 59th. The essays also grew obese over the years. "Of Studies," for example, roughly doubled in size between 1597 and 1625.

Montaigne's revisions made his essays richer. Bacon's revisions seem to me to have been less happy. As his essays enlarge, they lose the taciturnity—the aggressive minimalism—that is the principal source of their power. The sentences become more sequential, more official, more pontifical, more—shall I say it?—like sentences in an oration.

In addition to making the essays more official, Bacon tried to give them philosophical status by suggesting that they were part of the grand philosophical scheme outlined in the *Novum Organum*. By calling his essays "civil and moral," Bacon was proposing them as contributions to the social sciences—specifically, to politics and ethics. In my own opinion, which conflicts with conventional wisdom in this case, the connection of the essays to the program of the *Novum Organum* was an afterthought intended to enhance their dignity.

Whatever the case, philosophy is directly relevant to the early history of the essay. In *Representative Men* Emerson properly calls Montaigne "the skeptic." The first essay that Montaigne wrote is also the longest, most ponderous essay of the lot—Montaigne's *Apology for Raimond Sebond*, which is essay 12 in Book II. Sebond was a late medieval theologian who wrote a *Theologia Naturalis* showing how design in Nature will convince even the most de-

praved agnostic of the truth of the Christian religion. At his father's request, Montaigne translated it from Latin into French.

Sebond's work is the culmination of a long tradition of pious fatuity about the Book of Nature, and once his father was safely in the ground, Montaigne deconstructed it. The deconstruction was so devastating that by the end, very little basis remained for believing in God, or design in Nature, or in anything else. Shakespeare's Hamlet seems to have read the *Apology*, since he quotes from it when he observes that the earth is a pestilent congregation of vapors and man a quintessence of dust.

When you think about them, Hamlet's quotations are appropriate. Long before Hamlet began questioning the state of Denmark, Montaigne's world had been made problematic by the religious controversies of the Reformation and the collapse of traditional verities. This is what the *Apology for Raimond Sebond* is all about. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which occurred just eight years before the first edition of the *Essays*, magnified the shock. If Christians who proclaim themselves models of piety can establish their position only by slaughtering those Christians who disagree with them, what evidence is there that reason has any place at all in religion? In short, a world that seemed solid, reasonable, and self-evident had shown itself to be none of the above. There were times when it seemed to Montaigne like a pestilent contagion of vapors. John Donne makes the same point in familiar lines from his first *Anniversary* on the death of Elizabeth Drury:

And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
The element of fire is quite put out. . . .
'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
All just supply, and all relation.

Historians argue about whether Montaigne was a fideist or a skeptic. The terms are so close that we need not quibble. The fideist believes that God and His ways are utterly beyond human comprehension and that therefore we must accept whatever law or custom the local tyrant tells us to believe. The skeptic systematically demonstrates that man is deceived both by sense-evidence and by reason.

If the skeptics are correct, the proper stance for the philosopher is to doubt everything. This is not nihilism but a reserving of judgment, a determination to be a detached observer rather than a partisan. The Greek term for such detachment is *ataraxia*, which means "calmness" and, by extension, a refusal to become involved. Montaigne explains in the *Apology*: "This attitude of [the skeptics] . . . accepting all objects without inclination and consent, leads them to their Ataraxy, which is a settled condition of life, exempt from the emotions that we experience They are even exempted thereby from zeal about their own doctrine." At its coolest, ataraxy produces the spectator who views life ironically and refuses to become involved. However, spectators are also outsiders, and for outsiders, detachment sometimes becomes a perverse form of engagement. Hamlet's detachment is announced by his black suit and his refusal to be drawn into the *Gemütlichkeit* of the Danish court. It is closer to despair than to freedom from passion, and its result is not a series of essays enacting the process of self-realization but soliloquies in which the speaker alternates between the thoughts of murder and suicide.

This takes us to the dark outer edge of the early essay. It is a darkness that was acknowledged by Montaigne but one that lies, for the most part, beyond the emotional boundaries he set for himself.

Having been led by his own analysis to doubt the world as he had conceived of it, Montaigne turned inward in the quest for

certainty. The basic question of the *Essais* is "What do I know?"—"Que sçais-je?" This is Montaigne's motto, and as we learn in the *Apology*, he inscribed it under a picture of a pair of scales symbolizing ataraxy—the balancing of alternatives.

Montaigne's innumerable quotations are intended as part of the answer to the question of what we know. André Gide remarks in an often-quoted essay that they

are there "to show that man is always and everywhere the same." Unfortunately, the quotations do not show this. As Michael Hall observes, they are inconsistent. Evidently, when you collect several centuries' worth of wisdom on a topic, you do not get a philosophy, you get a chain of contradictory platitudes reminiscent of Polonius's advice to his son Laertes.

Turning inward was no more helpful than consulting the sages. When he turned inward, Montaigne discovered not universality but infinite variety. He was forced to conclude that the self is as various, as elusive, and as many-shaped as the world.

Without fully understanding what he was doing, Montaigne was searching for a central "I"—what Descartes would later call the *cogito*, and as a matter of fact, Montaigne powerfully influenced the Cartesian project. Descartes admitted that we may be dreaming the world, but he insisted that the *cogito* is beyond doubt—so solid, in fact, as to be the rock on which everything else can be built. But Montaigne was more radical than Descartes. He concluded from his inquiry that there is no rock. There is only an endless



series of illusions. Early in the *Essais*, he announces, "We must remove the mask from things as from persons." He adds that "being truthful is the beginning of virtue," but his great discovery is that man is as Protean as the world: "Every man has within himself the entire human condition." Later still, Montaigne uses metaphors of the arational to describe his discovery of himself: "I have seen no monster or miracle on earth more evident than myself . . . the better I know myself, the more my misshapeness astonishes me, and the less do I comprehend myself."

In the famous introduction to "Of Repenting," the second essay in Book III, we read:

Others shape the man; I narrate him, and offer to view a special one, very ill-made, and whom, could I fashion him over, I should certainly make very different from what he is; but there is no doing that. The world is but perpetual motion; all things in it move incessantly . . . I can not anchor my subject; he is always restless and staggering with an unsteadiness natural to him. I catch him in the state that he is in at the moment when I turn my attention to him. I do not paint his being, I paint his passing—not the passing from one age to another . . . but from day to day, from moment to moment . . . Writers commune with the world with some special and peculiar badge; I am the first to do this with my general being, as Michel de Montaigne.

Here, I think, we have the authentic note of the *Essais* and of the essay as a genre. The essay is the enactment of a process by which the soul realizes itself even as it is passing from day to day and from moment to moment. It is the literary response to a world that has become problematic. In its complexity Montaigne's text works to disguise this fact, but it has always been an open secret.

Now let us return to Bacon. If Montaigne's essays suggest how the mind feels as it seeks by constant adjustments to find a path through a labyrinth, Bacon's method is to assert the existence of a path whether one is there or not. In the *De Argumentis Scientiarum* Bacon calls his method "initiative" in contrast to "magisterial." The magisterial method is used for teaching. It has a

well-defined shape, namely that of an oration. The initiative method is, by contrast, suggestive. As Bacon explains: "The initiative intimates. The magisterial requires that what is told should be believed; the initiative that it should be examined." Like Montaigne, Bacon was strongly attracted to skepticism. He admitted: "The doctrine of those who have denied that certainty could be attained at all has some agreement with my way of proceeding." Although he argued that empiricism offers an escape from uncertainty, he believed that most of the received knowledge of his age was false—the result of "errors and vanities," which he categorized using the metaphor of Idols: Idols of the tribe, Idols of the cave, Idols of the marketplace, Idols of the theater.

Bacon did not spend much time on religion; perhaps he found it beyond—or beneath—the reach of reason. He never attacked religion, but his heavy-handed condescension resembles thinly disguised contempt. On the other hand, the collapse during the 16th century of doctrines that had been accepted as verities for thousands of years fascinated him. The prime example was the toppling of Ptolemaic astronomy by Copernican, but astronomy was only one of many areas in which received knowledge crumbled when it was put to the test. Each failure of a traditional theory was a demonstration of the validity of the theory of Idols.

This kind of skepticism looks forward to a fully developed scientific method. It underlies Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, better known as *Vulgar Errors*, which systematically exposes many superstitions of the sort deconstructed in Montaigne's *Apology*. The *Pseudodoxia* went through six editions in Browne's lifetime. In matters of religion, Browne was a fideist. Montaigne ends the *Apology* with the remark that man "will be lifted up if God by special favor lends him his hand; he will be lifted up when, abandoning and renouncing his own means, he lets himself be upheld by purely heavenly means." Browne writes in *Religio Medici*: "Me thinks there be not impossibilities enough in Religion for an active faith . . . I love to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an *Oh Altitudo* . . . I learned of Ter-

tullian, *Certum est quia impossibile est.*"

Bacon's dedication of the 10 essays of 1597 claims only that they are "medicinal." The dominant meaning is simply that they are useful—they expose various errors and vanities and provide bearings for a world in flux. But the term "medicinal" is a metaphor, and its implications invite comment. According to the metaphor, the reader needs to be cured. In other words, there is some kind of metaphysical plague going around. It is a plague of doubt. Jimmy Carter felt the same thing about 20th-century America and, in one of his more disastrous orations, called it a malaise. If Bacon had been around, he would have called it a failure of nerve and would have voted for Ronald Reagan. Bacon's essays are intended to be a cure for social malaise. They are medicinal because they distill wisdom gained from life in what Bacon's heirs persist in calling "the real world."

For the same reason, the essays often have the quality of a pep talk by the coach of a losing team. The strategy is to create what might be called a "rhetoric of assurance." Accordingly, in the first edition, the sentences are chiefly commands and assertions. Omission of understood words (zeugma) gives the sentences a telegraphic quality reinforced by the paring away of modifiers, modifying phrases, and subordinate clauses. Further economy is achieved by parallelism and balance. The word order is standard. The speaker knows what he wants to say and says it directly. The main units are set off by paragraph marks—which Bacon uses as we would use "bullets" today. The modern term is appropriate. Bacon wants each sentence to have the force of a pistol shot: "• Reade not to contradict, not to believe, but to waigh and consider. • Some books are to bee tasted, others to bee swallowed, and some few to bee chewed and digested. . . . • Reading maketh a full man, conference a readye man, and writing an exacte man. . . . • Histories make men wise, Poets wittie: the Mathematickes subtle, naturall Phylosophie deepe: Morall grave, Logicke and Rhetoricke able to contend."

The sentences often have an edge of cynicism, of *Realpolitik*, reminding us that Bacon had read his Machiavelli: Ambition

is a winding stair; those who marry give hostages to fortune; the stage is more beholden to Love than the life of man; wounds cannot be cured without searching; a mixture of lie doth ever add pleasure.

Is this *Realpolitik* or despair? Whatever it is, the message of the *Essayes* is, "So be it." That's how things are in the real world, and that's how they always will be.

Let us recall one other legacy from Montaigne and Bacon. Both men were authors. Therefore, it follows that, having invented a form, both proceeded to muck it up. As we have seen, neither could let an essay alone once it had been written. This habit is arguably a virtue in Montaigne and not fatal in Bacon, but its implications are ominous. The constant revision implies a change in the conception of the essay from the enactment of a process to something that suspiciously resembles literature—perhaps an oration propped up like a scarecrow on the scaffolding of its *dispositio*.

To turn the essay into literature is to domesticate it—to make it not very different from a letter by Seneca or one of Plutarch's *moralia*. Recall Florio's use of the word "discourse" as a rough synonym for "essay"; The usage is pregnant with future confusion. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is splendid philosophy. It might even be called an "essay" on the basis of its being an exploration of its subject, but if it is so called, any work of philosophy short of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* can be called an essay. Its proper title is obviously "discourse," maybe *Abhandlung*.

To turn the essay into literature is also to encourage authors to display beautiful—or delicately anguished, or nostalgic, or ironic, or outraged, or extroverted, or misanthropic—souls, or, alternatively, to create prose confections, oxymorons of languid rhythms and fevered images.

Yet despite all such temptations, the essay has tended to remain true to its heritage. I mean not that essays are products of what you might call "troubled times" but that the essay was born from a moment of profound, even terrifying, doubt, and that its rhetoric has often been adopted by authors who have sensed the power of the forces of dissolution. Matthew Arnold entitled his most famous collection of essays



Culture and Anarchy, and Joan Didion named her first collection from the apocalyptic image in Yeats's poem "The Second Coming": *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*.

Essays are written on an infinite variety of subjects from infinitely various points of view. However, time and time again, the essay reverts to its original forms—on the one hand to the Montaignian enactment of the process of self-realization in a world without order: "I do not paint [my subject's] being, I paint his passing . . . from day to day, from moment to moment." And on the other hand, to Baconian assertiveness in a world that threatens to reduce assertions to black comedy: "I will do such things . . . what they are, I know not, but they shall be the terrors of the earth."

The 18th century approved the idea of cool detachment from the malaise of the times. Addison and Steele are seemingly "men of sentiment" in *The Tatler*. Under the surface, however, lies the old motif of the search for the self. Steele concludes *The Tatler* with the image of the world as labyrinth: "I must confess, it has been a most exquisite pleasure to me . . . to enquire into the Seeds of Vanity and Affectation, to lay before my Readers the Emptiness of Ambition: In a Word, to trace Humane Life through all its Mazes and Recesses." *The Spectator* has even more obvious relations to its ancestry. A spectator is someone who withholds assent—a skeptic, an observer, an outsider. This is exactly the point made by Addison in the introduction to the new journal: "I live in the World rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the species . . . I have acted in all the Parts of my Life as a looker-on, which is the Character I intend to preserve in this Paper."

For the most part, *The Spectator* preserves its detachment, but occasionally there is a powerful updraft of emotion. The terror—or the malaise—of the world makes people want to be spectators, but as Werner Heisenberg has shown, spectators get tangled up in the things they are observing. The following comment, from *Specta-*

tor number 420, is directly traceable to the tangling of human motive with the world that science has revealed. It is all the more striking because it is not what you would expect from an 18th-century spectator:

If . . . we contemplate those wide Fields of Ether, that reach in height as far from *Saturn* as to the fixt stars, and run abroad almost to an infinitude, our Imagination finds its Capacity filled with so immense a Prospect . . . [it] puts itself upon the Stretch to comprehend it. But if we yet rise higher, and consider the fixt Stars as so many Oceans of Flame and still discover new Firmaments and new Lights, that are sunk further in those unfathomable Depths of *Ether*, so as not to be seen by the strongest of our Telescopes, we are lost in . . . a Labyrinth of Suns and Worlds, and confounded with the Immensity and magnificence of Nature . . . Let a Man try to conceive the different bulk of an Animal, which is twenty, from another which is a hundred times less than a Mite, or to compare, in his Thoughts, a length of a thousand Diameters of the Earth, with that of a Million, and he will quickly discover that he has no . . . Measure in his Mind, adjusted to such extraordinary Degrees of Grandeur or Minuteness. The Understanding, indeed, opens an infinite Space on every side of us, but the Imagination, after a few faint efforts, is immediately at a stand, and finds her self swallowed up in the immensity of the Void that surrounds it.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the spectator becomes a refugee. Charles Lamb's *Elia* solves his problems by infantile regression. He is no more ashamed of this habit than Montaigne was of revealing inner monstrosities. Regression is the secret of his modest success. Lamb explains: "The impressions of infancy had burnt into him, and he resented the impertinence of manhood. These were weaknesses; but such as they were, they are a key to explicate some of his writings."

The addiction of *Elia* to medicinally fantasied objectified feelings of his creator. Charles Lamb went through a bout of madness himself and lived with a sister who had murdered their mother in a fit of insanity. But the fantasies don't quite work. Reality is always breaking in. In "Dream Children: A Reverie," *Elia* recalls an interview with two imaginary children

named Alice and John. The children ask about their dead mother, also named Alice and also imaginary:

... suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both of the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. . . . We are only what might have been. . . ."

"Dream Children" is affecting, but it is almost literature. Emerson comes closer, I think, than Lamb does to the scope and brilliance—and the breezy solipsism—of Montaigne. Speaking of the achievements of Plato, Shakespeare, and Milton, Emerson creates one of the great literary puns: "I

dare; I also will essay to be." Writing an essay is an exercise in self-fashioning.

The sentiment is pure Montaigne. In *Nature*, Emerson expands the image: "Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those enquiries he would put on. He acts it as life,

before he apprehends it as truth." "Experience" recreates the terror of a problematic world: "Where do we find ourselves? In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none. We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight. . . . All things swim and glitter. Our life is not so much threatened as our perception. Ghost-like, we glide through nature, and should not know our place again."

Emerson's title—"Experience"—invokes Baconian empiricism only to reject it. The metaphor of the infinite stair recalls Addison's image of the self "swallowed up

in the immensity of the void that surrounds it." It also anticipates the infinite library of Babel imagined in the 20th century by Jorge Luis Borges.

In the later 19th century, the essay underwent a mutation. The prose poem can be defined as literature's revenge on the essay—an essay in which style has become substance. You can see the beginning of the prose poem as early as Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial*. The body of the animal begins to push through the chrysalis with De Quincey's *Confessions*, and it unfurls its iridescent wings and flaps them in Walter Pater's *Renaissance*. But the prose poem appears first in full lepidopteran glory in France: in Baudelaire's *Le spleen de Paris* and Rimbaud's *Les illuminations*. From there it migrates back to the English-speaking world. We are reminded by William Gass's *On Being Blue* of its flight across the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean to the New World.

One other modern development of the genre must be recognized. It is the topical essay—brief, pointed, often amusing, and closely related to a theme, event, or personality of current interest. Bacon's essay "Of Friendship" is a prototype for the form. It did not begin by being topical, but in its final, much-augmented form it commemorates his lifelong attachment to Sir Tobie Matthew. "Of Plantations" is explicitly topical, being a consideration of issues raised by the Virginia colony. The topical essay also owes much to Addison and Steele. That is not surprising, because its native habitat is the newspaper. The Homeric catalogue of its modern practitioners includes Art Buchwald, Mary McGrory, Ralph Kilpatrick, David Broder, Russell Baker, Carl Rowan, James Reston, William Raspberry, Ellen Goodman, and George Will. This catalogue moves us to the present, which is, after all, the main interest of any essay, including an essay on the essay. I suppose most modern essays are Baconian and Addisonian, but the Montaignian essay is still impressively alive.

Much scholarship appears in the form



of—you are correct—the critical essay. This, of course, raises the question of what the word “article” refers to. William Gass has solved the problem: “The essay,” he writes, “is obviously the opposite of that awful object, ‘the article’ . . . [whose] appearance is proof of the presence, nearby, of the Professor, the way one might, perceiving a certain sort of speckled egg, infer that its mother was a certain sort of speckled bird.”

Speckled birds aside, many of the classic works of our age are essays. I am thinking, for example, of Wallace Stevens’s “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words,” Leslie Fiedler’s “Come Back to the Raft Again, Huck, Honey,” Roland Barthes’s “Eiffel Tower,” Tom Wolfe’s “Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby,” Martin Heidegger’s “The Thing,” R. Buckminster Fuller’s “Grunch of Giants,” Werner Heisenberg’s “Abstraction in Modern Science,” and Robert Nozick’s “Fiction,” which is a non-fictional essay written by a

fictional character who is still asking the Emersonian question: “Must there be a top floor somewhere, a world that is itself, not created in someone else’s fiction? Or can the hierarchy go on infinitely?”

Nozick’s question seems to me to capture the fascination of the essay for our time. An essay is not an oration or an *Abhandlung* or a prose poem. It is “essaying to be,” in Emerson’s conceit, and “thought thinking about itself” in Heidegger’s. It is the enactment of the process of accommodation between the world and the “I,” and thus it is consciousness realizing itself.

A few years ago I wrote a book of essays called *Entering the Maze: Identity and Change in Modern Culture*. The title and subtitle did not take much thought; they seemed inevitable. I might have written a novel. I was never even tempted to do so. To choose fiction is to assert that you know the difference between fiction and fact, while I wanted to dramatize the constant redrawing of the line between the two that is taking place in modern culture. Maybe

fiction is possible in societies that change slowly. Maybe that is why the novel was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. But who, today, knows the difference between the real, and what was real, and what is not—or not yet—real?

If you think about the novel, you will see that it has taken paths in the 20th century that lead in the direction of the essay. One kind of novel moves toward a record of hallucinations—I think of Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, William Gaddis’s *The Recognitions*, John Barth’s *Giles Goat-Boy*. Another type of novel records a special type of hallucination—a vision of a future presumed to be real—*Erewhon*, *Brave New World*, 1984. Yet another type aspires to the condition of news, for example, *In Cold Blood*. There is also the tendency, apparently irresistible since Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist*, for novelists to pack their work with essays spoken by characters or by a figure whom, in deference to the fondness of the present age for critical terms, I will label “the intrusive author.” Some novels, in fact, seem to consist of almost nothing but essays. Given these tendencies in the novel, why not write essays from the beginning?

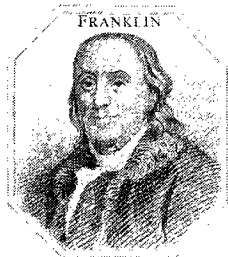
But I would like to end with some more challenging notion. I do not think we live in a solid, empirical world of the sort Bacon dangled tantalizingly in front of readers of *The Advancement of Learning* even as he demonstrated that it was an illusion. We live in a world of changes and shadows, a world where the real dissolves as we reach for it and meets us as we turn away. It is a world of mazes and illusions and metaphors and idols and stairways that proceed upward and downward to infinity.

We live at a time much like the 16th century. It is a time of immense destructive and constructive change, and there is no way of knowing whether the destructive or the constructive forces are more powerful. It is a time when the world looks like an unweeded garden and doubt is a condition of consciousness. The essay is as uniquely suited to expressing this contemporary mode of being-in-culture as it



was when Montaigne began writing the *Apology for Raimond Sebond*.

But what *is* the essay? If there is such a thing as an essential essay—a *real* Proteus—it changes into so many shapes so unlike the real one that it requires an act of



faith to believe the shapes merely variations on a single underlying identity. For this reason, of course, Proteus adopted the strategy of change in the first place. People who lack faith will turn away convinced that nothing is there.

We, however, will remember the advice of Cyrene: "The more he turns himself into different shapes, the more you, my son, must hold on to those strong chains."

Holding on may be important. If the essay is an enactment of the creation of the self—if we must essay to be—and the essay

does not exist, then you might legitimately ask whether that which the essay enacts can be said to exist. The epigraph of the last *Spectator* is from Persius: "*Respue quod non es*," "Throw away what you are not." It is good advice, but it assumes that, after you throw everything superfluous away, something is left.

If you have bound Proteus and all the changes have occurred, and if he returns to his own shape, he will have already answered your first question: Something is there. But is it? Maybe you are seeing only another counterfeit, another Idol.

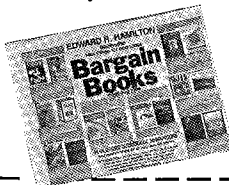
That's the way things are, and the essay is the most expressive literary form of our age because it comes closest to being what all literature is supposed to be—an imitation of the real. You can vex the essay and drive it to extremities. Maybe the result will be nothing. Your action will be doubtful, but in the real world, to get a piece of the action, you, however doubtful, must follow the advice: "Hold on."

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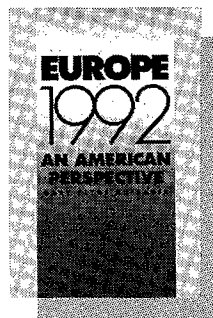
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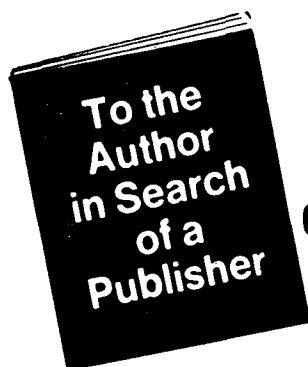
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*Leading the World Economy
into the 1990s*

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AMERICA



DECLINE?

by Richard Rosecrance



America's muscular response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has temporarily stilled all talk of American decline. Yet the national alarm over the expense of Operation Desert Shield, the urgent demands for more help from U.S. allies, and the extraordinary enlistment of Soviet support at Helsinki are all reminders of how much the world has changed. While America's military strength remains much greater than that of its allies, its economic strength does not. No longer is the United States willing—or, many would say, able—to shoulder the world's burdens. Does this mean that it is on the same long, downward slope of history that earlier great powers have traveled? Is its decline only relative? Or has it actually emerged victorious from the trials of the postwar period? These are the questions that scholars, politicians, and others have been debating during the past few years. As the turn-of-the-century cartoon on this page suggests, the debate is not entirely new. Published after the Spanish-American War, just as the United States was taking its place on the world stage, the cartoon warned against assuming the burdens of empire. Today, the costs of U.S. commitments abroad are still the chief issue. Here, Richard Rosecrance reviews the recent debate. He fears that the United States is indeed slipping. But unlike the great powers of the past, Rosecrance believes, the United States has an opportunity to renew itself.

There are today three fundamental views of the American future. One is that the United States, like 19th-century Britain before it, has lapsed into a terminal condition of economic lethargy and decline. A second view is that while the na-

tion has experienced its ups and downs, its position has not appreciably changed. The third view, which I share, is that the United States has demonstrably declined but that it can and will come back.

The "declinists"—a group which includes academicians such as David Calleo and politicians such as Colorado's former

governor Richard D. Lamm—point out that while shortly after World War II the United States accounted for 45 to 50 percent of world gross national product (GNP), it now claims only 21 percent, and its share could soon shrink below 16 percent. Part of this decline was to be expected as Western Europe, Japan, and East Asia recovered after World War II. But the declineists argue that the reversal of American fortunes is greater than these figures indicate. From being the leading industrial exporting country, the United States has fallen to third place behind Germany and Japan. It has run a trade deficit every year since 1975. (Today's current account deficit is about \$109 billion.) To satisfy Americans' hunger for imports of everything from autos and mineral water to machine tools and computers, the country has become the world's largest debtor. U.S. foreign debt now exceeds \$600 billion and at current rates will reach \$1 trillion during the early 1990s. All told, the national debt—which the Reagan administration ran up to unprecedented heights—and the private debt accumulated by U.S. companies and consumers has soared to some \$7 trillion. That represents nearly 140 percent of the nation's total annual output, or more than one-third of world GNP. Thus, even if America regains its equilibrium in trade in five years, which it may be able to do if it is moderately lucky, ballooning interest and dividend payments to foreigners could wipe out much of its progress.

In industry after industry, U.S. companies have lost their lead. The *Wall Street Journal* recently put the matter with stark clarity: "While U.S. manufacturers in 1969

produced 82 percent of the nation's television sets, 88 percent of its cars and 90 percent of its machine tools, [in 1988] they made hardly any TVs, and gave up half the domestic machine-tool market and 30 percent of the auto market. Even in a new industry like semiconductors, this country's world market share has shrunk to 15 percent from 85 percent in 1980."

When America lost its lead in cars, consumer electronics, and advanced machine tools, people consoled themselves with the thought that the United States was tops in finance and services. But in each realm Japan and other nations have caught up. Now, there is not a single American bank among the world's top 10; all of them are Japanese. In biotechnology, civilian aircraft, and advanced semiconductors and computers, Japan is beating at the U.S. door. Even the American farmer's once unassailable boast that he was the world's most efficient producer of food is being challenged. Wheat growers in Argentina are already more efficient than their American counterparts, and farmers in Australia and Thailand are rapidly improving.

The prophets of American decline believe that Yale historian Paul Kennedy's somber study, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), foretells the American future. They point out that intelligent Dutchmen of the 17th century and prescient 19th-century Britons were well aware of the plight of their nations yet were unable to halt the decline. What awaits the United States in the 21st century? Kennedy writes: "The only answer to the question increasingly debated by the public of whether the United States can preserve its existing posi-

Richard Rosecrance, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is professor of political science and associate director of the Center for International and Strategic Affairs at the University of California, Los Angeles. Born in Milwaukee, he received a B.A. (1952) from Swarthmore College and a Ph.D. (1957) from Harvard. He is the author of several books, including *The Rise of the Trading State* (1986). This essay is adapted from his *America's Economic Resurgence: A Bold New Strategy* (1990). Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

tion is 'no'—for it simply has not been given to any one society to remain *permanently* ahead of all the others, because that would imply a freezing of the differentiated pattern of growth rates, technological advance, and military developments which has existed since time immemorial."

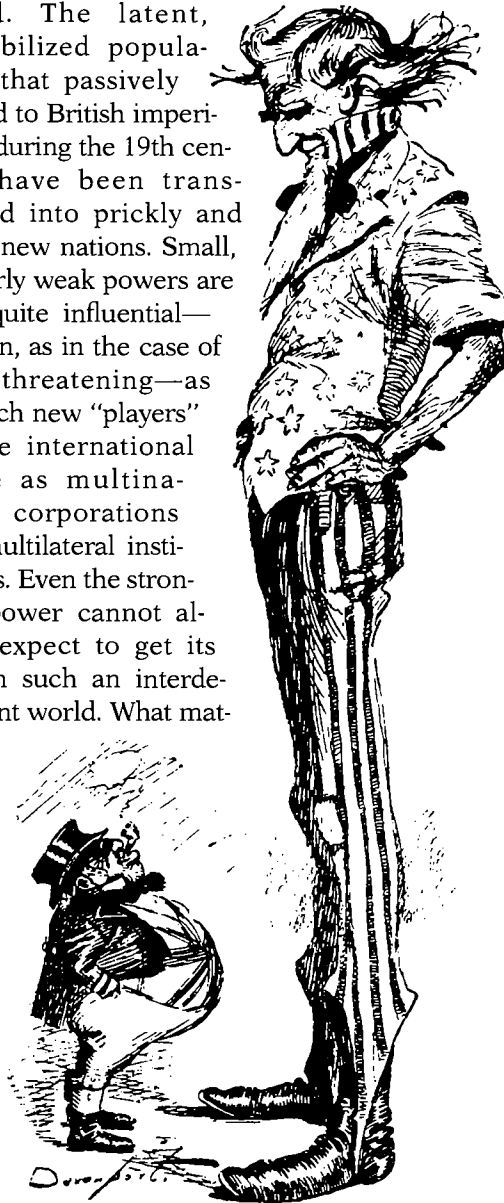
The second school of thought on American decline offers a much more reassuring view. The thinkers in this camp maintain either that the United States has not declined or that any decline is temporary and explicable, harmless, or easily remedied. [See box, p. 72.]

Some conclude that America has suffered only minor reverses and that there is no project it cannot accomplish if citizens are willing to pay for it through new taxes. In *Can America Compete?* (1984), Robert Z. Lawrence of the Brookings Institution speaks for a group that maintains that the manufacturing sector is as vibrant as ever. And even if manufacturing has declined, others argue, the United States can compete as effectively as ever in services. Still others observe that there is nothing dramatically new in America's relative economic situation. During the mid-1960s the United States produced about 24 percent of world GNP; today the figure is about 22 percent. In fact, the U.S. share of world GNP is not much smaller than it was in 1938.

To the degree that America has measurably declined, defenders of the status quo argue, this is because of, not despite, American policy. Thus, Harvard's Joseph Nye notes that, during the late 1940s, "rather than seeking hegemony over its allies, the United States opted to stimulate their economic revival and create a strategic partnership balancing Soviet power."

Still another explanation advanced for waning American influence is that we now live in a more complicated and obdurate

world. The latent, unmobilized populations that passively yielded to British imperialism during the 19th century have been transformed into prickly and tough new nations. Small, formerly weak powers are now quite influential—or even, as in the case of Iraq, threatening—as are such new "players" on the international scene as multinational corporations and multilateral institutions. Even the strongest power cannot always expect to get its way in such an interdependent world. What mat-



1898. *John Bull meets Uncle Sam.*

ters now, in this view, is not military and economic power but the power to persuade.

Furthermore, the argument goes, if the United States has declined, so has Japan. During the 1960s Japan grew by more than 10 percent per year. Since then it has been

averaging around four percent annual growth. The result is a comfortable sort of "convergence." Harvard's Samuel Huntington writes: "There is little reason why the Japanese economy as a whole should grow much faster than the U.S. economy, and there is little reason why an individual U.S. worker should be significantly more productive than a Japanese worker. On such indices of economic performance, one should expect long-term convergence among countries at similar levels of economic development and with economies of comparable complexity."

Converging rates of growth, however, mean that the United States can maintain its lead. *Discriminate Deterrence* (1988), a major study by a panel of experts (including Huntington) convened by the U.S. Department of Defense, plots U.S. economic growth for the next two decades at 2.6 percent annually and Japanese growth at 2.8 percent. By the year 2010, U.S. GNP will reach nearly \$8 trillion (in 1986 dollars); China and Japan will be next at nearly \$4 trillion each; the Soviet Union will follow at \$2.9 trillion.*

Still other writers who are content with American economic performance take a "so what?" attitude toward decline. In the new "one world" economy, U.S. trade deficits with Japan and South Korea don't matter any more than Maine's trade deficit with California. Capital travels freely across national frontiers, and the fortunes of one entity do not mean much so long as the system as a whole works.

Federal budget deficits? As a percentage of GNP the deficit has declined from a max-

imum of 6 percent of GNP in 1983 to only 3.5 percent today—less than that sustained easily by Japan during the mid-1970s. In any event, the argument goes, the deficit will continue to decline for the next few years. Robert Eisner, a prominent economist from Northwestern University, insists that the deficit is actually a plus, a stimulus that we cannot do without.

Not surprisingly, those who deny that America has declined believe it can continue to shoulder substantial military and diplomatic commitments. Since the United States could afford to devote 10 percent of its GNP to national security during the 1950s and 9 percent during the Kennedy administration, it can certainly spend 6.5 percent or perhaps a bit less now that the Cold War is over. If the deficit eventually must be cut, a one-third reduction might be effected simply by imposing, say, a higher tax on gasoline. And as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former president of France, commented to the *Wall Street Journal*, "It's hard to take seriously that a nation has deep problems if they can be fixed with a 50-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax."

A subgroup within the second school accepts part of the "decline" thesis but believes that the argument has been carried too far. Princeton's Aaron Friedberg, for example, contends that military spending was not responsible for the decline of the great powers of the past. At worst, defense burdens accentuated the problems of countries already facing economic weakness. Friedberg believes that increases in consumption or in social-welfare spending are at the bottom of most stories of decline, including that of the United States today. [See box, p. 78.]

The third possible perspective on decline, and the one I hold, is that the United States *has* demonstrably declined but that it can and will come back.

*However, these estimates are unduly favorable to the United States. The assumed Japanese growth rate of 2.8 percent may understate the actual by as much as 1.5 percentage points. The Chinese growth rate starts from a current base of \$1.2 trillion, instead of the \$600 billion usually employed. And the Chinese estimates were made before Tiananmen Square and the leadership's retreat from reform. More realistic estimates put Japan at \$5.8 trillion in the year 2010, second to the United States at \$7.4 trillion, with China at \$3.2 trillion and the Soviet Union at \$3.0 trillion.

The evidence of American decline is irrefutable. In 1929, well before it reaped the artificial advantage of victory in World War II, the United States claimed more than 43 percent of world manufacturing production. Today, it claims only 22 percent. Assuming no change in current trends, one can foresee a much less comfortable future for the United States than the one outlined by the Pentagon's experts in *Discriminate Deterrence*. Twenty years from now, Japan will be a close second to the United States, with the momentum to pull ahead during the decade of the 2020s. China will have ousted the Soviet Union from third place and will be growing rapidly. And if the European Community achieves its goal of thorough political and economic integration after 1992, it could challenge U.S. leadership. The resulting multipolar world will be a much more uncertain place than today's relatively simple world order. The result easily could be a return to the conditions of the 1930s: not necessarily war but momentous conflicts over trade and the creation of hostile tariff blocs. Only a continuously growing American and world market will prevent such economic conflicts.

A vast literature exists on what happens when a previously dominant economic power declines. Many scholars conclude that without a single leader, the international order founders. Rising challengers refuse to pay the costs—such as providing loans or markets to nations in distress—of keeping the international economic system open. The three or four successor nations tend to implement high-tariff policies, stunting world trade, as happened in the Great Depression. History is conclusive on this score: It is far better to have one large power at the helm of the international economy. The United States, however, may not be able to continue its leadership role. Even today, the United States and its closest

allies in Western Europe cannot agree on many important measures of economic and trade policy. Will a triumphant Japan and a resurgent China feel any greater compulsion to reach an accommodation with the United States 20 years from now?

In the future, it will take a higher U.S. growth rate—an eminently attainable 3 percent or more per year—and a dynamic American marketplace to convince others that they need to respond to U.S. policies and open their economies to foreign trade. To achieve faster growth, however, there must be a massive change in American priorities. National security must be redefined to include the strength and productivity of the economy, which is after all the base on which military capability rests. Some budget savings from reduced U.S. commitments overseas—plus, perhaps, domestic budget cuts and tax increases—will be needed to promote an economic resurgence that will eventually allow the United States to return to its leading role on the world stage.

If American fortunes are to be revived, the nation's leaders will have to challenge Americans to renounce the ethic of "borrow and spend." Special incentives ought to be extended to Americans who save for retirement or for the education of their children. Rampant inflation during the 1970s schooled a generation of Americans to buy rather than save, to borrow rather than invest. History suggests that great civilizations have been fatally weakened through such self-indulgence. David Landes, the great historian of the Industrial Revolution, rendered the pattern in generational terms:

Thus the Britain of the late 19th century basked complacently in the sunset of economic hegemony. In many firms, the grandfather who started the business and built it by unremitting application and by thrift bordering on miserliness had long

AMERICA TRIUMPHANT: A DISSENTING VIEW

If power is the ability of one country to persuade others to pursue its purposes, the United States has used its power with extraordinary success during the postwar period.

After World War II, America created a world community in which it deliberately shared its economic and industrial power in order to encourage other countries to adopt its purposes: more open political systems and more competitive economic markets. Today, all of the world's industrial countries, many developing ones, and even the socialist countries are democratic and market-oriented or struggling to become so. America now has less relative economic power, to be sure, but it also needs less to promote its most basic political and economic purposes.

Does that suggest that America has declined or that it has used its power successfully?

Those who argue that America is in decline focus only on narrow measures of industrial and economic power. They ignore completely the political environment in which material power is exercised. Yet the political context is what distinguishes America's position today from that of Great Britain a century ago. Great Britain lost relative power in a world that was polarizing between the autocratic purposes of a Prussian-dominated Germany and the republican purposes of France and Great Britain. America has lost relative power in a world that is coalescing around the very democratic and market standards it has long championed.

In a neighborhood of friendly states, the importance of material power is diminished, just as it is reduced when a marriage of two partners is strong. One may wish to carry some in-

surance policies against trouble, but these should not cost much (since the risks are low) and should not be a cause for conflict.

Yet those who focus on America's relative decline and ignore today's more benign political environment advocate policies that would produce greater conflict with America's friends and allies. They see Japan as the new enemy (replacing the Soviet Union) and call for nationalist policies to protect and subsidize American industry. Not only would such policies destroy political community; they would fail economically. Without an industrial policy, America came back during the 1980s and began growing almost as quickly as Japan. It did so by returning, at least partially, to the economic policies of the earlier postwar period, when America laid the foundation for the prosperous and close political community that exists today.

From 1947 to 1967, the United States pursued efficient economic policies—what I call the triad of postwar economic rearmament—involving moderate budget deficits (equal to an average of .2 percent of GNP annually), disciplined monetary policies (keeping inflation below one percent), and restrained regulation of industry. Under U.S. leadership, allied countries pursued similar policies, albeit with higher inflation in Europe and more interventionism in Japan. The resulting prosperity allowed for an unprecedented reduction of trade barriers and a quantum increase in world trade.

Europe and Japan grew faster than the United States, both because they started from further behind and because, as followers, they enjoyed the “advantages of backwardness”—

died; the father who took over and, starting with larger ambitions, raised it to undreamed-of heights, had passed on the reins; now it was the turn of the third generation, the children of affluence Many of them retired and forced the conversion of their firms into joint-stock companies. Others stayed on and went through the motions of entrepreneurship between the long weekends; they worked at play and played at work.

The pattern Landes describes sounds eerily familiar. Great Britain went through its decadent phase during the Edwardian period,

before World War I. The United States appears to have entered a similar phase today. Financial strategies maximizing short-term profits replace the long-term goals of increasing industrial competitiveness and market share. The industrial pioneers' ethic of hard work and team effort degenerates into the selfishness and conspicuous consumption of the grandsons and granddaughters. In sum, if critics of the contemporary American situation are correct, the United States has now entered a well-nigh

the ability to borrow technology and knowledge cheaply from the United States. But the United States did not stand still. It grew faster during this period than it had before, and as other countries caught up, their rates of growth began to slow.

During the 1970s, America abandoned prudent economic policies and paid dearly for it. But its fortunes revived again during the 1980s when it returned partially to the successful monetary and regulatory policies of the 1950s and 1960s. During the Reagan years, American manufacturing productivity grew at a 3.5 percent annual rate, faster than it did during the "golden era" of 1948–1973 and only a little slower than Japan's recent growth rate. The U.S. share of the manufacturing output and employment of the industrialized countries actually increased, offering no evidence whatsoever of the "deindustrialization" so often invoked by advocates of industrial policy.

Why have these achievements been obscured? Largely because America failed to reverse the disastrous fiscal policies of the 1970s. Budget deficits continued to grow during the 1980s, raising interest rates, sucking in capital and imports, increasing national and international debt, and leaving the impression of a country in decline.

What would happen if America finally reduced its budget deficit? The record of the 1950s and 1960s suggests that, with the "triad" back in place, the United States would flourish once again (and, unlike in the 1980s, on a sustainable basis), helping to pull along the democratizing nations of Eastern Europe and the

developing world, just as earlier U.S. policies to promote free societies, stable prices, and open markets worked so powerfully to build today's community of open and prosperous industrial societies. America would trade further material power, at no loss to its own economic well-being, to bring other countries of the East and South into the Western political community of open societies and competitive markets.

The United States has a unique role to play. American democracy is a powerful example of how to blend diversity with tolerance, how to pursue openness, not as a way to combat nationalism but as an integral part of national identity itself. And other nations would also follow its example if the United States were to return to prudent policies of fiscal and economic management.

Japan and Germany have become powerful competitors of the United States. But they are also politically more friendly and more open to this country than they have ever been in their histories. Japan is becoming more open, slowly, to be sure, but steadily. Newly reunited Germany is electing to remain in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, under U.S. nuclear protection, and is not only the most powerful economy in the European Community but also the one most inclined to keep European markets open to Japan and the United States.

It is far more important to preserve and broaden this political community than to bemoan America's loss of relative material power—a loss which has been well spent to create a more democratic and peaceful world.

—Henry R. Nau

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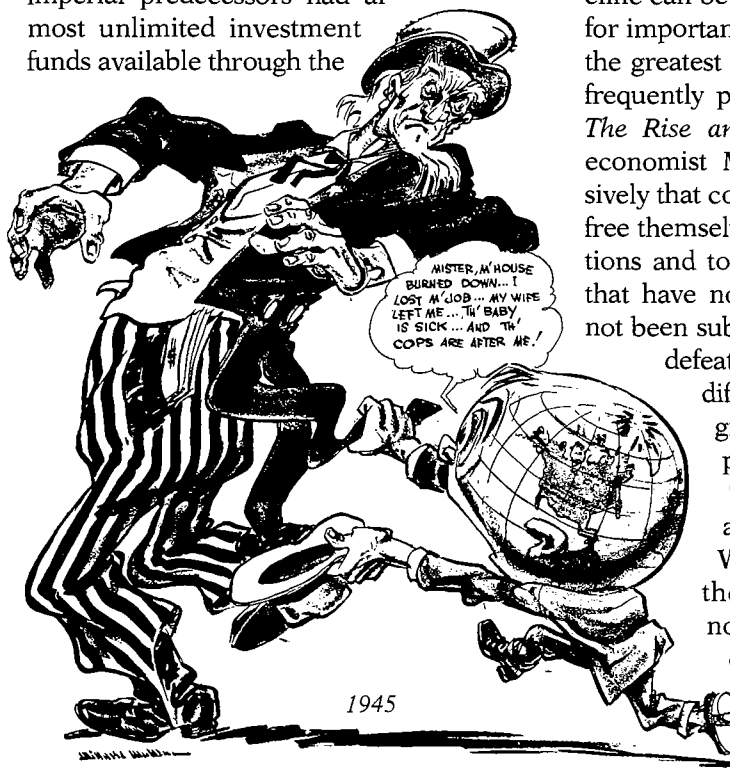
irreversible decline.

But pessimists, even historically trained ones, are not always right. Nations can decline and rise again. Both Germany and Japan appeared to have reached their economic summits during the 1930s. Yet, after sharp declines, both experienced a remarkable renaissance after World War II. Tsarist Russia reached a major economic peak in 1913, but Stalinist Russia grew rapidly through the late 1920s

and 1930s. True, Russia had to experience a revolution and Japan and Germany had to be defeated in war to trigger the economic transformation. And it also seems to be true that no declining power of hegemonic rank has ever made a real comeback. Spain, Holland, and England never came close to regaining their former status.

But with the possible exception of Russia, none of these nations was a continent-sized power endowed with enormous resources and a large, well-educated

population. None, including Russia, possessed, as the United States does today, a vast and sophisticated industry and the ability to create technology of the highest order. Despite certain parallels with the past, the United States remains in a distinctive position. No hegemonic state in other periods of history remained far ahead of its competitors in the total production of goods and services. None of the imperial predecessors had almost unlimited investment funds available through the



contributions of other nations. No other state was dominant in research in pure science.

Furthermore, the United States, unlike its hegemonic counterparts of yesteryear, is bargaining to maintain its position. Britain failed to negotiate an opening of German or American markets at the end of the 19th century, when economic decay had begun to undermine British industry. Holland could not persuade Britain to reduce its

prohibitive tariffs during the mid-17th century. The United States, however, in tough trade negotiations with the Japanese and others, has shown that it is not willing to offer an unlimited market to nations that are closed to American goods.

In history, it is traditional to chart rise and then decline. Historians have assumed that nations, like biological organisms, rise to power and then age and wither. But decline can be the prelude to rebirth. Indeed, for important countries (though not yet for the greatest powers) decline and loss have frequently preceded economic revival. In *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (1982), economist Mancur Olson argues persuasively that countries need a jarring shock to free themselves from old habits and institutions and to regenerate growth. Countries that have not declined enough, that have not been subjected to the national shock of

defeat and despair, have had more difficulty maintaining economic growth than those that have. Japan, West Germany, France, the "little dragons" of East Asia, and the small democracies of Western and Central Europe—these gained a powerful economic impetus from defeat and occupation in war. By contrast, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States—victors all—were not prodded to strive

for economic resurgence and revival.

Rather, the victors chugged along on a curve of moderate military and tepid economic success, spending (in the British and American cases) large amounts on arms and ultimately enfeebling themselves. The worst outcome of a challenge, therefore, is an expensive but narrow triumph.

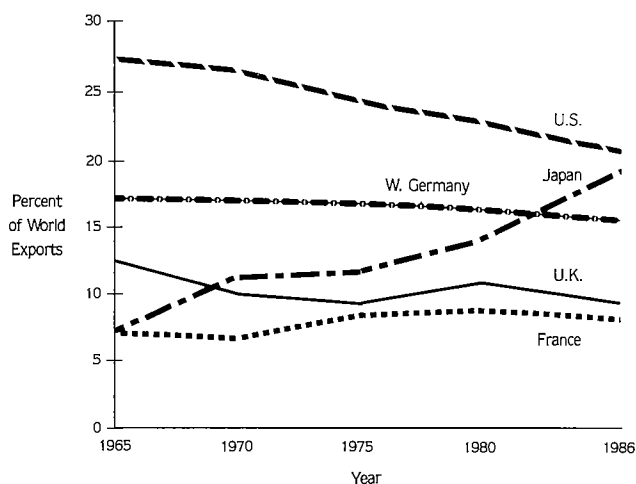
Victory in two world wars sanctioned a history of indolent economic efforts and impaired social progress in Britain. In the

COMPARING PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH RATES, 1870-1979 (Growth Rates of GDP Per Work Hour)

Country	1870-1880	1880-1890	1890-1900	1900-1913	1913-1929	1929-1938	1938-1950	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1979
W. Germany	1.50	2.15	2.42	1.41	1.40	2.34	-0.40	6.64	5.29	4.50
France	2.32	0.90	2.02	1.82	2.34	2.83	0.75	4.39	5.38	4.09
Japan	1.87	1.72	2.11	1.88	3.42	3.41	-3.20	5.57	9.96	5.03
U.K.	1.16	1.20	1.24	0.90	1.44	0.87	2.21	2.19	3.56	2.77
U.S.	2.28	1.86	1.96	1.98	2.39	0.74	4.03	2.41	2.51	1.92

Source: *Productivity and American Leadership* (1989), by William J. Baumol, Sue Anne Batey Blackman, and Edward N. Wolff.

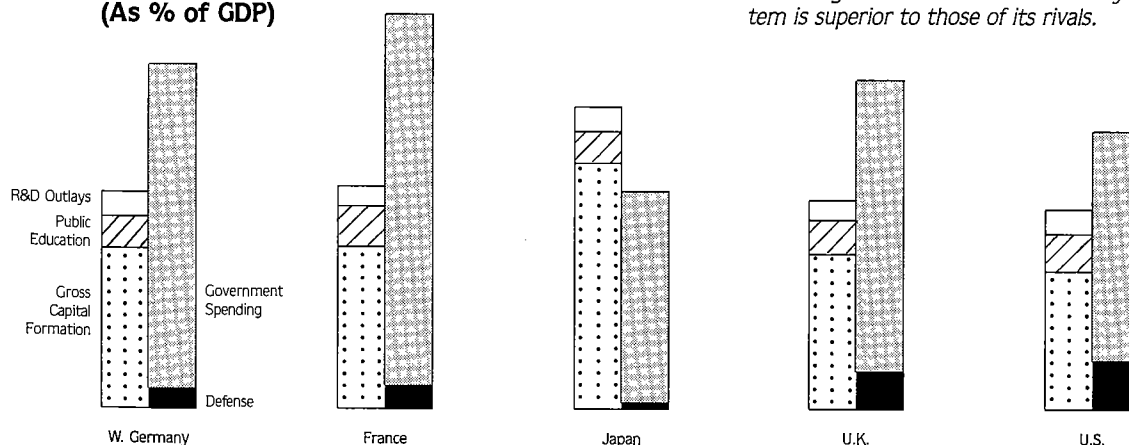
THE GLOBAL HIGH TECHNOLOGY MARKETPLACE



Source: National Science Foundation

Statistics provide a mixed picture of U.S. economic performance. Despite a lagging productivity growth rate (above), the U.S. economy remains the world's most productive. Its gross domestic product (GDP) per work hour reached \$8.28 in 1979, while that of Japan was \$4.39. Because of that enormous lead, U.S. growth rates can lag behind those of competitors without immediately threatening U.S. leadership. As the table above shows, that is what has happened since the Great Depression. New data suggest that U.S. productivity growth picked up during the 1980s, but a three percent growth rate may be needed to prevent the United States from falling behind by the year 2020. The global high technology marketplace (left) offers more discouragement: The United States is losing ground rapidly. Finally, the graphs below show how elusive are the sources of national distress. For example, only France devotes a larger share of its GDP to education. Yet few would argue that the U.S. education system is superior to those of its rivals.

SOME ECONOMIC INDICATORS (As % of GDP)



Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

United States, the Cold War failed to produce the needed reevaluation of economic strategies. (The loss in Vietnam was not a sufficient social shock; in fact, Vietnam was a reverse shock that caused Americans to become alienated from their government and to distrust authority.) The superpower arms race inhibited needed reinvestment in the civilian economy of both adversaries. In Paul Kennedy's words, military "overstretch" and heavy defense spending captured the very investment capital that was needed to regenerate economic growth.

Yet the matter is not so simple, for military spending may not disable an economy if domestic consumption is held in check. This was undoubtedly the case in Britain's costly wars with Napoleonic France between 1795 and 1812, which did not short-circuit the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. Military spending may even spur industrial growth if there is a great deal of idle industrial capacity. It was chiefly through rearmament outlays, not New Deal social spending, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt finally got America out of the Great Depression. The surge of defense spending during the Korean War did not create inflation or divert civilian investment; it reversed the recession of 1949 and stimulated a boom. Likewise, there appears to be little question that military spending under the Reagan administration helped lift the nation out of the recession of 1981–82.

Excess capacity and civilian consumption, then, have to be included in any account of the effect of military spending upon economic growth. In Britain during the first half of the 19th century, investment and savings remained very significant, while consumption was modest. After mid-century, however, investment began to decline and the British economy was propped up by increased consumption. Military spending was not destructive because from the Crimean War (1854–56) until the very

end of the 19th century (with the Boer War and the beginning of the naval race with Germany) England did not need to re-arm. Its navy was antiquated but still much larger than that of any possible foe, and its overseas empire was quiet, needing little policing. Even after 1897, there was no initial disadvantage because England had excess capacity remaining from the depression of 1873–96. It was not really until World War I that military spending displaced civilian investment. And it was not until the 1920s, and particularly the 1930s, that British governments began to worry about the tradeoff between military preparedness and industrial rejuvenation.

All imperial powers have had to balance consumption, investment, and the costs of empire. During the early 17th century, the Spanish indulged in an orgy of consumption which raised prices and wages. Military demands pushed inflation up more, but the remaining price increases stemmed from the inflationary effects of the vast inflow of bullion from Peru and Mexico. As a result, Madrid lagged behind in productive investment in new products. Spain's traditional wares—silk, textiles, leather, wood, wool, and iron—were priced out of their customary markets in Europe.

A century later, Holland imposed confiscatory taxes to finance its wars against Louis XIV of France. Prices surged, reducing the competitiveness of Dutch goods. In the later stage of the Dutch Empire, inflation encouraged lavish spending by the once somber burghers. Dutch merchants failed to reinvest sufficiently in the now less profitable foreign trade, preferring to send their money to London, where the return was higher. Meanwhile, the streets of Holland's towns and cities were filled with the destitute. In this phase, short-term economic profits for the upper and middle classes took precedence over building a strong national economy at home.

Thus economic growth appears to require both heavy savings and investment, with consumption remaining at a relatively fixed share of GNP, and low military and foreign-policy outlays, except during economic downturns. Rising powers typically find these conditions easier to meet than mature ones. The rising power, however, eventually confronts either rival military powers or the necessity to provide consumers with rewards for their past sacrifices. If both occur at the same time, the nation is forced to deplete its productive assets.

When Great Britain was on the rise, its people invested and saved and aimed for long-term growth. As the British achieved preeminence, however, they began to yield to the temptation to relax and enjoy their position. Short-term returns became important to appease stockholders and investors and to minimize risk. Factory owners hung on to aging equipment and frequently neglected to make new investments unless they were justified by immediate profits. Thus, after 1870, British manufacturers spent less to create new products than did their counterparts in Germany and the United States. They did less to improve worker productivity, and they acquiesced in a less educated and less technically proficient labor force than that of their rivals. When they found fewer profitable investment opportunities at home they increasingly chose to send their money overseas.

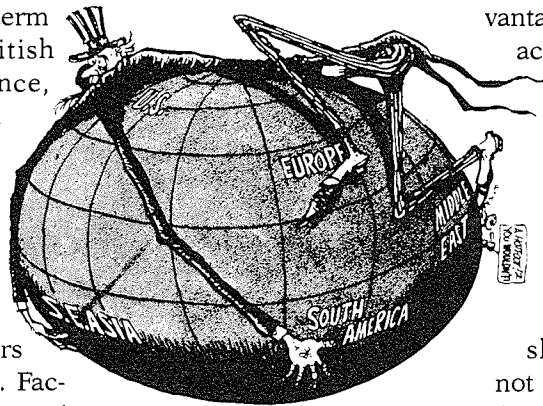
This worked so long as foreign investments and the British money market provided for a balance-of-payments surplus. When those overseas investments were sold off to finance two world wars, how-

ever, Britain had to fall back on merchandise exports at just the time when its past comparative advantages were disappearing.

The first indications of decline showed up in productivity. At the peak of its economic power during the third quarter of the century, Britain's labor and capital productivity grew at the solid rate of 1.2 percent per year. For the next 40 years, however, it fell to only 0.4 percent. During the same period productivity rose by 0.9 percent in Germany annually and by 1.2 percent in America. Some economic historians have explained the dynamics of national decline by claiming that the "advantages of backwardness" accrue to rising economies, which can simply exploit the industrial lessons and technologies already created by others. This is no doubt true. But Britain during this period slowed down relative not only to its rising competitors but to its own past performance.

The failure to invest was complicated by conflicts between labor and management. Increasing unionization led to worker demands for higher wages and shorter hours. If these had been offset by higher productivity, there would have been no disadvantage, but they were not. Unlike some of its rivals, Britain did not offer enough incentives to improve the performance of labor. Under pressure to reduce costs, British managers were likely to trim wages rather than install labor-saving machinery. But wage reductions alienated workers and further reduced productivity.

The result was that the British worker was neither as well trained nor as motivated as his opposite numbers in Germany



1967

IN SEARCH OF THE PEACE DIVIDEND

The day of reckoning is fast approaching for the critics who have persistently linked America's declining "competitiveness" to its large military burdens. They have made much of the fact that, compared to such economic rivals as Japan, the United States has been devoting a far bigger share of its gross domestic product (GDP) to the military since 1945 and a far smaller portion to private investment. [See chart, p. 75.] To these observers, Japan's relative economic ascendancy is no mystery. According to MIT's Lester Thurow, since the end of World War II the United States has "essentially taken defense out of investment [and] the consequences have now caught up with us to produce an uncompetitive economy."

Thurow's diagnosis of the "American disease" points to a simple and obvious cure: Cut defense spending. Investment, productivity, and international competitiveness should all rise automatically.

The problem with this analysis, both as an explanation and as a prescription, is that it overlooks the other uses to which national income has been, and could be, put. If the United States has devoted a smaller share of its GDP to private investment than has Japan, it is not only because it has been spending more on defense. Throughout the postwar period, the U.S. government has also spent considerably more on non-defense programs, and it has encouraged much higher levels of private consumption by its citizens.

To speak of a simple, inverse relationship between defense and investment is to ignore the larger and more complex *four-way* trade-off among defense, private investment, private consumption, and the various forms of non-defense government spending. As we enter the post-Cold War era, every dollar cut from defense will not inevitably be invested by American business in the new technology, equipment, and factories that the nation needs so badly. Some of the savings could be channeled into various worthwhile forms of "public investment," such as education, research, and physical infrastructure (e.g., roads, harbors, airports) that would enhance U.S. competitiveness. But a large chunk of the "peace dividend" could just as easily wind up as still more private consumption, or it could be diverted into federal entitlements and other programs that may be politically popular but that make a contribution to the nation's future well-being that is, at

best, questionable.

What will determine the destination of the one, two, or even three percent of GDP that may be freed by defense cuts? In large measure, decisions about taxes and spending that are made in Washington. If the aim is to enhance American competitiveness, the best approach would be to apply most of the savings to lowering the federal budget deficit. This would reduce the demand for capital, permitting interest rates to fall and encouraging private investment. A smaller defense budget should also make it easier selectively to expand public investment in education, research, and infrastructure. Given the multitude of claims already staked on the "peace dividend" and the vagaries of the federal budget process, a perfect mix of these two policies will not be achieved. It remains to be seen whether or not one can even be approximated.

There is a second way in which big defense budgets may have harmed the U.S. economy. The postwar effort to maintain a decisive technological lead in weaponry over the Soviets required huge government outlays for research and development (R&D) and the employment of large numbers of scientists and engineers by both government laboratories and private defense contractors. This may have bid up researchers' wages (and employers' costs), drawn scarce skilled manpower away from commercial R&D, and held back American industry's technological progress. The end of the Cold War should throw this process into reverse.

But it is not obvious that this will happen or, if it does, that the impact will be dramatic. There are powerful strategic arguments for maintaining a vigorous defense research effort, even as spending on military personnel and arms procurement is reduced. This is not to mention the powerful political arguments that surely will be advanced by self-interested defense contractors.

Even if research on new weapons *were* to be sharply scaled back, the effects might not be as great as many people expect. If, as some have alleged, close to half of the nation's scientific and engineering work force is now engaged in defense-related projects, a 50 percent drop in military R&D might free a quarter of the nation's researchers for employment on purely commercial projects. Recent surveys suggest, however, that the defense "brain drain" is much smaller. According to the Na-

tional Science Foundation, at the peak of the Reagan build-up during the mid-1980s, defense projects employed 15.5 percent of all engineers and scientists with bachelor's degrees, 19.9 percent of those with master's degrees, and only 8.5 percent of those holding Ph.D.'s. Thus, even a very large R&D cutback would have relatively modest effects. And, unfortunately for them and for their country, the people most immediately "freed" by the coming build-down (nuclear physicists, for example) will not necessarily be those best suited for civilian research projects.

Even if defense cutbacks *do* reduce the costs of private sector research, other forces may continue to inhibit American corporate R&D. Economists cite everything from the structure of the federal tax code, Wall Street's emphasis on short-term profits, the disruptive effects of mergers and acquisitions, and the functioning of the country's anti-trust laws. Some of these may be within the reach of government action, but none will be changed simply by reducing federal spending on military R&D. By itself, plainly, a defense cutback cannot be expected to stimulate a corporate research renaissance.

But there is a third possibility. If the Defense Department spends less on weapons research, more money could conceivably become available for federally financed efforts aimed directly at stimulating commercial innovation. In the past the government has deliberately avoided such programs, preferring to rely on the market and the "spinoff" from defense research to maintain America's lead in commercial technology. But many analysts now believe that defense research has become so specialized that it yields far fewer "spinoffs" than before. Reversing an earlier pattern, advances in civilian technology—e.g., microelectronics—are now finding their way into new weapons systems. But in this and a variety of other areas

that are important both for military and commercial reasons, American firms no longer hold a clear technological edge over their foreign counterparts.

As a result, there has been growing support in Congress, industry, and some parts of the executive branch for the idea that Washington ought to fund research on so-called "dual use" technologies—things like high-definition television and next-generation semiconductors, which could be useful both to the military and to industry. Some have gone one step further and urged direct federal support for purely commercial R&D.

The ideological and practical objections to any scheme that asks government bureaucrats in effect to pick winning technologies are obvious enough. Whether there may be some circumstances in which intervention is nevertheless desirable remains a subject of heated

dispute. For now, however, the question is moot. The Bush administration has made its position clear by refusing to be drawn more deeply into supporting even dual-use (let alone purely commercial) research and by reigning in government officials who disagree with its policies. (One of these,

Craig Fields, was recently dismissed from his job as chief of the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.) At least for the time being, federal support for commercial research is not going to increase no matter what happens to defense R&D.

By freeing scarce human and financial resources, the end of the Cold War creates opportunities for the future, but it does not provide any guarantees. What happens next depends on the uses to which those resources are put, and that depends not only on immutable economic principles but on the untidy world of politics, on debates that have yet to be resolved and on decisions that have yet to be made.

—Aaron Friedberg



Aaron Friedberg, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is assistant professor of politics at Princeton. He is the author of *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (1988).

and the United States. Britain did not even introduce compulsory primary education until 1880. In steel and engineering, Britain tended to rely on the talented "tinkerer" rather than the trained engineer or scientist. The British generally confined their research activities to areas that would return an immediate profit, while German managers made painstaking efforts to discover and create new products in chemicals and other lines. Finally, British scientists and engineers were paid less than their American or German counterparts. At the Woolwich Arsenal, for example, chemists earned £100 a year, the same as workers.

Perhaps Britain could have compensated for deficient labor productivity with more investment. But after 1900 it sent an even greater proportion of its capital abroad. By the last decade before World War I, domestic investment had declined to 8.7 percent of GNP and more than 5 percent was invested abroad. At a time when the United States was devoting more than 21 percent and Germany 23 percent of GNP to investment at home, the British failure to reinvest was fatal.

How could this have occurred? Economic historian Arthur Lewis contends that the productivity of the British working man was already so much lower than that of his American counterpart that businessmen could not even make automatic looms, mechanical coal cutters, and other labor-saving machinery pay for themselves, at least in the short term.

Britain's inability to make headway in the markets of its principal rivals—Germany and the United States—confronted it with several possible responses. It could have moved to higher-quality products (enhancing profits); it could have tried to reduce costs (through labor-saving devices); or it could have directed traditional products to new markets. Largely, it adopted the third alternative. As late as 1870 Europe

bought 42 percent of British exports, but by 1910 the figure had declined to 35 percent. Meanwhile, the total purchased by Africa, Asia, and Australasia rose from 29 percent to 43 percent. But this palliative would work only until Britain's competitors turned their sights on the same markets.

A fourth tack might have led Britain to innovate and introduce new industrial products. America and Germany were rapidly turning their attention to electrical appliances, automobiles, and chemicals. Like the United States today, Britain had initial advantages in many of the new technological fields of the day. The British made the essential discoveries in steelmaking, but they often found that their designs were put into service by others. Britain built the world's first functioning electric power station, but America and Germany spread urban electrification more quickly and then applied electric motors to industry.

Ultimately, however, it was the cost of two world wars that destroyed British economic illusions. In the first great encounter, Britain was forced to borrow nearly two-thirds of war costs from its citizens and from the United States. This might have posed no problem had British exports remained competitive, but they did not. During World War I, Britain lost its primacy in shipping and textiles and had to sell off half its foreign investments. John Maynard Keynes managed the Treasury portfolio during the war with remarkable dexterity, but on February 22, 1917, he calculated that Britain's gold stock would not last "for more than four weeks from today." Only America's entry into the war saved Britain from bankruptcy. It was true, as Paul Kennedy wrote, that "The harder the British fought, the more they bankrupted themselves."

What does the British example tell us about economic ossification and decline? From 1860 to 1913, Britain invested too lit-

tle in its home industry and consumed too much. The record does not demonstrate that military spending was the cause of British decline. Britain was failing to invest at German and American rates long before it was forced to divert funds from the civilian economy to rearmament. The war merely completed the process.

Not surprisingly, the Dutch Empire, Britain, and the United States all confronted the twin problems of high consumption and large military outlays, though the sequence differed in each case. Holland had to fight Louis XIV on land and, for a time, Britain at sea. During World War I, England had the burden of maintaining its dominance at sea at precisely the same time that it had to raise an expeditionary force to resist the German challenge on the continent. It did this carefully, always husbanding its forces and hoping to keep France at the forefront of the continental military effort. But the role left for Britain was still too much for it.

By comparison, the United States today not only seeks to maintain superiority at sea but also seems likely to try to keep a substantial force on the land in Europe despite the dissipation of the Soviet threat. The Iraqi challenge could even elicit a new long-term commitment of forces in the Middle East. Even with the reduced priority given to the Strategic Defense Initiative, America continues to aim at military dominance in space. Although the United States spent heavily on defense after World War II, U.S. decline did not reach exaggerated proportions until the defense-spending binge of the Reagan administration. That was because, even more than in the Vietnam War buildup, defense expenditure was not allowed to reduce civilian consumption but was financed by domestic and international borrowing.

That strategy created no great difficulty

for post-Napoleonic Great Britain, because the country maintained a solid surplus in its balance of payments. By contrast, during the 1980s American exports were allowed to fall well beneath imports, and there was no immediate way to repay the nation's growing foreign debts.

The timing of big increases in military outlays can be just as important as their amount. During the Napoleonic Wars, Britain restrained domestic consumption by raising taxes, while borrowing heavily to finance its military effort. By World War I, however, consumption was already too great. Civilian investment had to be sacrificed to pay for guns and soldiers. By the time the war was over, Britain had already lost many markets; it was nearly too late to redeem its industrial future.

The yet unanswered question for the United States is whether it can increase national savings and investment in time to achieve higher rates of productivity growth. Can America surmount the limitations that history seeks to impose upon great powers?

We have already seen that no truly hegemonic power of the past has ever been able to bring itself back. The powers that have made a return (such as Japan and Germany) did so under the beneficent protection of others. But history does not lend us enough perspective to predict the consequences of America's current condition. In certain respects our situation is unparalleled. The military load on the great powers of the past was never lightened. For the United States today, a reduced military burden seems possible if we can avoid a costly permanent commitment in the Middle East. Every earlier hegemonic power had to keep looking over its shoulder to see who might be gaining on it. Spain had to worry about France and the Netherlands; Holland had to contend with France and England; and Britain could not neglect the German challenge.



1990. A British view.

During the 1990s, however, the world will confront an entirely new situation. There is and will likely be no hegemonic successor to the United States. Though there will be military threats to guard against, as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait reminds us, no single military challenger will be capable of wresting leadership from the United States. As America looks over its shoulder, the country gaining on it is not a great military power but rather a "trading state," Japan. There is no great and sustained territorial threat to the existing order. Thus the choices that world leaders faced in the past were different from those confronting the United States. In the past, the choice was to continue to struggle for primacy, with disastrous economic consequences, or to drop out of the great-power race. Every other great power has been forced to give up. The United States does not confront such a dilemma. It can continue, though in a slightly diminished role,

because there is no combined military and economic challenger.

History shows that a shock usually is needed to bestir the complacent social and economic system of a great power. But there are several reasons to believe that a shock short of total war will suffice to arouse the United States. First, a major economic challenge in the form of a sharp recession is sure to confront the nation in the near future. Second, there is the challenge of foreign trade. In the past, other world leaders, particularly Holland and Britain, were major trading powers, but military preoccupations prevented them from fully pursuing their trading vocation. For too long, they limped along, attempting to combine their great-power role with a flourishing export sector. By the time they realized that they could not do both, they had lost their trading advantage. The Dutch even missed the first installment of the Industrial Revolution, thereby postponing industrialization until the late 19th century. Britain still has not regained the markets and market share that it lost in World War I. The end of the Cold War spares the United States a similar fate. Unlike its predecessors, it will increasingly be able to concentrate on foreign trade.

At the same time, the international economic and financial system is now uniquely favorable to an American revival. Support for foreign trade has risen not only in the United States but around the world. Always before, there were major conflicts between countries in which capital was scarce and those in which capital was abundant. Broadly speaking, capital-abundant countries wanted low tariffs and benefited from expanding trade. By contrast, capital-scarce and land-scarce countries favored protectionism. As nation after nation (most recently South Korea) has entered the phase of capital abundance since World War II, dominant economic interests

within these countries have also acquired an interest in low tariffs. This may well be the reason why there has been no general move to higher tariffs in the United States, despite the nation's vexing trade deficits. Certain sectors of industry have asked for and received relief, but Japan continues to sell 36 percent of its exports in the American marketplace. During the 1930s, the United States retreated behind high tariff walls; today, it remains in the international marketplace. And there are few greater incentives to modernize industry than the challenge of foreign trade.

In summary, given a major shock or stimulus and a favorable international environment, nations can alter a trajectory of decline. Resurgence becomes possible when the fact of failure can no longer be denied, and when new resources become available to finance an alternative strategy. Then the challenge to the national psyche shatters past assumptions and breaks conventional patterns of behavior. The chastened state can retrench and regroup, cut military spending and consumption, and dedicate itself to a new strategy combining industrial modernization and the expansion of exports.

To be sure, too great a delay in returning to such a strategy can do irreparable harm to domestic economic institutions, making it impossible to catch up. American scientific and technical research still sets the standard for the world. Major U.S. industries, such as civil aviation, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, computers, and software, retain their leading edge. But if there is to be an American renaissance, our national neglect of these assets must end soon. There are no mysteries about what needs to

be done: Layers of bureaucracy must be stripped away from the public and private sectors; tax policies that encourage corporate indebtedness must be reversed; government deficits and other policies that raise the cost of investment capital must be erased; and it may be necessary for government to channel capital directly to industry. Above all, improvements are needed in American schools to keep U.S. workers competitive internationally.

There are two major reasons to be confident that the United States will regain its equilibrium. For perhaps the first time in modern history, international relations—in this case, international economics—is the stimulus to domestic change. In the past, international relations was governed by epoch-shaping events in individual countries—the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution. Now the central realities are the rise of Japan, the archetypical trading state, and the paramount importance of international economic competition. As the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China liberalize their economies, these new challenges are certain to spark a resurgence of American industry.

The new emphasis on economic competition will also create a more favorable environment for an American renaissance. Because the growth of one nation does not impede that of another (and may even aid it), the pursuit of economic growth will reduce international conflict, providing the United States with the opportunity to reduce its costly foreign burdens. The challenge of international politics becomes economics and foreign trade, not warfare. Under these new conditions, the decline of nations is no longer final. Great powers can recover and ascend.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

MUST AMERICA DECLINE?

The decline and fall of nations is one of the great themes of history. It is a natural subject, as Thucydides said of history generally, for "those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it."

Over the years, the theme of decline has also proved to be a useful tool for those with an axe to grind or an agenda to promote—or, to put it more generously, those who believe that they possess profound insight into the problems of the world. A useful corrective is **The Ages of Man: From Sav-age to Sew-age** (Am. Heritage, 1971), by historian Marcus Cunliffe.

The first great modern study of decline was Giambattista Vico's **New Science** (1725), but it did not achieve wide recognition until the 20th century. Edward Gibbon's **Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire** (1776–88) was immediately recognized as a masterpiece. It neither reflected any large public anxiety about the fate of Gibbon's England nor contained many usable prescriptions for the future, although Gibbon did warn that barbarians in every age "have oppressed the polite and peaceful nations . . . who neglected, and still neglect, to counterbalance these natural powers by the resources of military art." But unlike the scores of writers who would later find dire lessons for their own societies in the fall of Rome, Gibbon was an optimist about the future. "Every age of the world," he wrote, "has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race."

Not until the 20th century did decline become a major preoccupation of Western thinkers. In part due to the influential historical theories of Hegel and Marx, writers discovered many permutations of decline and inaugurated what has turned into a century-long discussion of the phenomenon in its various guises and quarters. How many books, for example, have been written about the "decline" or "twilight" of democracy during the last 50 years?

Prominent among the century's early thinkers was Germany's Oswald Spengler, whose **The Decline of the West** (1918–22) spelled out in dense and sometimes mystical prose his cy-

clical theory of civilizations. (The other major cyclical theorist of the century was Arnold Toynbee, who was more interested in the rise of civilizations than in their fall.) Spengler argued that the West had reached the point of moral and spiritual exhaustion. "Let it be realized, then: That the 19th and 20th centuries, hitherto looked on as the highest point of an ascending straight line of world-history, are in reality a stage of life which may be observed in every Culture that has ripened to its limit," he wrote.

Academics dismissed Spengler's book, but the Western public, surprisingly, liked it. And it was in America, Klaus P. Fischer writes in **History and Prophecy: Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West** (Moore, 1977), that the book received its warmest reception. An impressive 20,000 copies were sold. "Spengler seems to have stirred the Puritan conscience in America," Fisher writes, "bringing out all the latent guilt of decadence and riotous living."

The decline of the West had already been taken up as a theme by a number of conservative critics, including Brooks and Henry Adams, two brothers descended from two American presidents. Brooks, the younger of the two, concluded in **The Law of Civilization and Decay** (1895) that Western Europe had passed its peak and that Russia and the United States were the only potential great powers left. It was not a development that filled him with joy, for he believed that the world was moving from a glorious religious-artistic age to a dreary era dominated by economics and science. In **The Education of Henry Adams** (1907), Henry developed his famous metaphor of the dynamo to describe the sterile energy that he saw as the driving force of American society. He believed that the United States was the first country in history to pass directly from barbarism to decadence, skipping the intermediate stage of civilization.

While the Adams brothers were riding upward on the American industrial elevator and fretting over America's *moral* decline, other thinkers riding downward on the British elevator had more immediate problems on their minds. Their writings, along with much that has since been written on the British experience, are thoroughly assayed in Aaron L.

Friedberg's **Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905** (Princeton, 1988).

Even when Britain was at its height, during the 1870s, Friedberg writes, some Britons realized that competitors were rapidly catching up. The alarm was spread by such books as Ernest E. Williams's bestselling **Made in Germany** (1896) and F. A. McKenzie's somewhat less successful **American Invaders: Their Plans, Tactics, and Progress** (1901). As in America today, a profusion of studies and statistics appeared—most of them confusing, contradictory, or simply wrong. Britain's national debate over its future did yield the makings of an "industrial policy" that might, in Friedberg's view, have kept Britain afloat. But all hope for a concerted response vanished after Joseph Chamberlain, the Conservative colonial secretary, delivered a radical protectionist speech in 1903. Hoping to galvanize debate, says Friedberg, he instead polarized it between free traders who "simply refused to admit that any problems existed," and protectionists who "blamed foreign governments for all of Britain's woes." Debates over the nation's domestic spending and imperial military commitments were no more decisively resolved. Britain tried "to play the part of a world power without being willing to pay for the privilege."

If there is a contemporary counterpart to Williams's *Made in Germany*, it is Ezra Vogel's **Japan As Number One: Lessons for America** (Harvard, 1979), an admiring study of Japan's postwar success which crystallized anxieties about the American position in the world that were in the air during the 1970s. Vogel endorses "industrial policy" and other familiar liberal economic prescriptions for U.S. renewal, but the main thrust of his analysis is cultural. "In the guise of pursuing freedoms," he warns, Americans "have supported egoism and self-interest and have damaged group or common interests."

A strong political critique was advanced by economist Mancur Olson in **The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities** (Yale, 1982). Olson argues that special-interest groups are the equivalent of cholesterol clogging the arter-

ies of the body politic. Unfortunately, Olson's book also serves as an example of how declinists are perennially undone by attributing cosmic significance to problems of the day. He cites the now-forgotten peril of "stagflation" as a key symptom of U.S. decline.

Oddly, it has been liberals who have been left to sound most of the alarms about cultural, political, and moral decay in recent times. Conservatives (with a few notable exceptions) seem to feel obliged to defend the individualist, consumerist culture that their supposed forebears, the Adams brothers, so despised. The conservative diagnosis of decline has focused on military and economic power, and it is summed up best not by any book—although Jack Kemp's **An American Renaissance** (Harper & Row, 1979) captured the spirit—but by the tax and defense programs of Ronald Reagan. Free markets and a strong defense are the main conservative themes of renewal.

Paul Kennedy's scholarly, even turgid, **Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000** (Random House, 1987) may not have been meant as a response to the Reagan program, but it certainly has been read that way. Kennedy argues that the shifting balance of economic power in the world, along with "imperial overstretch" caused by excessive U.S. commitments overseas, threaten American world leadership.

His book has touched off a far-reaching debate about the American future. (Among the notable replies to Kennedy is Joseph S. Nye, Jr.'s **Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power** [Basic, 1990].) History does not offer very much encouragement that this debate will resolve the American predicament. "It is remarkable to see how relatively numerous in declining empires are the people capable of making the right diagnosis and preaching some sensible cures," writes economist Carlo M. Cipolla in **The Economic Decline of Empires** (Methuen, 1970). "It is no less remarkable, however, that wise utterances remain generally sterile, because, as Gonzales de Cellorigo forcefully put it while watching impotently the decline of Spain, 'those who can will not and those who will cannot.'"

CURRENT BOOKS

SCHOLARS' CHOICE

Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows and staff of the Wilson Center

Before Death Do Us Part

ROAD TO DIVORCE: England 1530–1987. By Lawrence Stone. Oxford. 485 pp. \$27.95

Samuel Johnson once remarked to James Boswell that it was far from natural for men and women to live together in the state of holy matrimony. Incurable rake that he was, Boswell doubtless nodded his head in weary agreement. Yet until the 20th century, the vast majority of wedded couples did remain happily—or unhappily—united until death did them part. Even in 1900, only five percent of marriages in England ended in the divorce courts. Now, one in every three marriages ends this way. In the United States, one in two does so. How are we to account for this massive and rapid transformation in human behavior? Why has divorce, in the West at least, become almost as popular and quite as acceptable as marriage itself?

These are some of the questions that Lawrence Stone, the Dodge Professor of History at Princeton, addresses in this, his 11th book. Like his *Crisis of the Aristocracy* (1965) and *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England* (1980), *Road to Divorce* is vivid, intelligent, rich in quantification, and short on brevity. Indeed, readers with limited time or attention spans should be warned that this is only the first part of a projected trilogy. Two companion volumes, *Uncertain Unions* and *Broken Lives*, will in due course provide case studies of unhappy English marriages in the past, together with the sort of compulsively prurient details that are only hinted at in this volume's illustrations—"Adultery in the marital bed," "Adultery in the dining room," and "Adultery on the carpet." What is offered here is not the evocation of human pain and emotional drama, however, so much as a lucid and expert guide through the intricacies and idiocies of English marriage law over five centuries.

Although a Protestant nation, England long retained the Catholic rule that only death could terminate a marriage. Even that blustering tyrant, Henry VIII, did not go so far as to divorce his first wife Catherine of Aragon. Instead he had the marriage annulled. And this kind of desperate evasion of a too rigid marital law was typical. Before the Marriage Act of 1753, some couples avoided being married in church by a clergyman and simply exchanged spoken vows and ritual gifts before sleeping together. A silver coin snapped in two before an eager (or nervous) bride was a particularly popular alternative to the ecclesiastical ceremony. It was easy enough in theory to walk out of this kind of informal marriage, but very hard in fact for poor people to survive without the labor of their spouses and the shelter of the marital home. So middling- and lower-status couples stayed grimly together, whether they were miserable or not. Those few who did split up might try to lend an appearance of legitimacy to their actions by participating in a wife sale. The woman would be led from her home in a halter and sold in the village marketplace by her husband to another man, usually her lover. Once money changed hands, the marriage ended in the eyes of their neighbors.

But not in the disapproving eyes of the English state. As Stone demonstrates, Parliament had cracked down on informal marriages by the end of the 18th century, and it had become almost impossible for anyone except the very rich and the very influential to obtain a legal separation or divorce. Prosperous men and women might cross the border into Scotland (England's Reno) where divorces, like rapid marriages, were much easier to obtain. Or a couple might separate privately to avoid scandal, the wife receiving maintenance from her former husband. But if a man

wanted to divorce his wife for adultery and marry again, he had to be prepared for massive expense and a total loss of privacy. First, the husband had to bring a legal action against his wife's lover for what the courts politely termed "criminal conversation." This meant bribing servants to tell tales of stained bed linen, stolen embraces, and rapid exits down the back stairs. Or he might have recourse to a coachman, since making illicit love in a rapidly moving closed coach was a common erotic fancy in the 18th and 19th centuries: "The pretty little occasional jolts," as one magazine put it, "contribute greatly to enhance the pleasure of the critical moment." Only if he won his action for "criminal conversation," could a wronged husband go on to petition Parliament and the church courts for a divorce.

Between 1700 and 1857, 338 of these petitions for divorce were brought before Parliament. A mere eight of them were from women. Women suffered as much then from divorce being difficult to obtain as they suffer now from it being so easy. Until a new divorce law was passed in England in 1857, it was virtually impossible for a woman to instigate divorce proceedings for cruelty or for any other cause. Not until 1923 could she divorce her husband if he committed adultery, because the courts held by the double standard that a man's adultery was no more than an unfortunate peccadillo, whereas a woman's adultery was a sin that threatened the security of property and inheritance lines. Any woman found guilty of adultery ran the risk of losing financial maintenance as well as her standing in society and all access to her children. When Lady Holland



Divorcers and Divorcées. Henry VIII created a new church—the Church of England—to have his first marriage annulled in 1533. A twice-divorced woman, Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson, caused Edward VIII's abdication in 1936. The co-stars of Brother Rat, Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman, married in 1940 and divorced eight years later.

left an arranged marriage with a man she hated for a handsome and aristocratic young lover in the 1790s, she pretended that her youngest baby had died so as to keep at least one child safe from her furious husband's clutches.

Changing attitudes to the rights of women were one reason why England's divorce laws were remodeled in the mid-19th century. Another was the growing conviction in Parliament that the middle classes would explode in anger unless they, as well as the upper classes, could have some access to legal divorce. Yet, as Stone points out, the paradox is that for more than 50 years after the 1857 reforms, very few men and women took advantage of them. This, indeed, is the wider value of this book: It challenges the very common notion that it is the relaxation of divorce law in itself that lowers standards of sexual

morality and marital security. Rather, as all the evidence suggests, it has been social, religious, and demographic changes that have made divorce such a common event in our private lives.

To a considerable extent, marriage has been the casualty of both longer lives and wider opportunities. Until the 1800s, mortality rates were so high that comparatively few couples could expect to live together for more than 20 years. Now that men and women live longer, they have more time to become bored and disillusioned with each other. And more alternatives await them beyond the domestic hearth. This was why divorce increased so much more rapidly in 19th-century America than in Europe, particularly in the West and Midwest. The more men and women travelled in search of employment prospects, the more access they had to different kinds of jobs, different kinds of friends, and different kinds of lives, the more willing they became to sacrifice existing partnerships for the chance of new beginnings.

War also caused strains on marriages by disrupting families and by exposing husbands and wives to loneliness, change, and new temptations. In the United States, the divorce rate rocketed upward after the Civil War, after both world wars, and again

after the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. And in the last decades, with the declining influence of organized religion, the disintegration of a marriage has become separated in most people's minds from notions of guilt and shame. This, perhaps, is the greatest innovation of them all.

In England, Edward VIII was forced to abdicate in 1936 because he wanted to marry Mrs. Simpson, an American divorcee. After the Second World War, Princess Margaret, the present Queen's sister, had to give up her romance with a royal equerry because he too had been divorced. Later, ironically, it was Princess Margaret who helped set the trend by divorcing from her husband Lord Snowdon in 1978. Today even the most conservative Britons do not seem to care that Margaret Thatcher is Denis Thatcher's second wife. Nor apparently did Americans care when they made Ronald Reagan the first divorced president of the United States in 1980. For us not to care in this way has entailed, in Lawrence Stone's words, "a gigantic moral, religious, and legal revolution." And as is the case with most revolutions, the verdict on this one is still out.

—Linda Colley is professor of history at Yale University and the author of, most recently, *Lewis Namier* (1989).

A Modern Hamlet?

COLERIDGE: *Early Visions.* By Richard Holmes. Viking. 409 pp. \$22.95

Something will have to be done about biographies. Not about their popularity, or the fact that biographies and novels are the only things the common reader continues to read. But about the notion of a life they purvey. "A shilling life will give you all the facts," as W. H. Auden wrote in the poem "Who's Who," but the facts available for a shilling are such as these: "how Father beat him and he ran away." Such facts are important, certainly, but in

the case of an artist, they conceal the decisive acts and sufferings that go on in the artist's mind. Biographers, even the good ones, like to assume that what happens inside one's mind is merely a transcript of what has happened outside. The artist is shown suffering but not imagining. If you write a love poem, you are expressing your love—probably unrequited—and your heart, best if broken. We still speak about the creative imagination, but we don't think it creates anything. We think it takes dictation from the shilling facts. Even a biography as fine in other respects as Rich-



ard Ellmann's life of Joyce assumes that Joyce could imagine nothing but could only lift from his memory of what had actually occurred.

Coleridge: Early Visions is a vivid, stylish biography of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (poet, critic, metaphysician, political journalist, lecturer, born October 21, 1772, died July 25, 1834), but it is afflicted with the notion that a poem merely documents the circumstances that prompted its composition. It is hard to understand how this notion can be maintained, the poems in Coleridge's case being as weird as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," and "Kubla Khan." Nevertheless, Richard Holmes, the author of *Shelley: The Pursuit and Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer*, adheres to it. Admittedly, he has Coleridge's authority for doing so. Coleridge turned himself into a case by telling everybody that he was one. He made the mistake of telling people what to think of him, rather than urging them to read his work. He stereotyped himself as the doomed artist, a failure, a procrastinator. As he told William Godwin,

You appear to me not to have understood the nature of my body & mind. Partly from ill-health, & partly from an un-

healthy & reverie-like vividness of *Thoughts*, & (pardon the pedantry of the phrase) a diminished Impressibility from *Things*, my ideas, wishes & feelings are to a diseased degree disconnected from *motion & action*. In plain and natural English, I am a dreaming & therefore an indolent man. I am a starling self-incaged, & always in the moult, & my whole note is, Tomorrow, & tomorrow, & tomorrow.

When he thought of Hamlet, he envisioned himself:

Hamlet's character is the prevalence of the abstracting and generalizing habit over the practical. He does not want courage, skill, will, or opportunity; but every incident sets him thinking; and it is curious, and at the same time, strictly natural, that Hamlet, who all the play seems reason itself, should be impelled, at last, by mere accident to effect his object. I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so.

He continued to say so, and his biographers and critics have played the same note for him. Even T. S. Eliot spoke of Coleridge as "a ruined man," though he had the grace to add, darkly, that "sometimes, however, to be a 'ruined man' is itself a vocation."

Holmes evidently accepts the association of Coleridge with failure, indolence, defeat, the rigmarole of "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow," but he differs from many of Coleridge's biographers and critics in continuing to like the man. Coleridge has been called a breaker of promises, a sponger, a turncoat, a plagiarist, a show-off, a bad husband, a worse father. Holmes knows these accusations, and if he were on the jury he would probably vote his subject guilty, but he would hope for a suspended sentence, probation, or some other form of mercy.

This first of a projected two-volume life of Coleridge gives the facts and tells some (not all, indeed) of the story behind them, from Coleridge's birth to his departure, at age 31, for a long stay in Malta. The book thus covers the years during which Coleridge wrote most of the poetry for which he is remembered. Since John Livingston

Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu* (1927), the tendency in scholarship has been to see Coleridge as "a library cormorant" (to use Coleridge's own mocking phrase), to interpret his life as one gigantic booklist. Born the son of a vicar and headmaster in Devonshire, Coleridge voraciously read his way through childhood and kept reading throughout his stay at Cambridge University, where he immersed himself in works of imagination and visionary philosophy. His subsequent attempts at earning a livelihood, like his intellectual aspirations, shot off in various lines that never seemed to complete themselves, as he strove to balance, alternate, or unify the imaginative and the practical. In 1794, using the alias Silas Tomkyn Comberache, he enlisted in the cavalry, from which several months later his friends had to buy him out. Two years later, he started a liberal political journal, *The Watchman*, which ran for ten issues. In 1798, he was on the point of becoming a Unitarian minister at Shrewsbury when the Wedgewood brothers, recognizing his promise, provided him with an annuity of 150 pounds, allowing him to pursue his intellectual concerns.

Coleridge's most famous attempt to unite the ideal and the real was his scheme, with the poet Robert Southey, to form a commune, Pantisocracy ("the rule of all"), of 12 men and 12 women along the banks of the Susquehanna in America. Southey even persuaded Coleridge to marry the unsympathetic Sara Fricker in order to ensure generations of future Pantisocratians. A few months later, when finances failed and Southey defected from the scheme, Coleridge's Pantisocracy consisted of two members, himself and a wife he didn't love.

Coleridge attempted to console himself for his marriage (a disaster for her even more than for him) through his friendship with William and Dorothy Wordsworth, and by falling in love with Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's future sister-in-law. (What his passion for Sara Hutchinson came to is still hard to say, even with Holmes's help.) Coleridge kept

making excuses to run off to the Wordsworths, leaving Sara to mind the house and, when they started arriving, the children. He was decent about money, when he had it, but negligent to Sara otherwise, finding more consolation in drink and opium. These are the facts, in the shilling sense: unhappy marriage, money-troubles, dissipation.

Of all the shilling facts, Coleridge prized none more than his friendship with the Wordsworths. Although Coleridge acknowledged Wordsworth the greater man, it has always been clear that Coleridge gave to Wordsworth more than he received from him. The "Advertisement" to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) shows that Wordsworth was mainly interested in discovering "how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." In the poems, Wordsworth ascribed to rustics and shepherds emotions and exaltations which few of them would have laid claim to. Coleridge was far more interested in discovering what the human mind as such could do, released from any consideration of social class. It was Coleridge who pushed Wordsworth into the difficult questions of appearance and reality, perception, fancy, and imagination—questions which make the Preface to the 1815 edition of the *Ballads* one of the great poetic statements in literature. Together they fashioned as the true impulse of Romanticism the one by which the individual self constitutes itself as the center of every circle of its experience and takes the consequences of doing so. But it was Coleridge who pushed the domestic Wordsworth into becoming a "deep poet," while Wordsworth—who continued to imply that he, not Coleridge, understood "the primary laws of our nature"—provided Coleridge with little more than companionship.

Technically, their work on the *Lyrical Ballads* was collaboration, but there is no doubt that Wordsworth was the boss. When there was call for a second edition, he took charge and relegated Coleridge to the back of the book. Coleridge could have

made a fuss, but he didn't; he respected Wordsworth's primacy. Indeed, he accepted Wordsworth's rejection of him as an objective sentence passed on him and his talents. He wrote in a letter to William Godwin, "The Poet in me is dead."

On Coleridge's achieved work, as distinct from his projects, Holmes is judicious and appreciative. His book is not, alas, a critical biography; hence it regards the work as a set of footnotes to the life, the official text. He can't make much of the weird poems, because they are bound to look like distractions from the life. So he is happier with the "conversation poems," such as "Frost at Midnight," "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," and the great "Dejection" ode. They can be shown to issue (at least in circumstantial part) from domestic malice or, more rarely, from felicity. Holmes makes the point, well worth making, that Coleridge took some of the harm out of his 'failure' by making failure, loss of creative power, and persistent debility his theme. He succeeded in language by claiming to fail in every consideration. The English language sustained him

in ways the two Saras and the two Wordsworths did not. Like Hamlet, who kept his secret by telling everybody he had one, Coleridge wrote a few of the greatest poems in the language by confessing in them that he couldn't lift a finger.

It is my prejudice that the association of Coleridge with failure and weakness of will is nonsense. I agree with William Empson, the only critic to recognize that, far from having no will power, Coleridge brought most of his disasters upon himself by pigheadedness. Some of his work is higgledy-piggledy, but the scale and range of it is extraordinary: poems, lectures, essays, letters, notebooks, interventions upon social and political issues, speculations in metaphysics and religion. I see no evidence of debility. As a personality, Coleridge is far more interesting than Wordsworth, more interrogative and daring. Again, Empson is right about him: "He has always the fascination of the most extreme case of something."

—*Denis Donoghue, '89, holds the Henry James Chair of Letters at New York University.*

NEW TITLES

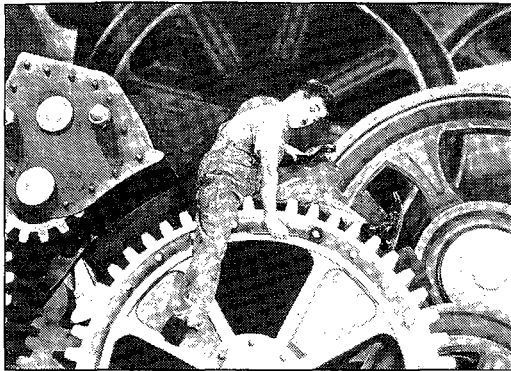
History

SCALE AND SCOPE: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism. By Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. *Harvard*. 860 pp. \$35

Alfred Chandler of the Harvard Business School is considered the dean of American business historians, and *Scale and Scope* caps his 30-year quest to develop a historical theory of big business. A complete history of modern industrial enterprise would demand a companion volume that does for labor what Chandler does here for business. Nonetheless, *Scale* is a

seminal work, one that ventures beyond the conventional categories of national economic history. Tracing the evolution of big business in Britain, Germany, and America from roughly 1880 to 1940, Chandler discovers those characteristics that made enterprises successful regardless of nationality.

Neoclassical economics has never shown much interest in individual businesses, considering them only within the production functions of the economy as a whole. Chandler, by contrast, examines the history and character of some 200 firms, including Du Pont and Good-year in America, Lever and Courtalds in Eng-



land, and Bayer and Siemens in Germany. This enables him to propose why one company succeeds while another fails.

Chandler's key concept, developed in his earlier *Strategy and Structure* (1962) and *The Visible Hand* (1977), is managerial capitalism. He explains here how massive investment "brought the separation of ownership from management. The enlarged enterprises came to be operated by teams of salaried managers who had little or no equity in the firm." Finally, says Chandler, "The new institution and the new type of economic man provided a central dynamic for continuing economic growth and transformation."

These elite managers are a far cry from the Faustian business-villains of Theodore Dreiser or Sinclair Lewis. Managerial capitalism made Germany Europe's most powerful nation before World War I, and it made America the world's most productive economy during the interwar years. But in Britain the descendants of the original founders tended to remain in control, often augmenting the fortunes of family owners at the expense of the enterprise. As a result, the world's first industrial nation rapidly declined.

If Britain is an object lesson in what to avoid, one cannot read this book without pondering the current "market for corporate control" in America. Only in his conclusion does Chandler bring his study up to the present—a present in which too many executives in the United States seem to be lacking the patience, knowledge, and drive that once made half the world's giant corporations American in origin. The corporate and financial elite in America buy businesses today intending not to increase their

competitiveness but to speculate, to finance debts, or to manipulate stocks. The fact that such shuffling of assets remains practically nonexistent in Germany and Japan (a more recent practitioner of successful managerial capitalism) is all the more sobering. *Scale and Scope* puts the weight of history on the side of those who argue against betting the business.

MICHELET, HISTORIAN: Rebirth and Romanticism in Nineteenth Century France. By Arthur Mitzman. Yale. 339 pp. \$35

It is rare indeed for a contemporary historian to rate a biography. But 19th-century historians were a different breed. They wrote history on a grand scale, often to propagate national myths or to build or unite nations. And no historian of the 19th century was more widely read than was Jules Michelet in France.

Michelet (1798–1874) virtually defined the genre of romantic history: "History," he said, is a "violent moral chemistry in which my individual passions become generalities." Mitzman, the author of an earlier "psychobiography" of Max Weber, thus has ample reason for saying that "the frontier between the political and the personal was as unguarded in his [Michelet's] case as that between past and present."

Michelet's story is that of a working-class printer's son who by his own efforts and intellect swiftly rose to head the historical section of the national records office. His position gave him easy access to the numerous sources he used in his 24-volume *Histoire de France*. His own successful career gave him the almost messianic faith in the democratic process that animates his monumental work. Mitzman observes that Michelet "combined plebeian origins with bourgeois status" and thus personified the goal of the romantic radicals who wished to renew "the revolutionary alliance of plebs and elite that had made 1789 possible." What distinguished Michelet's pro-Revolutionary history was his ability to transform his emotional experiences into analytic categories: His adolescent love for Paul Poinson, a school friend, became the model for revolutionary fraternity; his romantic liaison with a younger woman, Madame Dumesnil, the model for communal solidarity with *le peuple*. This half-

conscious identification of himself with *la patrie* made Michelet enormously popular.

After his death, however, it made him passé. Michelet was consigned to "literature," assigned to schoolchildren for his poetic power, while two generations of "scientific" historians ignored him. Yet, more recently, the trend has reversed: Historians following Lucian Febvre, Marc Bloch, and Jean Guehenno are again championing Michelet.

The literary critic Roland Barthes explained Michelet's current appeal when he observed that his subjectivity "was only the earliest form of that insistence on totality. . . . It is because Michelet was a discredited historian (in the scientist sense of the term) that he turns out to have been at once a sociologist, an ethnologist, a psychoanalyst, a social historian." What seemed almost the accidents of Michelet's subjective, romantic method—his interest in popular mentalities, his use of oral testimony, his scrutiny of the historian's relationship to his subject—have become standard approaches in the last decades. Recently, the important journal *Annales*, once known for dismissing the significance of individuals in history, published an editorial statement that called for "new meth-

ods" that would carry on Michelet's concern for relating "the individual to the group and the society." Thus, Mitzman comments, "the circle completes, and the grandfather's soul appears indeed to be reborn in his grandchildren."



RUDENESS AND CIVILITY: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America. By John F. Kasson. Hill and Wang. 305 pp. \$22.95

In the late 1960s rebellious youth demanded to "do their own thing," little realizing that most Americans have long claimed some variant of that right. The 19th-century transcendentalists nurtured an individualism that many took as license to construct their own unique "social" selves. Kasson, a historian at the University of North Carolina, finds that these individualistic

claims have grossly distorted the way social life has operated in the United States. A study of manners, of the forms of civility and rudeness, reveals that personal behavior in America has always been circumscribed by convention.

Kasson concentrates on the 19th-century American urban-dwellers who tended implicitly to accept "the boundless market as the model for all exchange, social as well as economic." Here, in the new economic and social order of the metropolis, egalitarian ideals and marketplace realities came into serious conflict. The problem was how to allocate definitive rank without seeming to curb personal liberty. Americans, Tocqueville observed, had no use for restraints imposed by others, but needed such social distinctions if acquisitive behavior were to have meaning.

One instrument which reconciled "the requirements of a democratic polity and the demands for social distinction" was the 19th-century guidebooks on manners, which started appearing in the 1830s and came streaming off the presses after 1870. Kasson sees these etiquette guides both as instruction manuals for the insecure and as sources of authority in a land where every citizen can claim the correctness of his own opinion and way of life. Specifically, these manuals attempted to prevent "the agony of uncertainty" in a social order where role-playing had displaced feudal role-allocation. In his *Autobiography* (1771), Benjamin Franklin had earlier demonstrated how to adapt one's observable behavior to one's interest. Kasson argues that Franklin thus anticipates 19th-century etiquette, according to which appearances matter more than reality. Here, indeed, is a paradox: By instructing a person not to trust his innate impulses but to copy outward models, "the very rituals intended to fortify individual character undermined a sense of personal coherence." The guides gradually fostered a sense of inadequacy that could be compensated for only by consumption—by buying one's way into approved taste and propriety.

As for the etiquette itself, Kasson uncovers the lost arts of hat-tipping and of cutting and snubbing; of what constituted a proper smile and a proper walk, of how to dine instead of merely eating. These minute—and often comical—strictures on everyday conduct de-



manded, as the century wore on, even greater control of one's emotions. In effect, they set careful limits upon the possibilities of social interaction, and, by doing so, led to a more specialized and segmented civic order in America. Far from being quaint sources of arcane rituals, those 19th-century etiquette manuals, Kasson concludes, "powerfully reinforced class distinctions while transposing them to the plane of refinement."

Arts & Letters

REMBRANDT'S SELF PORTRAITS: A

Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity. By H. Perry Chapman. Princeton. 189 pp. \$39.50

The Dutch artist Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) painted, etched, and drew his own likeness no fewer than 75 times, portraying himself as everything from a common beggar to the Apostle Paul. Why did he so often turn his canvas into a mirror? Most art critics agree that in grander images Rembrandt, the miller's son, was robing himself in the status to which he aspired or, in the later self-portraits, asserting the dignity of his profession. Critics have usually scoffed at the modern psychological notion that he was concerned with his inner life. Chapman, an art historian at the University of Delaware, differs. She argues that the self-portraits represented nothing less than "a necessary process of identity formation."

Rembrandt's obsession with self-portraiture makes him a true son of the 17th-century. During that century, a "growing faith in reason and

experience," Chapman writes, caused individuals to look "inside themselves for answers: hence Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*." Other developments encouraged this individualism. In the marketplace, guilds were increasingly displaced by privately owned enterprises. In the political realm, the idea of government by consent was gaining wider credence. In literature, autobiography was becoming a more popular form.

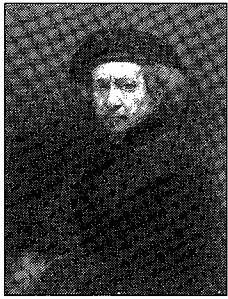
It is no great surprise, then, that the preoccupation with the self should find its way into the art world. "Especially in the Netherlands," says Chapman, "there was hardly an artist who did not paint his own features." What makes Rembrandt unique is not only the number of self-portraits but the way he used them "to label himself as an outcast or an outsider"—a true 17th-century individual.

His earliest self-portraits depict a "solitary melancholic," a fitting image at a time when people considered melancholia the "mandatory condition for creative genius." This guise soon gave way to more exotic, romantic poses, such as in *The Artist in Oriental Costume, with a Poodle at His Feet* (1631) or *Self-Portrait with Gorget and Helmet* (1634). These roles, outlandish though they seem to modern eyes, enhanced Rembrandt's reputation as a historical painter. They also aided him in his lifelong quest for an identity that would separate him from his fellow artists, most of whom portrayed themselves as wealthy gentlemen.

Following his *Self-Portrait at the Age of 34* (1640), which showed a confident-looking Rembrandt in elegant tunic, he ceased making self-portraits for nearly a decade. Chapman likens this period to a "conversion experience," during which Rembrandt directly confronted the question of his identity as an artist. When Rembrandt returned to self-portraiture in 1648, he had resolved to go his own way: "He discarded his Renaissance virtuosity for a more honest, more independent identity as an artist working with his tools." In his *Self-Portrait Drawing at a Window* (1648), Rembrandt depicted himself not in fancy garb but as a plain artist at work, without pretensions, staring straight at the viewer.

This independent impulse was not without its financial consequences, however, for Rembrandt refused to bow to his clients' wishes. In-

stead of satisfying the vogue for classical themes done in classical style, Rembrandt chose biblical subjects that appealed to his own moral preoccupations, and these he painted in a style that his contemporaries found "unfin-



Self-Portrait (1659)

ished" and much too realistic. His commissions dwindled, and payments were frequently withheld. He supposedly retorted, "If I want to give my mind diversion, it is not honor I seek, but freedom." Rembrandt thus faced a choice that few artists had known before but that many were to experience af-

ter him: whether to paint for one's wallet or for one's soul. Almost inadvertently, Chapman concludes, Rembrandt had invented a new idea: "the artist as an independent, self-governing individual."

THE BOOK OF J. *Translated by David Rosenberg. Interpreted by Harold Bloom.* Grove Weidenfeld. 340 pp. \$21.95

Harold Bloom acknowledges that there are "profound reasons for not regarding the Bible as a literary text comparable to *Hamlet* and *Lear*." But his commentary on poet David Rosenberg's translation of the oldest strand of the Pentateuch—what scholars call the J text—makes a powerful case that it is just that, a sublime work of literature. The Yale critic proceeds to claim that the author of the "Book of J" was neither Moses nor a scribe but a woman, a "sophisticated, highly placed member of the Solomonic elite" (c. 950–900 B.C.E.) who wrote in "friendly competition with her only strong rival among those contemporaries, the male author of the court history narrative in 2 Samuel."

On these bold premises, Bloom constructs a scholarly *tour de force*, not only detailing the various revisions of the text (beginning with the E revision, c. 850–800), but also challenging the misreadings of the Bible that have been bequeathed to us by the Jewish and Christian tra-

ditions. But if the Yahweh of J is not the God of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims—or even of secular critics—who is he? According to Bloom, he is a literary creation, an impish character "who behaves sometimes as though he is rebelling against his Jewish mother, J." Yahweh, as the Tower of Babel episode shows, is the representation of the irony of mankind's longing to be godlike: "We are godlike or theomorphic, or can be," writes Bloom, "but we cannot be Yahweh, even if we are David.... We are children always, and so we build the Tower of Babel. J's Yahweh is a child also, a powerful and uncanny male child, and he throws down what we build up."

The question that this provocative reading of the oldest part of the Bible raises is obvious: What do we make of Yahweh's demotion—or promotion—from divinity to literature? It is clearly Bloom's project, developed in his many books, to subsume the sacred within the highest order of poetry, the poetry of the sublime. His project descends from the great poet William Blake, who saw the sacred as the imagination's supreme creation.

Bloom is not a biblical scholar who has uncovered new source material; he is a critic giving the J text the interpretation that is most resonant and meaningful for him. And just as Bloom can read religion out of the Bible, so may future scholars learn to read Bloom's Blakean romanticism out as well. Whether they succeed, however, does not diminish the playful vigor of the interpretation. It is an altogether fitting accompaniment to Rosenberg's startling translation of the poem that describes the primordial spiritual relationship: "Yahweh shaped an earthling from clay of this earth, blew into its nostrils the wind of life. Now look: man becomes a creature of flesh."

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN: *The Duty of Genius.* By Ray Monk. Free Press. 672 pp. \$29.95

The interest in Ludwig Wittgenstein is almost as mysterious as the man was himself. In addition to countless memoirs by friends and acquaintances, there have been poems, paintings, musical arrangements, five television specials, and, most recently, a hefty fictionalized biogra-

phy—all devoted to a philosopher who during his lifetime published the total of one book, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). This, moreover, was a philosopher who scorned the business of philosophy and saw it as his mission to free mankind from philosophy's pernicious grip. (Philosophers have seemingly borne no grudge in return. Biographer Monk counts no fewer than 5,868 books and articles dealing with Wittgenstein's work.)

Part of Wittgenstein's fascination was his background, which Monk carefully details. He was born in 1889, the eighth and last child of a successful Viennese industrial family, Christianized Jews whose assimilation into Hapsburg society was almost assured by their great wealth. The Wittgenstein household was a hothouse within the larger hothouse of *fin de siècle* Vienna: a family that venerated the arts, particularly music, and that assumed nothing less than excellence of all its members. The stakes of such breeding were high—three of Ludwig's four brothers committed suicide—but Ludwig, by all appearances the least gifted, plodded through his early years, a tinkerer with a gift for manual arts.

The fascination quickens with the unfolding of this "normal" child into the man whom many of the best minds of his day would recognize as a genius. To some extent, Monk shows, Vienna's best thinkers set the terms of Wittgenstein's future intellectual struggle: From the satirist Karl Kraus, Ludwig acquired his sensitivity to the dishonest use of language. From Otto Weininger, author of *Sex and Character* (1906), he came to believe that the acquisition of genius was "not merely a noble ambition" but a "Categorical Imperative." Wittgenstein's philosophical style, its analytical rigor, was further shaped by the study of aeronautics which he entered upon at Manchester University, at the age of 19. His growing interest in the logical foundations of mathematics led him eventually to Cambridge and Bertrand Russell and the beginning of a fruitful but stormy relationship: Wittgenstein's commitment to total honesty compelled him to criticize his mentor on those occasions when he found his work less than first-rate. The mentor could become exasperated ("He felt I had been a traitor to the gospel of exactness," Russell complained in a letter to his mistress), but he continued to support his

nettlesome protégé even after their friendship exhausted itself.

World War I interrupted Wittgenstein's work on his book, but service in the Austrian army was a deepening experience. It strengthened his conviction that the most important things in life—goodness, honesty, the soul—were the least susceptible to discussion. They were beyond language. And that was what his *Tractatus* came disturbingly to announce when he finished it after the war. The best that language could do, wrote the war-weary veteran, was to provide accurate "pictures" of the world, verbal representations of what science has shown to be "the case."

Although published with considerable difficulty, the book could have immediately paved the way for an academic career. But Wittgenstein seemed to run from so obvious a fate, sequestering himself for several years as an elementary schoolteacher in rural Austria, gaining the reputation as a brilliant but eccentric misfit. His mind all the while turned, revising earlier conclusions, groping toward at least a partial revision of the *Tractatus's* conclusions. The village years ended badly, with allegations of cruelty toward his students, and Wittgenstein, after an interlude in Vienna, made his way back to Cambridge in early 1929. "Well, God has arrived. I met him on the 5:15 train," the economist John Maynard Keynes noted.

The next 12 years were those during which the "reluctant professor" argued most profoundly with himself. He believed no true philosophy could come out of academia, and thought the best he could do for his students was to turn them toward more truly useful careers—as doctors, or mechanics, or machinists. (His success in this endeavor earned him the wrath of more than one set of parents.) It was during these years, nevertheless, that Wittgenstein's reputation settled upon him like a mantle. His students worshipped him; some even loved him. But Wittgenstein never felt he could love them sufficiently or wisely in return. Monk makes clear that Wittgenstein struggled as much with his passion as with ideas, and it was this struggle that marked him as a philosopher and not merely a professor of philosophy. Most of the work of this time was collected in students' notes, later arranged in various books; meanwhile, Wittgenstein endlessly re-

vised the opus that would be published only after his death, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953)—a work that would develop his notion of “language games” while challenging the adequacy of the scientific method as the foundation of knowledge.

After working as a hospital orderly during World War II Wittgenstein could not bring himself to return to Cambridge. What followed were largely solitary peregrinations in England and Ireland, Wittgenstein dreading his loneliness but feeling that it was his fate to embrace it. His death from prostate cancer, three days after his 62nd birthday, was marked by a Catholic burial. Although Wittgenstein was not a practicing believer, Monk deems it an appropriate mistake: “For in a way that is centrally important but difficult to define, Wittgenstein had lived a devoutly religious life.”

Contemporary Affairs

THE POLITICS OF RICH AND POOR:

Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath. By Kevin Phillips. Random House. 262 pp. \$19.95

The Politics of Rich and Poor is this year's most talked about book: In it, before the reader's eyes, a leopard changes his spots. In the 1960s, Kevin Phillips predicted a new Republican majority, and in the 1968 election he helped to achieve it by building Richard Nixon's populist strategy on white working- and middle-class discontent. Now Phillips is predicting the Republicans' downfall, if only, he says, politicians will start treating real issues and the Democrats start acting like an opposition party.

Phillips's argument about the Reagan years sounds a familiar refrain: The rich got richer and the poor got poorer, and, meanwhile, the GOP had fun. By the end of the 1980s, the top 420,000 households accounted for 26.9 percent of the nation's wealth, the top

10 percent for 68 percent, while 21 percent of all children lived in poverty. Moreover, argues Phillips, “that accelerating economic inequality under the Republicans was more often a policy objective than a coincidence.” Tax laws were changed to eliminate their progressivity; government expenditures moved toward defense and away from domestic programs; interest rates were deregulated; and the government, instead of taxing adequately, borrowed lavishly, so that the United States passed from being a creditor to a debtor nation. All this was caviar on the plates of the rich. By 1987 there were a million millionaires; more Americans had become millionaires in the 1980s than in the nation's entire history.

But the day of judgment is at hand, Phillips says. “The great corrective mechanism of U.S. national politics is the chastisement of elites at the ballot box.” The Reagan and Bush administrations have lost “touch with the public, excessively empower[ed] their own elites, and become a target for a new round of populist outsidership and reform.” It has all happened before, according to Phillips. He draws elaborate analogies to the Gilded Age of the 1880s and the Roaring Twenties, both of whose spec-



ulative excesses ended in an economic panic and a subsequent populist outcry and a redistribution of wealth.

Yet, so far the Democrats have failed to chal-

lenge the Republicans successfully because, Phillips thinks, they have been too busy imitating them. The Democrats collaborated on both the Gramm-Rudman budget act and the 1986 tax reform, and thus could not take advantage, in 1988, of public dislike of a tax policy that both favored the wealthy and created unprecedented deficits. Even so, Bush's 53 percent was the weakest Republican presidential victory in a two-way election since 1908; a switch of a half-million votes in 11 states "could have elected even Dukakis." Although Phillips finds Jesse Jackson "limited by both race and Third World rhetoric," he believes that if the Democratic candidates appropriate Jackson's thunder in 1992, the way Nixon stole George Wallace's in 1968, the White House is theirs.

Exactly how plausible are Phillips's prophecies? So far, there's been little sign of any new populist majority emerging. Phillips's statistics on income inequality may be correct, but Americans in the middle ranges are not significantly worse off. And while those in the bottom third are, they are not heavy voters. In 1968, Phillips drew up a strategy that let Nixon capture white voters hostile to race-fraught issues such as busing and welfare. Yet the same tensions still polarize American politics. It will require more than populist rhetoric to unite the majority that Phillips proposes—blacks, whites, liberals, workers, the homeless, and the middle class—behind a single cause. Even the wizard Phillips has yet to locate such a unifying program in his famous crystal ball.

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada. By Seymour Martin Lipset. Routledge. 337 pp. \$29.95

To the casual observer, the United States and Canada pass for fraternal twins: a little hard to tell apart. But take a second look, says Lipset, a Harvard sociologist and political scientist, and striking differences emerge. America has twice as many policemen (per capita) as Canada—which may not be a bad idea, since four times as many Americans are murdered annually. A greater percentage of Americans go to church. A greater percentage of Canadians vote in elections. Canada resembles a European country,

with its third parties, socialized medicine, and strong trade unionism. In the United States, union allegiance is declining, third parties are ineffectual, and socialized medicine is largely untried. What do such differences, when added up, amount to? And given the similarity of the two countries' backgrounds, how did the differences arise in the first place?

Borrowing from Max Weber, Lipset sets up a chain of causality: Certain historical events happen, they establish social values, and those values in turn cause distinctive national behaviors. The event that culturally divided the upper North American landmass, Lipset argues, was the American Revolution. Canada, never experiencing a revolution, remained "Tory"—conservative, monarchical, ecclesiastical—while the United States embarked on its populist "Whiggish" adventure in individualism and egalitarianism. The mottoes of the two countries encapsulate their differences: Americans are dedicated to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," while Canadians want "peace, order, and good government."

Peace, order, and good government enumerate fairly practical goals, whereas liberty and happiness represent transcendent ideals. In pursuing them, one almost enters the realm of religion. Indeed, Lipset's main thesis is "that becoming an American was a religious—that is, ideological—act." He quotes Richard Hofstadter: "It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies but to be one." During World War II, Winston Churchill opposed the outlawing of the English Communist Party because it was made up of Englishmen, and he did not fear an Englishman. In Canada, as in England, nationality is related to community, to common history. One cannot become un-English or un-Canadian. But "being an American," Lipset says, "is an ideological commitment. It is not a matter of birth. Those who reject American values"—communists, for example—"are un-American."

The timing of *Continental Divide* is fortuitous, coming as the Cold War ends and when many journalists and politicians are speculating about America's role in the world. Lipset holds up Canada as a sort of fun house mirror to America: It shows what America might look like with one distinctive element removed from the image—our ideological mission.

*Science & Technology***HEALTH, RACE AND GERMAN POLITICS BETWEEN NATIONAL UNIFICATION AND NAZISM, 1870-1945.** By Paul Weindling.

Cambridge. 641 pp. \$69.50

Most accounts of Nazi medicine and biology read like demented Wagnerian librettos. By contrast, Weindling, a historian of science at Oxford, serves up a thorough, even dry analysis of those aspects of a biomedical system that may seem acceptable to many upwardly mobile, middle-level medical administrators today. Weindling tells how German scientists modified their language or research to meet official requirements. In their behavior, they appear quite similar to the agents of universities who now haunt the corridors of funding agencies to determine what sorts of proposals will receive support. It is not the methods or morality that appear strange in Germany's case. But the science was.

During the late 19th century, many German scientists misread Darwin and developed what seemed a legitimate program for improving the fitness of the German race. Where Darwin studied natural selection among individual organisms and biological species, they focused instead on classes, races, and nations, as if they were species too. After the unification of Germany in 1870, both scientists and government officials promoted eugenics to prevent the degeneration of the Germans: Alcoholism, criminality, tuberculosis, and falling birth rates were all assumed to be due to heredity. This assumption compelled health authorities to take as their primary patient the state and the *Volk*. Anti-Semitism, distaste for dark people, and even dislike of East European Slavs were viewed not as prejudices but as sound science.

Weindling shows that "German science" was fully in place before the Nazis took power. The Weimar government (1919-1933) ordered the sterilization of all German children of the French-African soldiery who had occupied the Rhineland after World War I. Hitler only seconded this mandate. Although the Nazis appointed eugenicists to university and governmental posts, these specialists had earlier been favored under the Weimar government (and many of them, Weindling shows, would be re-

appointed under the post-World War II Bonn governments).

Karl Von Frisch, the lovable discoverer of the "language" of the bees, and Konrad Lorenz, who wrote the bestselling *King Solomon's Ring* (1952), both taught in America after World War II. They charmed American students and won Nobel Prizes. Earlier, however, Lorenz had joined the Nazi party when Austria was swallowed up by Germany, and Frisch had dedicated the profits from his popular biology text to the benefit of the Goebbel's Military Fund. Most of the scientists discussed by Weindling were, like Frisch and Lorenz, ostensibly motivated by a strong ethical urge, often derived from their skewed readings of Darwin, and by their own personal ambition. And, quietly, horror became acceptable: "What is wrong with taking blood samples from people [concentration camp inmates] who are already condemned to death?" asked one professor in all sincerity.

MULTIPLE EXPOSURES: Chronicles of the Radiation Age. By Catherine Caulfield. Harper & Row. 304 pp. \$19.95

In 1895, the German physicist, Wilhelm Roentgen, discovered "a new kind of Ray" that passed through wood and flesh but not through certain metals or bones. Roentgen named it an x-ray, the *x* standing for mystery. Within months, reported the *Electrical Review*, the public was in the grips of a "Roentgen mania." Farmers even mixed radium with chicken feed to try to make hens lay hard-boiled eggs. Thomas Edison jumped on the bandwagon, but his assistant, Clarence Dally, who did the actual work on the x-ray light bulb, had to have both hands amputated before dying at age 39, the first "martyr to science" in the field of ionizing radiation.

Caulfield, a science journalist, argues that the scientific establishment has been careless in protecting workers (and others) from the devastating side effects of the "peaceful atom." During the 1930s, scientists tried to establish safety standards. With the outbreak of World War II, however, the pursuit of the atom bomb overshadowed health concerns. The U.S. government conducted atomic tests in remote



parts of the country, but when the cattle near test sites suffered severe radiation burns, government scientists kept the information secret. Their justification was that people would be protected by ordinary clothing and routine bathing. In 1959, instead of enacting strict protection laws, Congress passed the Price-Anderson Act (renewed in 1988), which prohibited citizens from suing for damages resulting from nuclear accidents.

Caulfield characterizes the history of radiation protection as a cycle of "lulls and spurts." The spurts come only after some radiation-caused disaster, when public indignation is roused. Thus the Chernobyl accident caused such a public outcry even in America that the

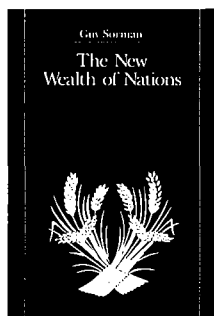
U.S. Department of Energy had to shut down its nuclear reactor in Hanford, Washington (which, like the reactor at Chernobyl, lacked thick containment walls) in early 1988. This cycle, repeated over and over, has made the public deeply suspicious about all radiation use. Ironically, Caulfield points out, the regulations governing the use of radiation "are far beyond those achieved by any other industry. Ionizing radiation is the best-understood and most tightly controlled toxic substance known to man."

Today radiation poses less of a danger to individual workers exposed to high doses than to the population in general. This is because of what Caulfield describes as "radiation's ever-increasing popularity as a medical and industrial tool." But exactly how serious is that threat? Most people don't know, and part of the reason they don't, Caulfield says, is that scientists and officials obfuscate. In 1977, the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) concluded that the existing exposure limit for workers was much too high. But rather than set a specific limit, the ICRP issued only a vague guideline that "all exposures shall be kept as low as reasonably achievable, economic and social factors being taken into account." Hardly an exacting requirement.

If business, scientists, and governments have all failed to institute proper radiation protection, who can? In 1987, 800 scientists from 16 countries petitioned the ICRP to admit "worker and public representation on the commission." The rationale for including laymen on a scientific board is strong, in Caulfield's view: While radiation is a scientific matter, radiation protection should involve philosophy, morality, and communal decision. "No radiation," she concludes, "without representation."

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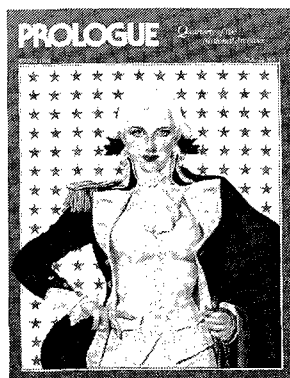
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Dismantling the Peculiar Institution

A bestselling author of the 1990s is, surprisingly, Abraham Lincoln. The Library of America has reissued his speeches and writings; in Eastern Europe, translations of Lincoln now serve as classroom texts on democracy. But few know about the evolution of Lincoln's thinking on the race question, or how he was influenced by the ex-slave and brilliant orator Frederick Douglass. Dorothy Wickenden describes the relationship between the two men—a relationship that would alter the history of race in America.

by Dorothy Wickenden

In late July, 1863, in the middle of the Civil War, an imposing man with stern features arrived at the White House hoping to meet Abraham Lincoln. Describing their interview later, he declared that, though he was the “only dark spot” in the throng of supplicants lining the stairway, he was received a few minutes after presenting his card. Elbowing his way to the front, he heard another visitor grouching, “Yes, damn it, I knew they would let the n----r through.” Lincoln, surrounded by documents and hovering secretaries, sat in a low armchair, with his feet “in different parts of the room.” The president's guest observed that “long lines of care were already deeply written on Mr. Lincoln's brow; and his strong face, full of earnestness, lighted up as soon as my name was mentioned.” He approached Lincoln, who “began to rise, and he continued rising until he stood over me; and, reaching out his hand, he said, ‘Mr. Douglass, I know you; I have read about you, and Mr. Seward has

told me about you.’”

The president's visitor was, of course, Frederick Douglass, the editor of a respected abolitionist newspaper, a man internationally famous for his oratorical powers and anti-slavery activities. A self-taught former slave who had fled to freedom 25 years before, Douglass was the first black man in America to receive a private audience with the president. There was every reason to expect, however, that the meeting would not go well. Douglass was a pitiless critic of Lincoln's hare-brained “colonization” schemes, which would have dispatched freed slaves to Africa or Central America to establish their own republic. What's more, Lincoln could hardly have relished Douglass's reason for coming to the White House—to press him to pay black and white soldiers equally, a highly sensitive political issue. The two men had very different goals: The president's mission in the war was to save the Union; Douglass's was to free the slaves and transform them into citizens. Doug-



lass's demands were not met that day, but he was evidently delighted by his reception. ("I tell you I felt big there!" he boasted.) And the meeting launched an exchange between Lincoln and Douglass that eventually did more than alter each of their views about the proper conduct of the war. It helped to rewrite the history of race in America.

If Frederick Douglass had the courage of Abraham Lincoln's convictions on racial equality, Lincoln perhaps more accurately gauged both the depth of prejudice permeating American society and the staggering complexity of replacing the institution of slavery with all of the safeguards of true democracy. Douglass's dream of a color-blind, integrated society in which blacks would share the privileges of education, voting, public accommodations, and political office seemed on the point of being realized a century later, in the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Today, Lincoln's tortured views about equal rights seem sadly prescient. Segregation can still be seen in schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces; and the

separatist creeds of extremist politicians—white and black—are again making themselves heard. With current schisms confirming some of Lincoln's worst fears, it is worth reconsidering how he and Douglass came to terms over the future of blacks in America.

During the 1950s and '60s, revisionist historians went back to reexamine Lincoln's views on racial equality and emerged with disturbing news. Kenneth M. Stampp asserted, "... if it was Lincoln's destiny to go down in history as the Great Emancipator, rarely has a man embraced his destiny with greater reluctance than he." A black journalist, Lerone Bennett, Jr., wrote a provocative article for the February 1968 issue of *Ebony* magazine entitled, "Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?" The very question, asked in a black magazine during the racial strife of the 1960s, hinted at its answer.

Both those who defend Lincoln's racial politics and those who deplore them prop up their arguments with the speeches and writings of Frederick Douglass. Douglass's commitment to emancipation, black en-

listment in the army, and universal suffrage was as clear and consistent as Lincoln's was equivocal and changing. Douglass found himself maddened by Lincoln's faltering progress toward emancipation and by his seemingly inexhaustible solicitude toward the border states and northern conservatives. Yet by the end of the war, Douglass had come to admire Lincoln's tactical genius, and with considerable pride he also saw him as an ally and a friend. Douglass's changing opinions about the president reveal as much about his own political evolution as they do about Lincoln's.

Race was the issue that launched Lincoln's career in national politics. In the famous debates of 1858, the other Douglas—Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln's opponent for the U.S. Senate in Illinois that year and again for the presidency in 1860—dwelled incessantly on the theme of racial inferiority. Douglas charged that the Negro race was inferior and thus not entitled to the inalienable rights accorded to whites. Conservative voters responded enthusiastically when Douglas referred to Lincoln as a "black Republican" and an extreme abolitionist (like "Fred. Douglass, the Negro") who was advocating intermarriage and Negro suffrage and officeholding. Lincoln tried to rise above Douglas's distortions and racial slurs, insisting that he was fighting for the nation's moral foundations. The crucial issue, Lincoln said, was that of human rights, not race. And he warned—as the abolitionists did—that the nation could not survive "permanently half slave and half free."

Yet Lincoln's liberal philosophy was countered by his pragmatism and his strong political conservatism. He realized that any attempt to secure all rights for blacks at once would scare the skittish white community and thus defeat the precarious enterprise of building a more equitable society. His goal during the 1850s was to stop the spread of slavery, not to liberate the slaves—hence the seeming contradictions in his views on race. He deplored the extension of slavery but defended southern states' rights to their

slaves as "property." He also supported the southern demand for a tough fugitive slave law and opposed Negro voting and officeholding. During the ruthless political campaign of 1858, Lincoln sounded deeply pessimistic about the prospects for racial equality. In the now infamous Charleston speech he baldly declared that

there is a physical difference between the white and the black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.

The best he could do was to invoke the views of two slaveholders—Thomas Jefferson and Henry Clay—advocating gradual emancipation and voluntary emigration of freed slaves as the only viable solutions to slavery and racism.

Frederick Douglass, who was not running for office in 1858, had a different agenda. While Lincoln was trying to win over antislavery voters without unduly alarming conservatives in the state, Douglass was speaking out for abolition and dismissing colonization as a delusion that "serves to deaden the national conscience when it needs quickening to the great and dreadful sin of slavery."

Yet Douglass campaigned hard for Lincoln both in his Senate race in 1858 and in his 1860 run for the presidency. He, too, was a political pragmatist. He was saddened, he wrote in the June 1860 issue of *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, that the Republicans would not "inscribe upon their banners, 'Death to Slavery,' instead of 'No More Slave States,'" but he was willing to "work and wait for a brighter day, when the masses shall be educated up to a higher standard of human rights and political morality." He described Lincoln approvingly as a "radical Republican," calling him "a man of will and nerve . . . He is not a compromise candidate by any means." Douglass was willing to overlook

Dorothy Wickenden is the managing editor of The New Republic. Born in Norwalk, Connecticut, she received her B.A. from William Smith College (1976). Copyright © 1990 by Dorothy Wickenden.

Lincoln's statements about racial superiority and his schemes for colonization. After all, Lincoln had pledged to stop the spread of slavery and to work toward "its ultimate extinction," and he had a good chance to win the presidential election.

But disillusionment quickly followed his endorsement. By December 1860 Douglass was describing Lincoln not as an abolitionist (which Lincoln had never remotely professed to be), but as a protector of slavery. "Mr. Lincoln proposes no measure which can bring him into antagonistic collision with the traffickers in human flesh," he declared. Douglass's worries were exacerbated by the country's unstable political condition. In the wake of the election, southern states were threatening to secede. Northerners were urging compromise, not confrontation, and Douglass and other abolitionists expected the Republican Party to back down on slavery. "The feeling everywhere," he wrote later, "seemed to be that something must be done to convince the South that the election of Mr. Lincoln meant no harm to slavery or the slave power." Douglass no longer advised against disunion. He sought "any upheaval that would bring about an end to the existing condition of things." As Lincoln desperately sought ways to restore national harmony, Douglass looked forward to war as the beginning of the end of slavery.

The new president did not intend to turn the war into an abolitionist crusade. He said in his first Inaugural Address in March 1861, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so . . ." Douglass described the address as "double-tongued"—a shrewd description of Lincoln at the time. Caught between abolitionists and their Republican sympathizers on one side and Northern Democrats and the volatile border states on the other, Lincoln struggled to arrange a compromise. He hoped that he could move the remaining slave states still in the Union slowly toward emancipation by offering financial compensation for freed slaves. At the same time, he sought to soothe racial

fears, in the North and the South, by advocating the colonization of freedmen.

For months after the Civil War broke out, public opinion in the North tended to endorse Lincoln's view of his mission. In November 1861, the three major New York papers, the *Tribune*, the *Times*, and the *World*, all denied that the war's purpose was to abolish slavery. Even Senator Charles Sumner, a friend of Douglass and a longtime supporter of the abolitionists, wrote: "You will observe that I propose no crusade . . . making it a war of abolition instead of a war for preservation of the union." Emancipation was "to be presented strictly as a measure of military necessity, and the argument is to be thus supported rather than on grounds of philanthropy." Though the abolitionists found this a cold-blooded approach, they too argued that the war could be won only if the slaves were freed. "The very stomach of this rebellion is the Negro in the condition of a slave," Douglass wrote. "Arrest that hoe in the hands of the Negro, and you smite the rebellion in the very seat of its life."

Lincoln was an astute politician who moved only when the time seemed right. He was as concerned about the limits of federal power as he was about the evils of slavery. As president he did not express his abhorrence of slavery with the passion he had in the debates with Stephen Douglas. Frederick Douglass was astonished when Lincoln revoked General John C. Frémont's order freeing Missouri's slaves in August 1861. He could not understand Lincoln's refusal to make use of Negro soldiers:

The national edifice is on fire. Every man who can carry a bucket of water, or remove a brick, is wanted; but those who have the care of the building, having a profound respect for the feeling of the national burglars who set the building on fire, are determined that the flames shall only be extinguished by Indo-Caucasian hands . . .

After a series of devastating Union defeats in 1861, however, the public moved closer to the abolitionist view that the war could be won only by destroying slavery. So did the president. Although he still declared

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: HIS BONDAGE AND HIS FREEDOM

The life of Frederick Douglass (1817–1895) has the shape of an American myth—even more, perhaps, than that of Honest Abe, rail-splitter. Douglass's autobiographies (he wrote three) show a man who not only demanded that the nation accept the black dream of freedom and equality, but who embodied the dream in his own life.

Born to a black slave and a white father he never knew, Douglass's early childhood on a Maryland plantation was marked by paralyzing hunger and cold. He recalled his feet being "so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes." At age six or seven, he was sent to a family in Baltimore, where the mistress of the house broke state laws by teaching him the rudiments of reading. This interlude came to an end when the master found out, admonishing his wife that if she taught "that nigger . . . how to read, there would be no keeping him. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master." Few warnings have proved so prophetic.

With the help of local schoolboys, Douglass taught himself to read and write. Now literate, he became even more eager for release from the "peculiar institution." In September 1838, at the age of 21, he escaped from slavery by fleeing to New York City, there marrying a freed woman, Anna Murray, whom he had known in Baltimore. They then moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he changed his name from Bailey to Douglass to elude slaveholders. For three

years he supported himself by shoveling coal, sawing wood, and sweeping chimneys, until, as he put it, "I became known to the anti-slavery world."

Soon after his arrival in New Bedford, Douglass became a subscriber to the abolitionist paper *The Liberator* and a protégé of its founder, William Lloyd Garrison. His first opportunity to speak before a white audience came in August 1841, when he addressed an anti-slavery convention in Nantucket. His gift for oratory was immediately apparent, and the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society hired him as a lecturer. Using no notes, Douglass could speak for hours at a time, possessing, as one observer said, "wit, argument, sarcasm, pathos" and a voice "highly melodious and rich." Hecklers and skeptics claimed that so articulate a man could never have been a slave. To refute them, Douglass wrote an autobiography in 1845, which he rewrote 10 years later as *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Fearing recapture because of what he revealed in the autobiography, Douglass went on a two-year lecture tour in the British Isles, promoting his book and raising funds for the Massachusetts reformers. Douglass was soon an international celebrity.

In December 1846 friends purchased his freedom, and he returned home with a new ambition: to start his own abolitionist newspaper. After moving to Rochester, he began publishing the *North Star* (later renamed *Frederick Douglass's Paper*), which he described as "a terror to evil-doers."

that the purpose of the war was to restore the Union and urged the border states to accept gradual, compensated emancipation, he simultaneously initiated a number of tactical changes. In August, the month he revoked Frémont's order, he also signed the first Confiscation Act, which freed all slaves who had participated against the Confederate war effort. In April 1862 he signed a bill abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and in May he acceded to General Benjamin Butler's "contraband" policy toward fugitive slaves, virtually granting them freedom. In July he signed the Second Confiscation Act. And, despite Lincoln's worries that

arming the Negro would turn the border states against him, in August Secretary of War Stanton authorized Brigadier General Rufus Saxton at Beaufort, South Carolina, to recruit black volunteers. Most telling of all, that summer Lincoln privately discussed emancipation with his cabinet.

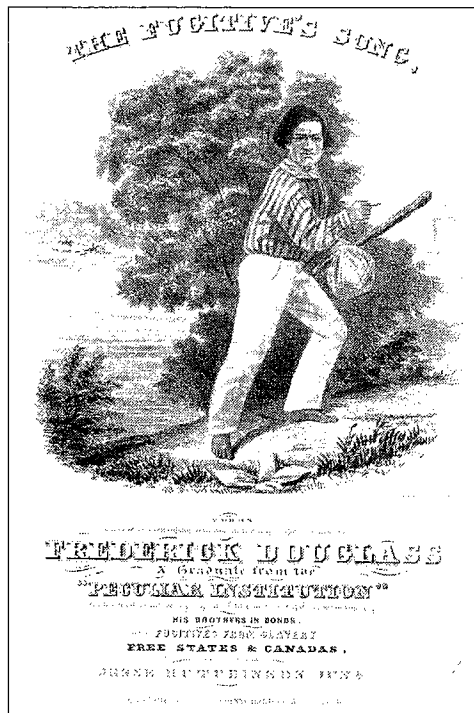
Lincoln had made each of these decisions reluctantly. That is unsurprising, given his cautious political disposition. More troubling to some historians is that Lincoln continued his tenacious support for the voluntary emigration of freed slaves, an idea Douglass described, accurately enough, as "an old Whig and border state prepossession."

In 1851, Douglass made a crucial decision. At the convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society he opposed Garrison's assertion that the Constitution was a pro-slavery document, citing the "noble purposes avowed in its preamble." He made it clear that he no longer supported Garrison's call for the dissolution of the republic.

Soon Douglass's work as an agitator and Lincoln's as a campaigner intersected. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, sponsored by Stephen A. Douglas, marked a turning point for the two men, as it did for the country. The opening of the territories to slavery unleashed Northern sentiment against the South, sending many voters to the new Republican Party. Impressed by Lincoln's eloquent attacks on slavery and by the promise of the new party, Douglass joined, too, in August 1856.

The victories of emancipation and black enlistment that Douglass helped to achieve during the Civil War never seemed to him sufficient. During the 1860s and '70s, when racial animosity appeared more pervasive than ever, he pushed for black suffrage and integrated schools. (He was also one of the few influential men of his time, black or white, to agitate for women's rights.) Douglass's work on behalf of the Republicans was rewarded with government posts: In 1877 he was appointed Marshal of the District of Columbia, in 1881 Recorder of Deeds for the District, and in 1889 he became American ambassador to Haiti.

During the 1880s and '90s, while many of his disillusioned contemporaries were preaching self-help and racial solidarity,



Douglass became stubbornly more assimilationist. In 1884 he remarried, this time a white woman, Helen Pitts. Many blacks were appalled, but Douglass denounced their reaction as a dangerous eruption of "race pride." In a message that sounds particularly pointed today, he insisted that "a nation within a nation is an anomaly. There can be but one American nation . . . and we are Americans."

On August 14, 1862, Lincoln received at the White House a small group of free black men who had been carefully selected by the Commissioner of Emigration, the Rev. James Mitchell, an avid proponent of colonization. Lincoln thought he could convince them that racial prejudice was immutable and emigration inevitable, and he asked them to lead a movement for voluntary colonization. "You and we are different races," he said. "[T]his physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both . . ." Furthermore, he told them, the Negro was the source of the current troubles: "But for your race among us there could not be war." Incensed at what he

perceived as a case of blaming the victim, Douglass wrote a withering account of the inconsistencies in Lincoln's argument, concluding that he was "a genuine representative of American prejudice and Negro hatred and far more concerned for the preservation of slavery, and the favor of the Border Slave States, than for any sentiment of magnanimity or principle of justice and humanity."

Few realized that as Lincoln was making one final push for his tired old Whig solutions to slavery, he was also laying the groundwork for a social revolution. One month before receiving the

black delegation, Lincoln had privately presented the "preliminary" Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet, and one month later he released it. In December 1862, he proposed amendments to the Constitution that would provide for gradual, compensated emancipation and colonization. But by January 1, 1863, when the final proclamation took effect, Lincoln no longer considered colonization an active political option. Many scholars have claimed that Lincoln supported colonization mainly as a political tool to chip away at conservative worries about black freedom. Certainly, once the slaves were freed and allowed to fight in the war, Lincoln recognized that the obvious next step was citizenship, not banishment.

Douglass wished that the proclamation had gone further. It was, after all, only a war measure that excluded the loyal border states and those areas of the South under occupation by Union troops. It justified emancipation as a "military necessity" and did not condemn slavery. Nevertheless, as he later wrote, he "saw in its spirit a life and power far beyond its letter." The final document made no mention of colonization (as the preliminary one had) or compensation, and it had a provision for incorporating blacks into the Union army. On New Year's Eve in 1862, Douglass waited with crowds of expectant blacks at Boston's Tremont Temple for the momentous announcement from Washington and joined in hours of rejoicing when it came. He set off on an extended lecture tour to explain the proclamation's significance to the public and to press for Negro enlistment. He agreed immediately to Major George L. Stearns's request to help recruit Negro troops. Douglass had begun to work within the political establishment.

For decades, historians have argued about whether Lincoln ever foresaw genuine civil rights for liberated blacks. Frederick Douglass, of course, had much to say on the subject. Although he continued his attacks on the administration after the Emancipation Proclamation, the tone of his remarks changed. Both men faced two pressing questions during the last years of the war—the role of blacks in the army and the future of blacks in Amer-

ica—which they discussed with mutual respect at the White House. The three conversations between the "ex-slave, identified with a despised race" and "the most exalted person in this great Republic," as Douglass put it in his 1892 autobiography, vividly capture how the two leaders practiced the arts of politics and persuasion. The talks also reveal how far each had gone toward accepting the other's views on how best to achieve a more just society.

Douglass intended to demand nothing less than "the most perfect civil and political equality." That included, of course, Negro suffrage. He was convinced that enlistment of blacks in the Union army was the first step toward citizenship, and on February 26, 1863, he published a widely distributed broadside, "Men of Color, to Arms!" urging blacks to fight for their own freedom. Undeterred by complaints of pay inequity, he told an audience of young black men in Philadelphia: "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S. . . . and there is no power on the earth . . . which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States." He even defended the administration: "I hold that the Federal Government was never, in its essence, anything but an anti-slavery government."

Six months later, after the bloody defeat of the Massachusetts 54th regiment at Fort Wagner, South Carolina (a battle in which his two sons fought), Douglass grew disheartened. Faced with growing evidence of the Confederates' brutal mistreatment of captured black soldiers, he wrote to Major Stearns that he intended to stop recruiting. "How many 54ths must be cut to pieces, its mutilated prisoners killed and its living sold into Slavery, to be tortured to death by inches before Mr. Lincoln shall say: 'Hold, Enough!'"

At Stearns's suggestion, Douglass went to the president himself with his complaints. In late July, 1863, accompanied by Senator Samuel C. Pomeroy of Kansas, Douglass entered the White House. During that first meeting, the president recalled Douglass's criticism of his "tardy, hesitating, vacillating policy" toward the war ("I think he did me more honor than I deserve," Douglass said somewhat disingenu-

ously), and Lincoln told him that this charge of vacillating was unfair. "I think it cannot be shown that when I have once taken a position, I have ever retreated from it." Douglass was more impressed with this statement than with anything else Lincoln said during the interview.

Douglass proceeded bluntly to make his demands: equal pay for black soldiers, equal protection for black prisoners of war, retaliation for Confederate killings, and promotions of blacks for distinguished service in battle. Lincoln replied that eventually black soldiers would receive the same pay as whites, but that the current inequity "seemed a necessary concession to smooth the way to their employment at all as soldiers." Lincoln resisted the suggestion of retaliation, arguing that it would encourage further Confederate atrocities, but he said he would "sign any commission to colored soldiers" recommended by Secretary of War Stanton. Douglass left the interview finally convinced of the president's concern for blacks as a people, not just as a military tool.

At the War Department, Douglass said, Stanton not only "assured me that justice would ultimately be done my race"; he promised Douglass a commission as assistant adjutant. The pledge prompted Douglass to cease publishing his paper, and in his valedictory he proudly told his readers, "I am going south to assist Adjutant General Thomas in the organization of colored troops, who shall win the millions in bondage the inestimable blessings of liberty and country." Although he was informed of his salary, the order for a commission never came. Douglass was displeased, but he later wrote with resignation, rather than resentment, that Stanton must have decided "the time had not then come for a step so radical and aggressive."

Lincoln called Douglass back to Washington the following August. The Rev. John Eaton, who helped run the government's program for freedmen in the Mississippi Valley, had reported to the president Douglass's continuing dissatisfaction with the treatment of black soldiers. Lincoln asked Eaton to set up another interview, telling him that, "considering the conditions from which Douglass rose, and the position to which he had attained, he

was, in his judgment, one of the most meritorious men in America."

This encounter was even more revealing than the first. On August 19, 1864, while waiting in the reception room, Douglass was mistaken for the president. Joseph T. Mills, another visitor that day, told Lincoln:

It was dark. I supposed that clouds & darkness necessarily surround the secrets of state. There in a corner I saw a man quietly reading who possessed a remarkable physiognomy. I was rivetted to the spot. I stood & stared at him. He raised his flashing eyes & caught me in the act. I was compelled to speak. Said I, Are you the President? No replied the stranger, I am Frederick Douglass.

The meeting itself perpetuated this eerie confusion of identities, with Douglass assuming the role of wise statesman and Lincoln proposing a radical scheme to ensure black freedom.

The Union troops were foundering, and Lincoln (in the midst of his reelection campaign) was afraid he would be forced into a premature peace agreement. He told Douglass he would like his advice on two matters, doubtless fully calculating the disarming effect the request would have. Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, and others had been pressing for peace. In his reply to Greeley, Lincoln had made the abolition of slavery an explicit condition for the restoration of the Union. This "To whom it may concern" letter inflamed moderate Republicans and Copperheads (Democrats who pressed for reunion through negotiations), and Lincoln showed Douglass a response he had drafted, in which he said, in his usual circumspect manner, that even if he wanted to wage the war for the abolition of slavery, the country would not go along. Douglass emphatically urged the President not to send the letter, warning that it would be interpreted as a "complete surrender of your anti-slavery policy." In the end, Lincoln did not send it.

Lincoln told Douglass that, if peace were forced upon them now, he must find a way to get as many blacks as possible behind Union lines. He proposed a kind of underground railroad that curiously re-

sembled John Brown's early plan of attack on slavery: a small band of black scouts would infiltrate rebel states and accompany their charges to the North. Douglass worried that Lincoln was implicitly conceding that the Emancipation Proclamation could be suspended after the war, but he agreed to cooperate. He wrote the president a letter several weeks later suggesting the number of agents to be assigned, their salaries, and how to assure their safety. He also proposed some temporary government support for the freed slaves.

In his autobiography, Douglass recorded his impressions of the meeting: "What he said on this day showed a deeper moral conviction against slavery than I have ever seen before in anything spoken or written by him . . . I think that, on Mr. Lincoln's part, it is evidence conclusive that the proclamation, so far at least as he was concerned, was not effected merely as a 'necessity.'" Moreover, Douglass added, "In his company, I was never in any way reminded of my humble origin, or of my unpopular color."

At the time Douglass had only a partial picture of the president's intentions. He did not know that Lincoln was deliberately making his way from the Emancipation

Proclamation toward the 13th Amendment, which the President would describe as "the King's cure for all the evils." He had already moved from an acceptance of black soldiers to enthusiasm for their performance. In August 1863 he had written a letter to his old friend James C. Conkling, stating:

I know, as fully as one can know the opinions of others, that some of the commanders of our armies in the field who have given us our most important successes believe the emancipation policy, and the use of colored troops, constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion; and that, at least one of those important successes, could not have been achieved when it was, but for the aid of black soldiers.

Furthermore, Lincoln had made the crucial connection between arming the Negro and allowing him the privilege of voting. Louisiana, where Reconstruction had begun before the end of the war, was a test case. In March 1864, Lincoln wrote a letter to the newly elected Union governor, Michael Hahn, saying that the elective franchise might be offered to some blacks, "as, for instance, the very intelligent, and



The largely black Massachusetts 55th Regiment marches into Charleston on February 21, 1865. Douglass had championed the idea of blacks serving as soldiers as a step toward citizenship.

especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks." He closed on a timid note: "But this is only a suggestion, not to the public, but to you alone." Nevertheless, on April 11, 1865, in his last public address a few days before his assassination, he returned to the idea, advocating limited suffrage and public education for blacks in reconstructed Louisiana.

Douglass disliked Lincoln's approach to Reconstruction, which allowed each state to decide for itself whether to confer the vote upon blacks. Like Senator Sumner, Douglass argued that Congress should demand universal suffrage as a condition for a state's readmission into the Union. Still, he did finally support Lincoln's reelection effort, agreeing with him "that it was not wise to 'swap horses while crossing a stream,'" and he attended the inauguration.

Lincoln's transcendent second Inaugural Address thrilled Douglass as much as the first had disappointed him. He was particularly struck by the president's conviction that slavery was "one of the offenses which . . . [God] now wills to remove," and that "this terrible war" was the "woe due to those by whom the offenses came." In Lincoln's words about the bond-man's 250 years of unrequited toil and suffering under the lash, Douglass could not have asked for a more stirring tribute to his people and the righteousness of the war against slavery.

The evening of the Inauguration Douglass went to the White House for the third time, to pay tribute to the president. He was turned away at the door, an affront that was quickly atoned for when an acquaintance of Douglass's let the president know he was there. Douglass entered the elegant East Room, and there, as he remarked in his autobiography, "Like a mountain pine high above all others, Mr. Lincoln stood, in his grand simplicity and homely beauty. Recognizing me, even before I reached him, he exclaimed, so that all around could hear him, 'Here comes my friend Douglass.'" Lincoln, ever the politician, took Douglass's hand and said: "I am glad to see you. I saw you in the crowd today, listening to my inaugural address; how did you like it?" Douglass de-

murred, afraid of detaining the president. "'No, no,' he said. 'You must stop a little, Douglass; there is no man in the country whose opinion I value more than yours.'" Douglass, an equally adept flatterer, told him that the speech was "a sacred effort," and Lincoln replied, "I am glad you liked it!" His black friend "moved on, feeling that any man, however distinguished, might well regard himself honored by such expressions, from such a man."

On April 14, 1876, the eleventh anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, Frederick Douglass gave a speech at the unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument in Washington. It was a ceremonious occasion attended by senators, Supreme Court justices, and President Ulysses S. Grant and his cabinet. The oration is a favorite both with historians who cast Lincoln as a white supremacist and with those who see him as the Great Emancipator. In it, Douglass began with what sounded like sharp criticism: "Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man. He was preeminently the white man's president, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men." Black Americans, continued Douglass, "are only his step-children . . . children by force of circumstances and necessity." Yet later in the speech, Douglass's praise for the President was unstinting:

His great mission was to accomplish two things, first to save his country from dismemberment and ruin; and second, to free his country from the great crime of slavery. To do one or the other, or both, he needed the earnest sympathy and the powerful cooperation of his loyal fellow countrymen . . . Had he put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the union, he would have inevitably driven from him a powerful class of the American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible. From the genuine abolition view, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent, but measuring him by the sentiment of his country—a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult—he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined.

Douglass was far from immune to the sentimental view of Lincoln that so many Americans acquired after his death. And the president's apparent fondness for him was reciprocated. He was deeply touched that Lincoln had left his walking stick to him. According to his biographer Benjamin Quarles, Douglass cherished this more than any other gift he received—including those from Charles Sumner and Queen Victoria.

Nevertheless, Douglass was not one to let sentiment override truth, and in his oration he was groping toward a painful recognition that the president's ultimate triumph was due in part to those distasteful concessions he made to white prejudice. As Richard Hofstadter acknowledged in *The American Political Tradition* (1948), Lincoln "knew that formal freedom for the Negro, coming suddenly and without preparation, would not be real freedom, and in this respect he understood the slavery question better than most of the Radicals, just as they had understood better than he the revolutionary dynamics of the war." The abolitionists and the radical Republicans could not have won their war against slavery. Nor would Lincoln's early support for black rights have prevailed without the determination of extreme idealists like Douglass.

At the time of his death Lincoln had not

yet made a clear commitment to full citizenship for blacks. But in the Gettysburg Address in November 1863, he described a nation that, "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," would be given "a new birth of freedom." This was not the old Jeffersonian social order he had set out to defend. It was, in fact, very close to the "new Union" Douglass talked about the next month: "We are fighting for something incomparably better than the old Union." In the new union there would be "no black, no white, but a solidarity of the nation, making every slave free, and every free man a voter." In strikingly similar terms, Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass thus described a more perfect union, one they together helped to construct.

Today, amid the politics of self-interest and racial resentment, this sense of shared purpose is ever more fragile. Douglass saw that the country would be susceptible to such fragmentation, and he fought against it throughout his political life. "Nothing seems more evident," he repeatedly insisted to blacks who despaired of finding common ground with whites, "than that our destiny is sealed up with that of the white people of this country, and we believe that we must fall or flourish with them."

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An Exile's Dilemma

To return to the Soviet Union or not to return? That is the question now facing one of Russia's most popular novelists. On August 15, 1990, the citizenship of Vladimir Voinovich—as well as that of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Joseph Brodsky, and other Soviet artists-in-exile—was restored. But going home poses problems. Voinovich describes his dilemma.

by Vladimir Voinovich

If you want something good to happen in Russia, said the Russian writer Kornei Chukovsky, you have to live a long life. Chukovsky took his own advice—he lived 87 years (from 1882 to 1969)—but the good thing never happened. My generation had better luck. Without even reaching old age, we have seen changes that our predecessors could not have imagined.

Normal Westerners cannot understand the heady excitement of buying a ticket to visit the place where you were born and raised, where the people closest to you live and the people related to you are buried. We Easterners, anything but normal, think it the very pinnacle of happiness. Until recently, we who were born and raised in the Soviet Union were divided into two categories: those who could not be let out, and those who could not be let in. The privilege of two-way traffic was granted only to those few people who had won the regime's confidence by demonstrating the ability to deviate from all accepted standards of morality.

Since my service to society had always received negative ratings, I belonged to the first category for the first 48 years of my life and to the second category for the next eight. Then came perestroika, and in time the Soviet border became more permeable, even to types such as me.

In the last two years I have visited my

country twice, though both times as a foreigner. A Soviet newspaper suggested that I stayed only long enough to turn up my nose and stomp off. American newspapers also carried accounts of writers who had returned to Russia to give talks and readings and then decided not to stay. But most accounts neglected to mention one point: The writers in question were not given the choice of staying.

And then on August 15, 1990, that changed. After a decade of exile, I am now permitted to live in the Soviet Union again. Something I have dreamed of ever since I boarded the plane that took me from Moscow to Munich in December 1980 is now a real possibility.

Even back in 1980, I was all but certain that in five years the Soviet Union would undergo major changes. When in June 1981 Leonid Brezhnev signed a decree depriving me of my citizenship, I wrote an open letter: "Being moderately optimistic by nature, I have no doubt that your decrees depriving our poor country of its cultural dignity will eventually be revoked."

With Brezhnev's death (November 1982), I wondered whether the changes wouldn't come sooner than I expected; with Yuri Andropov's (February 1984), I decided, no, not yet. But when Konstantin Chernenko was buried (March 1985), I returned to my original prognosis. Five years after I left the country a new man came to

power, a man I immediately trusted as much as Margaret Thatcher did. (Although, in truth, I trusted the situation more than I trusted the man: The Soviet Union had come to an impasse, and the only way forward was radical reform.)

Before long, political prisoners were released, although not in the way I would have liked. Instead of being legally rehabilitated, they were simply pardoned, just as common criminals might have been. At least it was a step in the right direction, I thought. Gorbachev had enemies galore; he needed to move carefully. Rehabilitation would be the next step and not only of "politicals" but of all those writers, artists, and musicians who had been deprived of citizenship.

How it would happen I didn't know. Perhaps at some stage of perestroika someone high up in the hierarchy—the Soviet ambassador to Germany, the minister of foreign affairs, even Gorbachev himself (why not?)—would invite me to Bonn, Moscow, the embassy, the Kremlin, a restaurant, and there he would say, "Well now, Vladimir Nikolaevich, we've been thinking, pondering, debating, wrangling...and, well, to come to the point, we've concluded that you have been done an injustice. Of course, Brezhnev and company are to blame, but we are sorry it happened, and we feel it's time for you to come home." At this point, he would read a decree restoring my Soviet citizenship.

So I sat waiting and ready for more than five years—sat, as we say in Russia, with my neck already washed. And now, a little tardily, it has happened: The president has signed his decree, the foreign

minister has issued his order, the Soviet ambassador has carried out his instructions, the cultural attaché has phoned to say I can come to the embassy to pick up my Soviet passport. This seems the opportune moment to put on a dark suit and a black tie and to retrieve that precious document with its red cover.

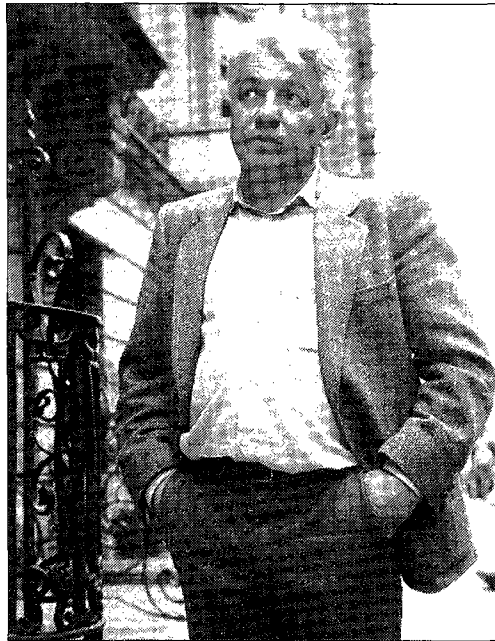
But I'm in no hurry. Before taking advantage of a Decree from the Almighty, I'd like to ask its author a few questions. I would like to ask the president what sort of conditions for my return he has in mind.

Will all my books be published, or only certain ones? What size will the editions be? Only big enough to give to Party delegates in the Kremlin and to sell to tourists in the dollar shops, or enough to satisfy demand? And, while I'm asking, I'd like to know whether I get an apartment, and, if so, where and what size? (I'd like a big one, please, in the center of town.)

Such questions may strike the Western reader as odd, if not impertinent. After all, in the West the housing problem is a money problem. If you have the money, you live where you please; if not, you revise your

expectations. But in Moscow money is not yet the main factor. True, a few apartments have come on the market lately. But most are still allotted according to age, health, occupation, number of years employed, length of residence in Moscow, military record, professional accomplishments, distinguished service to the State, Party affiliation, or membership in prestigious organizations.

And that poses some problems. For one, I never joined the Party. I was *once* a member of the Union of Soviet Writers.



The Exile's Dilemma. Voinovich inspects the cityscape of New York—one of many cities he has visited since 1980 but not called home.

Once, but never again. It has committed too many crimes against literature, writers, and me personally. To set foot in the same old offices with the same old men who made my life miserable and drove me from my country—no, not on pain of death.

But why, the Westerner may wonder, is this a problem now? It is because every Soviet citizen is required not only to work, but also to have a "certificate" proving that he does. If I refuse to return to the Writers' Union, who will give me that certificate? No one. And every citizen without a certificate is a "parasite," subject to criminal proceedings. I was considered a parasite for nearly seven years after my expulsion from the Writers' Union, that is, from March 1974 until my forced departure in December 1980. During that period a policeman by the name of Ivan Sergeevich Strelnikov would come regularly to my door. Scraping and bowing, he would say with an idiotic smile, "Can you tell me where you work, Vladimir Nikolaevich?" I'd say I worked right where he saw me, at my desk. And he would ask, "Tell me, what do you do for a living, Vladimir Nikolaevich?" And I'd answer, "I'm a writer."

"Can you show me the 'certificate' that proves you're a writer?"

"I can show you the books that prove I'm a writer."

After leafing through the books with great curiosity and respect, he would sigh and tell me that books were insufficient documentation. He needed a document that said that such and such a citizen worked at such and such an enterprise.

Times have changed. I may be able to come up with a certificate declaring that it took a certain amount of work to write my books. Or to apply for one of those new licenses, just as taxi drivers or tailors do, and go into business for myself. Then I could live there on my own—except that I wouldn't be *on my own*.

Which reminds me of an old Jewish

joke. One day the *shtetl* matchmaker pays a visit to Rabinowitz and offers to marry his daughter Sarah to Count Potocki. Rabinowitz is indignant: "Marry my Sarah to a goy? Nothing doing!" The matchmaker pulls out all the stops. He describes the Count's riches, the life Sarah will lead, the carriages, the jewels and fine clothes, the balls with magnates and princes. Finally Rabinowitz gives in. "All right, so let her marry your goy." The matchmaker runs out of the house, wiping the sweat off his forehead. "Phew!" he says. "Now all I have to do is persuade the Count!"

My case is more or less the same. Let's say someone persuaded me to go back; let's say I persuaded myself. That still leaves two other people: my wife and my daughter. My wife and I could probably come to an agreement, but with my daughter things are a bit more complicated.

She had just turned seven when we arrived in Germany. In the Soviet Union she hadn't even started school. Her formal education began in a foreign country in the middle of the year. We were very worried. Needless to say, the teacher took her by the hand, walked her to the classroom, and said to the class, "This little girl's name is Olya, children. She comes from Russia and she doesn't know a word of German." The children were so taken by the introduction that contact between them and Olya was established on the spot.

Within three years little Olya was at the top of her class in German. Now she speaks perfect German, excellent English, and decent but accented Russian. You can tell at once she's a foreigner. Where would I be taking her, then? To her "motherland?" Why? To wait in endless lines for bananas, pantyhose, laundry detergent, batteries, and just about everything else? To join the Komsomol and study Marxism-Leninism, or refuse and turn dissident? In any case, things will be different when she's older. She'll go off on her own, no

Vladimir Voinovich, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is considered by many to be Russia's greatest living satirist. Voinovich was born in Dushanbe, the capital of Soviet Tadzhikistan, and his formal education—interrupted by war and the need to work—consisted of the first, fourth, sixth, seventh, and tenth grades. Since his first novel, We Live Here (1961), he has earned his livelihood as a writer, publishing among other works The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin (1975), Moscow 2042 (1986), and The Fur Hat (1988). He lives in Stockdorf, West Germany.

matter what. Then my wife and I will decide where to live. And Moscow is a distinct possibility.

But for 10 years there was no hurry to make a decision. The cultural attaché didn't call; no telegram arrived. Until August 15 of this year, there was nothing but official silence. But silence has a history, too, and at different periods that silence took different forms.

During the years of stagnation, it consisted of the Soviet press leaving us unwilling émigrés alone—indeed, making us believe that we had ceased to exist. I grew used to it. I had been ignored long before I was forced to emigrate. At one time there was an unwritten rule that any expulsion from the Writers' Union merited at least a brief mention in the Union's newspaper, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. I believe I was the first writer whose expulsion went completely unmentioned. The authorities did everything in their power to make my name sink into oblivion. Not only did they say nothing positive about me—the usual treatment—they said nothing negative. My books were removed from libraries, individual pieces cut out of back issues of newspapers and magazines; even references to my name in reviews or surveys were carefully crossed out.

Once a foreign critic in Moscow asked a Writers' Union boss what he thought of me. "What was that name again?" the boss inquired. "Voinovich? A writer, you say? Just a minute." The boss reached for a directory of Soviet writers. He found the right page and ran his finger down it. "Give me the name once more, will you? Let's see—Vinogradov—Volkov. Look, there's even a Voinov. But Voinovich?" He looked up. "Sorry, there is no such writer."

And when I left the Soviet Union, I vanished into thin air.

With the coming of perestroika and the first bold efforts to tell the truth about Soviet life, you would think there would have been a kind word for those who had earlier told the truth and paid for it with their freedom or with exile. But no. Instead came vicious attacks. The press version of the recent past ran more or less like this: We have just come through a terrible period of great trial; some unable to withstand it left the country; they left volun-

tarily either out of weakness or for economic gain, for the gin and jeans of *la dolce vita*. Now that we have perestroika, they regret having left and fear becoming useless, so they hate us more than ever.

In the early days of perestroika, in 1986 and 1987, Soviet newspapers condemned us as a group. Later they switched to individuals. First on the docket was the old-timer Victor Nekrasov, author of *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (1946), the most famous Soviet war novel. One article gloated over how the "unscrupulous traitor" was completely ignored in the West and at the age of 75 was living off "the refuse of Paris high life" under a bridge on the Seine. Next to be attacked were Vassily Aksyonov, Vladimir Maximov, and Georgy Vladimov. Finally my turn came as well.

Literaturnaya Gazeta broke its usual silence on the subject of exiled writers to say that virulent anti-Soviets like me had never believed in anything before perestroika and so could not be expected to believe in perestroika itself. What is more, I had publicly denounced perestroika. (Completely untrue: I had come out in favor of it.) Even perestroika's vanguard organ, *Moscow News*, depicted me as an enemy of change. By referring to "those Voinovich types," it promoted me to a category.

If all this had been written by Party hacks and the KGB journalism department, I wouldn't have minded so much. But my return to Russia and to literature, like that of other exiled writers, was opposed even by fellow authors. They had their reasons. The first was fear of competition. Too many writers had gotten used to an artificial world in which the most interesting books went unpublished, and what was published was chosen not by supply and demand, but according to who was in favor with the higher-ups.

In the Soviet Union, you must understand, there is something that might be called "bigwig literature," written by the Writers' Union bigwigs, who until recently enjoyed extremely privileged positions. They received enormous royalties and prizes. They lived in apartments and dachas luxurious by Soviet (and sometimes not only Soviet) standards. They traveled abroad as they pleased and were chauffeured about Moscow in official limou-



Private Ivan Chonkin has become a folk figure in Russia. In the novel Chonkin is haunted by a nightmare of Stalin as a woman in a dress.

sines. All Soviet newspapers reviewed their works in the most glowing terms, comparing them to Shakespeare's tragedies and Tolstoy's novels. Then, suddenly, with the dawning of glasnost, their books stopped being published, their royalties dropped, invitations from abroad fell off and critics began passing them by or dismissing them with a few pejorative remarks. The resentment of such "writers" thus makes a sort of sense.

Sadder, perhaps, is the fact that even the talented writers—a much smaller group, to be sure—have misgivings about our return. During the period of stagnation they were published less frequently than were their bigwig colleagues, and their perks were more modest. But they did enjoy a certain prestige. If the press

praised them less unstintingly than it did the bigwigs, the reading public, deprived of other living models, raised them to the heights of the Soviet Parnassus. And like the queen in the Sleeping Beauty legend, they want to make certain they remain "the fairest of them all."

Finally there are Writers' Union stalwarts who, though perfect conformists before perestroika, now claim to be heroes of anti-socialist, anti-Soviet labor. Needless to say, they too are eager to avoid the ironic, reproachful looks of the returnee writer.

In short, nearly all Soviet writers had a stake in keeping us out, and they did everything they could (consciously or unconsciously) to prevent our return.

Fortunately, our books were able to return, and with the market now playing an important role in things, our books made money. Soon, the press grew embarrassed about repeating the standard lies. It began to write about émigrés in warmer terms. The first less-than-hostile references to us appeared in the press only three years ago and consisted of one-line throwaways, oblique remarks, conciliatory but always qualified. They (we) had done certain bad things (left our country, spoken on enemy radio stations), but before that we hadn't been so bad, we were even good at times, and in these days of glasnost, perestroika, and the filling in of the blanks of history, they (we) might be partially forgiven—the good things remembered, the bad things forgotten. The first recipients of this plus/minus treatment were Andrei Tarkovsky, the film director, shortly after his death, and Victor Nekrasov, of whom I spoke above, only days before his. I couldn't help recalling Pushkin's line, "The only ones they love are those who've died."

The first to break the ice among the living was the well-known Soviet filmmaker Eldar Ryazanov. For years, he had wanted to make a film of my novel *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (1975), and he decided the time had come to try. The journal *Youth* also expressed an interest in publishing the

novel. I was skeptical, but things did seem to be moving in the right direction.

They came to a standstill in June 1988, when I landed in the hospital and my doctors announced that I was on the verge of a serious heart attack. I nearly dropped dead on the spot: Was it possible that I would fail to see my books published in Russia, in Russian? Would I be like Tarkovsky or Nekrasov and fail to hold out?

Luckily I was saved by a by-pass operation. Soon thereafter, while I was convalescing, a reporter from Radio Liberty brought me a copy of *Moscow News* with an article by Ryazanov entitled "Magnanimity." Ryazanov used the article to beg the authorities for a generous, open-minded approach to émigrés in general and to me in particular. But to echo one of Pasternak's heroes, I neither expected nor wanted magnanimity from anyone. Based on a false premise, the article had a false ring to it. Yet it was the first time in at least 20 years that my life and work had been assessed in a positive light. The Radio Liberty reporter put his microphone to my pale lips and asked me what I thought of the article. "I'm a bit disconcerted," I said. "I'm told by my doctors that I'm doing well, but the only ones they love are those who've died. The only exception I know of is Nekrasov, and the minute they professed their love for him he died. In other words, they are never wrong."

But time has passed, I have (more or less) recovered, and my books have been published in Russia and read by millions. One has been filmed (*The Fur Hat*, not *Chonkin*) and a number of them staged. And I've been to the Soviet Union twice. Been twice and left twice.

Before my first trip I more or less assumed there would be some official interest in my returning for good. I wouldn't have been surprised if Gorbachev had taken advantage of the occasion to annul Brezhnev's decree and return my citizenship. In fact, something of the sort did happen, but on a sublimely ridiculous level.

Just after I landed, a reporter from Moscow television congratulated me on the annulment of my exclusion from the Writers' Union. I hastened to point out

that I did not consider membership in the Writers' Union anything to be proud of. I needn't have worried: I was no longer excluded from the Writers' Union, but as a foreign citizen with a German passport, I could not be included in it.

A meeting with the head of Mosfilm Studios was particularly memorable. I arrived on the dot, but the secretary told me that I had to wait: "We're expecting a foreign delegation." I was annoyed at being brushed aside; then I realized I was the foreign delegation. I was immediately led into a room dominated by a long table of the type made for important deliberations. As the representative of Western capital (to which I in fact had only the most limited access), I had a whole side to myself. The Mosfilm representatives sent me broad smiles of peace and friendship across the table, but their eyes said, "You won't put anything over on us."

Mosfilm's higher-ups were as high as I got while I was in Moscow. Pretty high, but not enough to affect my situation.

Most of my other encounters with Russians took place in quite different settings. I gave at least 20 readings to packed halls with an average seating capacity of a thousand. There was no reading at which I wasn't asked whether I planned to return to the Soviet Union. A man who had heard me on Radio Liberty praised me for the love I bore my country and said he was certain that, given the opportunity to return for good, I would crawl back on my stomach. I responded that the country worthy of such a return did not exist.

On August 15 of this year, the authorities in effect admitted that forcing its writers and musicians and artists to leave their country was a criminal and barbarous act. Even earlier, Gorbachev had made occasional promises to prevent another such "brain drain." If he dragged his feet about reversing the one his predecessors had caused, I was not surprised. What surprised me was the seemingly utter indifference within Soviet society. A minor affront, such as the demotion of one or another hero of perestroika—Yeltsin, Gdlyan, or Ivanov—created a furor and sent thousands of people into the street. But that certain famous writers had not had their citizenship reinstated and that

others were not allowed to return even for a visit—this seemed to leave them totally indifferent.

I've read in Mayakovsky, "I'd like to be understood by my country, and if I'm not, well, I'll go through my country sideways, like rain in the wind." Will I be understood by my country? We'll see.

I've also read about penguins and foxes in the Antarctic. As long as a penguin is with its herd, its fellow penguins will defend it to the death. But the fox is in no hurry; it tags along after the herd until a straggling penguin lags behind. Then it pounces and tears its victim limb from limb. For all the victim's wailing, the herd fails to react: The penguin that left the herd is a loner. Like me.

How different would it be today if I returned to the Soviet Union—or, better, Russia? And why, anyway, do I think of returning? Because it is the country where I was born and where people think, speak, drink, write, read, and dream in my language. Because it is the country where my adult children live, my relatives and friends, the country where my parents and my sister are buried. It is the country where my books come out in enormous editions and are gobbled up by millions of people. (When I see the chaotic, the alarming conditions under which people live, I am amazed that they still devour books—and in such quantities.) It is a country where I have enough money to forget about money. And there is another important factor: Literature has always been the center of my life, but it has never taken over completely. To live my life fully, I need to take part in my country's life.

The Soviet Union is now undergoing changes I have waited for all my conscious life: the collapse of what was perhaps the most inhumane regime on earth, one that until recently seemed eternal, and, along with this collapse, the dismantling of the

Eastern European empire it held in its thrall. To my mind, this is the most important event of this 20th century, and its epicenter is Moscow.

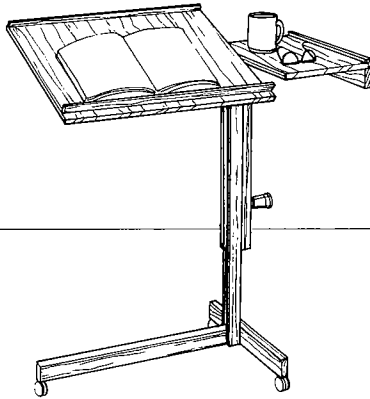
Each individual has his own answer to the question, What makes you go on living? My answer is curiosity, mostly. I have always wanted to see things with my own eyes and be as much a part of them as possible. I used to dream of giving everything up and rushing back, back into the fray. But then I would think, What for?

History is like an earthquake or a live volcano: It is easier and safer to observe from a distance—on television, say. My life's work is writing books, a profession that requires a certain amount of peace and quiet, comfort, and stability. And the Soviet Union provides none of the above: Life is always seething, nerves are on edge; tension, even hatred, among various groups, classes, and peoples is on the rise. You still can't move from one place to another without a residence permit. You have to ask permission to go abroad. And just about everything is in short supply. Today the country appears to be moving toward democracy; tomorrow there could be a coup, a return to dictatorship.

I used to sit and wonder, Would I be sorry if I went back? Would I want to bolt immediately? Would I be able to? I couldn't sleep at night thinking about these questions. Sometimes I very much wanted to go back, sometimes I very much wanted not to. And now it's a real possibility. During my ten years of exile, not even the millions of people who read my books seemed to understand my desire to go back to them. Perhaps it's because so many of them dream of moving in the opposite direction. "Are you crazy?" many said to me during my visits. "If you miss us so much, just send an invitation. We'll be glad to come and visit."

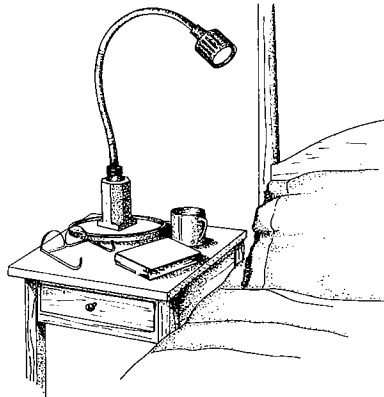
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Continued from page 18

right so that the divine meaning would become clear. Interpretation was almost unnecessary: Almanacs, histories, and collections of "providences" often contained only lists of occurrences, and even many published sermons contained long recitations of "the facts."

Of course, it was not long before varying interpretations of events did begin to appear, and by the time the first real newspa-

pers were started in Boston during the early 18th century, the teleological import of the news had all but vanished. Even so, Nord argues, journalism continued to feel the Puritan influence. "The news would remain event-oriented, devoted to unusual (but conventional) occurrences, and dependent on reportorial empiricism." The chief difference is that, today, "no one knows what the stories mean."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Locke's Lapses

"Three Approaches to Locke and the Slave Trade" by Wayne Glausser, in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (April-June 1990), Univ. of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y. 14627.

It is one of the more unsettling puzzles of political philosophy that John Locke (1632-1704), the premier theorist of liberalism, was an active participant in the slave trade. Among other things, he invested the substantial sum of 600 pounds in the Royal African Company, a slave-trading venture.

Over the years, notes Glausser, of DePauw University, scholars who have tried to explain Locke's lapse have fallen into three distinct camps. One group dismisses it as "embarrassing but insignificant." Scrutinizing *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) and other writings, these scholars find a virtually airtight case against slavery. Everyone is naturally free "from any Superior Power on Earth," Locke wrote, and anyone who attempts to enslave a person "puts himself into a State of War" with that person. Locke seemed to admit only one exception: captives taken in a just war can be held as slaves.

A second group of scholars, led by M. Seliger, detects signs of tortured logic justifying slavery in Locke's writings. From Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Locke borrowed the theory of "waste land," the notion that idle land may sometimes be seized by people prepared to put it to good use. Thus Locke wrote that victors in war may not seize the land of the vanquished, except that "where there being more

Land, than the Inhabitants possess, and make use of, any one has liberty to make use of the waste." By this logic, Africans resisting use of their "waste land" by whites could be considered aggressors in war—and thus candidates for slavery.

The third group of scholars sees slavery as part and parcel of Lockean theory. A conservative critic, Leo Strauss, maintains



Locke probably coauthored colonial Carolina's constitution; granting "every freeman . . . absolute power and authority over his negro slave."

that an acceptance of slavery was a natural outgrowth of Locke's defense of capitalism: "To say that public happiness requires the emancipation and the protection of the acquisitive faculties amounts to saying that to accumulate as much money and other wealth as one pleases is right or just." Leon Poliakov and H. M. Bracken are among those who argue that Lockean theory is fundamentally racist. Locke, they argue, did not consider blacks and Indians

to be fully human, and thus entitled to human rights. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), for example, he denied that nature had drawn the boundaries of the human species: "*The boundaries of the Species, whereby Men sort them, are made by Men.*"

Where does Glausser stand? He thinks that slavery is integral to Locke's thought, but only as part of an ambiguous "destabilizing competition of values."

The Muslim Mind

"The Roots of Muslim Rage" by Bernard Lewis, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Sept. 1990), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

The Cold War may be over but the clash of civilizations is not. Even if the inhabitants of what was once called Christendom still cannot quite believe it, they are locked in a holy war with much of the Muslim world.

Some of the "roots of Muslim rage," writes Lewis, a Princeton historian, grow in certain profound differences between the two faiths. Christians always recognized a distinction between Church and State, and since the great religious wars of the 17th century they have come to accept the separation of the two. Muslims never made such distinctions, Lewis observes. "Muhammad, it will be recalled, was not only a prophet and a teacher, like the founders of other religions; he was also the head of a polity and of a community, a ruler and a soldier." Thus, "the struggle of good and evil very soon acquired political and even military dimensions."

Many Muslims feel that Islam has been locked for 14 centuries in a struggle with Christendom; only since the Turks were repulsed at the second siege of Vienna in 1683 have the infidels enjoyed the upper hand. The Muslims were pushed out of Europe. Then came European and Russian colonialism, followed during the 20th century by the invasion even of the Muslim household by alien ideas about the roles of women and children.

Why has the United States become the focus of Muslim rage?

American "imperialism" and support for Israel are the answers most often

given, but Lewis does not find them credible. The Ayatollah Khomeini, for example, clearly loathed the United States even more than he did Israel; he was not, after all, above secret dealings with Jerusalem. Indeed, Muslims never seemed to hold it against the Soviet Union that it was responsible, through its satellite Czechoslovakia, for keeping Israel alive during its first weeks of existence in 1948. As for imperialism, Lewis says, the United States was never a power in the Muslim world, and it even forced the French, British, and Israelis to withdraw from Egypt in 1956. Meanwhile, Muslims are virtually silent about the fact that some 50 million of their fellow believers live under Soviet rule.

There are several reasons for this selective hatred, Lewis speculates, but none so powerful as the fact that the Soviet way of life poses no challenge to Islam. "After all, the great social and intellectual and economic changes that have transformed most of the Islamic world, and given rise to such commonly denounced Western evils as consumerism and secularism, emerged from the West, not from the Soviet Union."

Unfortunately, Lewis continues, the West can do nothing to remove the source of conflict with the Islamic world; nor can it do much to mollify Muslim fundamentalists. At best, it can step aside and wait for this cycle of Muslim fury to end and for the more tolerant forces that have always existed within Islam to reemerge.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

What Causes AIDS?

"Do We Know the Cause(s) of AIDS?" by Robert S. Root-Bernstein, in *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* (Summer 1990), Culver Hall 403, 1025 E. 57 St., Chicago, Ill. 60637, and "Is the AIDS Virus a Science Fiction?" by Peter H. Duesberg and Bryan J. Ellison, in *Policy Review* (Summer 1990), 214 Mass. Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

The whole world is waiting for a cure for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Yet medical researchers may have made a fundamental mistake. They may be wrong about its cause.

The generally accepted view in the medical community is that AIDS is caused by human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). But Duesberg and Ellison, Berkeley biologist and doctoral student, respectively, say that dissent is growing. Along with Root-Bernstein, a physiologist at Michigan State, they observe that HIV does not satisfy Koch's Postulates, the standard set of criteria for testing the causes of disease. First, HIV cannot be found in the blood of at least five percent of all AIDS patients tested (and less than half have been tested). Second, HIV is present only in minute quantities. Third, HIV has not been shown to cause disease by itself. It does not cause AIDS when injected into chimpanzees; of several thousand medical personnel accidentally exposed to HIV, only five percent have developed HIV and only one person not known to have other risk factors has developed AIDS.

"Other risk factors" is the critical phrase, for as Root-Bernstein writes, HIV is not the only possible cause of immunosuppression. He identifies seven agents that suppress the human immune system, some of them associated in this country with homosexual behavior: venereal and

other diseases; antibiotics; amyl nitrites and some other "recreational" drugs (not just dirty needles); semen components; blood; anesthetics; and malnutrition. Does it not seem logical, he asks, that since AIDS has more than one manifestation (e.g., pneumonia or wasting syndrome) it would also have more than one cause?

The occurrence of AIDS among infants seems to suggest that risky behavior is not a factor. But in fact, says Root-Bernstein, these unfortunate children are also subject to multiple risk factors through their mothers, and their immune systems are further undermined by premature birth and low birth weight.

There are several possible alternatives to the current wisdom. Among them: HIV may not cause AIDS at all; it may be one of several independent causes; or it may be necessary but not sufficient to cause AIDS. Root-Bernstein seems to lean toward the middle explanation. Duesberg and Ellison believe that HIV plays no role at all in AIDS. In their view, AIDS is in reality more than one disease with more than one cause, "most of which have in common only that they involve risk behavior." If so, AIDS is not transmissible.

All three authors seem to agree on one thing. Basing the entire \$3 billion U.S. budget for AIDS research, treatment, and education on the proposition that HIV is the only possible cause is a tragic mistake.

Biotech Mining

"Mining with Microbes" by Keith H. Debus, in *Technology Review* (Aug.-Sept. 1990), Building W59, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

Mining has not changed much since humans first began digging rocks from the earth and smelting them to obtain iron,

gold, and other metals some 6,500 years ago. But biotechnology may soon bring about a revolution in mining, reports De-

bus, an economist at Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology.

Traditional mining methods sufficed so long as high-quality ores and energy were abundant and concerns about the environment minimal. The fact that they no longer are has spurred advances in the new field of biohydrometallurgy. So far, the U.S. copper industry can claim the most successful application of biohydrometallurgy. Threatened with extinction during the mid-1980s, the once-dominant industry finally capitalized on a technology that was accidentally discovered at Spain's famous Rio Tinto copper mine in 1752, and which has been in scattered use since the turn of the century. The technology exploits the ability of the naturally occurring bacteria *Thiobacillus ferrooxidans* to free copper from ore. By spraying a solution of manufactured bacteria over mine wastes and processing the liquid, workers can recover huge amounts of copper. "Bioleaching," which produced about 30 percent of the U.S. copper industry's output by 1989, literally saved American copper companies from extinction.

Some day, Debus says, it may be possible to eliminate conventional mining alto-

gether. Bacteria engineered to remove specific kinds of minerals may be pumped into the ground and then extracted and placed in ponds on the surface, where the minerals would be processed. The problem, according to Debus, is that while such methods would be cheap, they would take a long time, perhaps decades, to work. And nobody has yet found a way to bring microbes and minerals together beneath the surface effectively.

Already in existence, however, are several genetically engineered microorganisms that can clean up conventional mining by removing sulfuric acid and metals from mine run-off. Similar methods have been applied to the treatment of industrial waste water. And researchers are working on microbes that will remove sulfur from coal, thereby reducing sulfur dioxide emissions by power plants that burn coal and the acid rain that results.

Biohydrometallurgy, Debus says, is that rare technology that serves two often conflicting goals simultaneously: more efficient production and a cleaner environment. Unfortunately, he concludes, neither industry nor government is paying enough attention to it.

Medicine Goes Native

"Borderline Cases: How Medical Practice Reflects National Culture" by Lynn Payer, in *The Sciences* (July-Aug. 1990), 2 East 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Science is supposed to be the bearer of universal truths, but at least in the case of medical science, that is not always the case. Even in the West, observes Payer, a freelance writer, there are distinct national styles of medicine.

Thus, West German physicians have long been preoccupied with the heart as the key to all disease, perhaps a legacy of German literary romanticism. That orientation is so strong that *Herzinsuffizienz*, or "weak heart," is the single most common ailment treated in West Germany. When West German and American doctors were asked in one study to analyze a group of electrocardiograms, the Germans identified abnormalities in 40 percent of

the patients, the Americans in only five percent.

Until recently, French doctors also had a favorite internal organ. Not surprisingly for a people known for their fondness for good food, they blamed a "fragile liver" for problems as various as headaches, coughs, impotence, acne, and dandruff—at least until a conference of French hepatologists largely absolved the organ during the mid 1970s. French attitudes toward medical research are strongly influenced by the legacy of Descartes. The Cartesian emphasis on elegant intellectual reasoning is evident in the habit among French researchers of announcing great breakthroughs without adequately testing them.

French researchers recently publicized a new treatment for AIDS after trying it on only six patients for just one week. By contrast, physicians in England, home of the empirical tradition of Bacon, Hume, and Locke, are the most cautious. They even dispute the efficacy of the drug AZT as a treatment for AIDS.

Neither the West Germans nor the French have ever fully accepted Louis Pasteur's discovery that germs cause many diseases; they share the tendency to view disease as a "failure of internal defenses rather than an invasion from without," notes Payer. Thus, German doctors rarely prescribe antibiotics. And their French counterparts refer rather vaguely to the *terrain*, or "constitution," as the most important factor in one's health. As a result, Payer reports, one out of every 200 medical visits in France leads to the prescription of a three-week cure at a spa in order to "shore up the *terrain*," courtesy of the national health insurance program.

By contrast, British doctors are considered so stingy about ordering tests or medication of any kind that the French call them "the accountants of the medical

The Frankenstein Syndrome

Frightened by genetic engineering? In suggesting how medical technologies ought to be governed, psychiatrist Willard Gaylin points out in the *Hastings Center Report* (Jan.-Feb. 1990) that they are far less dangerous than other, more familiar threats.

Those attributes that distinguish us from the beasts, that define our humanness, must be encouraged and enhanced to maintain our status "in the image of God." Acknowledging that one of the primary aspects of our humanness is the capacity to modify ourselves, I would hold that the guidelines necessary to test the value of change would be the degree to which those changes encourage or discourage the emergence of the other noble and human qualities . . .

In guarding these central human attributes, we must not overvalue the danger of the technological because in so doing we will take our eye from the sociological and psychological factors that to this date have had, and probably into the near future will have, the most profound impact in changing human nature. We will be victimized by the Frankenstein Factor, by being intimidated by the method rather than focusing on the effect. No technology to date has been able to dehumanize and demoralize with the power of drugs, poverty, neglect, despair, narcissism, and blind hedonism.

world." English empiricism and the constraints of the English health-care system account for some of this stinginess, but even the English minimum daily allowance of vitamin C is skimpy.

What about American medicine? By European standards, Payer writes, it is very aggressive. American doctors prescribe more medication and perform more surgery than their European counterparts, apparently in the belief that the important thing is to do *something*.

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

Science Meets Mother Earth

"Debating Gaia" by Stephen H. Schneider, in *Environment* (May 1990), 4000 Albemarle St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

For over a century, scientists have at least tacitly recognized that Earth's plant and animal life is not just the passive subject of environmental influences. It's a two-way street. The planet's "biota" also influences the climate and other aspects of the global

environment. During the 1960s, British scientist James E. Lovelock and microbiologist Lynn Margulis went a giant step further. They argued that the biota actually manipulates the environment for its own purposes, that it "optimizes" environmen-

tal conditions to suit itself. At the suggestion of Lovelock's neighbor, the novelist William Golding, they called their idea the Gaia hypothesis, after the Greek word for Mother Earth. "It is a more convenient term than biological cybernetic system with homeostatic tendencies," Lovelock explained.

At first, writes Schneider, a climatologist at the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research, the Gaia hypothesis was embraced only by mystics and certain apologists for industry who saw the Gaian vision of a self-policing global environment as a license to pollute. But now, because of increased appreciation of feedback mechanisms, scientists are beginning to pay serious attention to the idea.

The problem, Schneider suggests, is that there is more than one Gaia hypothesis. "The realization that climate and life mutually influence each other is profound Nonetheless, to say that climate and life 'grew up together,' or co-evolved,

is not the same as to say that life somehow optimizes its own environment to suit itself."

Consider, Schneider says, the last ice age, which ended some 15,000 years ago. The carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere at the time was much lower than normal; apparently ocean phytoplankton were "hoarding" carbon dioxide. Because carbon dioxide helps to warm the planet (as an essential element of the "greenhouse effect"), this abnormality made the ice age colder than it otherwise would have been. And a colder ice age meant much less biomass—about 10–20 percent less than the planet has today. So it does not look to Schneider as if Gaia optimized the environment during the ice age.

He salutes Lovelock and Margulis for reminding scientists of the importance of feedback mechanisms between earthly life and the environment, but he warns that it is a grave error to conclude that all of them are positive.

Going for Broke

"The Pathology of Symbolic Legislation" by John P. Dwyer, in *Ecology Law Quarterly* (No. 2, 1990), 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, Calif. 94720.

Every few years the U.S. Congress passes an ambitious package of laws intended to end by fiat some threat to health or the environment: cancer-causing substances in food, toxic pollutants in the water, hazardous substances in the air. Dwyer, an acting professor of law at Berkeley, cannot think of a better recipe for failure.

By enacting such statutes, he writes, "legislators reap the political benefits of voting for 'health and the environment' and against 'trading lives for dollars,' and successfully sidestep the difficult policy choices that must be made." As a result, regulators at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other agencies are stuck with an impossible mission.

Dwyer points to the Clean Air Act of 1970, which required the EPA to eliminate all risks to human health from hazardous air pollutants, regardless of costs or technological feasibility. The hazardous air pollutants were to be identified and regulated

within little more than a year of the law's passage. Needless to say, that never happened, and the reason, apart from scientific and other obstacles, is that the costs of eliminating all risks to health would be "staggering." For example, in 1983, after the EPA finally came out with a regulation for just one pollutant, arsenic, a government analysis showed that it would prevent 4.05 fatal cancer cases annually at a cost of \$27.1 million to industry. But if Congress had allowed the EPA to weigh costs, the agency could have set a standard that saved 3.92 lives at a cost of only \$7.4 million. In other words, \$19.7 million was to be spent to prevent 0.13 cases of cancer, the equivalent of \$150 million for one life.

Faced with such irrationalities, EPA regulators have only two choices: drag their feet or change the rules. Delay they have, through both Democratic and Republican administrations. By late 1984, regulations had been written for only seven hazardous

Conservative Environmentalism?

A Survey of Recent Articles

A "kinder, gentler" environmental policy may be a long time coming if George Bush relies on conservative intellectuals for inspiration. Two clusters of articles in conservative journals recently suggest that they are still struggling to come to terms with environmental politics.

In *Chronicles* (August 1990), Harvard's Edward O. Wilson, the father of "sociobiology," expresses dismay that "green" issues still make many conservatives see red. "If the heart of the conservation agenda is the preservation of the best in the world in the midst of change," he argues, "it cannot be limited to institutions, the rule of law, and personal morality." Wilson's main concern is the rapid extinction of plant and animal species. "Evolutionary biologists are like art curators watching the Louvre burn down," he writes. His solution: land-use zoning on a global scale, improvements in agriculture, and government population-control programs.

This is hardly that old-time conservative religion, as Thomas Fleming, the editor of *Chronicles*, makes clear. "It would be a great mistake," he warns, "to invest much faith or energy in political solutions." His own recommendation:

"human-oriented" environmental policies at the town and county level. Oddly, Fleming also favors the use of treaties and international law to reduce cross-border pollution. What if, say, Cuba, persisted in polluting the air? "I do not know what George Bush would do, but I would declare war."

In the same issue of *Chronicles*, John A. Baden, of the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment, sounds a more familiar conservative theme. Because they are driven by political imperatives, government bureaucracies often harm the environment more than they help it. Thus, the U.S. Forest Service dances to the tune of local congressmen and local interests, favoring loggers over recreational users of the 156 national forests and allowing the logging of "environmentally fragile and economically unprofitable areas."

Richard L. Stroup and Jane S. Shaw, both of the Political Economy Research Center in

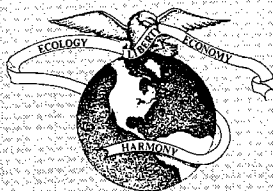
Montana, chime in with a strong second. They argue in the *Public Interest* (Fall 1989) that privately owned resources are seldom abused, because owners pay a financial price for neglect. They point to the famous Love Canal case. In 1950, they say, the school board of Niagara Falls, New York, took possession of a safe chemical dump built by the Hooker Chemical Company and, despite repeated company warnings, proceeded to develop the site, penetrating the dump's protective shell. In 1979, the Love Canal area had to be evacuated. "When Hooker owned the site, company managers had a powerful economic incentive to act responsibly. Liability laws made clear that Hooker would be liable for harm caused by the waste But the members of the school board, like public officials generally, did not have the same personal or financial accountability for their actions."

This endorsement of the private sector is juxtaposed with another *Public Interest* essay by attorney Michael Greve, who criticizes Congress for allowing private groups to sue industry for violations of anti-pollution laws. He argues that environmental advocacy groups have used the threat of lawsuits to extort

money from industry. In 1983, such groups collected four times as much as the U.S. Treasury did from out-of-court settlements arising out of the Clean Water Act.

Joel Schwartz, a *Public Interest* editor, takes aim at the new legal doctrine, advanced by Harvard's Laurence Tribe, among others, that nature ought to enjoy the same legal protections as humans. Since nature cannot defend itself in court, Tribe argues, environmental groups ought to be allowed to act on its behalf. Scoffing at such notions, Schwartz charges that overreliance on the courts reveals a grievous loss of faith in representative government among environmental activists.

Which it may. But conservatives do not seem to agree among themselves about what they want. More rational and effective government, as Schwartz, Greve, and Wilson seem to say, or less government, as Baden, Stroup, and Shaw suggest?



air pollutants. Dozens more remain to be dealt with. The other option is to reformulate the rules, either by persuading Congress to allow the EPA to weigh costs and feasibility or by doing so covertly. Congress has not gone along, and the courts, naturally enough, have rejected the EPA's covert efforts to do so.

Other commentators wag their fingers at

Congress for passing laws that are impossible to enforce, but Dwyer considers himself too much of a realist to believe that that will do much good. He suggests that regulators work behind the scenes to win informal concessions with congressional oversight committees, and that the courts stop holding regulators to the letter of the cynical laws that Congress passes.

ARTS & LETTERS

Our Fin de Siècle And Theirs

"The Decline of the City of Mahagonny" by Robert Hughes, in *The New Republic* (June 25, 1990), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Art critics of the future will inevitably refer to the era we live in as the *fin de siècle*. Just as inevitably, they will compare our *fin de siècle* to the one that went before, and Hughes, of *Time* magazine, declares that we ought to be embarrassed by what they will see. For who among the current crop of Manhattan artistic "giants," he asks, can reasonably be compared to Cézanne, Monet, Seurat, Degas, Matisse, van Gogh, Gauguin, Munch, Rodin?

New York seized the title of art capital of the world from Paris after World War II, and for the first quarter of a century all was well. The city nurtured such great talents as Jackson Pollock, Willem De Kooning, Mark Rothko, and Robert Motherwell. Then, in Hughes's view, everything went sour.

The fault, he concedes, is not entirely New York's. The last *fin de siècle* was a positive era; "the presiding metaphors were of conquest and development: of oceans, air, mineral strata, jungles, and foreign peoples." Political radicalism had not yet been betrayed by Lenin and Stalin. "Radicality" today, Hughes avers, is nothing more than "flippant, reamed-out cynicism." Moreover, the artists of that earlier era were thoroughly schooled in such basic skills as drawing; they also felt free to "consult and to use the past of [their] own culture, freely and without prophylactic irony."

But at bottom, Hughes believes, the fun-

damental difference is that art carried much more weight in the earlier era, "the weight of tradition, dreams, and social commemoration." Our era is dominated by the mass media, and art has sought to compete by lightening its load of meaning, by abandoning its "elitist" traditions. But it has sunk rather than sailed.

Hughes believes that art's decline was further exacerbated by the explosion of wealth in New York City during the 1980s, a development which greatly inflated the price of paintings and created a celebrity culture. "The great city has gone on with frantic energy not as an art center but as a market center, an immense bourse on which every kind of art is traded for ever-escalating prices. But amid the growing swarm of new galleries, the premature canonizations and record bids, and the conversion of much of its museum system into a promotional machine, the city's cultural vitality—its ability to inspire significant new art and foster it sanely—has been greatly reduced."

In fact, he says, few artists of any kind—and no great ones—live in Manhattan any longer. Few can afford to. Still, no other city is stepping forward to claim the title of art capital of the world. Hughes doubts that any will: The title has been rendered obsolete by New York's self-destruction. The artists who will eventually revitalize the art world, he predicts, will inhabit the world, not just one city.

Poetry's Empire

"Burdens and Songs: The Anglo-American Rudyard Kipling" by Christopher Hitchens, in *Grand Street* (Spring 1990), 50 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10024.

*Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need.*

These opening lines from Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" invariably make Americans think in superior terms of the hubris of 19th-century British imperialism. But Kipling (1865–1936)

wrote his famous poem for an American audience, and it was well received. As soon as the poem was finished he rushed it off to his friend, Governor Theodore Roosevelt of New York, with the hope that it might help sway the U.S. Senate in favor of a treaty taking over the governance of the Philippines from Spain. (Roosevelt passed the poem along to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge with the remark that it was "rather

poor poetry, but good sense from the expansionist viewpoint.") It appeared in the *New York Sun* on February 5, 1899, the day before the treaty was approved.

In fact, writes Hitchens, a British-born journalist, through his poetry and his continuing correspondence with Roosevelt and others, Kipling became a kind of "John the Baptist to the age of American empire." He was an ambivalent evangelist, however, for while an American wife and several years' residence in the United States during the 1890s had warmed him to the country, it was, after all, still a democracy and a republic. He hoped that "the growing strength of the United States could be harnessed to the existing British Empire." It is no accident that "The White Man's Burden" was his first major work after his great, world-weary "Recessional," in which he wrote: "Far-called, our navies melt away/On dune and headland sinks the fire . . ."

When World War I broke out in 1914, Kipling pressed Roosevelt and other Americans to come to Britain's



A turn-of-the-century cartoonist wryly linked Kipling to Herbert Kitchener (1850–1915), a hero of the English empire whose military exploits took him to Egypt, South Africa, and India.

aid, and he wrote poems intended to prick the American conscience. In "The Question" (1916), he asked:

*Brethren, how shall it fare with me
When the war is laid aside,
If it be proven that I am he
For whom a world has died?*

During the 1920s and '30s, when the British government labored in vain to reverse the isolationist tide of public opinion in America, such Kipling hymns to the imperial spirit as *Gunga Din*, *Elephant Boy*, and *Captains Courageous* were made into Hollywood films. It was perhaps inevitable that in the autumn of 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt was urging

Winston Churchill to free India from British rule, Churchill should send his American counterpart two previously unpublished Kipling poems, as if to ask whether the Americans were ready to assume the burdens of empire.

By then, however, the game was up for Britain. That very autumn, Harold MacMillan, the future prime minister, made his famous remark suggesting that Britain's role in the future would be to play Greece to America's Rome. That was not how Kipling had hoped things would turn out. But Hitchens suggests that "given the transmission of British imperial notions to the Legates of the new Rome, he was not so quixotic a figure as Churchill's gesture makes him seem."

Subsidizing The Muses

"Subsidies to the Arts: Cultivating Mediocrity" by Bill Kauffman, in *Policy Analysis* (No. 137), 224 Second St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003, and "The Dutch Dole" by Susan Tallman, in *Art in America* (July 1990), 575 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012.

Amid all the controversy over the congressional effort to prevent the National Endowment for the Arts from underwriting obscene works, says novelist Bill Kauffman, the real issue has been overlooked. Should the \$171 million NEA continue to exist?

He thinks not. The Endowment was created in 1965 after decades of lobbying by a curious alliance of liberals and Cold Warriors. Each group hoped to enlist artists in its own crusade. "The Soviet drive in the fine arts field finds the U.S. at present without a counteroffensive," warned a government commission in 1952. Many artists of the Beat era opposed subsidies. Painter Larry Rivers said, "The government taking a role in art is like a gorilla threading a needle. It is at first cute, then clumsy, and most of all impossible." As the poet Robert Lowell explained in turning down an invitation to read at the White House in 1965, "Every serious artist knows that he cannot enjoy public celebration without making subtle public commitments."

Kauffman has other objections to the NEA: that it encourages cronyism among

artists; that it favors artists in New York and Los Angeles and ignores regional talents; that the arts flourished long before there was an NEA. His basic argument, however, is summed up by something William Faulkner once said: "The writer doesn't need economic freedom. All he needs is a pencil and paper. I've never known anything good in writing to come from having accepted any free gift of money."

That point of view would not find many backers in the Netherlands, notes Tallman, a New York writer, but even there some subsidies have provoked controversy. In 1987, the Dutch government pulled the plug on its highly publicized Visual Artists Arrangement, a de facto welfare program for virtually anybody who could put paint on canvas. Through the Arrangement, the Ministry of Culture purchased artists' works for sums based on the artists' needs (determined by marital status, number of children, etc.) rather than on the works' merits. By the time of the program's demise, the Dutch government had purchased 220,000 works of art, most of which were stored in warehouses. Even

many artists were glad to see the Arrangement go. Among other things, they complained that it supported traditional modes of painting and sculpture. By the 1980s, Tallman reports, "it had become a mark of self-respect in the serious art world to get by without [Arrangement] subsidies. . . . Rather than a safety net, the [Arrangement] was seen as an all-too-comfortable bed from which it became increasingly difficult to arise."

Tallman hastens to add that Dutch artists gladly accept other government sup-

port—commissions, direct grants, and purchases for the national collection. Indeed, public subsidies for the arts remain far more generous than they are in the United States: \$33 per capita annually, versus 71 cents. Dutch art—often criticized as boring and repetitious—may not have improved since the abolition of the Arrangement, Tallman allows, but, in what seems a dubious defense, she says that the greatest defect of the Arrangement has been remedied: Art is no longer stored away in warehouses but is exhibited for all to see.

OTHER NATIONS

The 'Higher Lights' Of France

"The Longest Run: Public Engineers and Planning in France" by Cecil O. Smith, Jr., in *American Historical Review* (June 1990), 400 A St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

France has not always been the bastion of benign statism and central planning that it is today, but it has for centuries harbored an institution that quietly kept such ideas alive. The Corps des Ponts et Chaussées, created during the 18th century to design a national system of highways, is an elite group of state engineers that claims as its legacy the nation's railroads and canals, as well as such modern achievements as the supersonic Concorde and France's unparalleled nuclear power system.

The Corps, writes Smith, a historian at Drexel University, is itself without parallel. It embodies "public administration in the general interest and planning on a national scale," an ideal fostered during the 17th century by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who was King Louis XIV's finance minister. Its members were dubbed *lumières supérieures* (higher lights) more than a century ago by Louis Navier, a professor of Transcendental Analysis at the nation's leading school of engineering, the École Polytechnique. As Navier's exalted title suggests, France's "national engineers" did not think of themselves as mere tinkers. "Our predecessors," one self-assured student of Navier's day wrote, "were like the English engineers of today: completely

ignorant of theory."

The Corp's distinctively French belief in the superiority of theory and logic to experience led predictably to some serious blunders. During the 1820s, on the eve of the railroad age, the Corps committed France to a costly new system of canals. And Smith wryly notes that when Navier was appointed to run the Corps' railroad operations during the 1830s, his plan of attack was based on fairly abstract reasoning: The railroad's "self-evident advantage over existing means of transportation was speed; therefore, the railroad's natural function was to carry passengers and light goods long distances at high speed." It would help unite the nation. Most freight would travel by canal barge. Following this logic, the railroads were laid out on a pattern called, after the head of the Corps, the Legrand Star, with all lines radiating from Paris. The engineers scorned considerations of short-term profits, convinced that the public good would best be served by gold-plated construction.

The Corps sneered at the helter-skelter railroad development in Germany and other countries, often carried out by private entrepreneurs who used gimcrack construction techniques. But the weak-

nesses of the French way were calamitously revealed during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, when France's overly centralized system could not get troops to the front in time to stop the Prussians.

At various times during its history—notably during the revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848—the Corps and all it stood for were endangered by the brief ascendancy of politicians and ideas in the classical liberal mode of Adam Smith. Between the 1880s and World War II, these ideas did

prevail in France, but the Corps kept the *dirigiste* tradition alive. After the war, the engineers reemerged and their influence spread throughout the government and into the new para-public sector of electric power, gas, coal, banks, airlines, telecommunications, Renault, and other units that they did so much to create. True, says Smith, they continued to commit prideful blunders, but “it is no less true that for 250 years they sustained an ethos of public service rarely found elsewhere.”

China's Wishful Politics

The tragedy of Tiananmen Square, suggests MIT's Lucian W. Pye in *Asian Survey* (April 1990), is that it was so typical of Chinese politics.

The Beijing Spring of democratic hopes and the horrors of the Tiananmen Massacre brought out in bold relief the basic contradictions of Chinese political culture. The inspiring student demonstrations of April and May were a reminder of the degree to which modern Chinese politics has been carried along more by hope than by accomplishment. It is a politics of becoming, not of being. It was not just Mao Zedong but all Chinese leaders who, no matter what has happened, will say “the future is bright.” Chinese leaders and intellectuals concentrate on describing how wonderful the “New China” is going to be and

how awful the past has been; thereby they avoid hardheaded analysis of the present. Students of China are equally caught up in this spirit of hope, so that wishful thinking often substitutes for critical analysis. The conventional wisdom, for example, is that a “Chinese revolution” has been going on for the last 150 years. Yet, for most of that time the country was getting nowhere and the ways of thinking of the majority of the Chinese people had not greatly changed. Were a member of the reform movement of the last days of the 19th century to return to China today, he would not experience a Rip Van Winkle effect; he could easily pick up on the current discussions of “building socialism with Chinese characteristics” and other wishful dreams about modernizing China while keeping China somehow “Chinese.”

Goodbye to All That?

England is the last place on earth one would expect to find a national identity crisis, yet, like the Third World people they once ruled, write Witoszek and Sheeran, who teach at University College in Galway, the English are now asking, “What is my nation?”

The causes are various: Britain's post-war decline, the prospect of European integration, and the growing population in England of Third World immigrants who “insist on respect for and promotion of their own cultural values.” But at bottom

the authors believe that the problem is England's loss of a sense of civilizing mission in the world. As the journalist Henry Fairlie put it in 1976, “Britain is missionary or it is nothing. It is an exemplar or it is nothing.”

Unlike many other nations, which define themselves in terms of a lost past, England, Witoszek and Sheeran write, has defined itself in terms of opposition, as the embodiment of adulthood, maturity, or what they call Form, in opposition to “the Beast.” As evidence, the authors point to

“Form and the Beast: The English Mystique” by Nina Witoszek and Patrick Sheeran, in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Summer 1990), One West Range, Charlottesville, Va. 22903.

Fidel's Future

A Survey of Recent Articles

Since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, Fidel Castro has ordered a new slogan plastered on walls and billboards throughout Cuba: *socialismo o muerte* (socialism or death). But dissidents have discovered that it can be transformed by a few late night swipes with a spray can into something entirely different: *socialismo es muerte* (socialism is death).

The dissidents' handiwork is quickly painted over, notes journalist William Steif in *Nieman Reports* (Summer 1990), but other challenges may prove more formidable for Castro.

The Cuban economy is in shambles. Steif reports that one evening, 110 Cubans stood in line to buy three quarters of a pound of chicken imported from Bulgaria, half their monthly ration; the regime is now rounding up old jalopies that are still on the road and selling them to Western collectors as "classic cars" to raise hard currency. Castro refuses to contemplate reform and has even banned the weekly *Moscow News* because it brings tidings of glasnost and perestroika.

In *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1990), Susan Kaufman Purcell of the Americas Society confirms that the Cuban economy is deteriorating. Economic growth is negative; productivity is declining. And Castro is sustained by huge helpings of Soviet aid that he can no longer count on: Moscow's \$4-7 billion in military and economic aid account for 19-21 percent of the island nation's gross domestic product. Mikhail Gorbachev recently signed a protocol renewing Soviet aid for two years, not the five years Castro wanted; a new trade pact (Moscow pays twice the world price for Cuban sugar) has

yet to be negotiated. Moreover, Cuba is dependent on the nations of what used to be called the socialist world for 90 percent of its trade. Will they have the same appetite for Cuban sugar and rum now that the Cold War is over?

Purcell also detects many signs of political weakness in Castro's Cuba, from the summer 1989 execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa—officially for drug trafficking but quite possibly because Castro saw him as a rival—to the militarization last winter of the neighborhood Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. The defeat of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and of General Manuel Noriega in Panama leave Castro politically isolated in Latin America.

Purcell believes that Castro soon will be reduced to choosing between "using Cuba's already weakened institutions to mobilize and control an increasingly desperate population or loosening political and economic controls in order to raise productivity." Both paths are fraught with peril for him.

But where Purcell sees weakness, Gillian Gunn, a researcher at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, sees only strength. Writing in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1990), she contradicts virtually every one of Purcell's points: increased repression and the Ochoa execution show how firmly Castro is in control; the economy is growing (albeit slowly), not shrinking; reductions in Soviet aid are unlikely; the fall of Noriega and Ortega strengthened Castro by refueling anti-American sentiment; and so on. A loud "Here, here!" is entered by Saul Landau in the *Nation* (June 25, 1990).

It is hardly surprising that Gunn sees con-

some great struggles in English literature: between Beowulf and Grendl, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Marlow and Kurtz, Piggy and Jack. "By the 19th century the heritage of Form could seem a biological endowment rather than a cultural artifact . . . such acquired Anglo-Saxon characteristics as self-control and respect for law, reason, restraint, and distrust of enthusiasm [seemed] heritable." The Gentleman became the English cultural ideal.

To a much greater degree than the Spanish, Dutch, or other "immature" imperial peoples, the English persuaded their subjects that they were a superior breed. To the English, the absence of Form in a society was, simply put, shameful. At home, the English maintained a "cult of adulthood," exemplified by their system of "public" schools and "Oxbridge," designed to speed the young along to maturity as quickly as possible. Form showed

tinued U.S. pressure on Castro as counterproductive: "Every new U.S. threat gives him another opportunity to wrap himself in the Cuban flag and another pretext for jailing dissidents." The real surprise is that in *Policy Review* (Summer 1990), a publication of the conservative Heritage Foundation, Georgetown University's Luis E. Aguilar endorses what used to be the "soft" line on Castro: Lift the U.S. trade embargo. He says that such a move "could deal a severe psychological blow to Castro, indicating to Cuba that the United States no longer regards him 'as a power to be reckoned with.'" Meanwhile, in *Foreign Affairs*, considered the very embodiment of Establishment "moderation," Purcell declares that "the issue now is whether to maintain the current policy or toughen it." She favors the latter course.

But who can bring Castro down?

Steif saw scattered signs of dissent—a young man stood and shouted "Down with Castro!" at a televised boxing match in Havana in February before police dragged him away—but he thinks that most Cubans are still bound by "pride and nostalgia" to Castro. A few intrepid human-rights activists persevere, but many of Castro's natural opponents left with the more than one million emigres who have fled Cuba during Castro's 31-year reign. Castro "learned well the lessons of sociology," Irving Louis Horowitz of Rutgers observes in *Freedom at Issue* (July-

Aug. 1990). "Permitting emigration is the functional equivalent of tranquilizing a population." But he thinks the end is near, because Castro's rule has degenerated into pure *caudillismo*.

In *Policy Review*, Aguilar flatly states that "the military is the only possible source of change inside Cuba." He notes that some 40,000 troops are due to return from Angola by next year and are not going to like what they find. He also makes the interesting argument that the Cuban exiles in Miami must be restrained; they remember a Cuba that is no more—a Cuba that was, for example, 30

percent rather than 50 percent black. (The nation's blacks have not achieved full equality but have fared relatively well under Castro.)

Describing a visit to Cuba in the *New Yorker* (August 13, 1990), Argentinian journalist Jacobo Timerman depicts a grim land and a sul-

len, oppressed people and declares Castro's fate all but sealed. Yet he searches in vain for the "hidden movements" in the Cuban spirit which will bring down the tyrant. "It occurs to me," Timerman writes, "that *waiting* is Cuba's inner dynamic. Cubans are waiting for an outcome, a result, a finale."

The rest of the world is watching and waiting, too, but not with the same fascination that Castro aroused only a few years ago. The strutting Maximum Leader who boasted of being in history's vanguard is now bound for its dustbin. The only question seems to be when he will arrive.



itself most obviously in the use of language: "In no other Western country has one's accent such power to elevate or degrade socially."

Today, however, the empire that expressed the English mission is gone and Form itself is under attack from within. Its critics include foreign-born novelist Salman Rushdie (who is as hard on England as he is on Islam) and the "unrestrained, overimpulsive" leader of the La-

bor Party, Neil Kinnock. In England, the authors say, such liberation from the constraints of Form is not just a breach of decorum, "it implies a crisis of identity." Yet they do not underestimate Form's ability to survive. "By its very nature Form proves its superiority when under attack . . . To the very end it does the right thing at the right time, thereby morally embarrassing the rebel"—as it did by coming to the defense of Rushdie.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"Who Reads Literature?"

Seven Locks Press, P.O. Box 27, Cabin John, Md. 20818. 106 pp. \$9.95.

Authors: *Nicholas Zill and Marianne Winglee*

In the Age of Nintendo, do people still read "serious" literature? Zill, a social psychologist, and Winglee, an analyst at Decision Resource Corporation, knew that someone had to be reciting from the 1,000 volumes of poetry and drama, pondering the 2,000 works of literary criticism, and absorbing the 5,100 novels that are published each year.

They pieced together a portrait of the American reader from the findings of three nationwide reading surveys conducted in the 1980s.

The results are both heartening and disheartening, the authors say. Although 56 percent of American adults claimed in one survey that they had opened at least some fiction, poetry, or drama within the previous year, only about 11

percent of them had read a work of "literary distinction." Just seven percent had read a serious work of contemporary literature. That translates into about 16 million people.

The typical American reader is a white, middle-class, college-educated female living in the suburbs of a Western or Midwestern city. Contrary to the popular notion that people who read are social recluses, two-thirds of literature readers jog or do some other exercise, while only a quarter of non-readers do. Fifty-seven percent of readers visit an amusement park during a typical year, while only 17 percent of non-readers do. Surprisingly, literary sorts are also more than twice as likely as non-readers to perform their own home and car repairs.

Even among people who read, the authors add, literature does not sell as well as pulp fiction, business books, and self-help manuals. One book industry analyst estimates that 3.2 million volumes of contemporary literary fiction and poetry and 9.1 million works of classic literature were sold in 1985. But that was only slightly more than one percent of all books sold that year.

The authors line up the usual suspects to explain the small number of serious readers: the declining quality of education, television, and even the inaccessibility of writers. What can be done to reverse the tide? To start, the authors rather perversely suggest, the publishing industry ought to promote books in newspapers, magazines, and on television.

"The Money Chase: Congressional Campaign Finance Reform."

The Brookings Institution, 1775 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 227 pp. \$29.95.

Authors: *David B. Magleby and Candice J. Nelson*

Campaign contributions have long greased the wheels of American politics. And in concept they are a healthy part of political life: Giving money to a candidate is a way for citizens to participate in politics. A politician's need for support keeps him or her responsible to the electorate.

In practice, however, the influence of money often is not so benign. Magleby, a political scientist at Brigham Young University, and Nelson, a former Fellow at the Brookings Institution, argue that the rising costs of campaigns have turned the legislative branch into a fundraising circus.

The leap congressional campaign spending has taken during the last 18 years is remarkable. During the 1972 U.S. Senate and House of Representatives elections, candidates spent a total of \$66 million dollars. By 1988, the amount jumped to \$407 million—an increase of 456 percent in the House and 600 percent in the Senate.

In 1988, winning candidates for the House spent an average of \$374,000 each on their campaigns, while their counterparts in the Senate shelled out \$3,745,500. If the trend continues, this year those amounts will climb to \$500,000 and

\$4.8 million, respectively.

Where is all of this money coming from? Most of it—about three-fifths in the House and three-quarters in the Senate—is given by individuals. Political action committees (PACs) and political parties contribute the rest. Federal election laws allow individuals to contribute \$2,000 to a candidate. PACs may give \$10,000.

What concerns the authors most is the absence of overall campaign spending limits. Candidates are allowed to heap up as much money as they can. This spurs heated fundraising wars, in which perks such as free mail and media exposure

give incumbents a great advantage over challengers. The incumbency advantage has made many races less than competitive. In 1988, 89 percent of House incumbents who sought reelection won by near-landslides, with more than 60 percent of the vote.

In the Senate, where party control shifted twice during the 1980s, contests tend to be more competitive. Some fearful incumbents have cleverly built huge "war chests" just to scare off potential challengers. By the middle of 1988, more than two years before they would face the voters, Senator Phil Gramm (R.-Tex.) had raised \$2.7 million, and Senator Bill Bradley (D.-N.J.) \$2.8 million.

The authors favor several widely discussed reforms, in-

cluding, oddly enough, raising the ceiling on individual contributions to \$4,800. They reason that this will allow candidates to solicit the same amount of money from fewer contributors, reducing the amount of time they must spend pleading for money on the rubber-chicken circuit. The authors also favor partial public campaign financing, restricting PAC contributions to a small percentage of individual contributions, and placing lids on the amount of money a candidate may spend on an election.

To arguments that money isn't the problem and that any limits merely discourage citizen participation in politics, the authors reply that voter turnout has been dropping as campaign outlays have soared.

In today's typical congressional election, only 22 percent of the voters can name the candidates.

Even if it were true that money had little effect on election results, they add, its influence is pernicious in other ways. One survey of U.S. senators found that 52 percent thought that the demands of fundraising "cut significantly into the time available for legislative work"; 12 percent agreed that fundraising had other "deleterious effects" on the political process, such as influencing legislators' votes.

Still, despite a lot of rumbling about campaign reform in Congress lately, not many members of Congress are eager to surrender the advantages that return so many of them to Capitol Hill each term.

REPORTING FROM MOSCOW

Despite the Soviet Union's new openness, says Gary Lee, Moscow correspondent for the *Washington Post* during 1985-1989, the KGB has actually stepped up its longtime practice of spreading disinformation to western journalists. Lee related his experience in a paper prepared for the Wilson Center's Media Studies Project.

In early May 1988, while I was escorting a Soviet artist from my Moscow apartment to his car, he took me by the arm and told me he wanted to pass on a tip: an anti-Jewish pogrom was being organized on the outskirts of Moscow . . .

Without fully realizing it at the time, I was involved in one of the oldest forms of harassment the Soviets use against western correspondents: disinformation. The nature of the provocations became clear to me when, in swapping notes with colleagues, I found that several of them had also been approached with rumors of the pogrom. The sources, like my artist friend, were all known

to have links to the KGB . . . While glasnost has brought a drop in the other forms of harassment commonly used in the past, such as heavy surveillance and tire slashings, it has seemed to bring an increase in the art of passing false information . . .

It is difficult to say precisely why the rumor about the pogrom was passed on to me. One interpretation is that it was an attempt to foment further anti-semitism . . . Another interpretation is that the story, had I written it, would have discredited me as a reporter since the pogrom never took place . . .

Under glasnost, it seems that disinformation is not only being stepped up, but also highly refined. The source who told me of the pogrom rumor, for instance, had been supplied with everything he needed to appear to be a plain old artist and thus a credible source of information. He had a charming bohemian pad in Moscow, a history of troubles with Soviet authorities, and close links to some of Moscow's leading intellectuals, whom he quoted liberally.

COMMENTARY

We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.

The Other Story

Peter F. Klarén ["Peru's Great Divide," *WQ*, Summer '90] paints a vivid and accurate picture of modern Peru. However, the role of the Indian question in the current human rights crisis in Peru deserves further reflection. The traditional treatment of peasants as inferior citizens has encouraged one of the most brutal counterinsurgency campaigns in the hemisphere. Nowhere is this disdain more evident than in Vargas Llosa's report on the Uchuraccay massacre, excerpted in Klarén's article. Throughout the description of what may have happened at Uchuraccay, where eight journalists were killed in 1983, Vargas Llosa depicts the local peasants as exotic, savage, and untamed. Yet despite the isolation of many Andean villages, the Peruvian peasantry has been integrated into the market economy and has many ties with the "modern world." Perhaps that is why the prevailing belief in Peru is not that frightened and confused peasants killed the journalists, as Vargas Llosa claims, but rather that they were ordered to kill them by security forces present in Uchuraccay at the time of the massacre.

The military and police officials in charge of counterinsurgency operations come largely from coastal areas. More often than not they do not speak Quechua, the language of the Andes, and have no trust in the local population they are sent to protect. Nor do peasants trust and share information with them. Thus, all peasants are suspected of being guerrillas and are subject to torture, illegal detentions, disappearance, and extrajudicial executions. According to Amnesty International, more than 3,000 Peruvians—the vast majority peasants—have "disappeared" since January 1983. In fact, for three years in a row the United Nations recorded more disappearances in Peru than in any other country in the world. As Klarén points out, thousands more have died. Massacres of entire villages by Peruvian security forces occur with disturbing frequency.

Thus, the exploitation and violence directed against the Peruvian peasantry for centuries continues today. Peru is indeed in the midst of a profound social upheaval, but the road to a new social identity is paved in blood.

Coletta Youngers
The Washington Office on Latin America

The Call of the West

Brian Dippie's article ["The Winning of the West Reconsidered," *WQ*, Summer '90] is a knowledgeable summation of the frontier experience in terms of myth and antimyth, but it seems to ignore a primary ingredient in the *perpetuation* of the myth at the turn of the century, the time when the frontier was supposed to have died.

The myth was real fabric to the people who lived within its spell and participated in the ongoing endeavor to make it manifest on a personal level. By the turn of the century, most people who responded to the call of the West were not cowboys, gold prospectors, or railroad gandy dancers, and they did not necessarily see themselves as part of the myth of the wild and woolly West.

My parents were born when the frontier supposedly closed (1890), but its rhyme and song formed the background of their lives. They finished high school and eloped on a train from Missouri to California. They worked hard, educated themselves, and filled their lives with love, accomplishments, and knowledge. They were never really affluent, they were never famous, yet they lived the "Go West" story as much as any rancher or railroad baron—and made it work. And it is in such stories that the myth lives on in modern America, not in turn-of-the-century Deadwood Dick dime novels.

My parents were saddened over time as they learned of the government's bunglings, corruption, and inhumanity to the native Americans. But those things did not alter their convictions about opportunity in America and the part that opening the West had played. Going west meant starting a new life, leaving behind unwanted baggage, taking advantage of natural expansion in a country that was not only free, but welcomed people from all over the world to help build it. Buffalo Bill Cody? Come on, they saw him at the circus.

Don E. Smith
West Linn, Oregon

Down for the Count?

Brian Dippie has given the traditional western myth a thorough and richly deserved trouncing. That myth was, in many ways, a commercially de-

signed product, engineered to sell dime novels, movies, clothes, and cigarettes. With roots leading more directly to New York and Hollywood than to the collective soul of America, the Wild West has always had a quality of tinniness and shallowness, and Dippie effectively unveils it.

With the old myth down for the count, what happens next? Do we leave a vacancy in the place where the Wild West once stood? It is, I think, now our opportunity to show that the real stories of the American West are, in a word, better—more moving, more instructive, more charged with meaning. While Dippie's article captures recent changes in the writing of western history, history is only one of the fields of regional expression involved in this change. In fiction, poetry, art, and photography, the West seems at long last to be growing up, ceasing to be a cute, young, forgivable Beaver Cleaver of a region, and emerging as a place both haunted and enriched by its past.

Patricia Nelson Limerick
Univ. of Colorado, Boulder

Shot in the Foot

Brian Dippie appears to have fallen victim to the predictable greenhorn disaster: shooting himself in the foot as he tries to draw on his adversary. This is a result of the classic premise of the historian's art—that contemporary appraisals of events are inevitably in error and that time and distance, equally inevitably, correct this. What Dippie fails to recognize is that cultural myths are articulations of cultural *aspirations*. The myth of the West came into being and was adopted by our culture because it embodied values to which we aspired. It is historically self-serving, however, to presume that it was seen as literal fact even in its heyday.

Dippie's curious statement that a good historical explanation accounts for the past *and* the future, and his equally unsupported caveat that a romantic myth which is untrue for the present is probably untrue for the past, leaves me wondering whether his objective is to correct historical inaccuracies or just to debunk a cultural aspiration which he dislikes. Dippie seems more concerned with making the past conform to contemporary values than with examining how the past produced the values of his own time. Historical research would be better served if he and his sort examined how and why the cultural aspirations reflected in the myth of the West have been supplanted by those of insider traders, rock stars with fried brains and foul mouths, and sociopathic killers.

Edgar W. Neville
Keno, Oregon

A New Starting Point

Brian W. Dippie's suggestion that we study the landlord as well as the homesteader, the railroad operator rather than the builder, and entrepreneurs and corporations as well as cowboys and miners, while continuing the now intensive study of women in the West, is well-taken.

What is needed, however, is a different perspective, a different starting point. Western history, for example, seems to stop at the West Coast. But as John Whitehead has recently noted, from the late 18th century onward, the American whaling and sea otter trade in the Pacific was more economically valuable than the Rocky Mountain fur trade. California's relation to Alaska, Hawaii, China, and Mexico deserve fuller coverage. In short, the concept of what is western or western-related needs to be enlarged. The well-known early conservation debates centering on John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and Theodore Roosevelt, need to be supplemented if not replaced by accounts of what Harold Ickes and a host of New Deal agencies actually did for conservation during the 1930s.

Howard R. Lamar
Yale University

Remaining Committed at Home

I read with trepidation Shelby Steele's opinions ["Thinking Beyond Race," *WQ*, Summer '90] regarding the socioeconomic stagnation suffered by the majority of the people in my ethnic group. What Steele (who, by the way, is not representative of the average "middle class" black in terms of his sociopolitical outlook, his choice of a mate, or the neighborhood in which he chooses to live) fails to accept is that racism does prevent us from being accepted as equal human beings in this nation. His attitude is welcomed by most whites because it absolves them of responsibility for acquiescing in practices that perpetuate racial dissension even as they publicly preach social virtue. This is what President Bush does when he calls for a "kinder, gentler" nation while at the same time opposing civil rights legislation.

Steele's attitude shows that *he*, not those of us who work to build our neighborhoods instead of abandoning them when we achieve some measure of financial stability, is the type of black who has "self-doubt" about his ethnicity. We are not the self-doubting whiners that Steele portrays in his article. We are simply trying to make it in a system in which the color of a person's skin can limit opportunity. Nor are we guilty of trying to "internalize a message of inferiority" received from "school and

the larger society" by continuing to speak out against racism.

Freedom to act involves facing challenges and working to overcome them. If Mr. Steele is so intent upon fulfilling his potential as a black American, why does he reject those of us who choose to remain committed to principles of social progress instead of collective ignorance? He chooses to live in a comfortable, predominately white neighborhood and tries to suppress his own inferiority complex by questioning why other blacks don't wish to lead the same hypocritical existence.

Sherman T. Hinton
Vandenberg AFB, Calif.

The Lure of Nationalism

Your cluster of articles on East Central Europe ["Eastern Europe," *WQ*, Spring '90] reminded me of a comment I heard while standing in a dairy line in Prague, just after the 1968 Soviet invasion: "Why ever did we let Franz Josef go?" The woman who made it looked old enough to have spent a happy childhood under the Dual Monarchy, and doubtless the fond memories she harbored were more personal than political. Politically, the monarchy was no utopia, and wishing it had been one, wishing it back into existence, will not help its former constituents to solve their current problems.

One of the main problems in the region is resurgent nationalism. It provides deceptively easy answers for hard problems and tends to divert large segments of the population from the highly unattractive prospect of simultaneously tightening both the work ethic and their belts. No one can blame the nation-states of the area for voting in nationalist-oriented parties after being forced for nearly half a century to suppress national feelings in favor of Communist internationalism. Once the furor dies down, however, a sober reassessment of the situation may well lead back to a variety of Central European political unity.

Michael Henry Heim
Univ. of Calif., Los Angeles

Gorbachev's Role

To write about East Central Europe in the late 1980s without acknowledging the catalytic role of Gorbachev is like performing *Hamlet* without the Prince. Of course, the peoples of the region would in any event have continued to press their governments for greater freedom, justice, autonomy, and sovereignty. But without Gorbachev's eventual recognition that those regimes lacked legitimacy in

the eyes of their publics, and that without such legitimacy adequate economic and "alliance" performances (and even "socialist" survival) could not be expected, the public pressures might once again have been aborted, as in earlier postwar decades. Indeed, by 1989 the dissidents, dissenters, and youths of East Central Europe had escalated the pressures on their countries' communist rulers *in Gorbachev's name*.

It is interesting that Gorbachev's realistic assessment of the situation was the product of an admirable learning process. Upon coming into office in March 1985, Gorbachev was initially under the illusion that he faced only a difficult but manageable "crisis of performance" rather than, as has proven to be the case, a terminal "crisis of the system" in East Central Europe—and probably in the Soviet Union itself as well. (The terms are Seweryn Bialer's.) By the end of the decade, he knew better. While Gorbachev has made serious mistakes—some of them gratuitous—and while he may yet fail, his rapid and productive learning process on East Central Europe has been quite impressive.

Joseph Rothschild
Columbia University

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In Memoriam Neil Spitzer

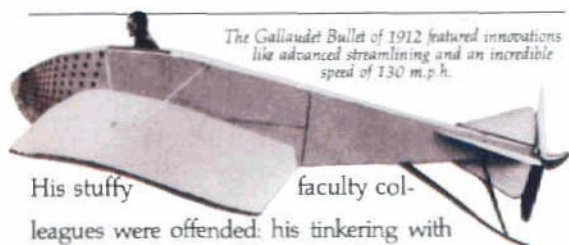
We report with great sadness that Neil Spitzer, a longtime friend and colleague, died of a brain tumor on August 5. Neil was a mainstay of the *Wilson Quarterly* for one-third of its existence, and all of us are grateful for the talent, commitment, wit, and high spirits that he brought to the magazine.

He was a man who made the most of everything, even, finally, adversity. Born in New Jersey in 1956, the eighth of the nine children of Richard and Dorothy Spitzer, Neil grew up in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. After receiving a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and a master's degree in international affairs from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, he came to the *Wilson Quarterly* as a research assistant in 1982. He worked briefly as an editorial writer at the *Cape Cod Times* before returning the next year to the *Wilson Quarterly*, where he soon rose to become associate editor. When he left in 1988 and became managing editor of the *Washington Quarterly*, he retained a connection to the *Wilson Quarterly* as a contributing editor.

Neil believed that a journalist's highest duty is to educate the public. With a strongly inquisitive mind, and by dint of much hard work, he made himself into an accomplished and prolific writer. In addition to his many unsigned contributions to the *Wilson Quarterly*, he wrote essays on two of his favorite cities, Berlin (Summer 1988) and Washington, D.C. (New Year's 1989). He contributed several essays to the *Atlantic Monthly* and wrote an occasional column on political history that he syndicated to major newspapers across the country. And as Neil's professional accomplishments grew, so did his private satisfactions. In 1988, he married Nancy Szabo.

One of Neil's passions was basketball, and he was known for his uncanny ability to get free for old-fashioned set shots, which he delivered gleefully and with unfailing accuracy. That combination of patented talent and pure zest was typical of him in all his endeavors. He was a fine and decent man and a good friend. He will be missed, and he will be remembered.

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