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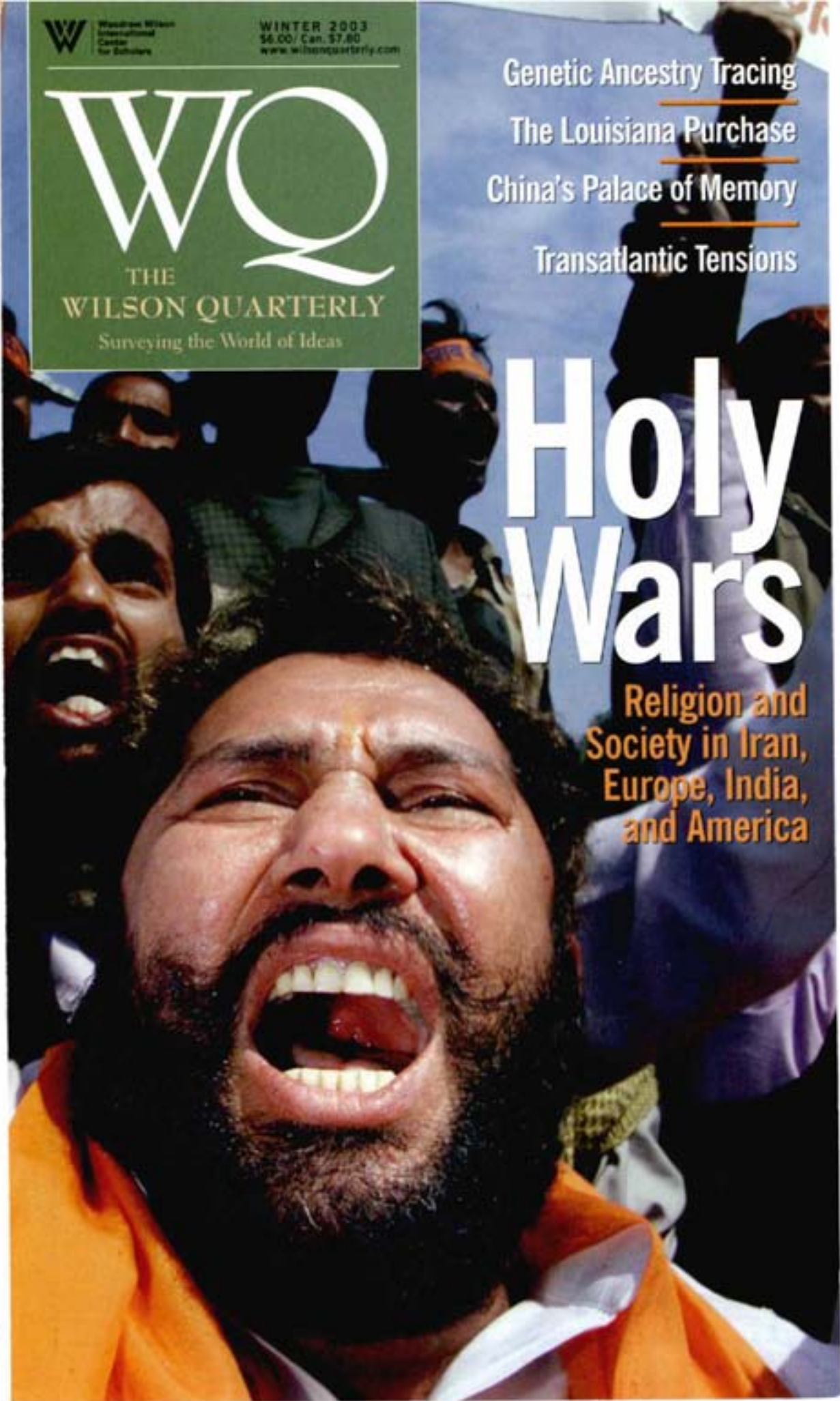
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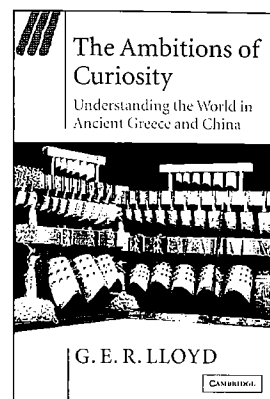
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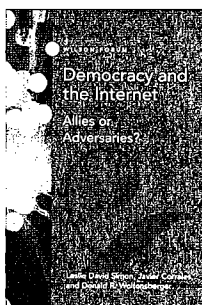
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The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

# Editor's Comment

In the past few months, the Wilson Center has been host to a procession of current and former world leaders, including United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan, President Bill Clinton, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and, at a December conference marking the 10th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the three national architects of the treaty, President George H. W. Bush, Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney, and Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

It's a testament to the Center's reputation as a nonpartisan forum and institute for advanced research that the leaders chose to come here. But it's also evidence of the welcome changes that have occurred in the physical setting of the Center since then-director Charles Blitzer engineered a move four years ago from two separate but equally cramped locations to spacious and attractive new quarters on Pennsylvania Avenue. Events of the scale and import we've seen recently could not have been accommodated in the past. Now they're becoming business as usual.

That's a tribute to the leadership of former U.S. congressman Lee Hamilton, who has been director since 1999. Under his guidance, the Center has sharpened its focus on policy-relevant research, even as it has embraced new fields of inquiry. The premises that initially seemed so spacious are already crowded with busy staffers and dozens of visiting scholars.

For the *WQ* and its readers, the high-energy Center serves up an intellectual banquet. In this issue, we have essays by the Center's associate director, Samuel F. Wells, Jr., former Wilson Center public policy scholar Afshin Molavi, and political scientist Hugh Heclo, whose essay grew out of a Wilson Center conference presentation. And while I'm celebrating the Center's bounty, let me congratulate *WQ* editor at large Ann Hulbert on the publication of her new book, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children*. Ann's book is partly the product of her tenure as a Wilson Center fellow several years ago, and it's further evidence of the great quality and variety of the Center's banquet.

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# Correspondence

Letters may be mailed to One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027, or sent via facsimile, to (202) 691-4036, or e-mail, to [wq@wwic.si.edu](mailto:wq@wwic.si.edu). The writer's telephone number and postal 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.

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## Thinking Globally

Amy Chua's article ["A World on the Edge," *WQ*, Autumn '02] was a welcome contribution to the discussion of globalization. For many years, much has been said about the extreme difference in living standards and resource consumption between the West and the underdeveloped countries. Now we are beginning to see this imbalance redressed, albeit slowly, as manufacturing and intellectual jobs move offshore.

In my own region, furniture, textile, and tobacco workers' standard of living is declining as those jobs are moved overseas and workers are finding only lower-paying service jobs available. Further job displacements and declines in standard of living are affecting computer programming and telecommunication jobs as they, too, are moved overseas.

Perhaps this is not a situation to be decried, but we have not yet developed a procedure to spread the decline in standard of living across the population, and the concentration of wealth increases. If allowed, a continued drift in that direction might produce in our country the "mass popular resentment that afflicts" the underdeveloped countries.

Thomas L. Harmon, Jr.  
Greensboro, N.C.

Amy Chua's premise that "market-dominant minorities" will emerge with globalization is economic determinism unsubstantiated by analysis or theory. Implicit in the hypothesis is a smug assumption that superiority inevitably propels her market-dominant minorities into their privileged positions. The obverse of this has been long since rejected with respect to America's disadvantaged minorities. In actuality, it was in many cases colonialism that bestowed advantages of education and privilege upon the favored groups, which are understandably resented today. In virtually all the cases she cites the ethnic con-

flicts predate globalization by decades or even centuries.

Perhaps most indefensible is Chua's ethnic stereotyping. Her portrayal of Filipinos and Chinese in the Philippines is distorted in any number of ways. One particularly egregious example is her description of the quarters of her aunt's male servants, horrifying to her because the servants slept on a dirt floor that "stank of sweat and urine." Cleanliness is a fact of paramount importance to Filipinos; knowing this, Spaniards in colonial days punished recalcitrant Filipinos by depriving them of their daily bath. If Chua indeed smelled urine, she has merely documented her aunt's callous disregard of normal Philippine standards of accommodation for servants.

Indeed, the Philippines offers persuasive evidence that Chua's hypothesis should be stood on its head: Globalization, by offering increased opportunities, appears to *diminish* ethnic tensions. As Filipinos have risen to the top of modern corporations, Chinese in family businesses in the ethnic enclave of Binondo have been left behind. Accordingly, today most Chinese educated in the better Philippine universities wish to be regarded as Filipino, not Chinese; they are more likely to speak Tagalog than Chinese; they may Filipinize their names (my favorite is the Leong who became de Leong); and, just as in Thailand, where religion is also not a barrier, they frequently marry Filipinos. This process is accelerating in part because Philippine society increasingly accepts them as Filipino.

Malcolm H. Churchill  
Former president, Philippine Arts, Letters,  
and Media Council  
Washington, D.C.

Amy Chua replies:

Mr. Churchill and I disagree less than he thinks. I regret to say, however, that he has badly misunderstood my argument. Of course market-dominant minorities predate globalization. My entire argument concerns what happens



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when countries with market-dominant minorities globalize. Moreover, I emphatically agree that many ethnic minorities owe their market-dominance to colonialism and its legacies. Finally, my essay explicitly condemns "specious theories of racial superiority" (p. 73) and, far from "stereotyping" Filipinos as "dirty," blames the unsanitary conditions sadly prevalent throughout the Philippines (and most developing countries) on poverty, maldistribution, and to some extent the practices of market-dominant minorities. As to the unique case of Chinese assimilation in Thailand, I refer Mr. Churchill to the extended discussion of that subject in my new book, *World on Fire*.

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## *The German Way*

"Germany Adrift" [WQ, Autumn '02] showed extraordinary sympathy for a nation that recently elected a government on an opportunistic, 11th-hour anti-American gambit. Interestingly, the election campaign between Gerhard Schröder and Eric Stoiber had failed to ignite the interest of the self-absorbed German electorate, which came to life only to champion the cause of a dictatorship in the Middle East.

What is disturbing in the gestalt of today's Germany is the country's inability to assume its proper burden of responsibilities for the myriad problems that plague the world. The United States for 50 years provided Germany with the security and protection it needed to grow wealthy and to claim a place among modern democracies. The cost of this security and protection remains overwhelmingly a burden carried by American taxpayers, not to mention American soldiers, even as the spoiled 1968 German generation grows ever more pacifist and ever more anti-American.

Germany's problem is the problem with Germany: an irresponsible disregard for international-security matters, self-absorption rather than engagement in the defense of Western interests and values, and a failure to assume any duty to what the old leftist (and ideological brother of Schröder) Franz Fanon called the wretched of the earth. When has Germany been in the forefront of

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*Continued on page 6*

## FROM THE CENTER

When I returned to Washington from Europe 10 years ago, I thought the world had exhausted, at least for a time, the possibilities of incomprehensible change. During my four years as U.S. ambassador to Switzerland, the Berlin Wall had come tumbling down, bringing the totalitarian dominion over half a continent with it; Communism had gone from being an “ism” to a “wasm”; in the Middle East, the United States had responded to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait with a vigor and steadiness of purpose that would have been hard to imagine only a few years earlier. I vividly remember Secretary of State James Baker’s ringing declaration that we stood on the verge of a “new world order,” based on democratic ideals and principles.

Today I fear that we are entering a period that could be called a “new world disorder.” Conflict seems to be the order of the day, and it has been left to the United States to lead the rest of the world in putting out fires, whether in Ireland, the Balkans, Afghanistan, or the Middle East. Now the fire is in Iraq, and again America must lead. How we should lead is a constant topic of conversation and debate in the halls and meeting rooms of the Wilson Center. My own view is that Saddam Hussein is a threat to the lives and interests of Americans and the people of other nations. One must hope that United Nations inspectors will be able to carry out thorough, unfettered investigations of Iraq’s military capabilities. If military action proves to be warranted, a joint effort by the United States and others would certainly be more desirable than unilateral action, but to rule out the latter option would just as certainly be irresponsible.

These are my own views, of course, and not those of the Wilson Center. One of the Center’s distinguishing features is that it’s congenial to a variety of views—indeed, that it seeks out competing ideas. In a city

filled with think tanks and other institutions that reliably hew to fixed partisan or ideological viewpoints, the Center is a precious patch of common ground where scholars, policymakers, and others can reasonably and civilly debate public questions, bring scholarly knowledge to bear, and work toward pragmatic solutions to some of the challenges facing our society.

Because I am so aware of the uniqueness of the Center, I feel especially honored that President George W. Bush has appointed me chair of its Board of Trustees. The Center is constantly stirring with interesting people and ideas, and I look forward to joining informed discussions and

assisting the staff in bringing dedicated and perceptive individuals from academia and public life to the Center. I was proud to escort former president Bill Clinton to the podium when he spoke about the problems confronting Africa and its peoples at a Wilson Center Director’s Forum last fall. More recently, in December, I had the honor of greeting former president George H.W. Bush, former president Carlos Salinas of Mexico, and former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney when they came to the Center to mark the 10th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

With a distinguished director, Lee Hamilton, at the helm, the Woodrow Wilson Center heads toward a bright future. After a long career as a leading figure in Congress, Lee has brought a vast store of experience and knowledge, along with great credibility and visibility, to this institution. I look forward to working with him and with the Center’s exceptional staff to ensure that this valuable piece of common ground in our nation’s capital continues to excel and to grow from strength to strength.

—Joseph B. Gildenhorn  
Chair





*Continued from page 4*

the solution of a world problem? Even during the last decade of fratricide in the Balkans, Germany had to be pressured and cajoled into a marginal peacekeeping role, still and always under American leadership. In sum, when will Germany grow up?

Vito Stagliano  
Chicago, Ill.

Martin Walker ["The New Germany"] packs all there is to know about present-day Germany into one piece. But what does it mean?

In his upbeat view of the status of German unity, Walker misses an important point. Had the Morgenthau plan of the late 1940s to transform postwar Germany into an agrarian state been realized, the result would have been fairly similar to what we see in eastern Germany today. What is left after the necessary cleanup of the dismal former East German industry is a lot of quaint countryside, and a population with a mindset that is probably more postagrarian than preindustrial. On the face of it, ruinous socialism has achieved what Mr. Morgenthau had aimed for, yet the situation is rather unstable, as Walker points out, and the real test for the Germans will come when Eastern European countries join the European Union. Poland, for one, seems better equipped to deal with the real world than the eastern German Länder, even if they sport some new but highly subsidized industrial highlights such as car manufacturing plants or JenaOptik in Saxony. Thus, one may expect a shift in German interests toward the East. This need not imply a move away from the West, but it may.

Walker is also too quick to dismiss as caricature the view of the German character as a compound of "angst, aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying, egotism, inferiority complex, and sentimentality." What did German chancellor Gerhard Schröder mean when, during the recent election campaign, he talked about a "German special way" in international politics? He stressed the point in connection with a possible war in Iraq—in which no one in the world had asked Germany to take a part—but he struck a much deeper chord in the German public and media. Here is a man with hardly any experience in foreign relations who has not traveled very much abroad. He seems to be

aggressive, assertive, and bullying. He caters to German angst, the proverbial German inferiority complex, and sentimentality.

John Hooper is closer to the mark in his view of Berlin ["Still Divided"] as a quintessentially petty bourgeois, provincial capital, especially by comparison with London, Paris, or Rome. Is it, perhaps, time to dig out the classics on Germany, from Gordon Craig to Sebastian Haffner, for a second reading?

Joseph Ernst  
Stuttgart, Germany

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### *Labeling a Terrorist*

Thank you for Max McCoy's thoughtful review of my book, *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War* [WQ, Autumn '02]. Unfortunately, he may have left readers with a gravely mistaken impression with this line from his review: "Although the argument is trendy, the support is thin for comparing Jesse James . . . with the sort of modern-day terrorists who flew airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon."

I would like to contrast Mr. McCoy's statement with a quote that appears on page six of my book: "Was he a criminal? Yes. Was he in it for the money? Yes. Did he choose all his targets for political effect? No. He cannot be confused with the Red Brigades, the Tamil Tigers, Osama bin Laden, or other groups that now shape our image of terrorism."

As for Mr. McCoy's idea that my thoughts are "trendy," I refer to prologue endnote 6, on page 404: "It should be noted that this book was written before September 11, 2001. The interpretation presented here, including the use of the word 'terrorist,' was not influenced by the events of that day, nor by subsequent developments."

My heavily circumscribed use of the word *terrorist*, I believe, actually serves to shatter the contemporary lens through which Jesse James is usually seen, a lens of popular entertainment and folklore that trivializes him. Perhaps there is a better word to describe a man who uses the notoriety achieved through violence to promote a political cause, but I am not aware of it. Certainly *terrorist* is no more anachronistic than *social bandit*, a term historians customarily use to describe Jesse James—and to describe him inaccurately, in my view.



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Again, thank you for the robust discussion of my book and its thesis.

T. J. Stiles  
New York, N.Y.

## Corrections

The photograph on page 15 of Jill Norgren's essay, "Lockwood in '84," [WQ, Autumn '02] was misidentified as an image of Belva Lockwood. The woman in the photograph was Alice Stone Blackwell, editor of *Women's Journal*. The error originated with the company that supplied the image and is not the responsibility of the author, who did not see the picture before publication. The editors regret the error. At right, Belva Lockwood as she appeared in the 1880s.

Reader Grant Hayes challenges the statement in Martin Walker's "An American Empire?" [WQ, Summer '02] that Romans plowed salt into the fields of Carthage after they sacked the city in 146 B.C. Most history books do include that salty old detail, but R. T. Ridley, a professor of history at the University of Melbourne, argued in a 1986 article in the journal

*Classical Philology* that it is false. The ancient sources—such as Polybius, Livy, Appian, and Pliny—make no mention of the harsh gesture, noted Ridley. It may not have been until the 1930 *Cambridge Ancient History*, even today a book of record, that the story appeared in print.



# Findings

## Literary Rockville

If life was sometimes callous to F. Scott Fitzgerald—alcoholism, crazy Zelda, ebbing celebrity (“My God, I am a forgotten man,” he wrote in 1940, a few months before his fatal heart attack)—death has brought indignities of its own. Fitzgerald, urbane chronicler of the Jazz Age,

denizen of Princeton and Great Neck and the Riviera, lies buried in solidly suburban Rockville, Maryland, near his father’s childhood home. The grave, moved in 1975 to the Catholic cemetery that blackballed

the nonobservant writer in 1940 (there *are* second acts in American death), abuts highways throbbing with commerce. Inscribed on the headstone is *The Great Gatsby*’s concluding line: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” Here, though, only minivans and SUVs battle the current, bound ceaselessly for Toys ‘R’ Us, Pottery Barn, and Hooters.

A few blocks from the cemetery, Montgomery College held its seventh annual Fitzgerald Literary Conference in October. The day of seminars, readings, and workshops culminated in the presentation of the Fitzgerald Award, given in the past to Norman Mailer, Joyce Carol Oates, and William Styron, among others. The award this year honored John Updike, whose subject matter the program succinctly described as “everyday life, sex, and religion.”

White haired, slim, and courtly, the 70-year-old Updike arrived at lunchtime, sat through a film and a series of talks over

balky microphones, applauded the director of parks and other emissaries from official Rockville, and obliged the many who approached for an autograph, a shoulder-to-shoulder photo, or a timorous tribute. When Updike stood to accept the award, his voice was fading and raspy. “By the time you get up on the podium, you’ve been talking for hours—being polite to people, giving interviews,” he told the

audience, and for a moment seemed, as Ernest Hemingway said of Fitzgerald, generous but not kind.

Responding to questions, Updike suggested that he’s finished with sequels. His Bech books have

been gathered in an omnibus volume called *The Complete Henry Bech*, “so I’m honor bound not to write any more.”

“Four and a half” Rabbit Angstrom books seemed enough, the half being the 182-page story “Rabbit Remembered.” “The nicest thing I could do for the Maples would be to leave them alone,” he said of the short stories about Richard and Joan Maple, and added: “I’ve reached an age where I’m sort of packing my bags.”

His remarks complete, Updike sat at a table while fans, some 200 in all, snaked down the aisle to get books signed. He began autographing, but the line scarcely moved. “If you don’t mind,” a conference organizer implored as he scuttled along the queue, “please don’t engage Mr. Updike in conversation—he tends to answer in paragraphs rather than sentences.”

In his memoir, *Self-Consciousness*, Updike writes of celebrity as “a mask that eats into the face.” It certainly eats into the day.



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## Tips on Tips

What can a restaurant server do to earn bigger tips? Not, alas, enhance the service, reports Michael Lynn of Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration. Studies indicate that improving service from middling to outstanding produces a tip increase too small for the average server to notice. Tips grow more markedly when the server touches diners or crouches next to them, when a waitress (but not a waiter) draws a smiley-face on the check, and when the sun is shining. In the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* (Feb. 2002), Lynn and his coauthors report that in one restaurant experiment, people tipped on average 19.0 percent when given only the check, 19.6 percent when also given one piece of candy, and 21.6 percent when given two pieces of candy. The largest tips—23 percent—came when the server doled out one piece of candy and then, in a seemingly spontaneous act of generosity, offered another.

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## Eliot Begins

"An American called Eliot called this P.M.," London-based Ezra Pound wrote to *Poetry* magazine's editor in 1914. "I think he has some sense tho' he has not yet sent me any verse." A week later, according to Joseph Parisi and Stephen Young's *Dear Editor: A History of Poetry in Letters* (Norton), Pound wrote again about the 26-year-old T. S. Eliot: "I was jolly well right. . . . He has sent in the best poem I have yet had or seen from an American."

Eliot finished revising "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and Pound forwarded it to *Poetry*. When the editor questioned the ending, Pound responded: "It is a portrait of failure, or of a character which fails, and it would be false art to make it end on a note of triumph. I dislike the paragraph about Hamlet, but it is an early and cherished bit and T. E. won't give it up, and as it is the only portion of the poem that most readers will like at first reading, I don't see that it will do much harm."

Not all readers shared Pound's enthusiasm when the poem appeared in

*Poetry*. "'Love Song' is the first piece of the English language that utterly stumped me," wrote poet Louis Untermeyer. He recounted having read the poem aloud to "a few poets, a lawyer, a couple of musicians, & one psychoanalyst." The only one able to keep a straight face was the psychoanalyst, who was raring to get Prufrock on the couch: "I think a lot could be done for him. It's a muddled case of infantile repressions and inhibitions."

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## Kael's Clout

"It's not fun writing about bad movies. I used to think it was bad for my skin," longtime *New Yorker* critic Pauline Kael said shortly before her death in 2001, according to Francis Davis's *Afterglow: A Last Conversation with Pauline Kael* (Da Capo). Such was Kael's prestige that her targets sometimes consoled her: "Barbra Streisand was incredibly pleasant when I gave her a very rough review in *Funny Lady*. She phoned to make me feel better."

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## Ailing Words

During a lingering illness in the mid-1920s, Virginia Woolf diagnosed an infirmity in the English language. "The merest schoolgirl, when she falls in love, has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her," Woolf wrote in *On Being Ill* (1930), newly back in print from the nonprofit Paris Press, "but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry. There is nothing ready made for him. He is forced to coin words himself, and, taking his pain in one hand, and a lump of pure sound in the other (as perhaps the people of Babel did in the beginning), so to crush them together that a brand new word in the end drops out. Probably it will be something laughable. For who of English birth can take liberties with the language? To us it is a sacred thing and therefore doomed to die, unless the Americans, whose genius is so much happier in the making of new words than in the disposition of the old, will come to our help and set the springs aflow."

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## Parasites at the Helm

Westerners “razor medicine off at the neck because people such as René Descartes and Pope Urban VIII contended that the human soul resides in the mind, and human disease resides in the body,” Gerald Callahan, a pathologist at Colorado State University, observes in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* (Sept. 2002). But scientists are discovering that mental and behavioral abnormalities in the animal world sometimes stem from bacteria.

“Rats are intermediate hosts for . . . a single-celled protozoan called *Toxoplasma gondii*,” Callahan explains. “*T. gondii* begins and ends its life cycle in domestic cats. The immune response that cats mount against this parasite forces the parasite into very tough cysts that are shed in cats’ feces. The cysts survive in soil for years waiting for an intermediate host, a rat, to eat them. Inside the rats, *T. gondii* resumes its life cycle. The ultimate goal of the parasite is to complete the cycle by returning to its primary host, the cat. Cats do not have a great fondness for dead animals. So *T. gondii* doesn’t kill its rodent host. But rats have a general fear of cats and avoid the scent (and urine) of cats at all costs, which slows the transmission of *T. gondii*.”

“To overcome this bottleneck, the parasite has learned to make rats crazy. Rats infected with *T. gondii* show no fear of cat urine. This is not because they have no sense of smell, because some of these rats develop an attraction—an often fatal attraction—to cat urine. They go mad and seem to invite their own deaths. . . .

“No dysfunctional family, birth defect, or blow to the head made these animals crazy. This madness has an infectious cause.”

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## Albatross

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) hoped to be best remembered for *Opus Maximum*, a more-than-magnum opus that would synthesize everything he knew. He labored over the philosophical work for 20 years but died before finishing it. “Probably

no other single manuscript of such declared import, by a figure who occupies a major place in the canon of established authors, has so long remained unpublished,” writes Thomas McFarland, professor emeritus of English at Princeton University.

*Opus Maximum* is finally in print—one of the 16 volumes in Coleridge’s *Collected Works* (Princeton Univ. Press), edited by McFarland—and the 168-year delay turns

out to be no great puzzler.

“Parts of the manuscript here presented,”

McFarland observes,

“recorded by an amanuensis palpably almost swamped by the dictatorial flow, and dictated off the top of his head by a Coleridge whose opium dosage we can only guess at, ooze murkily through a swamp of near-unintelligibility.” A further obstacle to more timely publication was, in the editor’s words, Coleridge’s “neurotic predilection for plagiarism.” One protégé described the poet’s habit of uttering, “with all the pomp of an original discovery,” concepts “plundered wholesale from some German book.”



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## Menu R&D

In 1974, according to *Gastronomica* (Winter 2002), the U.S. Army set out to determine whether soldiers were taking their periodic meal surveys seriously. One survey mingled fictitious foods—“funistrada,” “braised trake,” “buttered ermal”—with authentic ones. Funistrada proved especially popular, trouncing eggplant, lima beans, and cranberry juice.

Now, the *Washington Times* (Oct. 30, 2002) reports that the Defense Department is developing a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich with a shelf life of three years.

Funistrada is sounding better and better.

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# Adventures in the Gene Pool

What's the real value of genetic evidence in determining who we are? Many commercial tracing services now offer customers the opportunity to explore their genetic ancestry. But that's by no means the same thing as providing them with an identity.

*by Carl Elliott*

Last fall, the North Carolina public school attended by my 13-year-old nephew, Walker, instituted a new dress code. Girls can't wear midriff-baring tops or short skirts. Boys must tuck in their shirts, keep their shoes tied at all times, and wear belts with their pants. The code is enforced with military discipline, and snap inspections are conducted in the hallways. Girls are lined up and asked to raise their arms in the air, like criminal suspects, to ensure that their belly buttons can't be seen. Casually dressed boys are ordered to tuck in their shirts. A few weeks ago, after being subjected to a particularly humiliating hallway inspection, Walker decided to make a fashion change. He now wears only knee-length, American Indian "ribbon shirts" to school—as a tribute, he says, to his American Indian ancestry. So far, the baffled school administrators have left him alone.

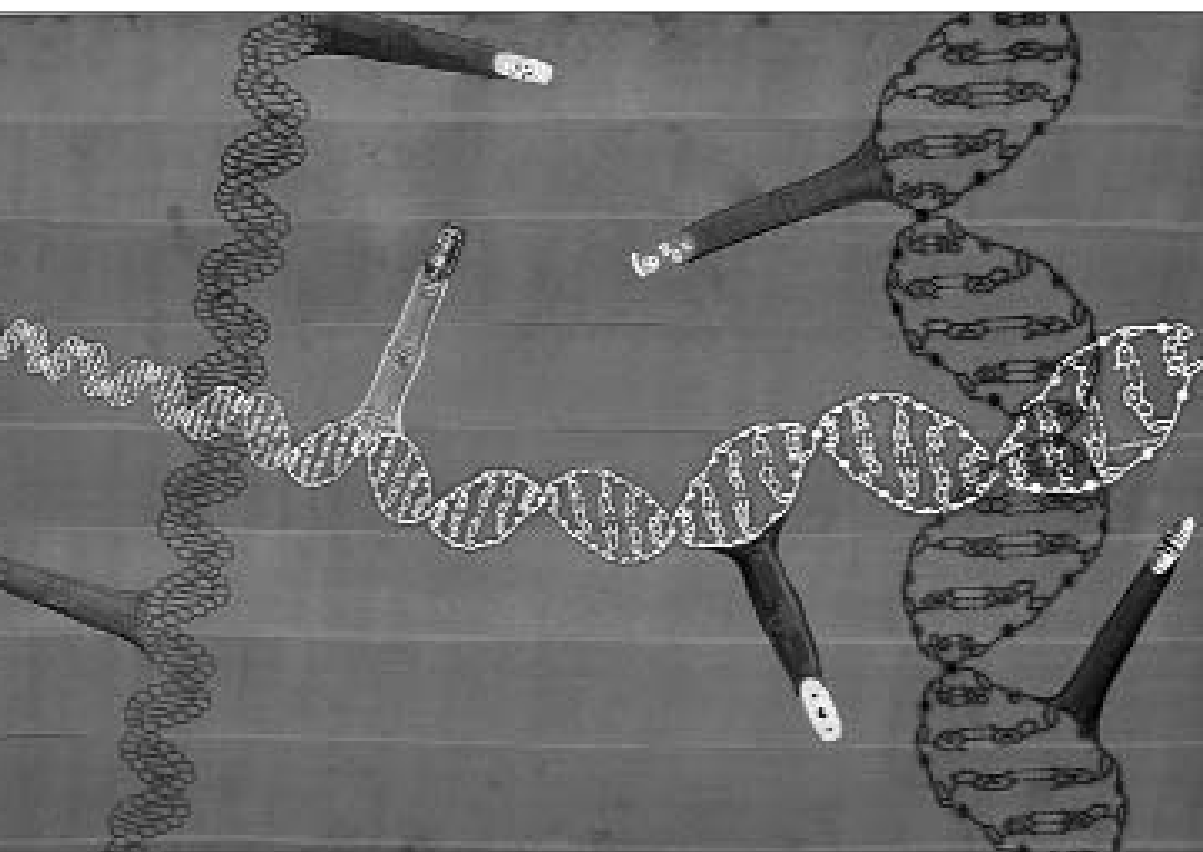
Does Walker have American Indian ancestry? He wears his ribbon shirts half in protest and half in jest, but under other circumstances his genetic ancestry might be a matter of great significance. In the segregated South, for instance, your genetic ancestry decided which restrooms you could use and which schools you could attend. For countries such as Israel and Germany, a displaced person's genetic ancestry helps determine whether he or she has the "right of return."

For the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), genetic ancestry is one marker of whether you count as an American Indian. Many American Indian tribes require members to have a certain "blood quantum." How much American Indian ancestry do you need before you can break the dress code in a North Carolina public school?

I'm not aware of any American Indian ancestry on our side of the family, but the matter is more complicated for my brother Hal's wife, Lisa. Lisa has never been a member of an American Indian tribe, nor (to her knowledge) has anyone in her family. But like many Southerners, Lisa grew up with stories of American Indian ancestors. Her grandmother and great-grandmother had dark skin and hair, and faces that did not much resemble those of the Ulster immigrants who settled our part of South Carolina. Her great-grandfather, who was rumored to be part American Indian and who lived to the age of 107, sold salves and poultices, sometimes in the "colored" part of town. Some people in Lisa's family said they might be Cherokee, but Lisa's great-grandmother always said they weren't. According to her, they were just ordinary "swamp Indians."

Yet Lisa recalls that there was always something funny about the way people in the family acted when questions of ancestry came up. Many of them didn't really want to





*A Train (2001), by Frank Moore*

talk about their heritage at all. Unlike many Southerners who proudly claim American Indian ancestry against all evidence to the contrary, Lisa's family always seemed slightly embarrassed at the prospect and would become defensive and anxious when Lisa asked about it. Often, they'd change the subject. For many years, their reaction left her puzzled.

A few years ago, while I was digging around in some old sociological studies from the 1940s and 1950s, I came across a paper by a scholar named Brewton Berry. Berry grew up in Orangeburg, South Carolina, and in 1945 he published an article called "The Mestizos of South Carolina." *Mestizos* was the term he chose to describe multiracial groups that did not quite fit the rigid, race-based caste system of the Jim Crow South. These groups went by different names, many of them meant to be insulting, in different parts of South Carolina—Redbones, Red Legs, Buckheads, Coppershanks, Marlborough Blues, or, most commonly, Brass Ankles. Most white South

Carolinians of the day suspected that Brass Ankles had black ancestors somewhere in their past, and as late as the 1940s and 1950s many South Carolina counties operated special segregated schools—neither white nor black—solely for Brass Ankle children. (In 1931, the Charleston playwright and novelist DuBose Heyward, better known as the librettist for *Porgy and Bess*, published a play called *Brass Ankle*, which dealt with a white family's accidental discovery of its black ancestry.) Toward the end of Berry's paper, I read something that made me think of Lisa. Speculating about the origins of the mestizos, Berry said that many were probably descended from American Indians who had managed to avoid forced immigration and who were known to have lived for generations in the South Carolina swamps. He also listed a number of names associated with mestizo families, one of which was Sweat. Sweat was the maiden name of Lisa's great-grandmother.

Most Americans, and even many Southerners, believe that Southerners come in two varieties, white and black. Yet groups



that don't quite fit either mold have been living in the South for centuries, often in isolated communities: the Melungeons of Tennessee, the Turks of Sumter County, South Carolina, the Guineas of West Virginia, the Issues of Virginia, the Cubans of North Carolina, and the Redbones of Louisiana and South Carolina, among others. Stories about the origins of these groups often include tales of lost colonies, gypsies, marooned sailors, or foreign soldiers. Many of the groups were said to have some American Indian ancestry, and anthropologists in the mid-20th century called them *tri-racial isolates*. The term *tri-racial* was meant to indicate a mixture of European, African, and American Indian ancestry. It's rarely employed anymore, partly because of skepticism about the usefulness of the concept of race, partly because it's a category that, if taken seriously, would probably include almost all Southerners. In the new, post-segregation South, there seems to be no commonly accepted term for such groups. They're called *Metis*, or *multiracial groups*, or *mixed-ancestry groups*, or simply *the little races of the South*. In the days of Jim Crow, what distinguished many of them was their insistence that they were really white, though whites insisted that they were really black.

Last summer, when Lisa was doing some Internet research on her genealogy, I put her in touch with a company called Family Tree DNA, which advertises itself as "America's first DNA-driven genealogical testing company." Family Tree DNA offers commercial genetic testing to subscribers who want to trace their genetic ancestry. Among their services are genetic tests for Jewish ancestry and American Indian ancestry. Customers send the company information about their family background and a sum of money ranging from \$200 to \$500, and Family Tree DNA sends them a DNA testing kit with which to take a cheek swab that can be used in genetic analysis. After matching the customers' DNA with

various databases collected by population geneticists, Family Tree DNA will tell them what the results reveal about their ancestry. Lisa decided to take the test for American Indian ancestry, and she sent off her swab in June.

Family Tree DNA is only one of many new commercial genetics and genealogy services, including Oxford Ancestors, Relative Genetics, and GeneTree, that are often used by people like Lisa who are curious about their ancestry but have run into dead ends with ordinary written genealogies. Some happy customers, including African Americans who are looking for their African roots, have given glowing testimonies to the press. Pearl Duncan, a writer in New York, collected DNA samples from her family and used a University of Arizona lab to trace her genealogy back (she believes) to Ghana. "I felt like a person stuck in limbo for so long," Duncan told *The New York Times*. "But now there's no doubt in my mind. When I got confirmation, I was elated, overwhelmed, grateful, even a little cocky because I finally knew."

Though the popularity of genetic ancestry tracing is growing, the question remains: Can the process really deliver what people are looking for? Commercial genetic testing services take advantage of two techniques that have been used by population geneticists for years. The first traces genetic markers on the Y chromosome. The remarkable thing about the Y chromosome is that, unlike other chromosomes, it's passed down virtually unchanged from father to son. My Y chromosome is the same as my father's Y chromosome, my grandfather's Y chromosome, and, for that matter, the Y chromosome of my father's two brothers, my two brothers, and all of our sons. By tracing markers on the Y chromosome, geneticists can follow one genetic line of a man's ancestry back for generations, from father to father to father. By matching markers on the Y chromosome with genetic databases, geneticists can often tell a man what part of the world his chromosome traces to. For example, my nephew Walker and I share the same Y chromosome,

>CARL ELLIOTT teaches philosophy and bioethics at the University of Minnesota. His latest book is *Better Than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream* (2003). He wishes to thank the National Human Genome Research Institute for its support of the work on which this essay is based (Grant no. R01-HG02196-01). Copyright © 2003 by Carl Elliott.



*Three generations of Melungeons: William Mullins, his son Noah, and Noah's son Friend.*

which contains a pattern of genetic markers known as the Atlantic Modal Haplotype. The Atlantic Modal Haplotype is quite common all over Western Europe.

**F**or women, the story is slightly different. Women do not ordinarily have a Y chromosome, of course, but they do have mitochondrial DNA, which is present outside the nucleus of the cell and is passed down through maternal lines virtually unchanged from one generation to the next. Both men and women have mitochondrial DNA, but

only women pass their mitochondrial DNA on to their children. Like the Y chromosome, mitochondrial DNA contains markers that geneticists use to trace maternal genetic lineages. Thus, any person, male or female, can track his or her ancestry through his or her mother, his or her mother's mother, and so on back for generations.

The catch is that each of the two tracing techniques gives a person information about only one genetic branch of a family tree whose branches double in number with each preceding generation. I have four

grandparents, two of whom are my grandfathers, but I share a Y chromosome with only one of those four ancestors. I have 128 great-great-great-great-grandparents, but again, Y chromosome tracing will track my genetic lineage back to only one of them. If I continue back in this way for 15 generations, I will have 32,778 ancestors, yet Y chromosome testing will still connect me to only one of them. The same goes for mitochondrial DNA testing. Even if Family Tree DNA were to identify my sister-in-law Lisa's mitochondrial DNA as "Native American," the service would be providing her with information about only one of thousands and thousands of her genetic ancestors.

When the information is so thin, why do people still care? Because in some cases that slender thread of information may be just what they need. One of the most famous cases of genetic sleuthing concerns the descendants of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. For years it was rumored that Jefferson had fathered at least one illegitimate child, and maybe more, by his slave mistress, Hemings. Generations of families descended from Hemings have grown up with the story that they are descendants of Jefferson. But for white descendants of Jefferson, many of whom belong to an exclusive genetic club, the Monticello Society, the thought that Jefferson could have fathered children with his slave has always been heresy. In 1997 Eugene Foster, a pathologist in Charlottesville, Virginia, had the idea of putting the claims to a Y chromosome test. He gathered DNA samples from various confirmed descendants of Jefferson's brother (whose Y chromosome would have been identical to Jefferson's) and from men who claimed descent from Jefferson through Hemings. Then he compared their Y chromosomes. Markers on the Y chromosomes of the descendants of one of Hemings's sons, Eston Hemings Jefferson, matched up almost exactly with those of Jefferson's confirmed descendants. So the ancestry claims of Eston Hemings Jefferson's descendants are now widely treated as valid. But to the dismay of descendants of another Hemings son, Thomas Woodson,

who also claim ancestry from Jefferson, the markers on their Y chromosomes did not match those of Jefferson's confirmed descendants.

An even more striking genealogy story concerns a tribe in southern Africa called the Lemba. In the mid-1980s, the English scholar Tudor Parfitt was in South Africa giving a lecture on the Falashas, or Ethiopian Jews. Most of the people in the lecture hall were white Jewish South Africans, but Parfitt noticed some black people, wearing yarmulkes, standing in the back of the room. When he greeted them after the lecture, they told him that they were Jews and that though they now lived in the northeast corner of South Africa, their people, the Lemba, had originally come from the Middle East. They invited Parfitt to visit, and he learned some suggestive things about them—for example, that the Lemba did not eat pork or porklike animals, that they circumcised their male children, and that they kept one day of the week holy. Eventually, geneticists in South Africa and England looked at the Lemba's Y chromosomes. One study found a much higher than expected frequency of markers ordinarily associated with the "Semitic" people of the Middle East (i.e., Jews and Arabs). An even more interesting study, conducted by Mark Thomas and his colleagues in London, compared the Y chromosomes of the Lemba's priestly caste, the Buba, with those of the Cohanim, the Jewish priests said to be descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses. Geneticists had previously identified a kind of genetic signature called the Cohen Modal Haplotype, which is present in only about three to five percent of ordinary Jews but in about half of the Cohanim. To the astonishment of virtually everyone except the Lemba, the Buba had the Cohen Modal Haplotype in frequencies as high as those of the Cohanim.

These studies raise an obvious and important question: Do the findings mean that the Lemba are "really" Jewish? Similar questions could be asked of the connection between genetics and many other kinds of ethnic, religious, national, and familial identities. Can individuals' genetic heritage make them any more German, Parsi, Cherokee—

or Jeffersonian? For many groups (though by no means all), the answer seems to be a qualified yes. Today your genetic heritage can help get you a passport to Israel or membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution, just as in the past it could have gotten you turned away from segregated schools and restaurants.

The racial stakes have been raised even higher by a new commercial testing service in Florida called DNAPrint Genomics, which claims to offer customers a detailed breakdown of their genetic origins to determine their eligibility for “race-based college admissions or government entitlements.” DNAPrint Genomics does not use Y chromosome or mitochondrial DNA tracing. Instead, its staff test for a number of autosomal genetic markers called SNPs (pronounced “snips”), which they claim are diagnostic of individuals’ geographic origins. Thus, customers receive a quasi-racial profile rather than the information about one ancestor among thousands that they would receive through Y chromosome or mitochondrial DNA testing. An individual might be told, for example, that he or she is 75 percent Indo-European, 15 percent African, and 10 percent Native American. Many geneticists are quick to dismiss these claims as commercial hype, arguing that the

“genetic admixture” studies might be useful for studying populations but that they don’t allow individuals to be given such precise genetic information with any degree of confidence. Other observers worry that admixture studies will give a scientific imprimatur to race-based discrimination.

And yet the most striking thing about commercial admixture studies may well be their failure to map precisely onto ordinary social conceptions of race. To take only one example: Brothers and sisters in the same family, with the same parents, might turn out to have very different genetic profiles simply because of the different genetic cards they’ve been randomly dealt. Would that make one brother black and another white? Or mean that one sister has enough Navajo “blood” to qualify for tribal membership, while her siblings do not?

DNAPrint Genomics claims to offer an exact quantification of an individual’s genetic origins. Ironically, it’s precisely because of this kind of obsession with racial quantification that many of the “little races” of the South survived for so long. In a society where people were strictly classified, socially and often legally, as either white or black, there was little conceptual space for people who did not quite count as either. When



*The Lemba of northeast South Africa trace their origins to the Middle East and consider themselves Jews.*

legal segregation began to break down in the 1950s and 1960s, so did the strict outsider status of the “little races.” Today, labels such as Brass Ankle, Redbone, and Melungeon are almost quaint, and Southerners whose grandparents would have been ashamed of their heritage are now seeking ways to discover information about their ancestry that earlier generations did their best to conceal. Genetic testing seems to them a means of connecting with their vanished past, and perhaps even of validating those mysterious stories about their origins.



A number of years ago, when Wayne Winkler first began dating Andrea, the woman who would eventually become his wife, she asked him about his ethnic background. “Melungeon,” Winkler replied. Andrea thought Winkler was pulling her leg. She had grown up in Tennessee, the heart of Melungeon country, but she had never believed that Melungeons really existed. Winkler says, “It was as if I had replied ‘Leprechaun.’”

As the current president of the Melungeon Heritage Association and the author of a forthcoming book on the Melungeons, *Walking toward the Sunset*, Winkler understands their quasi-mythical status. Many Tennesseans grew up thinking that Melungeons were moonshiners and counterfeiterers, that they had six fingers on each hand, and that when they emerged from the hills and hollows, it was to capture misbehaving children, like the bogeyman. Because of their dark (or “olive”) skin, Melungeons were said to be the descendants of Portuguese sailors, runaway slaves, American Indians, a lost tribe of Israel, ancient Carthaginians, gypsies, or inhabitants of Sir Walter Raleigh’s Lost Colony on Roanoke Island, North Carolina (established in 1587, the colony disappeared sometime before 1591). One legend had it that they were the children of Satan and an American Indian wife he took when he was driven out of hell. The meaning of the name *Melungeon* is uncertain too. Some speculate that it is a corruption of the French *melange* (meaning mixture), a hybrid

African-Portuguese term *melungo* (meaning shipmate), the Greek *melas* (meaning dark), or simply the surname Mullins, a common one among Melungeon families. (One of the most famous Melungeons was Mahala “Big Haley” Mullins, a woman moonshiner reported to be so fat that when she died, she had to be buried in a custom-made coffin built around her bed.)

Melungeon legends make it hard to separate fiction from fact. But the Tennessee census records and other historical documents are clear evidence that Melungeons (or others once officially classified as “free people of color”) have been living in the east Tennessee mountains for at least 200 years. It’s generally thought that many Melungeons moved to east Tennessee to escape the persecution and ill will of their neighbors in Virginia and North Carolina, and then moved even farther up into the mountains when Scots-Irish settlers began entering Tennessee. As a strategy to avoid bigotry and discrimination, the moves were not entirely successful. In 1834, Tennessee stripped Melungeons of the right to vote. In 1887, they were officially classified as “Croatan Indians,” the theory apparently being that they were descended from the survivors of Raleigh’s Lost Colony, who are thought to have intermarried with a tribe of Croatan Indians. The term *Croatan*, like *Melungeon*, came to be regarded as insulting, by the Melungeons and by everyone else too, and as early as the mid-19th century many Melungeons insisted that their ancestry was actually Portuguese (often pronounced “Portygree”). By the 1960s, the Melungeons had all but disappeared. As legal segregation began to fade, along with social restrictions on marriage and courtship, they were assimilated into ordinary white society. The very word *Melungeon* began to seem a relic of the past.

In 1969, the town of Sneedville, Tennessee, began staging a play about the Melungeons, *Walk toward the Sunset*, by Kermit Hunter (the title inspired Wayne Winkler’s book). Although it was developed largely as a tourist attraction and was put on for only six years, the play marked the beginning of a transformation in Melungeon identity. For the first time, a few Melun-

geons began to take pride in their history, and some even began to identify themselves openly as Melungeons. Yet it was not until 1994, when Brent Kennedy, a vice chancellor of development at Clinch Valley College (now the University of Virginia's College at Wise), published his book *The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People*, that the revival of Melungeon identity really took off. Today thousands of people, most of whom did not grow up thinking of themselves as Melungeons, are reclaiming their Melungeon roots and tracing their genealogies and family histories. There are Melungeon gatherings, Melungeon research groups, Melungeon internet listservs, a Melungeon Health Network, even a Melungeon book series with Mercer University Press. The Melungeon Heritage Association, founded by Kennedy, is the hub around which all this activity revolves.

But where did the Melungeons come from? That's the great unsolved mystery that has dogged them for generations. In 1998 Kennedy recruited Kevin Jones, a geneticist at the University of Virginia's College at Wise, to help him with a genetic study of the Melungeons. Over the next several years, Kennedy collected DNA from a number of families he believed to have confirmed Melungeon ancestry. Jones analyzed some 120 samples of mitochondrial DNA and, with Mark Thomas of University College London, 30 Y chromosome samples. The data have not been published, but in June 2002 Jones announced his much-anticipated results at the Fourth Melungeon Union in Kingsport, Tennessee. About five percent of the mitochondrial DNA tracked to Native American sources, about five percent to African sources, and about 90 percent to a broad category called Eurasian, which includes Europe, the Middle East, and India.

These results are notable mainly for what they fail to reveal. With no comparison group, it's impossible to know whether the findings say anything special about Melungeons. It might be that any random group of people tested from that part of east Tennessee and Virginia would yield a similar result. And yet, even with a comparison group, genetic testing of this kind will usually

give results that are vague enough to be consistent with any number of different stories of a group's origins. For example, the category "Eurasian" is broad enough to be consistent with old stories of Portuguese and Turkish origins for Melungeons, as well as with the Irish and Scottish roots of most people in that part of the South. The markers tracing to Africa are consistent with stories of slave ancestry. Jones also found a handful of very unusual markers—four sequences, for instance, that matched with the Siddi, a north Indian people of East African descent. What does it mean that, out of the hundreds of thousands of lines of descent leading to the Melungeon families in the study, four had these unusual genetic markers? Very little, actually. But those markers are almost certain to produce even more far-fetched speculation about Melungeon origins.



For Melungeons, genetic ancestry tracing is interesting mainly because of what it contributes to the solution of a genealogical puzzle. For other groups of mixed or uncertain origins, the process could have far higher stakes. A number of mixed-ancestry groups have organized themselves into formal associations and are petitioning the BIA for federal recognition as American Indian tribes, often claiming descent from tribes that vanished as a result of government policy in past centuries. Federal recognition as an American Indian tribe gives a group specific social benefits, such as educational and medical services and exemption from some state taxes. It also gives individual members of the group access to federal programs for legally recognized American Indians.

Genetics and genealogy play a crucial, and often controversial, role in decisions about American Indian identity. For example, many BIA policies require that individuals demonstrate one-half or one-quarter blood quantum to qualify for benefits. The notion of blood quantum is written into the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, and the BIA even issues a kind of genetic identity card called the CDIB (Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood),

which states an individual's blood quantum and serves as a passport to BIA services. Many individual tribes have their own blood quantum requirements for membership, ranging from one-half to one-thirty-second. Genealogy also figures in BIA decisions about federal recognition; to qualify, a petitioning group must demonstrate, among other things, that it's descended from a historical tribe or from amalgamated tribes.

Few tribes have been as frustrated as the Lumbee of North Carolina in their efforts to obtain full federal recognition. Numbering more than 50,000, the Lumbee are the largest American Indian tribe east of the Mississippi River. Like the Melungeons, the Lumbee have contested origins, have been tracked for centuries by accusations of mixed ancestry, and were at one point designated by the state as "free people of color" and subsequently as "Croatan Indians." Yet unlike the Melungeons, the Lumbee have always had a strong sense of themselves as a distinct, cohesive group. And unlike many other mixed-ancestry groups, whose members have only recently discovered their lost American Indian heritage, the Lumbee have considered themselves American Indians for centuries. They've been petitioning the federal government for full recognition as a tribe since the 1880s. Yet those efforts have never fully succeeded. Some recognized tribes have opposed the Lumbee petitions (though others have supported them), and the only concession the federal government has made to the Lumbee was a limited type of recognition in 1956 that specifically disallows their receipt of benefits from the BIA. In 1985, the BIA determined that the Lumbee failed to satisfy the criteria for full recognition, citing, among other factors, the group's "mixed and uncertain ancestry."

Given this long history of legal frustration, it would not be surprising if the Lumbee, like the Melungeons, were to look to genetic ancestry tracing as a way to support their ancestry claims. Such a move would not be unprecedented: Members of the Western Mohegan Tribe of the Upper Hudson have

undergone genetic ancestry tracing to advance their claim to legitimacy as an American Indian tribe. Genetic testing might help the Lumbee cause by establishing links between individual Lumbee and members of other federally recognized tribes, or links to descendants of American Indians who were listed on tribal rolls or living on reservations in 1934, the year of the Indian Reorganization Act. If a large number of Lumbee families were to have their Y chromosomes and mitochondrial DNA tested and compared with the DNA of other families in their part of North Carolina, it's also possible that a significant number of markers on their DNA might trace back to Native American sources. Given the participation of a large enough number of people, genetic tests might also settle the question of whether the Lumbee are descended from historical or amalgamated tribes.

Yet the use of genetic testing to document "authentic" American Indian identity for the Lumbee would also ratify the genetic standards that have often been used against them in the past. Many Lumbee don't match up with the popular archetype of an American Indian. Some look like African Americans; others have blond hair and blue eyes. The Lumbee don't live on a reservation or speak an American Indian language, and they've never had a treaty with the federal government. The earliest documented history of the Lumbee comes from Scottish settlers in the early 18th century, who reported an American Indian tribe living along the Lumber River whose members spoke an obsolete English dialect and lived like Europeans. In 1936, the BIA sent Carl Selzer, a Harvard University anthropologist, to Robeson County, North Carolina, to determine whether the Lumbee really were American Indians. Selzer's methods would be laughable if his conclusions had not been so consequential. He examined 209 Lumbee, measuring their features and putting a pencil in their hair to determine whether it was "Indian" or "Negroid." If the pencil slipped, it was Indian hair; if it stuck, it was Negroid. Selzer decided that only 22 of the 209 Lumbee he examined were "authentic" Indians.



But the Lumbee know very well who they are. They have their own origin stories, often connected to Raleigh's Lost Colony. They have particular ways of living, behaving, and speaking. They have heroes, most notably Henry Berry Lowry, the Lumbee Crazy Horse, a Civil War and Reconstruction-era marauder who defended the Lumbee against hostile whites. The state of North Carolina has given the Lumbee official tribal recognition. During the long history of southern racial segregation, the Lumbee had their own schools and their own university, now called the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In 1958, a group of Lumbee gained national attention (including photographs in *Life* magazine) when they attacked a Ku Klux Klan rally and ran the Klan out of Robeson County. When the University of Oklahoma basketball team went to the Final Four in March 2002, their coach, Kelvin Sampson, was widely reported to be the first American Indian to coach a Final Four team. Sampson is a Lumbee.

As cohesive and resilient as the Lumbee have proven themselves over the years, their identity as a group has never depended on the genetic standards that are written into American law, and membership has never been determined by measuring blood quantum. In fact, one of the most striking things about the Lumbee has been their ability to maintain such a strong sense of group identity over time while accepting outsiders into the group. Their openness looks progressive today, even as it explains why so many of the Lumbee failed the BIA's absurd racial purity tests in 1936.

For all the potential appeal of genetic ancestry tracing for individuals, it's difficult not to feel ambivalent about its wider implications. Given the long and damaging history of eugenicist thinking and race-based discrimination, a technology that seems to ratify the old racial categories resists wholehearted embrace. In a way, genetic ancestry tracing looks suspiciously like what Carl Selzer was doing with his pencil in Lumbee people's hair back in 1936. We'd like to believe that we've moved beyond that kind of thinking.

We'd like to believe that identity should be rooted in something other than genetics or race—in a history, a way of thinking, a language, a religion. Some people, especially Americans, would like to believe that you can be whoever you choose to be, regardless of your genetic inheritance. Yet it's impossible to get away from genetics entirely, if only because of the inescapable fact of biological families. So many structures of identity are rooted in kinship. Being African American or Jewish or Ojibwe—or even, for that matter, American—depends on who your parents happen to be. As undemocratic and illiberal as the thought may sound to modern ears, some aspects of identity are not a matter of individual choice. And it's this balance between chance and choice, between what's given and what's made, that creates the moral tension surrounding genetics and identity. We want to be part of a family, but we also want to be able to escape it. We want to know where our ancestors came from, but we don't want our ancestry held against us. Genealogy by genetics may look like a hobby now, but if genetic testing as a determinant of identity were to find its way into our social and legal institutions, it could take on a meaning and significance we never intended. How much should genetic ancestry matter to our identities? We've only begun to struggle with that question.



When my sister-in-law Lisa got her results back from Family Tree DNA, they showed a set of markers known as Haplogroup W. The bad news for my nephew Walker is that Haplogroup W is not a Native American haplogroup. The good news is that Haplogroup W, while quite uncommon, is found in low frequencies all over Europe and Asia, including, among other locales, the British Isles, Spain, Sicily, Switzerland, Sweden, Ukraine, Georgia, Russia, Turkey, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, Iran, and India. The highest frequencies occur in Finland.

Walker has not given up his ribbon shirts yet, but he's developing an interest in Finnish fashion. □

# The Revolution of 1803

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was “the event which more than any other, after the foundation of the Government and always excepting its preservation, determined the character of our national life.” So said President Theodore Roosevelt on the 100th anniversary of this momentous acquisition. As we celebrate the 200th anniversary, it’s clear that the extraordinary real estate deal also shaped America’s perception of its role in the world.

*by Peter S. Onuf*

If there was one thing the United States did not seem to need in 1803, it was more land. The federal government had plenty to sell settlers in the new state of Ohio and throughout the Old Northwest (stretching from the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to the Great Lakes), as did New York, Pennsylvania, and other states. New Englanders were already complaining that the westward exodus was driving up wages and depressing real estate prices in the East.

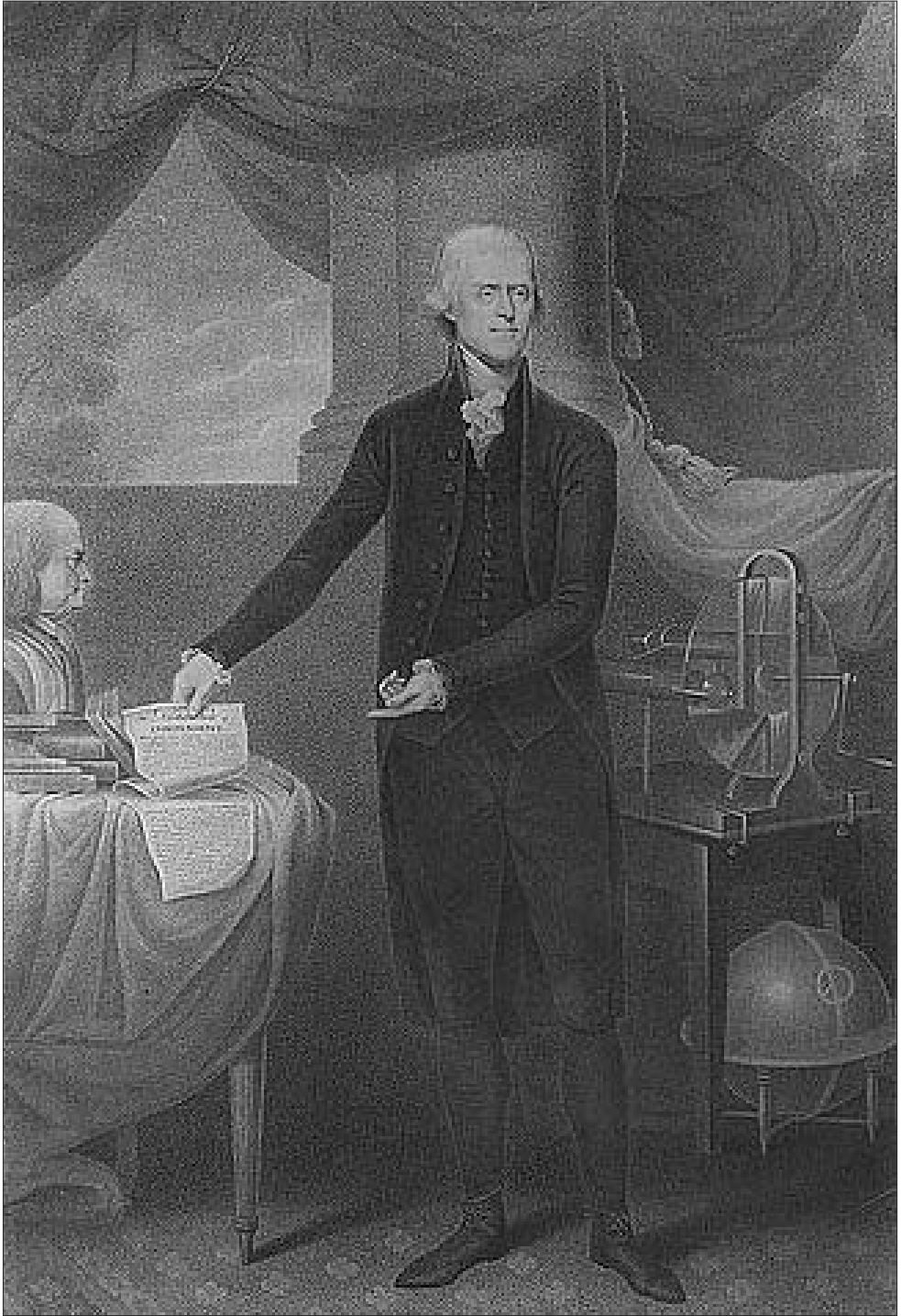
The United States then consisted of 16 states: the original 13, strung along the Atlantic seaboard, and three recent additions on the frontier: Vermont, which had declared its independence from New York during the Revolution, was finally recognized and admitted in 1791, and Kentucky and Tennessee, carved out of the western reaches of Virginia and North Carolina in 1792 and 1796, respectively, extended the union of states as far as the Mississippi River. The entire area east of the Mississippi had been nominally secured to the United States by the Peace of Paris in 1783, though vast regions remained under the control of Indian nations and subject to the influence of various European imperial powers.

Many skeptical commentators believed that the United States was already too big and that

the bonds of union would weaken and snap if new settlements spread too far and too fast. “No paper engagements” could secure the connection of East and West, Massachusetts congressman Rufus King wrote in 1786, and separatist movements and disunionist plots kept such concerns alive in subsequent years. Expansionists had a penchant for naturalistic language: At best, the “surge” or “tide” of white settlement might be channeled, but it was ultimately irresistible.

Though President Thomas Jefferson and the American negotiators who secured the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had not even dreamed of acquiring such a vast territory, stretching from the Mississippi to the Rockies, the expansion of the United States has the retrospective feel of inevitability, however much some modern Americans may bemoan the patriotic passions and imperialistic excesses of “Manifest Destiny” and its “legacies of conquest.” Indeed, it’s almost impossible for us to imagine any other outcome now, or to recapture the decidedly mixed feelings of Americans about their country’s expansion at the start of the 19th century.

Jefferson and his contemporaries understood that they were at a crossroads, and that the American experiment in republican self-government and the fragile federal union on



*President Thomas Jefferson touted the Louisiana Purchase as “favorable to the immediate interests of our Western citizens, . . . auspicious to the peace and security of the nation in general.”*

which it depended could easily fail. They understood that the United States was a second-rate power, without the “energy” or military means to project—or possibly even to defend—its vital interests in a world almost

constantly at war. And they understood all too well that the loyalties of their countrymen—and, if they were honest with themselves, their own loyalties—were volatile and unpredictable.

There were good reasons for such doubts

about American allegiances. Facing an uncertain future, patriotic (and not so patriotic) Americans had only the dimmest sense of who or what should command their loyalty. The Union had nearly collapsed on more than one occasion, most recently during the presidential succession crisis of 1800–01, which saw a tie in the Electoral College and 36 contentious ballots in the House of Representatives before Jefferson was elevated to the presidency. During the tumultuous 1790s, rampant partisan political strife between Federalists and Jefferson's Republicans roiled the nation, and before that, under the Articles of Confederation (1781–89), the central government ground to a virtual halt and the Union almost withered away before the new constitution saved it. Of course, everyone professed to be a patriot, dedicated to preserving American independence. But what did that mean? Federalists such as Alexander Hamilton preached fealty to a powerful, consolidated central government capable of doing the people's will (as they loosely construed it); Republican oppositionists championed a strictly construed federal constitution that left power in the hands of the people's (or peoples') state governments. Each side accused the other of being subject to the corrupt influence of a foreign power: counter-revolutionary England in the case of Federalist "aristocrats" and "monocrats"; revolutionary France for Republican "Jacobins."

In Jefferson's mind, and in the minds of his many followers, the new Republican dispensation initiated by his ascension to power in "the Revolution of 1800" provided a hopeful answer to all these doubts and anxieties. Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, which the soft-spoken, 57-year-old president delivered to Congress in a nearly inaudible whisper in March 1801, seemed to his followers to herald a new epoch in American affairs. "We are all republicans, we are all federalists," he insisted in the speech. "Let us, then, unite with one heart and one mind." The president's inspiring vision of the nation's future augured, as he told the English radical Joseph Priestley, then a refugee in republican Pennsylvania, something "new under the sun."

While Jefferson's conciliatory language in the inaugural address famously helped mend the partisan breach—and, not coincidentally, helped cast Hamilton and his High Federalist minions far beyond the republican pale—it also anticipated the issues that would come to the fore during the period leading up to the Louisiana Purchase.

First, the new president addressed the issue of the nation's size. Could an expanding union of free republican states survive without jeopardizing the liberties won at such great cost by the revolutionary generation? Jefferson reassured the rising, post-revolutionary generation that it too had sufficient virtue and patriotism to make the republican experiment work and to pass on its beneficent legacy. "Entertaining a due sense of our equal right to the use of our own faculties" and "enlightened by a benign religion, professed, indeed, and practiced in various forms, yet all of them inculcating honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude, and the love of man; acknowledging and adoring an overruling Providence, which by all its dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here and his greater happiness hereafter," Americans were bound to be "a happy and a prosperous people."

Jefferson congratulated his fellow Americans on "possessing a chosen country, with room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation," a vast domain that was "separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe." Jefferson's vision of nationhood was inscribed on the American landscape: "An overruling Providence, which by all its dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here and his greater happiness hereafter" provided this fortunate people with land enough to survive and prosper forever. But Jefferson knew that he was *not* offering an accurate description of the nation's current condition. Given the frenzied pace of westward settlement, it would take only a generation or two—not a thousand—to fill out the new nation's existing limits, which were still marked in the west by the Mississippi. Nor was the United States as happily insulated from Europe's "exterminating havoc" as the new

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A French-made map shows what was known of the Louisiana Territory and the distant West in 1755. It was not until the 1804–1806 expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark that cartographers could begin to describe in detail the western reaches of the Purchase.

president suggested. The Spanish remained in control of New Orleans, the key to the great river system that controlled the continent’s heartland, and the British remained a powerful presence to the north.

Jefferson’s vision of the future was, in fact, the mirror opposite of America’s present situation at the onset of the 19th century. The nation was encircled by enemies and deeply divided by partisan and sectional differences. The domain the president envisioned was boundless, continent-wide, a virgin land waiting to be taken up by virtuous, liberty-loving American farmers. In this providential perspective, Indian nations and European empires simply disappeared from view, and the acquisition of new territory and the expansion of the Union seemed preordained. It would take an unimaginable miracle, acquisition of the entire Louisiana territory, to begin to consummate Jefferson’s inaugural promise.

Jefferson’s expansionist vision also violated the accepted axioms of contemporary political science. In his *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), the great French philosopher Montesquieu taught that the republican form of government could survive only in small states, where a virtuous and vigilant citizenry could effectively monitor the exercise of power. A large state, by contrast, could be sustained only if power were concentrated in a more energetic central government; republicanism in an expanding state would give way to more “despotic,” aristocratic, and monarchical regimes. This “law” of political science was commonly understood in mechanical terms: Centrifugal forces, pulling a state apart, gained momentum as territory expanded, and they could be checked only by the “energy” of strong government.

James Madison had grappled with the problem in his famous *Federalist* 10, in which he argued that an “extended republic” would “take in a greater variety of parties and interests,” making it “less probable that a majority of the

whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens.” Modern pluralists have embraced this argument, but it was not particularly persuasive to Madison’s generation—or even to Madison himself a decade later. During the struggle over ratification of the Constitution, Antifederalists effectively invoked Montesquieu’s dictum against Federalist “consolidationism,” and in the 1790s, Jeffersonian defenders of states’ rights offered the same arguments against Hamiltonian High Federalism. And Jefferson’s “Revolution of 1800,” vindicating the claims of (relatively) small state-republics against an overly energetic central government, seemed to confirm Montesquieu’s wisdom. Montesquieu’s notion was also the basis for the popular interpretation of what had caused the rise of British tyranny in the colonies before the American Revolution.

At the same time, however, Montesquieu’s logic posed a problem for Jefferson. How could he imagine a continental republic in 1801 and negotiate a land cession that doubled the country’s size in 1803? To put the problem somewhat differently, how could Jefferson—who had, after all, drafted the controversial Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, which threatened state nullification of federal authority—overcome his own disunionist tendencies?

Jefferson’s response in his inaugural was to call on his fellow Americans to “pursue our own federal and republican principles, our attachment to union and representative government,” with “courage and confidence.” In other words, a sacred regard for states’ rights (“federal principles”) was essential to the preservation and strength of a “union” that depended on the “attachment” of a people determined to secure its liberties (“republican principles”). This conception of states as republics would have been familiar and appealing to many Americans, but Jefferson’s vision of the United States as a *powerful* nation, spreading across the continent, was breathtaking in its boldness. How could he promise Americans that they could have it both ways, that they could be secure in their liberties yet have a federal government with enough “energy” to preserve itself? How could he believe that the American government, which had only recently endured a near-fatal succession crisis and which had a pathetically small army and navy,

was “the strongest Government on earth”?

Jefferson responded to these questions resoundingly by invoking—or perhaps more accurately, inventing—an American people or nation, united in devotion to common principles, and coming together over the course of succeeding generations to constitute one great family. Thus, the unity the president imagined was prospective. Divided as they might now be, Americans would soon come to realize that they were destined to be a great nation, freed from “the throes and convulsions of the ancient world” and willing to sacrifice everything in defense of their country. In Jefferson’s vision of progressive continental development, the defensive vigilance of virtuous republicans, who were always ready to resist the encroachments of power from any and every source, would be transformed into a patriotic devotion to the transcendent community of an inclusive and expanding nation, “the world’s best hope.” “At the call of the law,” Jefferson predicted, “every man . . . would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern.”

Jefferson thus invoked an idealized vision of the American Revolution, in which patriotic citizen-soldiers rallied against British tyranny, as a model for future mobilizations against internal as well as external threats. (It was an extraordinary—and extraordinarily influential—exercise in revisionist history. More dispassionate observers, including those who, unlike Jefferson, actually had some military experience, were not inclined to give the militias much, if any, credit for winning the war.)

Jefferson’s conception of the American nation imaginatively countered the centrifugal forces, the tendency toward anarchy and disunion, that republicanism authorized and unleashed. Devotion to the Union would reverse this tendency and draw Americans together, even as their private pursuits of happiness drew them to the far frontiers of their continental domain. It was a paradoxical, mystifying formulation. What seemed to be weakness—the absence of a strong central government—was, in fact, strength. Expansion did not attenuate social and political ties; rather, it secured a powerful, effective, and affective union. The imagined obliteration of all possible obstacles to the enactment of this great national story—the removal of Indians

and foreigners—was the greatest mystification of all, for it disguised how the power of the federal state was to be deployed to clear the way for “nature’s nation.”

In retrospect, the peaceful acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, at the bargain-basement price of \$15 million, seemed to conform to the expansionist scenario in Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address. The United States bought land from France, just as individuals bought land from federal and state land offices, demonstrating good intentions (to be fruitful and multiply, to cultivate the earth) and their respect for property rights and the rule of law. Yet the progress of settlement was inexorable, a “natural” force, as the French wisely recognized in ceding their claims.

The threat of armed conflict was, nonetheless, never far below the surface. When the chilling news reached America in 1802 that Spain had retroceded Louisiana to France, under pressure from Napoleon Bonaparte, some Federalists agitated for a preemptive strike against New Orleans before Napoleon could land troops there and begin to carry out his plan for a reinvigorated French empire in the Western Hemisphere. As if to provide a taste of the future, Spanish authorities in New Orleans revoked the right of American traders

to store goods in the city for export, thereby sending ripples of alarm and economic distress through farms and plantations of the Mississippi valley. Americans might like to think, with Jefferson, that the West was a vast land reserve for their future generations, but nature would issue a different decree if the French gained control of the Mississippi River system.

As Senator William Wells of Delaware warned the Senate in February 1803, if Napoleon were ensconced in New Orleans, “the whole of your Southern States” would be at his mercy; the French ruler would not hesitate to foment rebellion among the slaves, that “inveterate enemy in the very bosom of those States.” A North Carolina congressman expected the French emperor to do even worse: “The tomahawk of the savage and the knife of the negro would confederate in the league, and there would be no interval of peace.” Such a confederation—a powerful, unholy alliance of Europeans, Indians, and slaves—was the nightmarish antithesis of the Americans’ own weak union. The French might even use their influence in Congress to revive the vicious party struggles that had crippled the national government during the 1790s.

Jefferson had no idea how to respond to the looming threat, beyond sending his friend and



*James Monroe, who was Jefferson’s special envoy, and U.S. Minister to France Robert Livingston negotiate details of the Louisiana Purchase with the formidable French foreign minister Talleyrand (seated).*



protégé James Monroe to join U.S. Minister to France Robert R. Livingston in a desperate bid to negotiate a way out of the crisis. At most, they hoped that Napoleon would sell New Orleans and the Floridas to the United States, perhaps with a view to preempting an Anglo-American alliance. Jefferson dropped a broad hint to Livingston (undoubtedly for Napoleon's edification) that if France ever took "possession of N. Orleans . . . we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation." For the Anglophobe Jefferson this must have been a horrible thought, even if it was a bluff. But then, happily for Jefferson—and crucially for his historical reputation—fortune intervened.

Napoleon's intentions for the New World hinged on control of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), but a slave revolt there, led by the brilliant Toussaint L'Ouverture, complicated the emperor's plans. With a strong assist from yellow fever and other devastating diseases, the rebels fought a French expeditionary force of more than 20,000 to a standstill. Thwarted in his western design and facing the imminent resumption of war in Europe, Napoleon decided to cut his losses. In April 1803, his representative offered the entire Louisiana Territory to a surprised Livingston. By the end of the month, the negotiators had arrived at a price. For \$15 million, the United States would acquire 828,000 square miles of North America, stretching from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border. Over time 13 states would be carved from the new lands.

When the news reached America in July, it proved a great deal more than anyone had been contemplating but was met with general jubilation. There was widespread agreement that national security depended on gaining control of the region around New Orleans; and Spanish Florida, occupying the critical area south of Georgia and the territory that the state had finally ceded to Congress in 1802, was high on southern planters' wish list of territorial acquisitions. But it was hard to imagine any immediate use for the trans-Mississippi region, notwithstanding Jefferson's inspiring rhetoric, and there was some grumbling that the negotiators had spent more than Congress had authorized. A few public figures, mostly New England Federalists, even opposed the transaction on

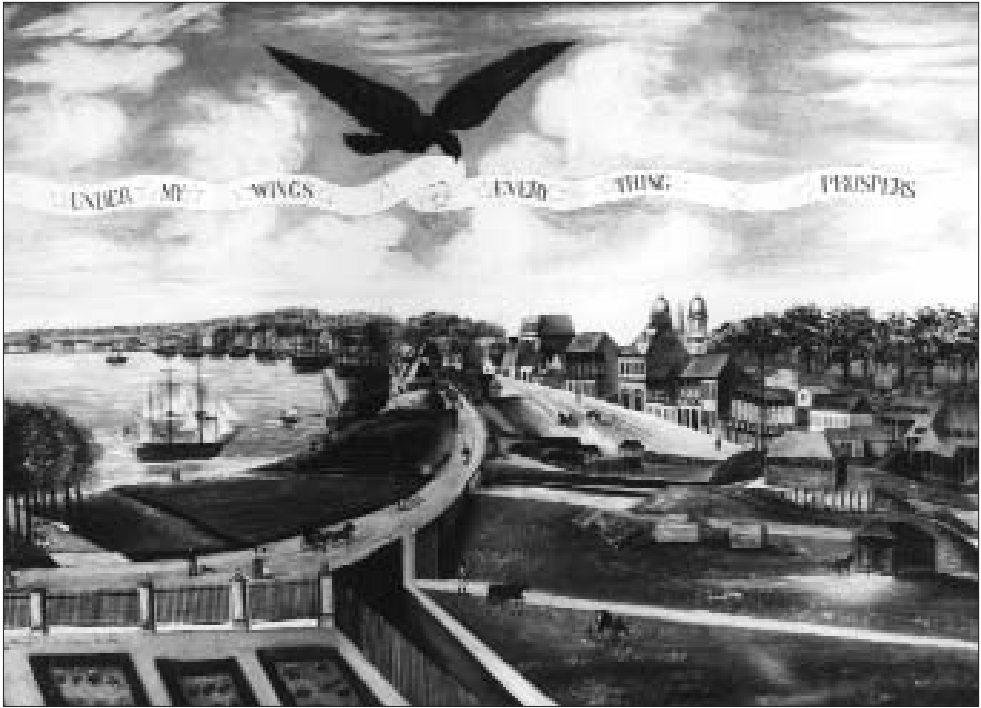
political and constitutional grounds.

The Lewis and Clark expedition, authorized before the Purchase was completed, testifies to Americans' utter ignorance of the West in 1803. The two explorers were sent, in effect, to feel around in the dark. Perhaps, Jefferson mused, the trans-Mississippi region could be used as a kind of toxic waste dump, a place to send emancipated slaves beyond harm's way. Or, a more portentous thought, Indian nations might be relocated west of the river—an idea President Andrew Jackson later put into effect with his infamous removal policy.

What gripped most commentators as they celebrated the news of the Purchase in 1803 was simply that the Union had survived another awful crisis. They tended to see the new lands as a buffer. "The wilderness itself," Representative Joseph Nicholson of Maryland exclaimed, "will now present an almost insurmountable barrier to any nation that inclined to disturb us in that quarter." And another congressman exulted that America was now "insulated from the rest of the world."

David Ramsay, the South Carolina historian and devout Republican, offered the most full-blown paean to the future of the "chosen country" as Jefferson had envisioned it. Echoing Jefferson's First Inaugural, he asked, "What is to hinder our extension on the same liberal principles of equal rights till we have increased to twenty-seven, thirty-seven, or any other number of states that will conveniently embrace, in one happy union, the whole country from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, and from the lakes of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico?" In his Second Inaugural, in 1805, Jefferson himself would ask, "Who can limit the extent to which the federative principle may operate effectively?" Gone were his doubts about the uses to which the new lands could be put. "Is it not better that the opposite bank of the Mississippi should be settled by our own brethren and children, than by strangers of another family?"

Jefferson's vision of the American future has ever since provided the mythic master narrative of American history. In the western domains that Jefferson imagined as a kind of blank slate on which succeeding generations would inscribe the image of American



*New Orleans had only 8,000 inhabitants when this scene was painted in 1803, but as goods flowed down the Mississippi, it became the world's fourth busiest port. By 1840, its population topped 100,000.*

nationhood, it would be all too easy to overlook other peoples and other possibilities. It would be all too easy as well to overlook the critical role of the state in the progress of settlement and development. When Americans looked back on events, they would confuse effects with causes: War and diplomacy eliminated rival empires and dispossessed native peoples; an activist federal state played a critical role in pacifying a “lawless” frontier by privatizing public lands and promoting economic development. In the mythic history of Jefferson’s West, an irresistible westward tide of settlement appears to be its own cause, the manifest destiny of nature’s nation.

Yet if the reality of power remains submerged in Jefferson’s thought, it’s not at any great depth. The very idea of the nation implies enormous force, the power of a people enacting the will of “an overruling Providence.” In Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence, Americans claimed “the separate & equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them.” The first law of nature, the great natural law proclaimed by writers of the day, was self-preservation, and the defining moment in American history was the great

mobilization of American power to secure independence in the Revolution. President Jefferson’s vision of westward expansion projected that glorious struggle into the future and across the continent. It was a kind of permanent revolution, reenacting the nation’s beginnings in the multiplication of new, self-governing republican states.

Born in war, Jefferson’s conception of an expanding union of free states constituted a peace plan for the New World. But until it was insulated from Europe’s “exterminating havoc,” the new nation would remain vulnerable, unable to realize its historic destiny. By eliminating the clear and present danger of a powerful French presence at the mouth of the Mississippi, the Louisiana Purchase guaranteed the survival of the Union—for the time being, at least. By opening the West to white American settlers, it all but guaranteed that subsequent generations would see their own history in Jefferson’s vision of their future, a mythic, nation-making vision yoking individual liberty and national power and promising a future of peace and security in a dangerous world. Two hundred years later, that vision remains compelling to many Americans. □

# China's Palace of Memory

In 1860, a Western expeditionary force destroyed the fabulous complex of Beijing palaces known as Yuanming Yuan. Today, the Chinese are debating how the ruined site should be treated. The argument is ostensibly about the physical remaking of Yuanming Yuan. But what's really at issue is China's sense of itself and its past.

*by Norman Kutcher*

**T**he Yuanming Yuan ("Garden of Perfect Brightness") was a residence for the emperors of China's last dynasty, the Qing. Considered the crowning achievement of traditional Chinese architecture, it once occupied a thousand acres in a section of northwest Beijing. Yuanming Yuan was destroyed in 1860, and Chinese are now debating whether it should be rebuilt or left as a ruin. Every Beijing resident seems to have a strong opinion, for at stake is not merely the physical character of the site but the use a people are to make of their history.

Yuanming Yuan, which Westerners know as the "Old Summer Palace," was built and rebuilt over a 150-year period. Though referred to in the singular in both English and Chinese, it was not one palace but a complex of palaces. By the height of its development in the late 18th century, the grounds held hundreds of small buildings, made of rare woods and constructed using techniques that are now all but lost. The palace was not merely a summer home but the beloved main residence of many Qing emperors. In contrast to the ponderous Forbidden City, Yuanming Yuan was an aesthetic retreat, as much a work of landscape architecture as a palace, with manmade hills and countless waterways over which ornate boats carried members of the royal family. In 1860, an

allied expedition of British and French forces plundered and destroyed most of the complex. They were retaliating for the death in captivity of individuals who had been sent to China to enforce treaties that, among other provisions, would have forced China to accede to the residence of Western ambassadors in Beijing.

Even the men who destroyed Yuanming Yuan remarked on its beauty. Charles Gordon, who was to become perhaps the most celebrated of Victorian soldiers, wrote to his mother: "You can scarcely imagine the beauty and magnificence of the places we burnt. It made one's heart sore to burn them; in fact, these palaces were so large, and we were so pressed for time, that we could not plunder them carefully." The most succinct description of Yuanming Yuan came from an interpreter to Lord Elgin, the British nobleman who ordered the destruction:

Here a solitary building would rise fairy-like from the center of a lake, reflecting its image on the limpid blue liquid in which it seemed to float, and then a sloping path would carry you into the heart of a mysterious cavern artificially formed of rockery, and leading out on to a grotto in the bosom of another lake. The variety of the picturesque was endless, and charming in the extreme; indeed, all that is



*This silk painting from 1738 depicts the emperor celebrating the new year at Yuanming Yuan.*

most lovely in Chinese scenery, where art contrives to cheat the rude attempts of nature into the bewitching, seemed all associated in these delightful grounds.

If part of the current emotional debate among Chinese is over whether such beauty *can* be restored, the larger issue that has captured the popular imagination and is debated in national publications is whether it *should* be restored.

To comprehend the emotion in the debate is to understand something of what Yuanming Yuan means to most Chinese. It marks at once the high point and the low point of their civilization: Yuanming Yuan was the capstone of Chinese architectural achievement, but its destruction revealed how moribund was the Chinese government that had betrayed the nation to Western imperialism. As one of China's leading intellectuals recently put it, "The invaders' raging

fire that burned Yuanming Yuan into a relic is imprinted as a mark of national humiliation on the backs of the Chinese people. It is the alarm bell in the mind of every Chinese person.” The place has a meaning for Chinese akin to that of the Holocaust for Jews: It is an eternal reminder both of what has been lost and of what cannot be allowed to happen again.

**L**ike many who visit China, I was initially saddened at the prospect of the reconstruction, fearing it would yield yet another gaudily painted tourist attraction. There is already too much evidence in China of historic sites that have been garishly restored. Each time I return, I am dismayed to find that a beautiful old ruin has been “restored” into a vulgar tourist trap, its history lost amid the cries of souvenir sellers. A like sense of dismay at the careless treatment of historic sites is gaining currency in China, and a generation of Chinese influenced by the West have begun to discuss in earnest the nature of responsible restoration.

One of the most articulate advocates of keeping Yuanming Yuan a ruin is the famous Chinese writer Cong Weixi. Cong has used prominent Chinese newspapers to educate his compatriots in Western—and, to him, modern and sensible—ideas about the treatment of historic structures. He has described how, while walking through a busy shopping district in Berlin in the 1980s, he came upon an old church that stood in stark contrast to the modern buildings around it. The steeple of the church had been half-destroyed in the war decades before. The sight gave Cong a new, and foreign, perspective on historic restoration: The steeple had been left as it was to remind Germans of a past they dared not forget.

Cong had a similar experience in the city of Koblenz, where a bronze statue of William the Great, the personification of Germany’s martial spirit, was destroyed by a shell in the Second World War. All that survived—and survives still—is the pillar on which William stood, and it is now covered in bird droppings. Cong, finding signifi-

cance even in the bird droppings, compared the wisdom of leaving the column empty with what he feels would have happened in China: “If there had existed such a statue in my country, it would long ago have been replaced. We Chinese have always preferred to repair our history.” That last sentiment has become a mantra for those who oppose the reconstruction of Yuanming Yuan.

A chorus of scholars has joined Cong in asserting that masterpieces can be created but not re-created. They employ another phrase that has galvanized opposition to the reconstruction of Yuanming Yuan, and that I have heard repeated by everyone from taxi drivers to high-level party members: “Relics have their own kind of beauty.” Would any sane Westerner, they argue, consider rebuilding Roman ruins? If the Mona Lisa were destroyed, would someone presume to paint another? These opponents of rebuilding assume the superiority of the Western point of view. They draw their arguments from Western aesthetics and use examples that are uniformly European. Indeed, they are convinced that rebuilding Yuanming Yuan would shame them in Western eyes, for to create a fake antique on a historic site would demonstrate yet again China’s backwardness. (Cong is unaware of a parallel debate taking place in Germany over whether the palace of the Prussian monarchy should be rebuilt in Berlin.)

**B**eijingers have other reasons for questioning restoration. Many believe, for example, that the proposal is motivated by the prospect of financial gain. A well-known architectural historian, Chen Zhihua, has gone so far as to call restoration an exercise in “money worship.” He points to a section of the Great Wall at Badaling, where a completely new wall, a KFC outlet, and a crowd of loud vendors hide the quiet beauty of that frontier fortress.

But there are powerful voices on the other side of the debate as well. Wang Daocheng, a distinguished professor at China’s Qing History Institute in Beijing, is the world’s leading authority on Yuanming Yuan and,

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*The ruins of the Western-style palaces at Yuanming Yuan as they appear today.*

as it happens, an articulate advocate of its restoration. I began visiting him in August 1999, in his apartment at the institute. Professors there live in drab concrete structures that were built in the 1950s for efficiency and not much else: concrete floors, whitewashed plaster walls, and light fixtures with bare fluorescent tubes. Yet Wang insisted that we meet in his apartment. I soon understood why. The professors and their families have begun remodeling the apartments, and the bleakness of the hallways contrasts markedly with what one finds behind each door. After climbing five flights of dingy stairs, I entered Professor Wang's home. It was a completely different world, with wood wainscoting, granite floors, and wood built-ins.

My first visit occurred on a brutally hot day. Over the hum of his newly installed air conditioner, this well-dressed, vibrant senior historian became increasingly animated as he spoke: "Our young people seem to think that Yuanming Yuan was a Western-style palace. They don't realize that

the Western-style palaces it included were something like only two percent of the total Yuanming Yuan." Most people in China know almost nothing of the real Yuanming Yuan, he said, and think that the Western-style palaces, which were designed by 18th-century Jesuit architects and never fully destroyed because they were built of stone rather than wood, were the whole of it. In fact, the heart of the original Yuanming Yuan lay far to the southwest of those palaces, in what is now a barren, walled-off area for "mixed use"—manufacturing tofu, raising pigs, dumping garbage. Outside the walls of this site lies Beijing's version of "Silicon Valley," an area of high-technology industry with connections to China's most prestigious universities. The only public-use area recalling Yuanming Yuan is a park that circumscribes the remains of the Western-style palaces.

In Wang's view, nothing could be more embarrassing to China: The accumulated genius of Chinese architecture lies in a garbage heap, while the ruins of some Western-style buildings miles away, of little architectural or historical interest, have

become symbols of Chinese nationalism. Worse still, the Western buildings have come to stand for the whole of Yuanming Yuan, the great treasure to which the West laid waste. The only adequate response, Wang believes, is a national campaign to return Yuanming Yuan to glory and make it an attraction as splendid as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City.

A recent study under the auspices of the Beijing municipal government confirms Wang's view that most Chinese know little of the real Yuanming Yuan. They regard it as a symbol of China's disgrace at the hands of Western powers, but they are as ignorant of the specifics of its destruction as they are of the true nature of its grandeur. For the nationalist Wang, rebuilding Yuanming Yuan will encourage Chinese to learn the truth about their past and shake off the burden of a defeat by Western powers and a betrayal by corrupt internal regimes.

Most Westerners never fully appreciate how profoundly Chinese have been affected by what they call "the century of shame," a period that began in the early 19th century with the first Opium War and ended in 1949 with victory on the mainland by the Chinese Communist Party. I have often heard Chinese describe their subsequent history, using that "century of shame" as a reference point, in a narrative that runs something like this: "Because of the corruption and decadence of the Qing regime, we were overrun by outside powers. Only Mao Zedong and the Communist Party were able to unite us and throw the foreigners out. After Mao came Deng Xiaoping, whose economic reforms put us back on solid footing. Now, with the return of Hong Kong to the mainland, one of the last vestiges of the shame of imperialism has been removed. When Taiwan is returned to the motherland as well, the reunification of China will be complete." Many Chinese would add to that triumphal sequence yet another event—the restoration of Yuanming Yuan.

In answering critics of reconstruction, Wang and his supporters have begun to enunciate a new kind of nationalism, rooted in the principle that the Chinese past must be commemorated in a Chinese way. Like

Wang, Zhang Cheng, a prominent intellectual who is vice director of both the National Cultural Relics Study Association and the Yuanming Yuan Study Commission, rejects the view that the more sophisticated, modern, and tasteful approach to ruins is to leave them as they are:

We have some experts who say: We must be like Greece. They take the side of Cong Weixi and cite examples of many foreign preserved ruins and do not look at Chinese reality. They shut their eyes and use foreign theories as their rule, and consequently they are adamantly opposed to restoring Yuanming Yuan. Their outlooks may indeed be based on patriotic motives, but in reality they are urging that Chinese do things according to foreign rules. . . . How can we make people understand that Yuanming Yuan was not just some imperial garden? It embodied more than 5,000 years of China's traditional culture. It was the zenith of our nation's more than 3,000 years of garden-building tradition. It was the greatest page ever written in the greatest book of our nation's achievement.

Zhang has no use for those who unthinkingly follow Western ways and believe "that the moon is rounder in Western countries." The task that faced China's great leaders, he recalls, was not to adhere to Marxism-Leninism as it was interpreted in the West but to define a socialism with Chinese characteristics: "If the Chinese revolution had blindly copied the experience of foreign revolutions, how much more bitterness would we have had to endure?"

The Chinese approach to historic restoration is born, in part, of differences in the architectural styles of East and West. Western architecture traditionally employed stone, so that even when a building was badly damaged, much of it would survive—and perhaps acquire over time the new kind of beauty Westerners attribute to ruins. But when a Chinese building was destroyed, its reliance on fragile wood materials tended to make the destruction complete. Hence, a Chinese building "survives" only by being reconstructed.



Wang Daocheng is among those writers who have proclaimed the superiority of Chinese architecture to Western architecture—and thereby linked Chinese nationalism with the defense of a traditional Chinese aesthetic. Western gardens, he says, are based on ideas of symmetry and balance, with the buildings placed at the center and even the plants clipped according to geometric principles. In Chinese gardens, the buildings occupy a less important place and are integrated into the landscape. Chinese architecture works in harmony with the landscape and nature, not against them. Others make the point less delicately. Chen Liquan, an Oxford graduate who is chairman of the board of China's Million Land House Corporation, says of those who advocate the German approach to historic preservation, "If they could only see Germany's grotesque and gaudy artistic genres and its disjointed forms, which are so perplexing and alarming, they would not be so quick to praise Germany as a model for rebuilding the national spirit."

Advocates of reconstruction reject the view that what is new and fresh must be inferior to what is authentically old. Landscape is everything in the architecture of Yuanming Yuan, they argue, and the buildings themselves are a designed component of that landscape, as are the plants and the rocks. If the buildings are spoiled, the landscape is spoiled, just as a garden in which all the plants had died would cease to be beautiful. Only when architecture is new can it be beautiful.

This bold defense of the new pervades the writings of the restorationists. And their arguments strike a responsive chord in most Chinese, as they would probably have done with Chinese emperors, who often began their restorations of palaces and temples with wholesale demolition. The Qianlong emperor, who reigned over China for most of the 18th century, would order ancient temples and palace buildings destroyed for no other reason than that he needed their precious *nanmu* wood for a new construction project.

A "make-it-new" approach to the past has been so much the tradition in China that, as advocates of rebuilding Yuanming

Yuan remind their detractors, almost every historic site has been repeatedly reconstructed. Yellow Crane Tower, which sits on a promontory overlooking the great city of Wuhan, is a perfect example of this. Visitors to Wuhan are told that the building dates to the third century but only the *location* of the building has remained the same since the third century. The building itself has been rebuilt in almost every generation. Destroyed by fire in 1884, it existed in name only until 1983, when it was completely reconstructed. Visitors to Beijing who rail against poorly executed restorations don't realize that many of the "old" buildings they admire are reconstructions built after 1949—and transformed by the rapid antiquing process of North China's harsh climate. Even the famous Tiananmen Gate underwent a massive overhaul after 1949 that made it two meters taller.

For modern Chinese in search of an indigenous aesthetic, believing in a rebuildable past is nothing less than the progressive view. Zhang Cheng calls the argument of the writer Cong Weixi "poisonous," because it blocks any opportunity for progress, prevents the evolution of traditional Chinese architecture, and consigns China to a future in which traditional architecture cannot play a role. For Zhang, rebuilding a historic site gives each generation the opportunity to improve it, in accordance with a traditional principle: "When a place is moderately ruined, moderately restore it; when it is massively ruined, massively restore it; when it is completely ruined, completely restore it." The challenge, as in Chinese calligraphy, is to create work that is beautiful and fresh even as it adheres to traditional motifs. This line of thought is vehemently at odds with the thinking of those who embrace Western logic and argue that ruins have their own particular kind of beauty. The notion that a ruin can be beautiful is completely alien to Chinese aesthetics. So, too, is the belief that masterpieces should not be duplicated; Chinese tradition considers emulation of the masterpiece an intrinsic part of the creative process.

The nationalistic elements that inform today's defense of a traditional Chinese aesthetic are especially evident in discussions of the Western-style palaces of Yuanming Yuan. Some of the staunchest supporters of rebuilding the complex are utterly opposed to including those palaces in the plan. Nationalists envision a reconstructed Yuanming Yuan in which the Chinese portions are dazzlingly restored while the Western ones are left in ruins. That would send a message to visitors about the vitality of the new China, the decay of the West, and the outmodedness of a China that sought to fuse East and West.

Whereas the Western-style palaces were once a source of pride and symbols of China's openness to the West, the fashion is increasingly to view them as aesthetically mediocre structures—and symbols of how China was duped by the West. Here is Zhang Cheng's cold assessment:

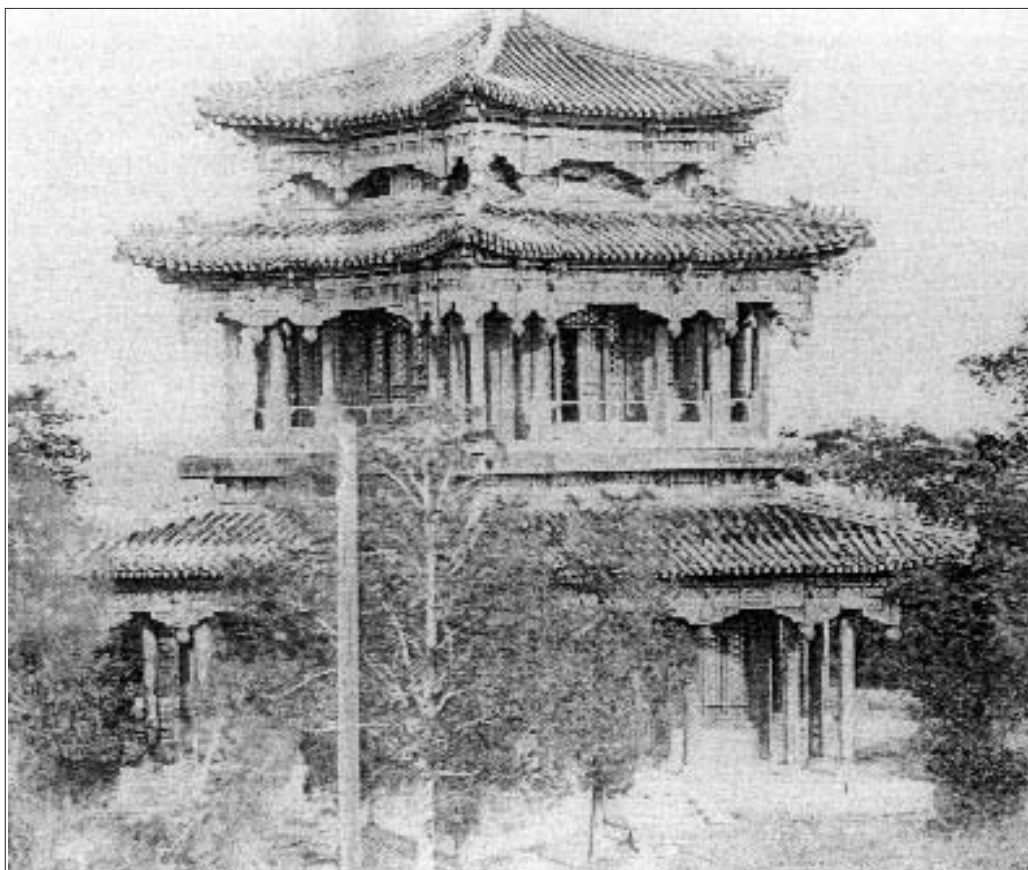
They were an emblem of imperialism, created by foreign missionaries who wished to display foreign culture and please the likes of Qing emperors to further their causes. After the Western palaces were completed in 1759, there was an illusion of "Chinese-Western amicability." Numbly, China's bureaucratic class permitted the rapid importation of opium, and the national power ebbed just as rapidly. The "Opium War," which occurred only 81 years later, humiliated the nation, caused it to forfeit its sovereignty, made China a colony and a semicolony, and led to the Chinese people's more-than-century-long period of suffering.

Wang Daocheng takes a somewhat different approach to denigrating the Western-style palaces. Adopting a controversial stance, he rebuts the view that the Qianlong emperor decided to build European-style palaces because he was fascinated by Western culture. Instead, Wang argues that the emperor built them to demonstrate, particularly to Westerners, that there was nothing China could not

accomplish. And far from being fascinated by things Western, he actually found the buildings distasteful: He placed them behind an earthen wall so that their ugliness would not detract from the beautiful garden palace that he had created, and he seldom visited them.

Debunking the importance of the Western-style palaces and rediscovering the validity of the traditional Chinese aesthetic are but two ways the partisans in the debate over Yuanming Yuan reflect developments in Chinese nationalism. Much more about this debate is new. Consider that during the Cultural Revolution, historic landmarks were intentionally destroyed by avid Red Guards enforcing a government policy that mandated the destruction of feudal remnants. Although the policy was reversed after the fall of the Gang of Four, there remains more than a dash of ambivalence toward such buildings. When some Chinese began to advocate that the structures be preserved, they justified the policy by invoking tourism and the profits it could bring to the nation. The term they used was not "preserving" a site but rather "opening" it.

The transformation of Yuanming Yuan from a site to be opened for tourism to a site that should be historically preserved is momentous. The first policy allowed the site to be used over the years for a hodgepodge of bizarre amusements, including a "primitive village" and a paintball arena. When people began to advocate rebuilding the palace, many responded that it was more important for the nation to dedicate itself to modernization than to the reconstruction of a feudal relic. It was the reconstruction-minded Wang Daocheng who took the lead in articulating a response to the earlier policy. He argued that Yuanming Yuan should be seen not as a plaything of emperors but as a temple to the workers who built it—and to the accumulated Chinese genius that imperialism destroyed. Yuanming Yuan was "the crystallization of the brightness of the Chinese people and of their sweat and toil" and "a testament to the history of Western Imperialism's invasion of China."



*A photo thought to show the grand palace of Yuanming Yuan shortly before it was set afire.*

This new point of view is especially consequential for issues of land use. In the years after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there was considerable discussion of what should be done with the Yuanming Yuan site, a large tract of land that lent itself to easy cultivation, in a nation deeply concerned with agricultural production. It was decided to create a park around the ruins of the Western palaces and to leave the rest of the land vacant. In a now-famous remark, Premier Zhou Enlai said that the land should be kept intact so that, conditions permitting, Yuanming Yuan could one day be rebuilt. The portion of Yuanming Yuan that lay outside the park was slowly and semiofficially given over to agriculture and various other pursuits. But today some Chinese call the farmers who put Yuanming Yuan's land to productive use "squatters who polluted a sacred site."

Zhou Enlai's suggestion that the palace would eventually be rebuilt has allowed

those who would restore Yuanming Yuan to make another argument: They contend that China's newfound wealth and role in the world economy are evidence that the nation has finally begun to exorcise the demons of imperialism that overshadowed a century of its history. When the country was at its lowest ebb, the national treasure that was Yuanming Yuan could be plundered and destroyed. But China today is rich and in a position to restore and maintain the great complex. Proponents of this view are not fazed by the vast sums it will take to rebuild Yuanming Yuan; on the contrary, they revel in the cost.

Over the years, visitors to Yuanming Yuan have been free to remember the past as they chose to remember it. If the complex is rebuilt, it will no longer be a place where memory is individualistic and autonomous. It will become, rather, a place where memory is largely controlled. The site has been home to various sorts of



*Chinese students, wearing communist youth league bandanas, learn history firsthand at Yuanming Yuan.*

artists and freethinkers, and even to advocates of democracy. To rebuild Yuanming Yuan would be to impose control on such groups. Of course, one's imagination is not left entirely free to wander even today when one visits the site; at certain hours, for example, a speaker system blasts mournful traditional Chinese music to imbue visitors with the proper sense of loss. But, for the most part, Yuanming Yuan allows a private response to the past. Those who want the site kept a ruin often mention the sadness that affects them when they walk there. Ye Tingfang, a prominent professor of literature, describes the experience:

On my first trip to the Yuanming Yuan ruins, when I saw the crooked remains of the Western-style palaces, with their broken columns still standing upright in the quiet fields, my heart felt a rush of exquisite emotion. I looked up at them and heard their silent complaint. My eyes filled with tears, and my palms touched my forehead. Since then I have come often to this spot. . . . This great ruin, how beautiful is its tragedy. At any

moment it cleanses my soul. . . . For this reason I believe that Yuanming Yuan should be kept forever as a place that one visits to ponder the past.

Wei Kaizhao, a research scholar in the department of history at the Beijing Academy of Sciences, rejects Ye's free-wheeling emotional indulgence. He argues that seeing Yuanming Yuan as it really was will be a qualitatively different experience from merely *reflecting* on its splendor. Seeing, rather than reflecting, is "a more mature, more systematic, and more effective form of patriotic education." To behold Yuanming Yuan in all its glory, he believes, "is sure to bring about an onrush of devotion to building socialist modernization."

**A** Yuanming Yuan that leaves nothing to the imagination will doubtless gloss over a great deal of history. For example, almost no one I met in China knew that the British and French destroyed the palace complex to retaliate for the death of hostages. There is the further issue of

Chinese complicity in the plunder and destruction: Some scholars now suggest that Chinese warlords, not Westerners, destroyed the Western palaces. Considerable evidence suggests, too, that the people of Beijing were there to profit from the sale of goods once the dust settled.

**M**y former teacher, Vera Schwarcz of Wesleyan University, has astutely described how the Cultural Revolution continues to exert a subtle but powerful influence on the Chinese present. Thanks to her, I have come to understand that reconstructing Yuanming Yuan is in part meant to exorcise the demons of that awful moment in China's recent past when so many historic sites were leveled by zealous Red Guards. I have read article after article in the Chinese media on the reconstruction of such sites, and rarely have I found in them any acknowledgment that the Cultural Revolution was responsible for the sites' destruction. By focusing now on Yuanming Yuan, their architectural crown jewel, and by blaming the West for its destruction, Chinese can avoid the more recent past and turn away from their own complicity in the murderous fate of historic places.

Cong Weixi fears that if Yuanming Yuan is rebuilt, generations to come may lose all memory of its destruction. To that fear, Zhao Guanghua, of the Beijing Garden Science Research Academy, offers a creative response: Reconstruct Yuanming Yuan to look just as it did in late 1860, immediately after the destruction; at that moment, Zhao believes, it was most beautiful—and most poignant. My own view is that signage at a restored Yuanming Yuan would keep the memory of the destruction alive. I am less hopeful that the signage will present a balanced account of the destruction.

Of course, if Yuanming Yuan is fully realized, it will no longer hold its unique place in the Chinese imagination. Reconstructing the lost palace would be akin to reconstructing the temple in Jerusalem. Both structures are more powerful when imagined than when seen; no matter that the reconstruction of each was faithful to its original. Destruction gave

Yuanming Yuan its power. Imagine that it had never been destroyed. Like the Forbidden City, it would have gone through alternating periods of decline and reconstruction. But because Yuanming Yuan was so much more delicate than the Forbidden City, it would have been in much worse shape, and large portions of it probably would have been lost. It would be today a mere shadow of what it once was. Thanks to its destruction by the West, it became instead an enduring symbol of Chinese achievement and a vanished centerpiece of national spirit.

**S**o where does the reconstruction of Yuanming Yuan stand? The latest round of plans emerged after Beijing's successful bid for the 2008 Olympics. The government has announced a compromise between total reconstruction and maintaining the complex in ruins. About 10 percent of the whole will be rebuilt—walls, gates, waterways, and some of the buildings. Work on the walls surrounding the complex is underway, and residents of the area have been relocated. Thus far, details have been scarce, and no one knows whether this restoration is the first phase of a larger project. (Wang Daocheng seems certain that it is.) But given the pressure Beijingers feel to spruce up their capital for the Olympics, something dramatic will surely be done.

My conversations with Wang Daocheng made me see the logic in wanting to rebuild Yuanming Yuan, which may seem an odd admission after I have said that the rebuilt palace may gloss over history. Perhaps I was swayed by Wang Daocheng's personality. Or perhaps I simply let go of my preconception that the Chinese had to commemorate their past in a way we Westerners would deem tasteful. Westerners destroyed Yuanming Yuan. To apply Western standards to reclaiming it would be to add insult to injury. When Chinese commit to this project, they will embrace the past as their ancestors embraced the past and treat a historic site as it would traditionally have been treated. A rebuilt Yuanming Yuan might blur history's details, but it will honor China's past in a Chinese way. □

# Transatlantic Ills

Tensions between the United States and its European allies often ran high during the later days of the Cold War, but today's conflicts are more numerous and frequently more severe—and they won't be resolved without strong commitments from leaders on both sides of the Atlantic.

*by Samuel F. Wells, Jr.*

There was quiet celebration on both sides of the Atlantic last November when President George W. Bush and German chancellor Gerhard Schröder shook hands and grinned for the cameras at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Prague. It wasn't the handshake itself that was notable, but the fact that this small (and palpably insincere) token of amity between the leaders of the two largest Atlantic powers was considered a noteworthy event. The reaction showed just how badly transatlantic relations have frayed in recent years.

The immediate source of German-American tensions was Schröder's strong stance against war with Iraq during the recent German elections, and personal antagonisms have doubtless been added to the policy disagreements. But the problem isn't confined to two men or two nations. The relationship between the United States and Europe is in trouble, and common attitudes and policies are less evident than at any time since World War I.

For all the happy talk in Prague as NATO extended historic membership invitations to three countries that had once been part of the Soviet Union, the United States went away without important commitments from its allies on the confrontation with Iraq. NATO did declare that Saddam Hussein must disarm, but there were no promises to join in dislodging him if he does not. And the Iraq problem is only the visible manifestation of more deeply rooted difficulties.

Perhaps the most widely discussed of these difficulties is the serious disparity in American and European military and intelligence capabilities. With the partial exception of Britain, no European nation has equipment and forces capable of operating with the Americans. That's one reason why the United States responded unilaterally in Afghanistan to the terrorist attacks of September 2001. It had the help of a few British aircraft and special forces but otherwise sought assistance from no states other than those neighboring the targeted territory. Yale University historian Paul Kennedy, who in the 1980s famously warned the United States against "imperial overstretch," declared: "The larger lesson [of the Afghanistan war] . . . is that in military terms there is only one player on the field that counts."

American unilateralism has exacerbated basic differences with Europe over other security issues: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, arms control and weapons proliferation, and aspects of international law. There's contention, too, over the environment, food safety, development assistance, culture, trade, corporate mergers, and the death penalty.

In a much noted article in *Policy Review* this past summer, Robert Kagan of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace bluntly declared: "It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world. On the all-



*Bush ceremonially offered Schröder his hand one day . . .*

important question of power—the efficacy of power, the morality of power, the desirability of power—American and European perspectives are diverging. . . . On major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.”

Another observer has written:

American complaints tend to center on three areas: a belief that Europeans are not bearing their full share of the defense burden; an impression that a tide of anti-Americanism is sweeping across Europe; and a suspicion that Europe expects Americans to take all the . . . risks. For their part, Europeans are unhappy at the perceived stridency and militancy of tone in the rhetoric of U.S. foreign policy; tend to believe that the United States would rather confront than negotiate; and resent that Americans do not seem to appreciate the burdens that Western Europe does share.

That statement comes not from a contemporary pundit but from General Bernard Rogers, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, writing more than 20 years ago in *Foreign Affairs*. Rogers’s analysis is a useful reminder that the Western allies have weathered other storms in the past.

Yet it’s also true that the current tensions are different in several important ways from those of the Cold War. The very threats and tactics that confront the United States and Europe are different: for example, biological weapons, “dirty” nuclear bombs, and other weapons of terror wielded by shadowy “nonstate” groups; attacks on the cyber-infrastructure of our globalized information systems; and suicide bombings. Above all, the absence of a principal adversary, as we had during the Cold War, deprives the western allies of the underlying cohesion that sustained transatlantic ties through earlier crises.

Today, it’s not always easy to agree even on who our adversaries are,

much less on how to meet the challenges they pose. In this new environment, Europe and the United States will have to work all the harder to foster cooperation and confront adversaries successfully.

It hasn’t helped that many Europeans viscerally dislike President George W. Bush, who often reminds them of another American president they disdained, Ronald Reagan. In his emphasis on freedom at home and abroad as the principal objective of political action, for example, Bush bears a striking resemblance to Reagan. After the destruction of the World Trade towers, President Bush proclaimed that



*. . . and gave him the cold shoulder the next.*

“freedom itself is under attack.” In his January 2002 State of the Union address, he declared that “while the price of freedom and security is high, it is never too high.” Not by chance did candidate Bush make his first foreign policy speech, in November 1999, at the Reagan presidential library in Simi Valley, California.

As Reagan was before him, Bush is committed to the primacy of military power in advancing U.S. national interests and expanding the arena of freedom. Both men campaigned on pledges to restore American military strength, and the Bush administration’s defense budget request for 2003 contains the largest increase (12 percent) since the military buildup of the early 1980s. On a list of the 10 largest national defense budgets in the world today, the \$397 billion budget of the United States looms larger than the combined budgets of the other nine nations.

There’s a dramatic difference, however, in the two presidents’ attitudes toward nuclear weapons. Though it was kept relatively quiet during the early years of his administration, Ronald Reagan wanted to abolish nuclear weapons, and he pressed the goal steadily throughout his meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders. George W. Bush, on the other hand, appears committed to expanding nuclear possibilities into the tactical realm. He strongly supports the development of new types of nuclear warheads designed to attack hardened or deeply buried targets. Some in the administration have hinted that this will require breaking the current moratorium on nuclear testing.

Many Europeans, weaned on realpolitik, are also put off by the moral dimension of the two presidents’ rhetoric. Reagan’s comments about the Soviet Union as “the evil empire” presaged Bush’s “axis of evil” and his characterization of Taliban and Al Qaeda members as “evil-doers.” After terrorists hijacked a TWA airliner in 1985, Reagan charged that Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, and Nicaragua constituted a terrorist network and

declared that the United States would act “unilaterally, if necessary, to ensure that terrorists have no sanctuary anywhere.” He went on to say that “we are especially not going to tolerate these attacks from outlaw states run by the strangest collection of misfits, loony tunes, and squalid criminals since the advent of the Third Reich.” Predictably, European political elites have had the same anguished, incredulous reaction to the two outspoken Republican presidents, and the same dismissive terms—“reckless,” “cowboy,” “naive,” “simplistic,” and “unilateralist”—echo through Europe’s capitals.

In Washington’s view of the world, meanwhile, the task of assessing threats and identifying partners has become far more complicated than it ever was during the half-century of the Cold War. U.S. leaders are especially concerned about transnational threats such as those presented by Al Qaeda and the Taliban and by terrorist groups in Colombia (which receive aid from the Irish Republican Army and elsewhere), the Philippines (which have ties throughout South and Southeast Asia), Yemen, and East Africa. But the traditional threatening players—Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—are a concern as well. From Washington’s perspective, the allies and partners available to help deal with this array of threats are a difficult group indeed. There are willful allies, such as Israel, grudging and conflicted allies, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, and wary ones, such as China, whose nationalism is tempered only by its desire to move into the integrated world economy. And there is Washington’s new best friend, Vladimir Putin’s Russia, which is making an effort to support the U.S. struggle against terrorism and stabilize the world oil market, but which has a worrisome military infrastructure—and provides elements of weapons of mass destruction to potentially hostile states.

In assessing this mix of friends and foes, how would American policymakers char-

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acterize Europe? *Self-absorbed* is perhaps the term most policymakers and analysts would use. The Europeans are preoccupied with the construction of the European Union (EU) and with domestic issues of economic reform, immigration, and social services. The individual member states of the EU pursue foreign policies that are often divergent and frequently ineffective. Though many European leaders say they want an independent international role for the EU, it lacks the resources, clarity of purpose, and political will to make that feasible.

Even on the fraught question of Iraq, there is no unanimity: Germany remains opposed to U.S. policy, but France has moderated its position after extracting significant concessions from Washington, and other countries, notably Italy and Spain, have been quietly supportive of the U.S. approach all along. And, of course, British prime minister Tony Blair has worked closely with the Americans. To make matters more uncertain, the EU is on the verge of adding as many as 10 new members, most of whom are even less committed to a strong international role for their own countries and for the EU than the least enthusiastic of the current 15. No wonder many officials in Washington believe that Europe's policy preferences, weak military power, and even weaker will to use it are largely responsible for the current transatlantic discord.

Yet, almost unnoticed amid the din of the headlines, the United States has proposed a roster of policies to deal with the altered international environment, many of them quite new. Richard Haass, director of the policy planning staff at the U.S. Department of State, provided one of the best statements of the Bush administration's foreign policy aspirations in a speech to the Foreign Policy Association last April. Harking back to the doctrine of containment of Soviet aggression articulated by George Kennan in 1947, Haass called for a new doctrine of "integration":

In the 21st century, the principal aim of American foreign policy is to integrate other countries and organizations into

arrangements that will sustain a world consistent with U.S. interests and values and thereby promote peace, prosperity, and justice as widely as possible. Integration of new partners into our efforts will help us deal with traditional challenges of maintaining peace in divided regions as well as with transnational threats such as international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It will also help bring into the globalized world those who have previously been left out. In this era, our fate is intertwined with the fate of others, so our success must be shared success.

While Haass's statement reflects the goals of the State Department and the internationalists in the United States, not the Bush administration's hard-liners, President Bush has sought the broadest possible international cooperation since his September speech at the United Nations calling for the Security Council to back the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Haass gave a subsequent speech in London proposing "a new course" for European-American relations. He called specifically for partnership with Europeans to combat terrorism and to deal with Iraq and with such matters as instability in Africa and Latin America: "Because of the relative peace and stability Europe enjoys today, there is less that the United States and Europe have to do together *in* Europe and more that they should do together *beyond* Europe. . . . Only by addressing such regional and transatlantic challenges can the transatlantic relationship be relevant; only by being relevant can the transatlantic relationship withstand the inevitable disagreements and divergence."

Some progress toward these goals was made at last fall's Prague summit, where NATO leaders agreed to add seven Eastern European states to the alliance in the future, bringing the total membership to 26. They also decided to transform the traditional defensive strategy to create a NATO response force of 21,000 troops armed with high-tech weapons and capable

of quick deployment anywhere in the world as part of the war against terrorism. The leaders of the expanded alliance endorsed a plan for a new specialized division of labor in which members will commit themselves to concentrating their resources on developing capabilities in one or more areas, such as defense against weapons of mass destruction and long-range transport of troops and equipment. When implemented, these commitments will go a long way toward satisfying some of the U.S. complaints about the poor military capabilities of the European allies.

Several new elements of U.S. strategy apart from the immediate war on terrorism have important implications for transatlantic relations. The creation of a new government department devoted to homeland security, second in size only to the Department of Defense, will change how our allies do business with Washington. Efforts to strengthen U.S. intelligence collection and analysis and to transform the military for rapid deployment and mobile operations—though sure to be challenged within the government—will also alter U.S. dealings with the European allies. Beyond these domestic initiatives, the administration will attempt to integrate economic, financial, and political policies for international economic growth and stability, and to strengthen relations with allies by increasing the capacity for joint operations and cooperation among financial, intelligence, and police authorities.

No aspect of the Bush administration's post-9/11 policies has caused more controversy than its doctrine of military preemption against terrorist groups or states developing weapons of mass destruction. The shift in policy was first sounded by President Bush in the State of the Union address on January 29, 2002: "I will not wait on events, while dangers gather." The president was more explicit in a speech at West Point in June, when he declared that "our security will require all Americans . . . to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives." Many analysts in Europe and the United States have

expressed concern at the dangerous implications of such a policy; more seasoned observers have seen it as another step in the escalating war of nerves between the Bush administration and the regime of Saddam Hussein.\*

Finally, the U.S. strategic approach insists on the maximum degree of freedom to act. The administration is wary of treaties and agreements that might constrain future action (which is why it terminated the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty). Most recently, the policy of maximum freedom led the administration to threaten the viability of all UN peacekeeping operations in order to win an exemption for U.S. troops from possible prosecution before the new International Criminal Court. Critics at home and abroad have naturally been quick to point out that the policy runs directly counter to the cooperative approach needed to prosecute a global war against terrorism.

Quite apart from whether the new strategic plan is either consistent or coherent, its chances of succeeding are compromised by problems in three significant areas. The biggest of these is the long-standing conflict between U.S. diplomatic and defense authorities, which in this administration has escalated beyond the control of its infirm mediator, the National Security Council. The often beleaguered Department of State is pitted against the powerful "Cheney-Rumsfeld axis" of the vice president's foreign policy staff and the Department of Defense—much as Secretary of State George Shultz and Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger were at odds during the Reagan years.

The prospects of success are also complicated by the longstanding U.S. practice of not providing political direction to military forces once they are given a mission. In Afghanistan, for example, the Bush administration decided to accept only British and Afghan help, partly in order to give American

\*This doctrine of preemption was not as new as many believed. In a 1997 document, *National Security Strategy for a New Century*, the Clinton administration declared that one of the main elements of its security policy was "to prevent, disrupt, and defeat terrorist operations before they occur." Quoted in Christopher Coker, *Globalization and Insecurity in the Twenty-First Century: NATO and the Management of Risk* (Adelphi Paper 345, 2002).

military commanders free rein. But the refusal to use European troops in the attack on Tora Bora resulted in the escape of large numbers of Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders. The military's primacy also produced the disagreement surrounding the capture and detention of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters—a legal and public-relations controversy that has not yet been adequately resolved.

The third and final problematic aspect of the war on terrorism is an inadequate commitment to “nation-building”—that is, to developmental assistance and multilateral political development efforts. The most obvious case in point is the government's refusal to commit greater resources to the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

Transatlantic relations will be improved only by the most judicious mix of pragmatism and patience. The United States and Europe are separated today much less by a general gap in cultural values than by particular beliefs about the role of government, the use of force, and the amount of time to be allowed for solving problems. The United States wants the minimum possible role for government at home and abroad. (There's even talk of privatizing parts of the foreign-policy apparatus such as the U.S. Agency for International Development.) It's allergic to multinational projects, and avoids using the United Nations whenever possible. It wants problems dealt with directly and resolved quickly. Americans are an impatient people. By contrast, the Europeans, from experience and conviction, favor a high level of political direction in all international activities, especially those involving the military; prefer multinational solutions and the use of the United Nations to achieve them; and are willing to accept half-measures to buy time, in the hopes of an improved international environment.

Keeping these differences in mind, one can envisage a program for improved transatlantic cooperation with several basic components. First, the leaders of the EU, its member states, and the United States must recognize the need for allies in the fight against terrorism. It's ironic that the Bush administration, which is working intensely to reorganize the U.S. government to improve the performance of agencies dealing with homeland security, does not see the need to enhance external cooperation with our traditional allies. There should be more frequent consultations between Washington and the individual European capitals and the EU, and those encounters need to be focused less on immediate tasks and more on shaping joint efforts to deal with acknowledged common problems. Meetings between legislators from the two sides should increase as well. Parliamentarians too often think solely in terms of national needs and domestic constituencies, and internationalists need to put before them



*A view of the U.S. role in the world from Lisbon's Expresso newspaper*

the very real argument that the solutions to many national problems will be found in an improved international context. And creating more opportunities for exchanges among academics, businesspeople, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and citizen groups would provide a subtle but powerful tonic for transatlantic relations.

To improve relations in the realms of defense and intelligence, both the United States and Europe must acknowledge the problems that have been created by a

resources gap and develop a plan for joint activities that does not assume significant new European defense spending at a time when all available resources will be devoted to EU enlargement. The new division of labor among NATO members laid out in Prague establishes a blueprint. Europe can reform its current forces to specialize in certain tasks, such as mine clearing and base protection, that will contribute to joint operations. But for that change to occur, each nation must stop funding its own air force, navy, and army. Europe does not need 15 or, heaven help us, 25 separate artillery divisions or fighter wings. If European leaders want a defense partnership with the United States and autonomous capabilities within current budget levels, they should implement the Prague program to free up resources for new equipment that can operate in a high-tech combat environment.

A second major set of initiatives involves creating new mechanisms for cooperation in meeting the threat of weapons of mass destruction. One such initiative would be to work jointly to develop better techniques of threat assessment and prepare responses. Such a step is essential because powerful trends—the global connection of communications, the free flow worldwide of goods and information, the reduced capacity of states to regulate or penetrate terrorist groups, the increasing movement of peoples—have greatly increased unpredictability for intelligence analysts and policy-makers and made strategic surprises like that of September 11 much more likely.

Another initiative would be for the 187 signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to reinforce nonproliferation efforts. A strengthened nonproliferation regime, working through the International Atomic Energy Agency with U.S. leadership, could provide significant help with safeguards and inspections while schooling new members in strategic thinking and the protection of nuclear materials and facilities. Research and analysis in biological warfare should be a high priority as well. If terrorists are able to use weapons of mass destruction, most specialists believe, these weapons will likely be biological rather than nuclear or chemical. Unlike nuclear research, biotechnology research is mainly private and decentralized, and therefore difficult to identify and track. Because so little

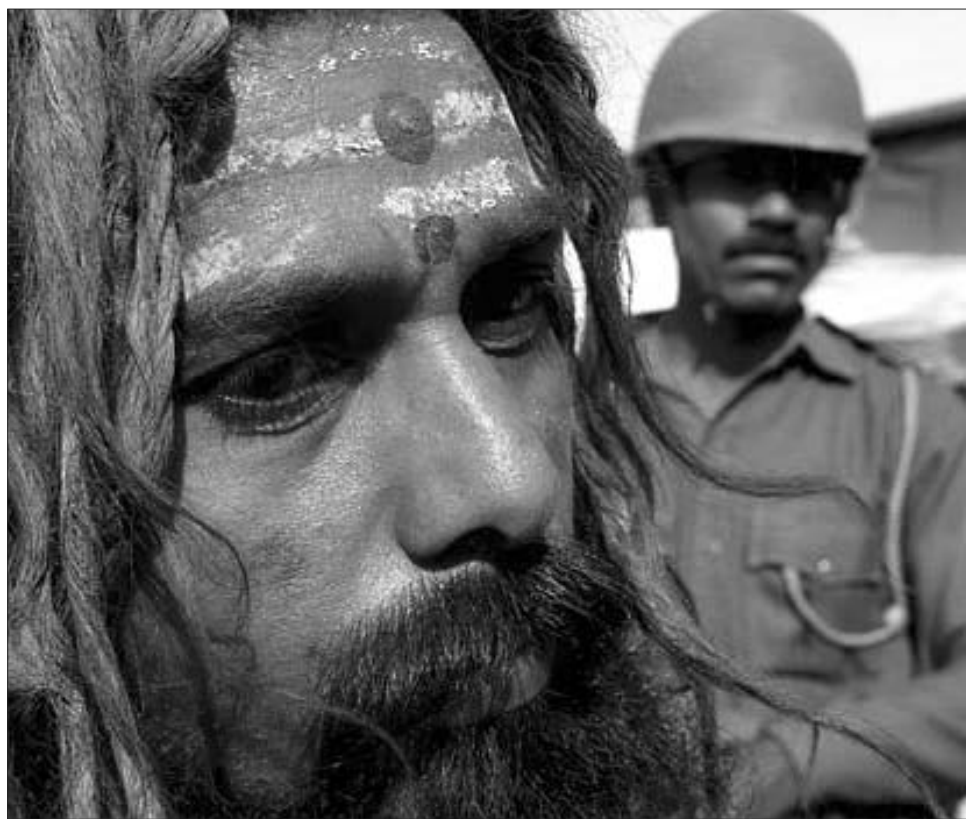
has been done in this area, it's especially ripe for joint U.S.-European efforts. Yet the Bush administration has not supported a new protocol that will add international enforcement powers to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention.

The United States and Europe would also benefit from working out a division of labor on nondefense matters, such as aid to developing countries, the international fight against AIDS and other health challenges, and international financial crises. Europe has already taken the lead in development assistance, and the United States should find an augmented role in each of these areas. More active transatlantic cooperation is also needed to provide global leadership in trade and financial policy.

America and Europe are drifting apart on a variety of international issues, and even when they have common objectives, they find cooperation increasingly difficult. The problems stem less from a lack of overall financial resources than from the attitudes and policies that govern their use. The United States must reassess the application to international affairs of attitudes that favor minimal government and deregulation, as well as those that lead to unilateral action and the rejection of international arms control and environmental agreements. The United States may have the largest and most effective military force in history, but it cannot ensure its security in the 21st century solely through its own actions.

For its part, Europe must make better use of its resources and avoid sliding into a mindset that makes mere difference with the United States the distinguishing characteristic of policy. And it will have to shift to the EU an increased central authority for foreign and security policy; the requisite level of coordination and division of labor cannot be achieved by so many separate national governments.

The current transatlantic illness is neither terminal nor permanent, but its cure demands resistance to the pressures of partisan politics and narrow national interests and a basic reformation of attitudes about international cooperation. More than that, it requires that the patients summon the will to improve. □



# HOLY WARS

Who could have predicted that the dawn of the 21st century would find religion one of the world's most hotly contested issues? From New York to New Delhi, the question is the same: What role are religion and religious belief to have in the direction of government and the shaping of society? Our essays on Iran, Europe, India, and America suggest that there are more illuminating differences than universal truths in the answers given—and that the question will still be with us when yet another century dawns.

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# The Disenchantment

*by Afshin Molavi*

**A**mid the clutter of commerce in Isfahan's old bazaar, a dust-colored dome rises modestly above the shops in a rock-and-dirt-strewn side street. Low arches lead into the courtyard of the simple, domed shrine for a 17th-century cleric, Mullah Mohammad Bagher Majlesi. By Iranian standards, Majlesi's shrine is not elaborate. But the modesty of the shrine masks the importance of the man buried there. A leading court cleric in the palaces of the Persian Safavid kings from 1680 to 1698, Majlesi dramatically affected the course of Iranian Shiism. He is the first example of a powerful Shia cleric who sought to influence the state as well as society.

To understand the rise of Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini in the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the creation of a modern theocracy in Iran, it helps to understand something of the history of Majlesi. In his story the seeds of the Islamic Republic of Iran are sown, and its failures, including the current revolt against the conservative ruling clergy and their intransigent lay allies, are foreshadowed.

Like most Shia clerics of his era, Majlesi descended from a group of Arab clerics who came to Iran in the early 16th century at the invitation of the Turkish warrior clan that had conquered Iran in 1501. The Safavids, as they were called, sought to impose on Iran's majority-Sunni population an unorthodox version of Shiism that mixed religious reverence for the Safavi leader with a powerful and mystical reverence for the first imam of the Shia faith, Imam Ali. To teach Iranians their new faith, the Safavids imported Arab Shia clerics from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Bahrain.

The early Arab Shia clerical imports preached orthodox Twelver Shiism, so named because of its reverence for the 12 imams of the Shia faith. This reverence is a "deviation" that Sunnis, who revere only God and his prophet, view as blasphemous. The Sunnis also rejected the Shia practice of interpreting the Quran broadly and engaging in vigorous theological speculation. Most important, the Twelver clergy emphasized their own role as intercessors between man and God—another major point of difference with the Sunnis—and they looked with disdain on the Safavid leaders' claims of divine access, though without openly challenging their patrons.

By Majlesi's time, Iranians generally accepted the Twelver clergy as intercessors, and the Safavid rulers had moved away from their claims of semidivine status. Still, Iranians had thus far acceded to their new faith only superficially. Majlesi was determined to remedy that, in part by writing a series of religious tracts—more than 60 in all. Hoping to reach a broad audience, he wrote in Persian rather than the customary clerical language of Arabic. But his books of esoteric theological arguments and rigid social rules did not attract



*How times have changed: An Iranian student confronts police officers at a Tehran rally last fall protesting the death sentence meted out to reformist scholar Hashem Aghajari.*

Iranians as much as the rituals and stories he propagated, and sometimes invented; those rituals today constitute an important part of Iranian Shia religious life.

In 1695, while serving as chief mullah in the court of one of the weaker Safavid kings, Majlesi felt secure enough to challenge the monarchy on issues of public morality. He ordered that 4,000 bottles of fine Georgian wine from court cellars be smashed in the grand square of Isfahan, then the capital of the Safavid state. The king remained silent. Some three centuries later, in 1979, in a move eerily reminiscent of Majlesi's action, Iranian religious revolutionaries smashed wine bottles found in Iran's parliament building.

One of the challenges facing Majlesi was that his was not the only version of Shia Islam. Other members of the Shia clergy preached an "Islam of the spirit" that was more tolerant than Majlesi's "Islam of the law" and disput-

ed the clergy's role as sole intercessors between man and God. The debate between the two strands of Shiism continues in today's seminaries. On the Iranian street, "Islam of the spirit" is the more popular of the two—Iranian Islam tends more to the spiritual and emotional than to the ritual and sober. The rituals that Iranians have embraced—the mourning for fallen Shia imams, the passion plays, the pilgrimages to the tombs of saints—have a theatrical, emotional aspect to them. They resonate with pre-Islamic Iranian historical themes of loss, martyrdom, and frequent invasion by marauders—including the Arabs, who brought Islam to Iran with their defeat of a tottering Persian kingdom in the seventh century A.D. The dour, simple, noble faith of the Arabian desert had, in its subsequent Shia "deviation," the right elements to attract Iranians, who then grafted the color, theater, and historical memory of Persia onto their new Shiism.

In one sense Majlesi was resoundingly successful, since the vast majority of modern Iranians are Twelver Shia Muslims (though he would frown upon the mysticism that remains a motif in their religious life). But the great mullah's effort to impose rigid social codes was a dramatic failure. His long discourses—on subjects ranging from why dancing is prohibited and religious mysticism is blasphemous to how to cure a stomach cold, prepare soup, or have sexual intercourse—fell for the most part on deaf ears. Today's Islamic Republic, with its strict regulation of public morality, represents a long-delayed victory for Majlesi, who never saw his behavioral suggestions enforced on a statewide level.

**T**here is one way in which Majlesi's influence is particularly relevant. Though the classical Shia Muslim view held that the clergy should not get involved in governing the state, from Majlesi's era onward Iran's Shia clergy concerned themselves more and more with such matters, though they never wielded direct power. Sometimes they took on the role of "people's protectors" against unjust kings; sometimes they joined alliances of convenience with Iran's rulers. This role of the clergy as state influencer, which was temporarily reduced during the reign of the secular, modernizing Pahlavi kings (1921–79), laid the groundwork for Khomeini's bid to be statecrafter.

The Shia clerical practice of vigorously interpreting the faith, in conjunction with the clerical role as state influencer, helped open the philosophical loophole through which Khomeini stepped forward with his idea (or, as he would call it, interpretation) of clerical rule—a radical innovation in Shia thought that is still widely repudiated by the majority of senior Shia clerics in Iran and elsewhere. Lacking the support of Iran's ayatollahs, Khomeini could attract only a cadre of mid-ranking clerics, who led a "revolt of the colonels" against the senior clerical establishment. And Iranians followed them. In 1979, the country voted overwhelmingly (albeit in a limited referendum) for the establishment of an Islamic republic. With cries of "neither East nor West," Khomeini proclaimed a third way: a modern theocracy supported by the peo-

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ple that would resemble neither the liberal democracies of the West nor the authoritarian communist systems of the East.

But the Islamic Republic fell into the very traps that undid communism: hollow, state-sponsored glorification of a leader (Khomeini); dramatic but abrasive attempts at social engineering to create a “vanguard” of the Islamic Republic (“Islamicizing” Iran’s universities, for example, and creating “Islamic tests” for officials); purges of “disloyal” officials; corruption within the nomenklatura; tight control of the media; a sluggish and failing state-dominated economy; and the use of hired street thugs to quash dissent.

Eventually, inevitably, Iranians began to grumble. Today, the country is in a state of quiet revolt, punctuated by the occasional loud protest. Iranians are hungry for change. They seethe under the weight of an inert economy, disillusioned by the failed political promises of the revolution (and, more recently, of the country’s reform movement), and frustrated by restrictions on social freedoms, by government corruption, and by the domination of the conservatives and hard-liners. Their frustration can be seen in the resounding defeat of conserva-

TODAY, IRAN IS IN A STATE  
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OCCASIONAL LOUD PROTEST.

tives in elections for the presidency (1997 and 2001), parliament (2000), and local councils (1999); in the great popularity of the beleaguered reformist press; in the overwhelming sales of prodemocracy books such as those by the jailed journalist Akbar Ganji, now serving a six-year jail sentence for condemning Iran’s conservative clergy as “fascists”; in the frequent outburst of street protests against economic conditions and the jailing of journalists; in a rising tide of anti-clericalism; and, most recently, in the student protests that were sparked by the death sentence imposed on the reformist academic Hashem Aghajari.

Aghajari’s crime was to dispute the clergy’s role as intercessors between man and God and to call for an Islamic Reformation. Borrowing from themes laid out by other 20th-century Iranian intellectuals, notably the writer and lecturer Ali Shariati (1933–77), he has come down hard on Iran’s traditionalist clergy for trying to block the paths to God of other Shia Muslims by demanding the role of intercessor. “We are all capable of interpreting the Quran,” Aghajari has said, “without the help of clergy.” For him, the ruling clergy’s claims about their role are a “fabrication” and a “racket,” jealously guarded for fear of losing their privileges, and the state clerics have become “a ruling class” that reminds him of the worst excesses of the Roman Catholic papacy.

**T**he demonstrations in behalf of Aghajari took on a life of their own when students demanded not just his release but that of all political prisoners. For the first time, Iranians in large numbers (5,000 students at Tehran University, 2,000 to 3,000 in other cities) chanted slogans in a public venue against a key legacy of Khomeinist government—the

office of supreme leader and its current occupant, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Khomeini had envisioned it as a position for a high cleric who would rule justly in the name of Islam, but it has morphed into a virtual clerical dictatorship that grants the supreme leader kinglike powers. The protesters daringly called for the separation of mosque and state.

The Islamic republic that emerged from the maelstrom of Iran's 1979 revolution must today contend with a bitter reality: The successful governance of a modern nation-state requires more than revolutionary slogans, esoteric theological arguments, and social engineering. Neither Majlesi nor Khomeini wrote or thought much about theories of economic management. When Khomeini

spoke about the economy, he grandiosely promised Iranians a fair share of the country's oil bounty, and he lambasted the corruption of the rich merchants and the shah's elite. He promised that a new dawn of political freedom would rise from the debris of a strangling monarchy.

On the issues that matter most to the average Iranian—

jobs, the economy, education, social freedoms, political freedoms—there is overwhelming evidence that the system has been a failure. Clerical privileges have stirred deep resentment. Aghajari attracted wild applause when he said “I drive a Peykan,” referring to a cheap but sturdy Iranian-made car, “but they [the ruling clergy] drive the latest model luxury cars.”

Iran's misery index has risen to alarming levels. Iranians today earn a quarter, in real terms, of what they did before the revolution. They face high unemployment (16 percent officially, 25 percent unofficially), an unhealthy rate of inflation (13 percent last year), and stagnant wages. The middle class has been devastated, with many families reduced to selling carpets, gold, apartments, and other assets acquired after the 1973 oil boom to keep up with the rising cost of living. Iranians eat 20 percent less meat, bread, and rice than they did before the revolution, and in a food-centric culture that prizes meat-based stews and generous hospitality toward guests, the turn rankles. One in four Iranians with a college degree works outside the country, and in 2001 an estimated 200,000 Iranians, most of them highly educated, emigrated.

Social freedoms have been drastically reduced since 1979. Women are forced to wear the hijab or risk jail time; mixed-sex parties are still occasionally broken up by “morals police”; dancing in public is prohibited; and young men and women who are unrelated can be taken to the police station for strolling together in the park. For the country's large, modern middle class, which recalls more liberal days, these social restrictions, imposed from above by stern men in gray beards and enforced by young thugs in wispy beards, are as much an irritant as the political and economic restrictions. The sons and daughters of more traditional middle-class families—whose parents might have supported

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ARE LISTENING TO  
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*Hard economic times have led to measures such as this government-sponsored mass wedding, which spared 14,000 university student couples the expense of private ceremonies.*

the social restrictions in the early years of the revolution—are rebelling against their parents, listening to Western music, attending parties, and, in some cases, using illegal drugs.

**I**ran's political freedoms have marginally increased since the autocratic days of the shah, but there remains a powerful current of authoritarianism. Every "democratic" layer of the Islamic Republic is covered by two or three authoritarian layers. For example, the president (currently Mohammad Khatami) is popularly elected, but every presidential candidate must be approved by the unelected Council of Guardians, a 12-member body of six clerics and six lay jurists that was originally intended to "oversee" the popularly elected parliament. Once in office, the president must contend with the unelected supreme leader, who has virtual veto power over all matters of state and controls the elements of coercive force: the judiciary, the security services, the army, and the revolutionary guards. These competing layers reflect the tensions between popular sovereignty and religious legitimacy that were never fully resolved by the crafters of the Islamic Republic's constitution.

Governments that fail to meet the basic needs and desires of their populations are nothing new in the Middle East and the Muslim world. Citizens of Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, and Algeria will recognize all too well Iran's state-dominated, inefficient economy, which rewards well-connected merchants and marginalizes middle-class professionals. Muslim youth from non-Persian Gulf states certainly know the emotional and psychological strain their Iranian counterparts feel as they line up outside foreign embassies hoping

for a visa that will lead, perhaps, to a life of economic dignity. Even residents of the wealthy gulf Arab states and oil-rich Muslim Indonesia will understand the frustration of living in a country with squandered oil bounty and high-level corruption.

But Iran's failures take on added meaning because of what the government represents: a modern attempt to fuse mosque and state. Today's Iranian discourse of protest is increasingly secular, in marked contrast to the winds of Islamist protest swirling around most regimes in the Muslim world with secular "monarchical presidencies" or traditionalist monarchies. The sociology of protest against failed and failing states in the Muslim world has become familiar: A young Muslim man or woman hungry for change is attracted to the angry Islamist with the courage to challenge the state, or to the moderate Islamist with a clearly articulated "alternative" and the resourcefulness to provide public services the government does not. The young man grows a beard; the young woman from a modern family suddenly takes to wearing the headscarf. They read leading Islamist theoreticians and buy cassettes of angry clerics berating Israel and the United States. (Most of these Islamists are Sunni Muslims, and they still have important doctrinal differences with the Shia, but many Sunni clerics in recent decades have adopted aspects of Shia clerical practice, including more wide-ranging interpretation of the Quran, to guide the faithful on matters relating to society and state.) These young Islamists see salvation not in the vague, half-baked, angry leftism of their parents, but in a vague, half-baked, angry Islamism. The pattern is being repeated all over the Muslim world—except in Iran.

In Iran, where the failing government is Islamic, the colors of protest are of varying and often subtle secular hues. In major cities, clerics have trouble getting taxis to stop for them. A young cleric told me that when he needs a taxi, he "defrocks," changing to civilian clothes. In a small village in the north, a farm laborer told me that "it's time for the men with neckties to return," a reference to secular technocrats. A deeply religious veteran of the devastating 1980–88 war between Iran and Iraq spoke bluntly: "The men of religion have tainted themselves in the eyes of the people. My own son has little respect for them. For their own good, they should retreat."

I have heard similar sentiments all across Iran. The talk today is of *de facto* regime change, a sweeping away of the old guard of conservative clerics and their lay allies who still control key levers of power in favor of a genuinely popular democracy that would allow any Iranian to hold the highest offices in the land. A philosophical and intellectual movement undergirds this street sentiment. Dissident clerics are stepping forward to condemn corruption, argue against "fascist" interpretations of Islam, and call for a return to the clergy's traditional role as guardians of the faith. The silent majority of clerics who repudiate clerical rule are speaking out more and more against the system. Former lay revolutionaries turned reformists hint at separation of mosque and state. Well-respected Islamic philosophers, such as Abdol Karim Soroush, write books, articles, and essays that make a theological case against theocracy and promote democratic ideas. Journalists and reformists

call for “Islamic democracy,” though the logical result of their prescriptions would dismantle the current system.

What may be most significant is that a new discourse has emerged from Iran’s student associations, which in the past generally supported the reformist ideas of Khatami and other advocates of “Islamic democracy.” As one student leader, Akbar Atri, put it: “We want democracy without a prefix or suffix. That means no Islamic or religious democracy. The two are incompatible.”

Atri is a member of the Daftar-e-Tahkim-e-Vahdat (Office to Foster Unity), a university student association that was formed in the early 1980s to “safeguard” the revolution and confront, often violently, secular democrats, communists, and Islamic Marxists on campus. Over time, however, the group evolved into a more moderate force, and it played a key role in the election of the reformist Khatami in 1997. Now the group is going one step further by breaking free of Khatami and the reform movement and calling, in effect, for a secular democracy. Iran’s student movement should be watched closely. Nearly two-thirds of the population is under the age of 30, and half is under 21. Iran’s youth will not only determine the future, they will overwhelm it.

In a bold public-relations move, Atri and other student leaders have called for a referendum on college campuses to gauge the popularity of the current system. They point out that a referendum was held in 1979 to create the Islamic Republic. Why not hold another to determine whether Iranians still want the system? Even if such a referendum were held, the regime’s supporters would likely disrupt it and intimidate voters. But the call for a referendum dramatized what most Iranians already knew at some level—that the results would deal a harsh blow to the conservative rulers, and would probably repudiate the system of rule by clergy.

A student-led referendum is hardly a major threat to Iran’s hard-line clergy and their allies. But now there is some talk of a national referendum. The writing is on the wall. Iran’s attempt at creating an Islamic republic has failed politically, economically, and socially, resulting in massive disenchantment with the government and an eagerness for change, possibly even regime change. Iran’s youthful population is certain to make Iran a different place 20 years from now, and in this Internet age, change might come even more quickly.

Secular autocrats and traditionalist monarchs in the Muslim world shuddered when Iran’s revolution thundered onto the world stage in 1979, toppling a powerful monarch and creating an Islamic republic. Would similar revolutions engulf them too? For the most part those revolutions did not occur, although Iran’s success inspired other Islamist groups throughout the Muslim world. Today, a different movement within Iran has caught the attention of Muslim intellectuals and dissidents: the movement toward democracy. The only internal argument seems to be over whether to seek a secular democracy or the Islamic democracy that leading reformists call for. (Even in the Islamic version, the reformists hint, a clerical monopoly of power would be intolerable.) So the Iranian debate has shifted dramatically. If Iran manages to pull off this second revolution, the repercussions within Muslim societies that have flirted with, but never achieved, democracy in their own 20th-century struggles for political and social freedom and economic dignity might well be just as dramatic. □

# Impious Europe

*by Roger Scruton*

**A**n enormous spiritual tension has begun to manifest itself in Europe. The presence here of large numbers of Muslim immigrants has brought home to ordinary citizens truths that have long been officially hidden: Religion is natural to human beings, and is also a means by which they define their social membership. Under the old Christian dispensation, membership and citizenship coincided; that was the purpose of national churches. Under the new dispensation, the two are growing apart, and the native population is beginning to sense its lack of spiritual identity in the face of religious communities that appear to defy its way of life. We have witnessed the political effect of this in France, Holland, and Germany. But the spiritual cause remains unexplored and, to a large measure, unrecognized.

I was brought up in the England of the 1950s, when it was generally assumed that, with the exception of the Jewish minority, you were either non-conformist or Church of England. On official documents that required you to state your religion, you wrote "C of E" regardless. And you could be confident that God was an Englishman, who had a quiet, dignified, low-key way of visiting the country each weekend while being careful never to outstay his welcome. In today's England, God is a foreigner, an illegal immigrant with aggressive manners and a way of intruding into every gathering, even in the middle of the workweek. In the presence of this new God, the voice of the English churches becomes ever weaker, ever more shy of doctrine, ever more conciliatory and ill at ease. The idea that the British should be re-evangelized would be dismissed by most of the official clergy as an act of aggression, or even a racist affront to our nonbelieving minorities. After all, the church is not there to propagate the Christian faith but to forgive those who reject it.

It is, of course, one of the great strengths of Christianity that it makes forgiveness into a duty and freedom of conscience into a religious ideal. But Christians recognize the duty of forgiveness because they too seek forgiveness. Those brought up in our postreligious society do not seek forgiveness, because they are by and large free of the belief that they need it. This does not mean that they are happy; indeed, the high rates of juvenile crime, promiscuity, and drug dependence suggest the opposite. It does mean that they put pleasure before commitment and can neglect their duties without being crippled by guilt. And since religion is the balm for guilt, those brought up without religion seem, on the surface, to lose the need for it.

But only on the surface. You don't have to be a believer to be conscious of a great religious deficit in our society. We saw its effect during the strange canonization of Princess Diana, when vast crowds of people congregated in places vaguely associated with the princess's name, to deposit wreaths, messages, and teddy bears. The very same people whose pitiless prurience had caused Diana's death



*More than five years after the death of Princess Diana, mourners are still powerfully drawn to an informal, flower-strewn shrine near the site of her fatal Paris car crash.*

sought absolution from her ghost. She became a sacrificial offering, and therefore a saintly intercessor before the mysteries that govern the world. Forget the gruesome kitsch and liturgical vagueness — inevitable results, in any case, of the decline of organized religion. We were in the presence of a primordial yearning for the sacred, reaching back to the earliest dream-pictures of humankind and recorded in a thousand myths and rituals.

There is a yearning too for spiritual forces that we do not control. This yearning has given birth to J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels and to the trilogy of Philip Pullman. Ostensibly, this is literature for children; in fact, it has gripped the adult imagination all over the world. The Harry Potter books are particularly significant. They deal in miracles and magic; they concern the primeval contest between good and evil; their hero is a kind of spotless saint, saved from the degradations of the modern world by his youth and sexual innocence. And they are set in an English private school, in the heart of the English countryside, where the Anglican presence still lingers among gothic arches. They have all the elements of religion save God, and are a kind of lament for the death of God, phrased in the language of people who have never quite believed in him.

You can witness religious yearning elsewhere as well—in the stunts, for example, that are now practiced in the name of art. Each year at Easter, on the Philippine island of San Fernando, 10 volunteers spend half an hour nailed by their hands to a cross; this year, the London artist Sebastian Horsley was one

of them. “An artist,” he reported, “has to go to every extreme, to stretch his sensibility through excess and suffering in order to feel and to communicate more.” The act of his fellow martyrs was one of penitence, and if they sought to draw attention to suffering, it was not to their suffering but to Christ’s. Mr. Horsley, by contrast, has no religious belief and was suffering for art’s sake—which is to say for his own sake. This was to be the first stage in his rebirth as an artist and a man. And his suffering was to be put on display and sold as a work of art. People were fascinated, and flocked to witness the video of Horsley’s martyrdom with all the eagerness of the crowds that followed Jesus to Calvary.

The Italian-born artist Franko B entertained visitors to a recent performance-art festival in England by displaying his naked body decorated with a large, self-inflicted stomach wound. Franko’s art consists in ostentatious mutilations, bleedings, and slashings offered to his eager audiences as a kind of cathartic encounter. Those who queued to study Franko’s wounds were made conscious of their own vulnerability and filled with compassion—not for Franko, but for themselves. Franko is currently planning his next work, *Oh Lover Boy*, which he describes as “a bleeding piece, something between a life-class setup and a post-mortem setup in a hospital.”

Horsley and Franko offer the spectacle of suffering as the remedy for a spiritual void. Many religions, including Christianity and Shiism, focus on a re-enacted martyrdom, in a collective ritual that purges believers of their sins. This phenomenon is so widespread that the critic and anthropologist René Girard sees it as the fundamental secret of religion. In Girard’s view, the suffering of a vic-

tim is necessary if the accumulated violence of society is to be released and abjured. That’s why we’re moved by the story of Christ’s passion. We nailed this man to the cross, and the compassion that we feel for him is also a purging of our guilt, which arises from our experience of society. The guilt is the residue of

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the aggressions through which we compete for our thrills. In our postreligious society, these aggressions are no longer sublimated through acts of humility and worship. Hence the sadistic forms of entertainment that dominate the media in Europe. But if we accept Girard’s view, and there is surely a lot to be said for it, we must accept also that the irreligious young are just as subject as the rest of us to the burden of religious guilt.

And indeed, as soon as we look at religion in that detached, anthropological way, we begin to discern its subterranean presence in European society. Although doctrine has no place in our public life, a fear of heresy is beginning to grip the countries of Europe—not heresy as defined by the Christian churches, but heresy as defined by a form of post-Christian political correctness. A remarkable system of semiofficial labels has emerged with which to prevent the expres-

>ROGER SCRUTON, a writer and philosopher, lives in England. His latest book is *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat* (2002). Copyright © 2003 by Roger Scruton.



sion of dangerous points of view. A point of view is identified as dangerous if it belongs to the old Judaeo-Christian culture and thereby reminds us of what we were when we actually believed something. Those who confess to their Christianity are “Christian fundamentalists,” or even part of the “Christian fundamentalist Right,” and therefore a recognized threat to free opinion. Those who express concern over national identity are “far-right extremists”—a label attached to Holland’s Pim Fortuyn purely because his political campaign, which ended in his assassination, focused on the real problems caused by the mass immigration of Muslims. As a former Marxist sociologist and gay activist, Fortuyn would have been considered—in any other context—to be a man of impeccable left-wing credentials. Defenders of the family are “right-wing authoritarians,” while a teacher who advocates chastity rather than free contraception as the best response to teenage pregnancy is not just “out of touch” but “offensive” to his or her pupils. To criticize popular culture, television, or contemporary rock music or to press for the teaching of grammatical English in English schools is *prima facie* evidence of “elitism,” whereby a person forfeits the right to speak. It is as though our society is seeking to define itself as a religious community whose very lack of faith has become a kind of orthodoxy.

**H**eretics are no longer burned at the stake. But they are marginalized by cultural and educational institutions. *The Guardian*—which, as the mouthpiece of *bien-pensant* opinion in Britain, tirelessly hunts down the criminals who threaten the body politic with their elitist poison—recently carried an article complaining of the lack of any real philosophers in our culture. It praised Plato, who had placed philosophy at the center of Athenian life and shown its relevance to the conduct of politics. It then mentioned my own (admittedly far more meager) efforts to make philosophy a part of public debate, and said merely that my views on hunting, homosexuality, and popular culture are a discredit to the discipline. The article failed to mention that Plato had written on those same three topics in *The Republic*, *The Laws*, and elsewhere, and defended exactly the views that I defend. In effect, the writer was demonstrating just why philosophy has no place in our culture: It risks arriving at the wrong conclusion, the conclusion that current orthodoxies are not divine revelations but human mistakes. In other words, the *Guardian* writer, caring nothing for arguments but acutely aware of the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable doctrine, was expressing not a philosophical but a religious attitude.

Even if we mourn the post-Enlightenment loss of faith, it is sometimes said that we should welcome the fact that rational argument rather than blind superstition now governs the movement of public opinion. The problem is that rationality does not govern public opinion. The social and political movements that are currently most influential in Europe—the ecological movement, the movement for “animal rights,” the movement toward political union—are, in their activist components, almost entirely closed to rational argument. Try persuading ecologists who trample down genetically modified crops that there is as yet no clear scientific evidence that the crops are dangerous, and you will find yourself immediately stigmatized as the enemy. Try arguing that hunting and shooting are socially necessary and, when properly conducted, beneficial to the quarry species;

you will be demonized by the animal rights movement, and maybe even targeted by their bombers. Question the project of European union and make the arguments for national sovereignty; you will be dismissed as an “extremist,” a “little Englander,” a “Europhobe.” Behind the façade of reasonableness in each of these movements lurks a fortified orthodoxy, ready, if challenged, to punish dissent.

There is nothing new in this. Jacobinism and communism both began life as antireligious movements, and both bear the marks of the Enlightenment. But they recruited people precisely as religions recruit them—by offering inviolable orthodoxies, mysterious rituals, witch-hunts, and persecutions. And that’s why they were successful. Living as we do in an age without certainties, we like to believe that we can finally dispense with the religious instinct and coexist in open dialogue with people who dissent from the premises on which we build our lives. But we too need orthodoxies, we too hunger for rituals, and we too are apt to confront the critic and the dissenter with persecution rather than argument.

We even have gods of a kind, flitting below the surface of our passions. You can glimpse Gaia, the earth goddess, in some of the deranged rhetoric of environmentalists; fox and deer are totemic spirits for the defenders of animal rights, whose religion was shaped by the kitsch of Walt Disney; the human genome has a mystical standing in the eyes of many medical scientists. We have cults (football), sacrificial offerings (Princess Diana), miracles (Harry Potter), and improvised saints (Linda McCartney).

But we have abandoned those aspects of religion that provide genuine guidance in a time of spiritual need. The instinctive awe and respect toward our own being that the Romans called *pietas* has more or less vanished from the public life of Europe. This is nowhere more evident than in the officially Roman Catholic countries of France and Italy. Now that the church has ceased to be a public voice in those countries, secular ways of thinking are colonizing the culture. Discussions of embryo research, cloning, abortion, and euthanasia—subjects that go to the heart of the religious conception of our destiny—proceed in once-Catholic Europe as though nothing were at stake beyond the expansion of human choices. Little now remains of the old Christian idea that life, its genesis, and its terminus are sacred things, to be meddled with at our peril. The piety and humility that it was once natural to feel before the fact of creation have given way to a pleasure-seeking disregard for absent generations. The people of Europe are living as though the dead and the unborn had no say in their decisions. The Romans warned against impiety not only because it would bring down judgment from heaven but because it was a repudiation of a fundamental human duty, the duty to ancestors and to progeny.

And that impiety, surely, is at the root of European spiritual anxieties. The Muslims in our midst do not share our attitude toward our absent generations. They come to us from the demographic infernos of North Africa and Pakistan like Aeneas from the burning ruins of Troy, an old man on his shoulders, a child at his feet, and his hands full of strange gods. They are manifestly in the business of social as well as biological reproduction. And they reveal what we *really* stand to lose if we hold nothing sacred: the future. □

# India's Embattled Secularism

*by Mukul Kesavan*

Indians are sometimes scolded for misunderstanding secularism. They're reminded that secularism in its original, Western sense means commitment to a public life fenced off from religion, not an equal pandering to all religions. This chiding is unreasonable.

It's unreasonable because secularism in India grew out of the peculiar circumstances of anticolonial nationalism. India isn't a Christian country try-



*At a demonstration demanding the construction of a Hindu temple on the Muslim holy site of Ayodhya, a man wields a trishul, a traditional religious symbol that can double as a lethal weapon. Hindu extremists have distributed many of the weapons to their followers.*

ing to disentangle its state from the tentacles of a smothering, interfering church. Nor is it Atatürk's Turkey or contemporary Algeria trying to erase monarchy and mullahs in the name of a secular modernity. India is an unlikely subcontinental state, first made by the English from the rubble of the Mughal Raj, then remade by their English-speaking subjects—a twice-made state, if you like. India was first fashioned out of a process of colonial expansion and conquest that dragged on for a hundred years, and the India the British made was a complicated jigsaw, an Austro-Hungarian Empire under more ruthless management. In the post-1947 makeover of India, the independent state consolidated the partitioned Raj into a secular republic.

Some part of this task of consolidation had been accomplished by Mahatma Gandhi's huge campaigns of civil disobedience in the decades before

independence. In the name of the nation, the discontents of a poor country were harnessed against the colonial state that had, ironically, consolidated the territory the would-be nation wished to occupy. Gandhi's campaigns of mass defiance and solidarity were important not only because

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they helped throw out the British but because they demonstrated that India's bewilderingly plural population was capable of purposeful collective action.

As established in 1885, the Indian National Congress—the party of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and every Indian prime minister of independent India until 1977—was a self-consciously representative assembly of people from different parts of India. Because colonial nationalism had to prove to the Raj that the variety of India could be gathered under the umbrella of a single movement, there was a Noah's ark quality to the Congress's nationalism: It did its best to keep every species of Indian on board. The Congress never lost this sense that the nation was the sum of the subcontinent's species, and that the more Parsees, Muslims, Dalits, Sikhs, and Christians it could count in its Hindu ranks, the better was its claim to represent the nation. Even before the birth of Pakistan in the partition of 1947, Hindus were an overwhelming 75 percent of the population; today more than 85 percent of all Indians are Hindus. For the Congress, being secular meant making different types of Indians equally welcome. In that context, secularism became a way of being comprehensively nationalist.

The emotional charge of the Congress's nationalism came from anti-imperialism, not from some romantic myth of a suppressed identity struggling to be born. The Congress emptied nationalism of its usual content: language, culture, religion, history. In the place of these components it put an anti-imperialism based on a sophisticated critique of the economic effects of colonial rule. If Indian nationalism was to be fueled by the grievances of victimhood,

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the Congress made sure that all Indians were made to feel equally victims of economic exploitation. The leeching of India's wealth, the destruction of livelihood through colonial de-industrialization, and the crippling of agriculture by an extortionate taxation were hardy staples of Congress nationalist rhetoric—and for good reason. Taken together, the charges showed how colonialism had ravaged *all* Indians, whether they were peasants or workers, craftsmen or traders, landlords or indigenous capitalists. Theoretically, then, Muslim weavers, Jat peasants, Bohra traders, and Parsi industrialists were knit together by anticolonial grievances of one sort or another. In economic nationalism, the Congress found a nondenominational—a secular—way of being patriotic.

**T**he remarkable thing about the Congress's nationalism was that, despite the personal inclinations of many of its leaders, it generally kept to the secular straight-and-narrow. It was not antimissionary (though Gandhi disliked conversion); it sponsored Hindustani, the lingua franca of northern India, as India's national language, written in two scripts to bridge the gulf between Sanskritized Hindi and Persianate Urdu; in 1937, it abbreviated the patriotic song "Vande Mataram" when Muslim legislators complained about its lyrics. Congressmen reined in their "Hindu" instincts because an all-India nationalism had to embrace everyone, especially when the party's claim to represent the nation was constantly being challenged by the colonial state. Far from keeping religion at arm's length, the Congress used an all-are-welcome secularism to conscript every religious identity in sight and bolster its credentials in the struggle against the Raj. The party's eclectic benevolence toward all faiths was expressed symbolically by the presence of its leaders at religious festivals, by the declaration of a rash of public holidays to mark the landmark events on every religion's calendar (Christmas, Easter, Eid, Muharram, Divali, and the birthdays of Buddha, Mahavira, Nanak, and Muhammad are all public holidays in republican India), and occasionally, as in the case of state subsidies to Muslims making the haj, by substantial financial support.

The Congress's historical difficulties with Muslims kept it honest. In its first three decades, the Congress was not a mass party, nor did it wish to be. It was an annual assembly of professionals and local notables from all over India. Muslim notables were hard to find. Faced with a politics that counted heads, Muslims did their sums and got a worrisome answer: In this new politics of numbers, the Hindus had the bigger battalions. The Congress always counted distinguished Muslims among its leaders—Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a traditionally educated alim, the peer and confidante of Nehru and Gandhi and the republic's first education minister, is a good example—but never in sufficient numbers to give the lie to the charge of tokenism.

The Congress's peculiarly Indian secularism had been designed to keep Muslims on board. So what happened to it after the Muslim League won Pakistan in 1947 and most Muslims left India? In fact, it held up well. The constitution of the new nation was remarkably secular in its approach to protecting religious freedom and preserving the neutrality of the republican state in the matter of faith. The Congress's construction of secularism, which had

once had the aim of persuading the Raj that the Congress spoke for all Indians, was written into the constitution to reassure religious minorities that they did not live on sufferance in free India. The constitution guaranteed their right not only to practice their faith but to propagate it and to establish educational institutions that despite their denominational status would be entitled to financial subsidies from the state. In the years that followed, the state under Nehru ritually demonstrated its enthusiasm for all of India's faiths. Nehru at a Sufi shrine, Nehru in a Sikh turban, the mandatory presence of cassocked padres, bearded ulema, Buddhist monks, and Hindu priests at the annual commemoration of Gandhi, the use of the Buddhist wheel, or Dharma Chakra, as the central motif of the Indian flag—these are but random examples of how the Indian republic tried to demonstrate its pluralist good intentions. It was a clumsy, patronizing secularism, always vulnerable to resentment and the charge of appeasement, but at a critical moment in India's history it held the pass and helped buy time for secularism to become an ordinary part of the republic's furniture. It did what good political ideas do: It worked.

Since the rise of the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Indian politics in the 1980s and 1990s, and especially since the party's ascension to power at the head of a coalition in 1999, concerned secularists have wrung their hands over the number of civilized middle-class people—educated folk who ought to know better—who have embraced the ideas

and slogans of the Hindu Right. True believers had tended to see secularism as the rock on which the Indian elite had built its house. They were wrong.

Nehru's state was heir to the Indian National Congress's political beliefs and convictions. But the ruling class of republican India wasn't made up of Congress nationalists. It

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was a mixed class of bureaucrats, businessmen, rich peasants, rentiers, soldiers, and professionals who had served the Raj and now served the republic. They were secular because the preferred ideology of the state they served was a plural secularism. In addition, to be a secular individual in republican India was to be modern, unburdened by traditional beliefs and ascriptive identities. Every postcolonial ruling class yearns to be modern, and during his time as prime minister (1947–64), Nehru successfully sold secularism, non-alignment, and economic self-sufficiency as the essential ingredients in India's recipe for postcolonial modernization.

The secularism practiced by the Indian elite, then, often had little to do with conviction or ideological principle. It was a mark of modernity and metropolitan good taste. That helps to explain why, beginning in the 1980s, large sections of this elite traded in their secular clothes for the khaki shorts favored by the factions of the Hindu Right. The state's inability to make India

an economic success eroded its claim to be progressive and modern. The failure of the planned economy discredited as well the secularism to which the economy had been linked. And because the diffusion of secularism depended on its sponsorship by the Nehruvian state, the decline of the Congress as a political power and the BJP's withdrawal of state support for congressional secularism had the opposite effect. Secularism for the republican elite wasn't a political stance. It was a style choice—and styles change.

How did being secular become passé? Why did L. K. Advani's inspired coinage *pseudosecular* in the late 1980s persuade so many Indians that secularism was a hectoring, anti-Hindu project? Advani, the most important leader of the Hindu BJP after the prime minister, A. B. Vajpayee, has done to *secular* what Ronald Reagan did to *liberal*: The word now signifies an approach that has crippled a great nation by suppressing its basic impulses.

The Hindu Right, to which the BJP belongs, is implacably opposed to the Congress's pluralist construction of secularism because its political identity depends on the demonization of Muslims as the enemy Other. Christians are part of this demonology, but the historical grievance of the Hindu Right derives principally from the Muslim conquest of India that began a thousand years ago; its nationalism is premised on the idea of a beleaguered Hinduism. This is a sheepdog chauvinism, and the BJP is the dog: It works to keep a Hindu flock together and to protect the strays from Muslim and Christian wolves. If there were no wolves, the BJP would have nothing to do. Its nationalism—of a type familiar in Europe—slips easily into intolerance and bigotry.

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**T**he BJP's chauvinism, which the Western press sometimes characterizes as Hindu nationalism, is very different from a nationalism born of anti-imperialism. The chauvinism of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the paramilitary volunteer corps founded in the 1920s that created the BJP as its parliamentary front in 1949, had very little to do with the struggle against colonialism. The RSS was a professedly apolitical militia, dedicated to Hindu self-strengthening. It was committed to an exclusionary nationalism that aimed to create a uniform citizenry on tried and tested European nationalist principles: a shared language, an authorized history, a dominant religious community, and a common enemy.

The BJP's brand of majoritarian nationalism isn't uniquely Indian. It has parallels, for example, with Serbian nationalism. Both are built from the same historical debris: a memory of centuries-old defeat at the hands of the Turks, legends of gallantry in defeat, an enduring memory of Turkish dominance and atrocity. Much as the Serb majority succeeded in aligning its state with its faith, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the BJP, despite the much-advertised absence



*Balasaheb Thackeray, whose right-wing Shiv Sena party is allied with the ruling BJP, last fall called for the formation of Hindu suicide squads to target Muslim extremist groups. Police in the Indian state of Maharashtra brought criminal charges against Thackeray for his comments.*

of a Hindu clergy, has been doing quite handily with its bands of militant sadhus and vocal Shankaracharyas. The BJP and its affiliates cite historical Hindu grievance as their reason for being, and they are committed to the transformation of a pluralist and secular republic into a Hindu nation. The RSS salutes a saffron flag, the Bhagwa Dhvaj, which is its emblem for the Hindu state-in-the-making. Its most revered ideologue, Guruji Golwalker, argued in a tract called *We, or Our Nation Defined* (1939) that Muslims living in India should be second-class citizens, living on Hindu sufferance, with no rights of any kind:

From this standpoint sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu Nation, i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-long traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizens' rights.

The campaign challenging the right of minorities to be equal citizens and questioning their loyalty has begun to gather pace in India.



Balasaheb Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena, a Hindu supremacist party allied with the BJP, said in a newspaper interview in December 2000 that all political parties in India would toe the chauvinist Hindu line if Muslims were denied the right to vote. The BJP itself is partial to the idea that Hindus are natural citizens of India because their sacred sites are contained within the boundaries of the nation, while Muslims and Christians are suspect on account of their extraterritorial loyalties. The chief of the RSS recently advised Indian Catholics to reject the Pope and sever their links with Rome, the better to “nationalize” the Catholic Church.

Early last year, a pogrom of Muslims in Gujarat, a state ruled by the BJP, left between 700 and 1,000 Muslims dead and many more displaced, their homes burnt and their businesses destroyed. The pogrom, and the complicity of the civil administration and the ruling party in the killing and the subsequent demonization of the Muslim victims as Pakistani fifth columnists, came as no surprise to anyone who has followed the bloody history of Muslim nationalism in Pakistan and Bangladesh or of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism in Sri Lanka. The history of South Asia over the past half-century has shown that chronic violence and civil war are the inevitable outcome of majoritarian nationalism.

**S**ecularism in India has now come to mean resistance to the long-standing and increasingly violent campaign to force the republican state to acknowledge the primacy of the Hindu majority. In the vanguard of this campaign is the main constituent of the ruling National Democratic Alliance, the BJP and its affiliated organizations, sometimes collectively described as the Sangh Parivar, or Sangh Family. It's no coincidence that the parties of the Hindu Right leading the campaign came to power a few years after the destruction, in 1992, of the Babri Masjid, a medieval mosque in Ayodhya, a Hindu pilgrim town in northern India. The campaign to build a Hindu temple on the site of the illegally razed mosque was (and is) a concerted attempt to rig the republic's politics in a majoritarian way—in effect, a coup in slow motion. More than the fate of a mosque hinges upon the Babri Masjid dispute and its resolution. The real estate in dispute is not the site on which the Babri Masjid once stood but the constitutional ground on which the republic is built. The argument is about India.

To accept the claims of the Hindu Right in Ayodhya is to accept that Hindu grievance (in this instance, the festering belief that the mosque was built by the first Mughal emperor, Babar, after he razed a temple dedicated to the Hindu god Ram) takes precedence over the republic's laws and institutions. The construction of a Ram temple where the Sangh Parivar wants it built would alter the common sense of the republic. This generation of Indians and their children would come to find it reasonable that those in the majority enjoy a *right* to have their sensibilities respected and their beliefs deferred to by others. And imperceptibly, India would become some other country. □

# The Wall that Never Was

*by Hugh Hecl*

A hundred years ago, advanced thinkers were all but unanimous in dismissing religion as a relic of mankind's mental infancy. What's being dismissed today is the idea that humanity will outgrow religion. Contrary to the expectations of Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, John Dewey, and a host of others, religion has not become a mere vestige of premodern culture. If anything, Americans at the dawn of the 21st century are more willing to contemplate a public place for religion than they have been for the past two generations. But what does it mean for religion to "reenter the public square"? What good might it do there—and what harm?

Mention religion and public policy in the same breath these days, and what will most likely spring to mind are specific controversies over abortion, school prayer, the death penalty, and stem cell research. All are issues of public choice that arouse the religious conscience of many Americans. They are also particular instances of a larger reality: the profound, troubled, and inescapable interaction between religious faith and government action in America.

For most of American history, the subject of religion and public policy did not need much discussion. There was a widespread presumption that a direct correspondence existed, or should exist, between Americans' religious commitments and their government's public-policy choices. When the oldest of today's Americans were born (which is to say in the days of Bryan, McKinley, and Theodore Roosevelt), the "public-ness" of religion was taken for granted, in a national political culture dominated by Protestants. It was assumed that America was a Christian nation and should behave accordingly. Of course, what that meant in practice could arouse vigorous disagreement—for example, over alcohol control, labor legislation, child welfare, and foreign colonization. Still, dissenters had to find their place in what was essentially a self-confident Protestant party system and moralistic political culture.

Those days are long past. During the 20th century, religion came to be regarded increasingly as a strictly private matter. By midcentury, Supreme Court decisions were erecting a so-called wall of separation between church and state that was nationwide and stronger than anything known in the previous practice of the individual states' governments.





*The tradition of opening sessions of the U.S. Congress with a prayer dates back to 1774, when the Continental Congress assigned the responsibility to a Philadelphia minister, Jacob Duche.*

National bans on state-mandated prayer (1962) and Bible reading in public schools (1963) soon followed. In 1960, presidential candidate John F. Kennedy was widely applauded for assuring a convocation of Baptist ministers that his Catholic religion and his church's teachings on public issues were private matters unrelated to actions he might take in public office. Intellectual elites in particular were convinced that the privatization of religion was a natural accompaniment of modernization in any society.

But even as Kennedy spoke and Supreme Court justices wrote, strong crosscurrents were at work. Martin Luther King, Jr., and masses of civil rights activists asserted the very opposite of a disconnection between religious convictions and public-policy claims. King's crusade against segregation and his larger agenda for social justice were explicitly based on Christian social obligations, flowing from belief in the person of Jesus Christ. So, too, in antinuclear peace movements of the time atheists such as Bertrand Russell were probably far outnumbered by liberal religious activists. After the 1960s, the United States and many other countries witnessed a political revival of largely conservative fundamentalist religious movements. These, according to prevailing academic theories, were supposed to have disappeared with the steam engine. The horror of September 11, 2001,

showed in the most public way imaginable that modernization had not relegated religion to an isolated sphere of private belief. On the contrary, religious convictions could still terrorize, as they could also comfort a nation and inspire beautiful acts of compassion.

It is nonetheless true that during much of the 20th century the dominant influences in American national culture—universities, media and literary elites, the entertainment industry—did move in the predicted secularist direction. What at midcentury had been mere embarrassment with old-fashioned religious belief had, by century's end, often become hostility to an orthodox Christianity that believed in fundamental, revealed truth. Noting that the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent are the most religious society in the

world and the inhabitants of Sweden the most secularized, sociologist Peter Berger has said, provocatively, that America might usefully be thought of as an Indian society ruled by a Swedish elite.

In contemporary discussions of religion and public affairs, the master concept has been secularization. The term itself derives from the Latin word *saeculum*, meaning “period of time” or “age” or “generation.”

The idea of the secular directs our attention to the place and time of this world rather than to things religious and beyond time. It supposes a demarcation between the sacred and the profane. The social sciences of the 19th century developed theories of secularization that dominated much of 20th-century thinking. In the disciplines' new scientific view of society, all human activities were to be analyzed as historical phenomena, rooted in particular places and times. Religion was simply another human activity to be understood historically, an evolutionary social function moving from primitive to higher forms.

The idea of secularization became tightly bound up with intellectuals' understanding of modernization. As the 20th century dawned, the secularization that religious traditionalists condemned, leading modernists of the day saw as a benign and progressive evolution of belief systems. Secular political organizations had already gone far in taking over the social functions (welfare and education, for example) of medieval religious institutions. As society modernized, science and enlightened humanitarianism would provide a creed to displace religion's superstitions, and religion would retreat to pri-

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vate zones of personal belief. Policymaking would deal with worldly affairs in a scientific manner, indifferent to religious faith. Public religion was something humanity would outgrow. Religion in the modern state would go about its private, one-on-one soul work; public life would proceed without passionate clashes over religious truth.

**T**he foregoing, in very crude terms, is what came to be known as the secularization thesis. To be modern meant to disabuse the mind of religious superstitions (about miracles, for example) and recognize the psychological needs that prompt humankind to create religious commitments in the first place. Modern society might still call things sacred, but it was a private call. In public life, the spell of enchantment was broken—or soon would be.

But something happened on the way to privatizing religion in the 20th century. For about the first two-thirds of the century, secularization seemed to prevail as a plausible description of public life. Then, in the final third, the picture changed considerably. Religion re-engaged with political history and refused to stay in the private ghetto to which modernity had consigned it. Witness the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the role of the Catholic Church in communist Eastern Europe, and the growth of the Religious Right in the United States. Of this resurgence of public religion, the sociologist José Casanova has observed: “During the entire decade of the 1980s it was hard to find any serious political conflict anywhere in the world that did not show behind it the not-so-hidden hand of religion. . . . We are witnessing the ‘deprivatization’ of religion in the modern world.”

This “going public” of religion, moreover, was not an expression of new religious movements or of the quasi-religions of modern humanism. Rather, it was a reentry into the political arena of precisely those traditional religions—the supposedly vestigial survivals of an unenlightened time—that secular modernity was supposed to have made obsolete.

Three powerful forces make this a particularly important time to take stock of the new status of religion in public life. The first is the ever-expanding role of national policy in Americans’ mental outlook. During the 20th century, struggles over federal policy increasingly defined America’s political and cultural order. In other words, conceptions of who we are as a people were translated into arguments about what Washington should do or not do. The abortion debate is an obvious example, but one might also consider our thinking about race, the role of women, crime, free speech, economic security in old age, education, and our relationship with the natural environment. After the 1950s, academics, and then the public, began to make unprecedented use of the term *policy* as a conceptual tool for understanding American political life. But the entire century nourished and spread the modern syndrome of “policy-mindedness”—an addiction to the idea that everything preying on the public mind requires government to do or to stop doing something. It’s a notion that allows almost any human activity to be charged with public relevance—from the design of toilets to sexual innuendo in the workplace (filigrees of environmental policy and civil rights policy, respectively). Like

it or not, our cultural discussions and decisions are now policy-embedded. And this in turn inevitably implicates whatever religious convictions people may have.

The juggernaut of today's scientific applications is a second development that now compels us to think hard about religion in the public square. Technological advances have brought our nation to a point where momentous public choices are inescapable. To be sure, scientific knowledge has been accumulating over many generations. But in the latter years of the 20th century, much of modern society's earlier investment in basic research led to technological applications that will affect human existence on a massive scale. For example, though the human egg was discovered in 1827, the DNA structure of life did not become known until the middle of the 20th century. Since then, sweeping applications of that accumulated knowledge have cascaded with a rush. By 1978, the first human baby conceived in vitro had been born. By the 1990s, the first mammals had been cloned, the manipulation of genes had begun, and the first financial markets for human egg donors had developed. These and other scientific advances are forcing far-reaching decisions about the meaning of life forms, about artificial intelligence and reconstitution of the human brain, and even about the reconstruction of matter itself.

These choices at the microlevel have been accompanied by technology's challenge to human destiny at the macrolevel. It was also in the mid-20th century that mankind became increasingly conscious that it held Earth's very life in its own contaminating hands. At the onset of the 1960s, Rachel

Carson did much to overturn generations of unbridled faith in scientific progress when she publicized the first dramatic charges about humankind's disastrous impact on the environment in *Silent Spring*. By the end of the 1960s, people saw the first pictures from space of the fragile Earth home they share. The first Earth Day and the blossoming of the modern environmental movement soon followed. The point is not sim-

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ply that issues such as ozone depletion, species extinction, global warming, and the like have not been thought about until now. It's that people have never before had to deal with them as subjects of collective decision-making—which is to say, as public-policy choices.

Our modern technological condition thus represents a double historical climacteric. Today's citizens must manage the first civilization with both the outward reach to bring all human societies within a common global destiny and the inward reach to put the very structures of life and matter into human hands. For more than 2,000 years, philosophers could talk abstractly about



*The spires of three wooden churches representing three different faiths—Catholic, Lutheran, and Baptist—point straight to the same heavens above the Great Plains of South Dakota.*

the problem of being and the nature of human existence. For 21st-century citizens, the problem of being is an ever-unfolding agenda of public-policy choices. The extent to which ethics leads or lags the scientific juggernaut will now be measured in the specific policy decisions our democratic political systems produce. And the decisions are saturated with religious and cultural implications about what human beings are and how they should live.

Even as the policy choices are forcing citizens into a deeper search for common understandings, doubts about a shared cultural core of American values are pushing in precisely the opposite direction. Those doubts are the third

challenge to religion in the public square. Thanks to the homogenization produced by mass markets throughout the 50 states, 20th-century America experienced a marked decline in traditional geographic and class differences. But with the uniformity in material culture has come a greater insistence on and acceptance of variation in the realm of nonmaterial meanings and values. The widespread use of phrases such as “identity politics,” “culture wars,” “inclusiveness,” and “political correctness” reflects the extent to which affirmations of diversity have supplanted earlier assumptions about a cultural core. “Multiculturalism” is a label for a host of changes in mental outlook, group self-consciousness, and educational philosophy. And with Muslims almost as numerous as Presbyterians in today’s America, multiculturalism is more than faddish academic terminology. It’s true that self-identified Christians still outnumber all other faith categories of Americans by 8 to 1 (in 2001, 82 percent of the population reported themselves to be Christian, 10 percent non-Christian, and 8 percent nonbelievers). But the Christianity in the figures is often purely nominal, with little orthodox content. The cultural indicators show that, by and large, America is well on its way to becoming a post-Christian, multireligion society of personally constructed moral standards.

**T**hese, then, are three developments that compel attention to the interrelations between religion and public policy: A vast and powerful political society is defining itself to an ever greater extent through self-conscious policy decisions about what to do and what not to do; a technological imperative is driving that society’s policy agenda to raise ever more profound questions about the nature of life and the sustainability of our earthly existence; and an increasingly fragmented sense of cultural identity is taking hold among the self-governing people who are called upon to make and oversee these collective decisions.

In light of these developments, how are we to think about “public religion” in our self-proclaimed democratic world superpower (so much for Christian humility)? Ordinary Americans continue to profess a devotion to religion far greater than is found in other developed nations. At the beginning of the 21st century, some 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God and pray at least once a week. Sixty percent attend religious services at least once a month, and 43 percent do so weekly. Nonbelief is a distinctly minority position; it’s also a hugely unpopular position. Large majorities of Americans claim that they would vote for a presidential candidate who was female (92 percent), black (95 percent), Jewish (92 percent), or homosexual (59 percent)—but only 49 percent say they would do so for a candidate who was an atheist.

In the summer of 2002, a political firestorm greeted a federal appellate court’s decision that the words “under God” (which Congress added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954) violated the constitutional separation of church and state. As the hapless Ninth Circuit Court backed off, delaying the decision’s effect, polls showed that 87 percent of Americans supported keeping God in the pledge, and that 54 percent favored having government promote religion. These figures reflect a significant shift: After declining sharply between the mid-1960s



and late 1970s, the proportion of Americans who say religion is very important to them grew to roughly two out of three by 2001. Seventy percent of Americans want to see religion's influence on American society grow, and an even larger proportion, including two-thirds of Americans aged 17 to 35, are concerned about the moral condition of the nation. (And yet, by general agreement, the common culture has become more coarse and salacious. One may well wonder who's left to be making the popular culture so popular.)

However, the meaning of religious belief has also been changing in recent decades. A great many Americans find that the search for spirituality is more important to them than traditional religious doctrines, confessional creeds, or church denominations. Although most Americans say they want religion to play a greater public role so as to improve the moral condition of the nation, only 25 percent say that religious doctrines are the basis for their moral judgments about right and wrong. Even among born-again Christians, fewer than half say that they base their moral views on specific teachings of the Bible. To claim that there are absolute moral truths (a view rejected by three out of four American adults at the end of the 20th century), or that one religious faith is more valid than another, is widely regarded as a kind of spiritual racism. The new cornerstone of belief is that moral truths depend on what individuals choose to believe relative to their particular circumstances.

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Human choice has become the trump value and judgmentalism the chief sin. Thus, three-fourths of that large majority of Americans who want religion to become more influential in American society say that it does not matter to them *which* religion becomes more influential. Similarly, between 80 and 90 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians, though most of them dismiss some of the central beliefs of Christianity as it has traditionally been understood. Father Richard John Neuhaus, editor of the journal *First Things*, recently summed up the situation: "To say that America is a Christian nation is like saying it's an English-speaking nation. There are not many people who speak the language well, but when they are speaking a language poorly, it is the English language they are speaking."

**W**hat all this means for the intertwining of religious faith and the politics of government policymaking is something of a mystery. It's mysterious because Americans both want and distrust religious convictions in the public arena. Thus, more than 60 percent want elected officials to compromise rather than to vote their religious beliefs, even on life-and-death issues such as abortion and capital punishment. And though Americans have become more open in recent decades to having religion talked about in the public arena, 70 percent of them also think that when political leaders talk about their faith, they're just saying what people want to hear. Most people surveyed are willing to have religious leaders speak out more on public issues, but they also don't care much whether they do so or not. In the spring of 2001, when

President Bush's faith-based initiatives were being publicized, three-quarters of Americans expressed strong support for the idea that faith-based groups should receive government funds to provide social services. But that same proportion opposed having government-funded religious groups hire only people who shared their beliefs. This amounts to support for religion as long as religion does not really insist on believing anything. Then again, most Americans opposed funding American Muslim or Buddhist groups, and they regarded even Mormon groups as marginal.

So never mind thinking outside the box. When it comes to religion—their own or others'—in the public square, today's Americans have trouble thinking seriously even inside the box. The wonderfully rich history of religion and democracy in modern America has been ignored and even suppressed in public-school textbooks and university curricula, both of which were largely purged of "God talk" after the mid-20th century. The sowing of traditional religious information in the school system has been so sparse that one national researcher on the topic has called younger cohorts of Americans a "seedless" generation. A less polite term for their religiously lobotomized view of culture would be heathen. Here is crooked timber indeed for building a framework to support the culture-shaping interactions between religion and public policy.

When Americans do think, however imprecisely, about religion and public decision making, what do they commonly have in mind? Their predominant notion is probably of "a wall of separation between church and state." Most citizens would be surprised to learn that the phrase is not in the Constitution; it comes from a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1802. When we visualize the public square, the easiest things to perceive are structures—a church building here, a government building there, distinctly separate institutions. And *that*, Americans have long believed, is as it should be. But even casual observation reveals that there's

more going on in that square. Perched atop the ostensible wall of separation between the structures of church and state, we watch a public forum where religion and politics are anything but separate. There are not two kinds of people in the forum, some of them religious and some political. There are only citizens.

And as they interact, they express

themselves both religiously and politically. Religious, nonreligious, and antireligious ideas are all at work in their heads when they define problems and choose measures to deal with them collectively, as a people. Religious and irreligious ideas commingle in programs enacted in behalf of this or that vision of a good social order. Church and state, religion and politics, and ideas and social action are crosscutting elements whose presence, even if poorly articulated, we often sense in the public square.

To put it another way, the major interactions between religion and public pol-

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icy occur across three domains. The first is *institutional* and focuses on the way organized structures of religion and government impinge on one another—and together impinge on society. This institutional perspective comes most naturally to Americans because it's encoded in their nation's constitutional understanding of itself. The bland phrase “separation of church and state” conceals what was the most audacious and historically unique element of America's experiment in self-government: the commitment to a free exercise of religion. In this institutional domain, one encounters, for example, groups claiming infringement on the unfettered exercise of their religious liberties and disputes over government sponsorship of religious organizations. Less obviously, it is where one also finds religious and public agencies jostling against one another as they pursue, for example, education and welfare policies.

The second domain where religion and public policy connect can be called *behavioral*. Here the term simply means that religious attachments move people to act in public ways (e.g., to vote, to organize within the community, to engage in other political activities). There's a direct, though paradoxical, link between the first and second domains. The distancing between religious and government institutions has allowed religion in America to be an immense resource for the nation's politics. Alexis de Tocqueville concluded that his American informants were correct in believing that the main reason religion held great sway over their country was the separation of church and state. He wrote that “by diminishing

the apparent power of religion one increased its real strength.” Since his visit in 1831, Americans in religious associations have created and sustained public movements to promote slavery's abolition, women's rights, prison and asylum reform, child welfare and worker protection, mothers' pensions, liquor regulation, racial desegregation, and civil rights legislation. (Such associations have also been an important source of less savory causes, such as anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish laws.) And citizens moved to more routine political action through religious affiliations have done much to shape America's party system and election outcomes.



*The godless were said to have been pleasantly surprised by the number of people who showed up for this march, but nonbelief remains a distinctly minority—and unpopular—position nationwide.*

The third domain connecting religion and public policy is more difficult to describe, but one senses that something important is missing if we take account only of organized institutions and politically relevant behaviors. For lack of a better term, we might call the third domain *philosophical*. It reflects broad policy outlooks on the social order. At this intersection, ideas and modes of thought are expressed in programmatic courses of action. It's the realm in which people operate when they speak about culture wars in the schools, the work ethic in welfare, or the need for moral clarity in foreign policy. It's the basis on which some people cringe and others rejoice when a presidential candidate talks about his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The cringers know that religion can mask all manner of hypocritical mischief in public affairs, and the joyful know that religion can yield a principled striving for a better world. Both groups are correct.

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To see how the philosophical level is linked to the first two domains, we need only consider the philosophy that drove early American policy to separate church and state. The formal Constitution was constructed as a “godless” document that kept the

new national government out of religious matters—not because religion was unimportant to the society, but because it was extraordinarily important. The Founders (acting in the behavioral dimension noted above) understood why the Constitution had best be essentially silent on matters of religion and God. For one thing, the memory of Europe's religious wars kept vivid the dangers of political division based on religion. More importantly, in the context of 1787, they realized that the fragile coalition behind the proposed federal constitution would be endangered by any statements about religion and devotion to God that might compete with the abundant dealings by state and local governments on the subject.

In linking calculations of political behavior and institutional design, the Founders were also drawing on a deeper set of philosophical understandings present in the society—ideas about individual conscience that were identified with Protestantism. The ideas had been tested and refined during decades-long encounters among communities of religious believers and dissenters in colonies all along the Atlantic seaboard. Behind the separating of church and state there loomed an emerging cultural commitment to the free exercise of religion. Generally speaking, the champions of this norm were not secular philosophers but religious people who were convinced that religion could never be authentic if it were coerced, directly or indirectly, by government.

**T**hough the three perspectives—institutional, behavioral, and philosophical—can be distinguished (and studied individually), they are lived together in the one life of the nation. That's why it's so vitally important to understand religion's place in the public square. Some of us might wish to adopt a popular intellectual shortcut to escape the complexities of the matter—by invoking, for example, the simplistic formula that says religion and

public policy really ought not to mix, or by striking a worldly pose and claiming that what's at issue is merely religious groups' self-interested struggles for political power. But the formula is an illusion and the pose a lie that obscures inescapable and growing religious implications in public policy choices.

Whether we like it or not, religion and government policy are unavoidably linked. Each claims to give authoritative answers to important questions about how people should live. Each is concerned with the pursuit of values in a way that imposes obligations. Each deals in "oughts," and does so through commands, not suggestions. How so? It's obvious that religion tells people how to live. Less obviously, public policy also issues directives for living, because it affirms certain choices, and not others, for society and backs up the choices with the coercive power of government. Modern government policy is in the business of mandating, promoting, discouraging, or prohibiting particular ways of life. Even adopting the comforting principle of "neutrality" is a way of taking sides, for it can amount to a *de facto* claim that something is *not* a moral issue.

**T**he City of God and the City of Man are engaged in deep and substantive transactions with each other, and we cannot escape that fact. But there is also an all-important difference between the two spheres. Religion points toward matters of ultimate meaning for human beings; it's concerned with what is timeless, unchanging, and holy. It's about the absolute or it's about nothing. By contrast, the policy courses pursued by government are societal engagements with the here and now. Their meanings are proximate. At least in democratic (as opposed to totalitarian) government, policymaking acknowledges itself to be contingent, potentially erroneous, and subject to change. Religion and policy mark a continuous flashpoint in public life because the two touch along that horizon where the great thing needful is to keep relative things relative and absolutes absolute.

Is serious religion necessarily intolerant because of its preoccupation with the absolute, and can only the godless be counted on to engage a diverse public audience by persuading them rather than by asserting dogma? Not at all. That way of parsing the subject obscures too many of the humane possibilities in religion and the inhumane possibilities in godless morality. It denies the possibility of a religious faith

that, sensing the eternal and transcendent, renders relative and contingent all human institutions and claims to truth—including those made by religious and irreligious pharisees in the public square. Just as there can be humbling dimensions to lived religion, there can be absolutist assumptions surrounding supposedly contingent, secular policies. It's precisely the prideful claim that mankind is the center of the universe and that the purposes of the Almighty coincide with our

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In modern intellectual circles, a fashionable strategy for pursuing the decoupling of religion from policy debate has been to argue for “dialogic neutrality.” The concept means that, in democratic debate, religionists must learn to “translate” and make publicly accessible—that is, make secular—the reasons for their policy claims. As the philosopher Richard Rorty has put it, “The main reason religion needs to be privatized is that, in political discussion with those outside the relevant community, it is a conversation stopper.” For a religious person to say “Christian discipleship requires that I oppose abortion” is the equivalent of someone else’s saying “Reading pornography is the only pleasure I get out of life these days.” Rorty argues that both statements elicit the same response in the public sphere: “So what? We weren’t talking about your private life.”

Against Rorty are those who argue, with justification, that a commitment to translation, far from being dialogically neutral, amounts to a demand that religious believers be other than themselves and act publicly as if their faith were of no real consequence. If they accommodate only secular reasoning, religious believers will translate themselves out of any democratic existence and contribute to the creation of a shriveled public arena that cannot accommodate, respect, or even acknowledge theological grounds for discussing serious normative issues.

**I**n this new debate, one encounters what is essentially a contest over the practical meanings of religion. At the beginning of the 20th century, William James anticipated the basic outlines of the contest in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. He rejected the intellectually popular “survival theory” that religion is merely superstition held over from premodern times. He argued, rather, that religious life arises from an awareness of one’s personal connection with a transcendent reality mediated through the subconscious self. James went on to draw a sharp contrast between what he called “universalistic supernaturalism” and “piecemeal supernaturalism.” The former corresponds to a view that some today would call simply spirituality. It conceives of an abstract, ideal dimension separate from the world of phenomena, and, at most, it illuminates facts already given elsewhere in nature. Piecemeal supernaturalism conceives of a transcending but immanent power that is, in addition, a postulator of new facts in the world. This power bursts into the world of phenomena—enters into the flat level of historical experience and interpolates itself between distinct portions of nature with facts of its own. And those facts are obligatory for guiding practical conduct in the world.

The claim for dialogical neutrality fits comfortably with a view of religion as universalistic supernaturalism. Reflect, for example, on the way contemporary politicians use religion. To be sure, faith and even Jesus are invoked. The problem is that the God who’s brought into the public sphere doesn’t seem to count for much. No practical policy consequences follow from this God’s presence. By contrast, piecemeal supernaturalism insists on the scandal of doing religion in public. William James left no doubt where he stood in the contest over the meaning of religion: “In this universalistic way of taking the ideal world, the essence of practical religion seems to me to evaporate. Both instinctively and for logical reasons, I find it hard to believe that principles can exist which make no differ-

ence in facts. But all facts are particular facts, and the whole interest of the question of God's existence seems to me to lie in the consequences for particulars which that existence may be expected to entail. That no concrete particular of experience should alter its complexion in consequence of a God being there seems to me an incredible proposition." In other words, to orthodox believers God can never be dialogically neutral.

To think responsibly about religion and public policy, then, requires harkening to what might be taken as a prime commandment of all religions: "Pay attention." We need to look past the surface of things and not assume that what meets the eye is all there is. Religion is sometimes full of hypocrisy and hate. And it is sometimes full of light and life.

Many people consider it disturbing, if not downright dangerous, to invoke religious commitments in matters of public policy. They have good reason to think so. Because religion makes claims about ultimate truth, compromise may be interpreted as sinning against God, and yet compromise is what makes peaceful politics possible. Mixing religion and policymaking opens the way to intolerance, persecution, and bloody-mindedness in the body politic. It stirs the modern mind's vague but potent memories of Crusades, Inquisitions, and religious wars. It's to this popular prejudice that John Lennon could appeal in urging his young listeners to imagine an ideal future: "Imagine there's no countries/ It isn't hard to do/ Nothing to kill or die for/ No religion too/ Imagine all the people/ Living life in peace."

People may be less likely to recognize the danger that policy engagement poses for the religious. Politics can encourage expediency, duplicity, and hypocrisy, and high-minded religious individuals are easily exploitable. The historian Edward Gibbon observed that for philosophers all religions are false, for common people they are all true, and for politicians they are all useful. Mixing religion and policy may attract not only worldly knaves and naive saints but also the worst of crossbreeds: knaves who appear saints. A subtler and frequently overlooked danger for religious individuals is that policy engagement often reveals contradictions among "God's people." That, in turn, may shake the faith of believers, deepen doubts among religious skeptics, and supply ammunition to those who are actively hostile to all religion. It's only prudent to recognize that, when religion touches politics, politics touches back.

**A**nd yet, despite all these historical risks, the greater risks in modern society run in the other direction: They derive from excluding public religion. In the history we're writing today, there are sound reasons to welcome the mingling of religion and public policy. For one thing, there's a benefit to serious religious faith—because influencing the policies that guide their society is an important way for believers to live out their beliefs. That's true especially in a system of self-government where religious consciences can never be purely public or private. To claim that among a democratic people religious commitments should have little or no part in public policymaking is hardly a "neutral" position. It's a formula for gutting both religion and democracy of real, practical meaning.

Nonbelievers and the wider society also gain from religion's presence in

today's public square. Without religion in the policy debates, everyone runs the risk of falling for false claims about technological imperatives and moral "neutrality"—the too-easy reassurance that policy choices depend merely on technical knowledge or popular convenience. Neutrality is itself based on some fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and leaps of faith. Having to confront overtly religious individuals who set forth their fundamental assumptions in public can bring to light the hidden secular assumptions of policymaking.

**B**ut more is at stake than improving the forum for public debate. Religion also adds something vitally important to the content of what's being said. It asserts that a transcendent purpose gives meaning to who human beings are and what they do. The religious voice insists that God-inspired standards be taken seriously when a society governs itself, and that questions of right and wrong are more than matters of passing opinion. By its nature, religion rejects faint-hearted stabs at real virtue and dismisses the easy excuse that no one is perfect. Authentic religion insists that leaders—and everyone else—measure up rather than adjust the yardstick.

The point is not simply that religion is a powerful foundation for moral behavior—which was the insistent view of America's founders as they sought ways of preventing democratic liberty from descending into license. It's that religion can increase the fundamental humaneness of society. A religious outlook (not the outlook of every religion, to be sure, but certainly of the religions that historically shaped America) contends with both the immortal grandeur and the tragic fallenness of humankind. It calls attention to the narrow ridge we must traverse between essential human worth and essential human humility. Looking down one side of the ridge, a religious outlook warns that if human beings live no more meaningfully than animals, and die as conclusively, they will be seen to lack any value that differentiates them intrinsically from animals. Looking down the other side, it warns that if humanity is its own god, what may it not do? Neither prospect is reassuring for the momentous choices posed by modern public policy.

Religion in the public square stirs up deep and troublesome issues. Yet it seems far healthier that our modern, policy-minded democracy endure the disturbance than dismiss it. If traditional religion is absent from the public arena, humanity will invoke secular religions to satisfy its quest for meaning. It's not the history of the Crusades or 16th-century Europe's religious wars that's most relevant for us. It's the history of the 20th century. Throughout that century a succession of antidemocratic and antitheist political ideologies exploited people's yearning for meaning and social idealism. A godless faith in humanity as the creator of its own grandeur lay at the heart of communism, fascism, Maoism, and all the unnumbered horrors unleashed in that bloodiest of centuries. And adherents of traditional historical religions—individuals such as Martin Niemöller, G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Buber—warned most clearly of the tragedy that would come of humanity's self-deification and the mad attempts to build its own version of the New Jerusalem on earth. Prophetic warning voices such as theirs will be at least as valuable in the high-tech, low-culture world of the 21st century. □



# THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

*Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad*

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## *Debating Preemptive War*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

Seeking to justify its threatened war on Iraq, the Bush administration last summer boldly updated the idea of preemptive war and stamped it official doctrine. Was this a grand strategy for a new age of terrorism—or a global expression of the arrogance of power? Or was it, more prosaically, an unnecessary, potentially costly scholastic exercise?

“Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. . . . America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed,” President George W. Bush declares in the introduction to the annual *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Sept. 17, 2002, at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)).

International law has long recognized the right to preempt an imminent attack, says the document, but “the concept of imminent threat” must be adapted to the new realities.

Criticism has come from both left and right. Writing in *The Nation* (Oct. 28, 2002), Bruce Cumings, a University of Chicago historian, claims that “some of [the document’s] logic would flunk even a freshman class: as in preemptive attacks are OK for us, but other nations ‘should [not] use preemption as a pretext for aggression.’” In *The American Conservative* (Nov. 4, 2002), Andrew J. Bacevich, director of the Center for International Relations at

Boston University, charges that the Bush strategy, crafted by “zealots” who appear to recognize no limits to American power, is a prescription for “the progressively greater militarization of U.S. foreign policy.”

In *Foreign Policy* (Nov.–Dec. 2002), however, John Lewis Gaddis, the noted Yale University historian of the Cold War, finds the Bush doctrine of preemption persuasive—and potentially one of the most significant statements of strategy in U.S. history. “Who would not have preempted Hitler or Milosevic or Mohammed Atta, if given the chance?”

Gaddis lauds the Bush document’s treatment of terrorists and tyrants as equal dangers requiring a new strategy. Suicide bombers, for example, do not respond to deterrence. While the document calls for U.S. military hegemony, it also emphasizes—to a degree few pundits have noted—the need for cooperation among the great powers. Bush reasons that they will find U.S. power acceptable if it fosters stability and addresses the root cause of terrorism—not poverty but the absence of freedom. Thus, the final goal of the Bush strategy is to spread democracy everywhere.

Iraq, says Gaddis, “is the most feasible place where we can strike the next blow” after the victory over the Taliban in Afghanistan, and given the difficulty of finishing off Al Qaeda. If Saddam Hussein can be toppled, Gaddis

thinks, “we can set in motion a process that could undermine and ultimately remove reactionary regimes elsewhere in the Middle East, thereby eliminating the principal breeding ground for terrorism.” If his reading of the Bush strategy is correct, he says, then the national security strategy report could be “the most important reformulation of U.S. grand strategy in over half a century.”

But Michael Walzer, a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, New Jersey, and author of the acclaimed *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977), argues that the Bush strategy is misconceived, beginning with the use of the word *preemption*. “In the absence of evidence suggesting not only the existence of Iraqi weapons but also their imminent use, preemption is not an accurate description of what the president is threatening,” he writes in *The New Republic* (Sept. 30, 2002). “No one expects an Iraqi attack tomorrow or next Tuesday, so there is nothing to preempt. The war that is being discussed is preventive, not preemptive.”

**T**he traditional argument for preventive war is to avert a disruption of the existing balance of power by a rival state engaged in a military buildup, Walzer writes. “International lawyers and just-war theorists have never looked on this argument with favor because the danger to which it alludes is not only distant but speculative, whereas the costs of a preventive war are near, certain, and usually terrible.” In the modern era, in which weapons of mass destruction can be used without warning, the gap between preemptive and preventive war may be narrower, he acknowledges. Israel’s 1981 preventive attack on Iraq’s nuclear reactor, for instance, may also have been preemptive. But the Iraqi threat to the United States today, he says, is not as immediate as it was (and is) to Israel.

“People of goodwill may differ on how to apply just-war norms in particular cases, especially when events are moving rapidly and the facts are not altogether clear,” the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops notes (in a Nov. 13, 2002, statement at [www.ncbuscc.org](http://www.ncbuscc.org)). But the bishops, too, question “recent proposals to expand dramatically traditional limits on just cause to include preventive uses of military force to overthrow threatening regimes or to deal with weapons of mass destruction.”

But deterrence, which worked against the

Soviet Union, won’t work against terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, asserts former Clinton administration official Philip Bobbitt, writing in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Fall 2002). “Our fear is not that Saddam Hussein is going to attack New York or even attack Tel Aviv,” but rather that Iraq might slip nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons to terrorists.

Saddam’s past behavior, however, suggests that he is not undeterrable, contend three Brookings Institution scholars—Michael E. O’Hanlon, Susan E. Rice, and James B. Steinberg—in a working paper (Nov. 14, 2002) at [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu). “In 1990, the United States was unclear about its commitment to Kuwait prior to Iraq’s decision to invade; since Desert Storm, the United States has been clear, and Saddam has not again attacked a U.S. ally in the region.” Saddam knows that there’s a high risk of getting caught, and thus attacked, if he supplies terrorists with weapons of mass destruction. It’s “highly unlikely” he would do so.

Nevertheless, if Saddam possessed nuclear arms, he “would become much more dangerous in the region,” and the threat of a U.S. response might not deter him. But preventing him from acquiring nuclear weapons, they argue, does not require an expanded concept of preemption. That change “reinforces the image of the United States as too quick to use military force and to do so outside the bounds of international law and legitimacy”—and may encourage the administration to resort to force too quickly. And even as the new posture makes it harder for the United States to win international backing for its own use of force, it may also reduce America’s future ability to persuade other nations (e.g., India and Pakistan) not to use force. They, too, will be able to invoke the new concept.

The Brookings authors contend that the new doctrine was never needed, since the 1991 United Nations Security Council resolutions obliging Saddam to disarm were available. However, Walzer notes, “there was no will to enforce the inspection system” when it broke down in the mid-1990s—“not at the UN . . . not in Europe, and not in the Clinton administration.” And without the Bush administration’s threats of war, he believes, there would have been no effort to restore the UN inspections.

# Whither the Sprawl People?

"Where Democrats Can Build a Majority . . ." by John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, and "The Brawl in the Sprawl" by David Brooks, in *Blueprint Magazine* (Sept. 27, 2002), 600 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Ste. 400, Washington, D.C. 20003.

The last presidential election left the electoral map of the United States an intriguing patchwork of the red (Republican) and the blue (Democratic). It also left political soothsayers busily searching for portents of its future color scheme. *Blue* eventually, forecast Judis and Teixeira, coauthors of *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (2002). *Red*, predicts Brooks, a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*.

Despite the Republican successes last November, the Democrats stand to benefit from the spread of the postindustrial economy, in which "the production of ideas and services" looms large, argue Judis and Teixeira. "The Solid South [red in 2000] is unlikely to remain solid; some of the mountain and Midwestern states that are red are likely to go blue; and the blue states that Al Gore carried by small margins in 2000 are likely to get harder, not easier, for the Republicans to pick off."

The bluish new politics, according to their analysis, is being shaped by the growth of "ideopolises"—metropolitan areas in which the suburbs have become more urbanized. No longer merely bedroom communities, such suburbs provide professional, technical, and service jobs for an ethnically and racially diverse work force, and have become "extensions of the city."

"The politics of these ideopolises emphasizes tolerance and openness," write Judis and Teixeira. "It is defined by the professionals, many of whom were deeply shaped by the social movements of the '60s." In Boston, San Francisco, and some other postindustrial metropolises, a fourth of the jobs are held by professionals and technicians. Many ideopolises are in the North and West, Judis and Teixeira say, "but they are also in states like Florida and Virginia. Republicans are strongest in areas where the transition to postindustrial society has lagged," especially

in the Deep South and the prairie states.

Brooks has a different demographic vision: "The most important political divide in the coming decades . . . will be between . . . inner suburbs, which have large numbers of people at the top and the bottom of the income scale and are hence Democratic, and the faster-growing outer suburbs, which have greater similarity of incomes and are hence Republican."

"The suburbs around Atlanta now sprawl for hundreds of miles," Brooks points out. "In a few decades the greater Phoenix area will have almost 10 million people; it will be a more significant city than Chicago. Already, Mesa, Arizona, has a larger population than



St. Louis, Cincinnati, or Minneapolis."

The folks who live and work in the sprawl areas have no "regular contact with urban life," Brooks says. They have an emerging culture of their own. Neither red nor blue, "this new tribe is . . . a mix—a purple America. These are . . . the swing voters who will shape the destinies of both parties." Though they are largely apolitical now, says Brooks, their moderately conservative values—stressing order, responsibility, success, and sports—are in harmony with George W. Bush's. As the booming new suburbs develop, the purple "sprawl people" are likely to become redder, in his view. "I'd bet that the emerging majority is a Republican one—or at least that it can be."

## The Global Money Curse

"Financing Politics: A Global View" by Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, in *Journal of Democracy* (Oct. 2002), 1101 15th St., N.W., Ste. 800, Washington, D.C. 20005.

All around the free and quasi-free world, from Albania to Zambia, there has been no shortage of political finance scandals in recent years—and no shortage of ineffectual government measures to prevent them. Pinto-Duschinsky, a senior research fellow in politics at England's Brunel University, argues that it's time for a dose of realism.

"Laws are one thing; whether they are followed is quite a different matter," he notes. "In country after country, those investigating political financing receive the warning that laws are a dead letter or are honored in the breach." Consider, for example, regulations requiring public disclosure of the finances of parties and candidates. Of 114 countries on which information was available, 62 percent had such regulations, yet scholars who have studied them, says Pinto-Duschinsky, "have almost exhausted the vocabulary of contempt in describing [their] ineffectiveness." "Works of fiction," a specialist in France called them. About honest disclosure, a scholar in Italy said, "Hardly ever happens." "Just the tip of the iceberg," said another, in Japan, about the figures in the published accounts.

"Besides disclosure laws being ignored because of lack of political will to enforce them," Pinto-Duschinsky says, "such laws are frequently evaded because they apply

only to a limited range of political payments." Evaders simply use other channels, from secret presidential slush funds (as in Zambia) to "party taxes" on public officeholders (as in many countries).

More than half of the 143 countries ranked "free" or "partly free" by Freedom House in 2001 offer public funds to parties or candidates. But that's no solution, either. These subsidies "have clearly failed to cure the problem of corrupt political funding," observes Pinto-Duschinsky. Recipients, of course, do not stop looking for other funds. "Some of the most serious scandals have occurred in countries with generous public subsidies, such as France, Germany, and Spain."

Pinto-Duschinsky questions the conventional wisdom that the money-gobbling demands of campaign television ads encourage a lot of today's chicanery. In many parts of Asia and Africa where televisions are scarce, there's no shortage of financial abuse, and even in the United States, elections for hundreds of thousands of lesser posts occur with TV playing little or no role.

Reformers, he concludes, should put "more stress on the enforcement of a few key laws such as those on disclosure, and less on the creation of an ever-expanding universe of dead-letter rules."

## Dreaming of Direct Democracy

"Direct Democracy during the Progressive Era: A Crack in the Populist Veneer?" by Daniel A. Smith and Joseph Lubinski, in *The Journal of Policy History* (2002: No. 4), Saint Louis Univ., 3800 Lindell Blvd., P.O. Box 56907, St. Louis, Mo. 63156-0907.

The corruption of American politics has gone so far, some critics say, that even initiatives and popular referendums have become tools of special interests and other malign forces. Call it small comfort, but Smith, a political scientist at the University of Denver, and Lubinski, a law student at the University of Colorado at Boulder, argue that their home state's experience shows that direct democracy never had a golden age.

In 1912, after Progressive era reforms made direct democracy possible, Coloradans faced for the first time a blizzard of ballot initiatives and referendums—32 in all. An exciting three-way contest for president drew voters to the polls, as incumbent Republican William Howard Taft faced Democrat Woodrow Wilson and ex-president Theodore Roosevelt, running as the Progressive Party candidate. Yet direct

democracy didn't seem to stir much enthusiasm. On average, the ballot initiatives attracted votes from only 36 percent of those who voted for president. (However, 73 percent voted on a prohibitionist initiative, which went down to defeat.)

And even in 1912, long before television and campaign consultants, "special interests"—including public utility corporations, railroad companies, mining and smelting operators, and newspaper publishers—were busily manipulating the process for their own benefit. There were two initiatives to create a new body to regulate public utilities, one put forward by the progressive Direct

Legislation League, the other sponsored surreptitiously by the utility companies and designed to create a commission beholden to them. Perhaps confused, voters defeated both measures. (The state legislature subsequently created a progressive-backed regulatory commission.)

"Besides sponsoring ballot initiatives," write Smith and Lubinski, "vested economic interests also successfully placed on the ballot six popular referendums that expressly challenged reforms passed in 1911 by the progressive-leaning legislature." Voters endorsed five of the antiprogressive measures.

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

### *Too Much of a Good Thing?*

"The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action" by Alexander Cooley and James Ron, *International Security* (Summer 2002), 5 Cambridge Center, 4th Fl., Cambridge, Mass. 02142-1493.

Everyone's cheering the rise of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These groups, ranging from familiar brand names such as CARE-USA to the newer Doctors without Borders, can fight poverty, government corruption, and other global ills, say enthusiasts. Ultimately, power will shift from dysfunctional states to liberal private organizations. It's the dawn of a new global civil society!

Alas, there can be too much of a good thing, caution Cooley, a Columbia University political scientist, and Ron, a McGill University sociologist. As the number of international NGOs rises—it went from 1,000 to 5,500 between 1960 and 1996—competition for donor dollars drives them to act much like for-profits. They may aim to improve the world, but the focus on increasing market share, landing big contracts, and remaining solvent often leads to perverse results.

"Low barriers to entry," traditionally a virtue, may start the inefficiency ball rolling. In 1980, a total of 37 foreign relief agencies operated within one Cambodian refugee camp; in 1995, by contrast, 200 agencies flooded the refugee camps in Goma, the vortex of Hutu-Tutsi devasta-

tion in Rwanda. As a *Guardian* journalist put it, since aid had become "big, big money," any NGO "worth its salt recognized that it had to be in Rwanda."

Competition can lead to the squandering of aid: Money better spent abroad instead goes to grant-writers hoping for the same U.S. Agency for International Development (or United Nations, or World Bank) contracts. Duplicated efforts, endless rounds of meetings, and a growing tail-to-teeth ratio are other results. Worst of all, while competition may eliminate the inefficient, it can also eliminate some of the worthiest aid groups.

It's having to compete every six or 12 months to win a new contract that causes the worst problems, Cooley and Ron believe. The need to keep the money coming can encourage NGOs to hurt the very people they're supposed to help. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, NGOs brought in to help liberalize the economy encountered constant backsliding by local politicians. But because "donors often ask recipients whether the contractor's project should be renewed," the NGOs were reluctant to tattle. In Goma, "the refugee camps became de facto safe havens for Hutu fighters." In the

past, the aid givers likely would have put their foot down, but when one NGO contemplated a boycott of the camps in protest of the fighters' presence, another aid group quickly signaled its willingness to take over the contract.

"More is not always better and competition does not solely reduce waste," Cooley

and Ron warn. Market forces can homogenize groups and inhibit cooperation. The two scholars recommend that Western governments and other international-aid givers grant longer-term or nonrevocable contracts to NGOs. The groups themselves should search out funding from church groups and other alternative sources.

## *The Return of Tyranny*

"The New Age of Tyranny" by Mark Lilla, in *The New York Review of Books* (Oct. 24, 2002), 1755 Broadway, 5th fl., New York, N.Y. 10019-3780.

President George W. Bush, the United States, and the democratic West now face not an "axis of evil," but rather the uncharted expanse of "a new age of tyranny," argues Lilla, a professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. The "hollowness" of Bush's phrase reflects the West's conceptual unpreparedness to deal with this new challenge.

The totalitarian threat posed by Hitler's Germany and then the Soviet Union is past, Lilla notes, yet the West's long confrontation with that menace "still sets our intellectual compass," rendering us "less sensitive to tyranny in its more moderate forms." Thus, in the recent war in the Balkans, most

Europeans found it difficult to grasp that though Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic was not Adolf Hitler, he "still was a dangerous tyrant who had to be combated." A similar reluctance is evident today among Europeans and many Americans with regard to Iraq's Saddam Hussein.

"From Zimbabwe to Libya, from Algeria to Iraq, from the Central Asian republics to Burma, from Pakistan to Venezuela," says Lilla, "we discover nations that are neither totalitarian nor democratic, nations where the prospects of building durable democracies in the near future are limited or nil."

"Sooner or later," he writes, "the language of anti-totalitarianism will have to be



*The wave of the future? America may be forced to grapple with more leaders like Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi.*

abandoned and the classic problem of tyranny revisited.” From the ancient Greeks down to the Enlightenment, there was “a continuous tradition of political theory . . . that took the phenomenon of tyranny as its theoretical starting point, and the establishment of barriers against tyrannical rule as its practical aim. That tradition came to an effective halt with the French Revolution,” when political tyranny, understood chiefly as a deformation of absolute monarchy, seemed to disappear.

The ancient concepts of tyranny cannot simply be dusted off for use today, says Lilla, though many features of contemporary bad regimes—“political assassination, torture, demagoguery, contrived states of

emergency, bribery, [and] nepotism”—would be very familiar to earlier political thinkers. But the ancient Greeks limited their analysis of tyranny to areas where Greek was spoken, and medieval and early modern political thinkers mainly confined theirs to Europe. The need today is for concepts that apply universally.

“We live in a world,” Lilla says, “where we will be forced to distinguish, strategically and rhetorically, among different species of tyranny, and among different sorts of minimally decent political regimes that might not be modern or democratic, but would be a definite improvement over tyranny. As yet, we have no geographers of this new terrain.”

## *America's Pro-Arab Past*

“The Real Roots of Arab Anti-Americanism” by Barry Rubin, in *Foreign Affairs* (Nov.–Dec. 2002), 59 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

The 9/11 terrorist attack was “undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions.” So asserted Susan Sontag—and the first lady of American letters was not alone in her opinion. In this view, anti-Americanism in the Arab world is a rational response to U.S. policies. The problem, contends Rubin, editor of the *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, is that those policies, “if anything, have been remarkably pro-Arab and pro-Muslim over the years.”

Of the dozen major conflicts during the last half-century that have pitted Muslims against non-Muslims (e.g., Turkey versus Greece, Pakistan versus India, Bosnia versus Yugoslavia), Muslims against secular forces (e.g., Saudi Arabia and other monarchies versus Egypt), or Arabs against non-Arabs (Iraq versus Persian Iran), the United States almost invariably has sided with the Muslims or Arabs. The only important exception has been U.S. support for Israel, says Rubin, and “the United States has merely helped Israel survive efforts from Arab neighbors to remove it from the map.” In 1973, at the end of the October War, the United States forced a cease-fire on Israel, rescuing Egypt. “Washington then became Cairo’s

patron in the 1980s, providing it with massive arms supplies and aid while asking for little in return.”

Throughout the Cold War, writes Rubin, the United States “maintained its pro-Arab policy,” fearing that Arab regimes would side with the Soviet Union. Washington “wooed Egypt, accepted Syria’s hegemony over Lebanon, and did little to punish states that sponsored terrorism.” U.S. forces long stayed out of the Persian Gulf in order to avoid giving offense, finally entering “only when invited in to protect Arab oil tankers against Iran and to save Kuwait from Iraq. In Somalia, where no vital U.S. interests were at stake, the United States engaged in a humanitarian effort to help a Muslim people suffering from anarchy and murderous warlords.”

Why the prevalence of Arab anti-Americanism? Everybody from radicals to “moderate regimes” finds America-bashing a very useful, low-cost way of rallying support and distracting attention from their own shortcomings. Why the terrorist attacks? It’s the perception that America is not just a bully but a “paper tiger,” Rubin says, “that has encouraged the anti-Americans to act on their beliefs.”

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

## *Togetherness at the Top*

"When Two (or More) Heads Are Better than One: The Promise and Pitfalls of Shared Leadership" by James O'Toole, Jay Galbraith, and Edward E. Lawler III, in *California Management Review* (Summer 2002), Univ. of California, F501 Haas School of Business #1900, Berkeley, Calif. 94720-1900.

In the popular mind, and in Wall Street's, too, business leadership almost invariably comes in the form of a single dynamic individual—a Jack Welch or a Bill Gates. In reality, say the authors, shared leadership is common, and often more effective than the solo sort.

Running a large corporation these days frequently calls for more skills than any one person is likely to have, observe O'Toole, Galbraith, and Lawler, researchers at the Center for Effective Organizations at the University of Southern California. Since World War II, the trend "has been away from concentration of power in one person." This is reflected in—and also obscured by—the profusion of titles that have appeared at top corporate levels: chairman, chief executive officer

(CEO), chief operating officer (COO), and the like. Sometimes, the joint leadership is undisguised. The Amana Corporation, with business units in areas as different as farming and tourist services, divided leadership along industry lines among four coequals in 1995, and only then began to make steady profits.

Shared leadership, the authors point out, can come about in different ways: "from corporate mergers of equals, from cofounders, from the practice of two individuals sharing jobs, and from invitations from sitting CEOs to share power." Corporate mergers seldom produce successful teams at the top. Cofounders of a firm at least have chosen each other, but they, too, "often fail as coleaders because the skills needed to start a company are not the same

EXCERPT

### *Wall Street Socialism*

*Even the joys of Pentagon contracts negotiated by marketing vice presidents who used to be air force generals pale next to the achievements of the newest form of unfree enterprise: bailouts, the collectivization of private risk, and the emergence of a financial sector better protected by government rescues, preferences, and guarantees than manufacturing ever was by tariff protection. Milton Friedman has made the point that finance has flourished because it is protected by the Federal Reserve and is not allowed to fail.*

*Suffice it to say that without these ideological perversions and mutations, bank, stock market, and hedge fund failures would have occurred on a level—let us call it the free market in action—that would have made the stock market bubble impossible. . . .*

*Ironically, back in the early 1980s, center-Left strategists like Robert Reich, recently Clinton's labor secretary, endorsed the idea of a so-called Industrial Policy, by which government aid, strategy, and benign regulation would be used to promote the embattled manufacturing sector. It was dismissed by critics contemptuous of "lemon socialism."*

*What to make, then, of lemon financialism—"Wall Street socialism"? One would think this would be the battle cry of every American conservative who had ever read Friedman, Schumpeter, or Hayek. Instead, the conservative establishment gave it a wink, if not a salute.*

—Kevin Phillips, author of *Wealth and Democracy* (2002) and a key political strategist for Richard M. Nixon, in the premier issue of *The American Conservative* (Oct. 7, 2002)



as those needed to run it.” One exception is the case of William Hewlett and David Packard: Hewlett became the “heart” of their business machines firm, while Packard was “the hard-nosed businessman.”

Even Welch and Gates came to share power with others. In his two decades at the helm of General Electric, Welch had two or three vice chairmen (“elder statesmen”) in his office to complement his own skills. At Microsoft,

Gates turned over his CEO job to collaborator Steve Ballmer but remained chairman of the board and head of software research.

Dividing responsibilities may be the easy part. The bigger challenge, say the authors, is deciding how to split the credit. “Coleadership has worked at Intel and TIAA-CREF because executives . . . are able to share the credit, and it has failed at Disney and Citigroup because of the egos rampant in the executive suites.”

## *The Right to Bear Checks*

“Why Do We Use So Many Checks?” by Sujit Chakravorti and Timothy McHugh, in *Economic Perspectives* (2002: Third Qtr.), Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 230 S. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. 60604-1413.

Every month in the United States, more than 15 checks per person are written. That’s more than three times the number in Canada and at least 15 times the number in Italy and several other European countries. What happened to America’s commitment to the brave new checkless world?

Checks may be less efficient than electronic payments, according to Chakravorti and McHugh, a senior economist and a senior analyst, respectively, at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, but American consumers don’t see much individual benefit in quickly switching to the new format. While credit cards are now more popular than checks for point-of-sale transactions, total check volume went *up* in America during the 1990s, while it declined in most other industrialized countries. Of the nearly 50 billion checks written in the United States in 2000 (total value: \$48 trillion), consumers wrote slightly more than half.

Consumers perceive each check as virtually free. Instead of per check transaction fees, most prefer bank accounts with fixed monthly fees, or minimum balance requirements and no fees. In any case, the costs are hidden.

Checks are easy to use, widely accepted, and provide more control over the timing of payments, permitting better budgeting.

With the rapid increase in the use of check verification systems, most merchants now have little reason to stop accepting checks. The systems cut the cost of accepting checks to 60 cents per \$100 of sales, which is less than for any other form of payment, including credit cards (\$1.80) and even cash (90 cents).

And check services are a big business for financial institutions. “On average, they charge customers 21 cents and merchants five cents to process each check.” In 1995, they collected \$8.1 billion in fees for bounced checks while losing only \$400 million on bad checks. Even if banks wanted to discourage check usage by imposing a small fee for each check (as Norwegian banks did, thereby cutting check usage about 90 percent), competitive pressures might keep them from doing so. There are a few signs that consumers may be changing, but most seem to act as if the only way anybody will get their checkbooks away from them is by prying them from their cold, dead fingers.

### SOCIETY

## *Debating the Black Family*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

**T**he charge was to explore, in the words of *Salmagundi* (Winter–Spring 2002) editor Robert Boyers, “the situation of Afro-

America,” or, in Harvard University sociologist Orlando Patterson’s more specific ones, “the gender, family, and sexual problems of

African Americans,” at the dawn of the 21st century.

The ultimate issue was the plight of black children, 60 percent of whom grow up in fatherless households. Patterson, whose *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* (1999) was assigned reading for the 18 panelists gathered by the journal, acknowledged that he had changed his outlook since a similar roundtable almost a decade earlier. Then he had stressed unemployment and the absence of available jobs as the reason marriage was so unpopular among blacks; but now he suggested the reverse: “Men do not have jobs because they’re not married.”

At the root of the contemporary black reluctance to marry or cohabit in a stable union, said Patterson, is “the most profound tragic experience in Afro-American history, namely slavery and its aftermath.” Slaves did not even own their children, and fathers were especially irrelevant. Jim Crow and “the nightmare of lynching” carried on the emasculation, he said. The whole experience “was devastating culturally and psychologically.” This past, he said, “gave us the [gender] attitudes which largely account for our present problems.”

Kendall Thomas, a law professor at Columbia University, protested that “black people of all classes” in America today “continue to be menaced, threatened, subjected to violence of all sorts”—victims of “the ideology and the institutions of white supremacy.” He objected to the idea of “normative masculinity and normative heterosexuality” as a solution to “the perceived gender crisis in the black community.” Patterson was also faulted for slighting gay and other unions.

**B**ut Jacqueline Rivers, executive director of the Boston-based National Ten Point Leadership Foundation, which seeks to combat violence among inner-city youths, pointed out that homosexual unions are not the issue. “Clearly, what we have in the inner city are mostly short-term, heterosexual unions without any affiliated commitment to raising the product of those unions. That is what we have to deal with.”

Speaking “as a black woman and as a feminist,” Jill Nelson said she felt “ambushed” by

several panelists’ alleged implication “that black women’s commitment to feminism has to somehow be subverted to save the black man and the family.” Nelson, a journalism professor at New York’s City College, also said she was offended by “the whole notion of the so-called ‘nuclear family’ . . . I think we’ve got to expand and become inclusive about family.”

Most unmarried black women struggling to raise their children undoubtedly regret the absence of support from the fathers, observed Kendall Thomas. But “many young black men have not one, not two, not three but as many as four children by four different young African American women. They can only go home to one of them, if any, which leaves the rest of these kids with nothing.” He suggested that black churches and community centers should do more to help mothers.

“In most lower-class, working-class neighborhoods” there is a correlation between church attendance and marital stability, noted the Reverend Eugene Rivers, pastor of Azusa Christian Community in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood (and Jacqueline Rivers’s husband). Any practical program to aid the black poor, he said, will require a fresh appreciation of the functional role religion plays in their lives.

“It would be the height of bad faith,” commented James Miller, editor of *Daedalus*, for individuals without religious convictions, such as himself, “to suggest to other people that they should hold a religious belief . . . because it is sociologically convenient.” He wasn’t sure what can be done. “I suppose that if you’re fully committed to the principle of dyadic coupling, you might favor a state policy making it punitively difficult to divorce once you’ve coupled to raise children. But beyond something as drastic as that I don’t know where you’d go.”

Patterson, however, maintained that cultural attitudes often can be changed more readily than economic realities. “Over the past 50 years, America changed significantly from the system which we know as Jim Crow. Peoples’ attitudes do change.” It’s not enough, he admonished, to just “keep on saying it’s jobs, it’s jobs, it’s jobs.”

# The Lake Wobegone Effect

"The Dangerous Myth of Grade Inflation" by Alfie Kohn, in *The Chronicle Review* (Nov. 8, 2002), 1255 23rd St., N.W., Ste. 700, Washington, D.C. 20037.

At Harvard University and other campuses, a handful of administrators and professors have launched a loud attack on grade inflation. Harvard political scientist Harvey Mansfield, for instance, calls today's grading a scandal. But Kohn, author of *Punished by Rewards* (1993) and other books, contends that the real scandal lies elsewhere.

It's not even clear that grades at most colleges have been rising, he notes. After reviewing transcripts from more than 3,000 institutions, an analyst at the U.S. Department of Education concluded in 1995 that "grades actually declined slightly in the last two decades." A 2002 report found that one in three undergraduates in 1999–2000 had a grade point average of C or below—hardly a sign of lax grading standards.

Though it "may well be true" that grades at the most selective institutions are higher today than they used to be, Kohn says, that does not necessarily mean they are artificially inflated. The SAT scores of entering students at top schools have been going up in recent decades, so why not grades? Perhaps students are doing better work. And students are able to avoid poor grades by withdrawing from courses in which they're not doing well—an option not widely available decades ago.

Kohn adds that complaints about grade inflation are nothing new. At Harvard itself, a committee raised the issue as early as 1894.

Underlying today's campaign against grade inflation, Kohn argues, are certain dubious assumptions:

- *That professors should be sorting students for the benefit of future employers or graduate schools.* That's not a teacher's job, insists Kohn, and in

any case he says there is "growing evidence . . . that grades and test scores do not in fact predict career success."

- *That students should be encouraged to compete with one another for scarce A's and B's.* Instead of contriving to have the distribution of grades resemble the familiar bell curve, instructors should strive to have most students in their class learn "what they hadn't known before," Kohn argues.

- *That grades motivate.* But a desire to learn also can motivate, Kohn points out, and grade grubbing often undermines the love of learning. "Scores of studies have demonstrated that the more people are rewarded, the more they come to lose interest in whatever had to be done in order to get the reward."

Kohn's conclusion: "The real threat to excellence isn't grade inflation at all; it's grades."



*Searching for knowledge, or just a higher grade?*

## What Makes Johnny Gay?

“Opposite-Sex Twins and Adolescent Same-Sex Attraction” by Peter S. Bearman and Hannah Brückner, in *American Journal of Sociology* (Mar. 2002), Univ. of Chicago Press, Journals Division, 1427 E. 60th St., Chicago, Ill. 60637.

It’s commonly supposed these days (and enshrined in many textbooks) that biology plays the main role in determining an individual’s sexual orientation. Sociologists Bearman, of Columbia University, and Brückner, of Yale University, have found some evidence that suggests otherwise.

In a 1994–96 national study, 18,841 middle and high school youths were asked if they had ever had a “romantic attraction” to a person of the same sex; 9.5 percent of the boys and 7.8 percent of the girls said they had. (Far smaller percentages reported having an actual romantic or sexual relationship.)

What caught the authors’ attention was that 16.8 percent of boys with a twin sister reported romantic same-sex feelings, while less than 10 percent of boys with a twin brother did. Genetic influences could hardly explain that seven-percentage-point difference, they say.

Why are boys with a twin sister so much

more likely to show signs of a same-sex orientation? Bearman and Brückner suggest that because the twins are so similar, parents and other adults are more inclined to treat them alike—to give them a “less gendered upbringing.” Parents in such a situation may tend to be a little more permissive about behavior that might otherwise be branded “sissy.” (Boys with a sister who was not a twin were actually less likely than average to report same-sex romantic sentiments.) This may allow a genetic predisposition to a homosexual orientation, if such a predisposition exists, to come to the fore.

What about the girls with twin brothers? Only 5.3 percent of them reported a same-sex attraction. The authors argue that the twins’ “less gendered upbringing” has less impact on girls than on boys because “tomboy” behavior among girls is not normally considered as socially unacceptable as comparably unconventional behavior by boys is.

## Sociology’s Sad Decline

“Whatever Happened to Sociology?” by Peter L. Berger, in *First Things* (Oct. 2002), Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Ave., Ste. 400, New York, N.Y. 10010.

In 1963, Berger published a book called *Invitation to Sociology*. Still in print, it has attracted many students to the discipline over the decades. Alas, says the author, an emeritus professor of religion, sociology, and theology at Boston University, the picture he painted then of sociology “bears little relation to what goes on in it today. The relation is a bit like that of the Marxian utopia to what used to be called ‘real existing socialism.’”

Sociology enjoyed “a sort of golden age” in the 1950s, he says. At Harvard University was Talcott Parsons, who, despite his “terrible prose,” was erecting an imposing theoretical system that addressed the “big questions” that had preoccupied sociologists since the discipline’s birth in the late 19th century—“What holds a society together? What is the

relation between beliefs and institutions?” At the University of Chicago, there was “the so-called ‘Chicago school’ of urban sociology, which had produced a whole library of insightful empirical studies,” as well as the blend of social psychology and sociology fathered by George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). At Columbia University were two powerhouses of the discipline: Robert Merton, who espoused “a more moderate version” of Parsons’s “structural functionalism,” and Paul Lazarsfeld, “who helped develop increasingly sophisticated quantitative methods but who never forgot the ‘big questions.’” All of these thinkers had something to say that non-sociologists might find interesting and useful.

Unfortunately, other sociologists even

then were starting to let the “useful tool” of statistical analysis become a fetish, Berger says. They wanted the prestige of the natural sciences—as did the government agencies and foundations that provided sociologists’ research funds. The result: “increasingly sophisticated methods to study increasingly trivial topics.”

A second, even more “severe deformation,” Berger writes, came with the cultural revolution that began in the late 1960s. “The ideologues who have been in the ascendancy for the last 30 years have deformed science into an instrument of agitation and propa-

ganda,” alienating all who do not share their beliefs and values.

There still are some sociologists doing excellent work, according to Berger. And some, such as Harvard’s Orlando Patterson, address the “big questions.” But unlike the giants of the 1950s, these sociologists have created no new schools of thought.

As the public has become aware of the devastating changes, reports Berger, sociology has lost the prestige it once enjoyed, “lost its attraction to the brightest students, and lost a lot of its funding.” Can its demise, he wonders, be far off?

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# *The Totalitarian Puzzle*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

When Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* appeared in 1951, the West had only recently prevailed over Hitler’s Germany and now faced the menace of Stalin’s Soviet Union. *Origins* was the first major philosophical effort to deal with totalitarianism, and more than a half-century later it remains perhaps the most significant. But, as several of the 13 scholars who consider Arendt’s magnum opus in *Social Research* (Summer 2002) observe: *Origins* is as difficult and disjointed as it is erudite, imaginative, and provocative. The masterwork of the German émigré writer (1906–75) “defies any simple attempt to state a key thesis or argument,” notes Richard J. Bernstein, a professor of philosophy at New School University, “and it is difficult to find coherence among its various parts.” The book’s title itself is misleading, in that Arendt did not seek to uncover the immediate causes of totalitarianism. “It is even difficult to determine just what she means by totalitarianism and its distinguishing characteristics,” says Bernstein.



*Hannah Arendt in 1954*

The explanation for *Origins*’ confusing structure is simple, according to Roy T. Tsao, a political scientist at Georgetown University. “Arendt arrived at her basic views on totalitarianism only after she had already written nearly all” of the book’s first two parts, on anti-Semitism and imperialism. A third part was to deal with Nazism, which at the time she saw as the direct successor to imperialism. But her views changed sometime around 1947, and she came to regard Nazism and Bolshevism as species of totalitarianism. Arendt simply grafted her new theory onto the trunk of the old, revising the earlier parts only enough to avoid blatant

contradictions. To further complicate matters, in later editions she added a chapter, “Ideology and Terror,” that represented a still newer phase in her thinking, “displacing without fully dislodging the arguments of the one before,” writes Tsao.

Totalitarianism, in Arendt’s philosophical appraisal, represented a new kind of government, says Jerome Kohn, director of the Hannah Arendt

Center at New School University. “The hallmark of totalitarianism, a form of rule *supported* by uprooted masses who ironically and also tragically sought a world in which they would enjoy public recognition, was the appearance of what [she] called ‘radical’ and ‘absolute’ evil.” “Difficult as it is to conceive of an absolute [radical] evil even in the face of its factual existence,” Arendt wrote, “it seems to be closely connected with the invention of a system in which all men are equally superfluous,” including even, in their own fanatical minds, the “totalitarian murderers” themselves. Carrying out their logic of total domination, they aimed to transform human nature itself.

A theme that runs through all of Arendt’s thinking, says Bernstein, is the opposition between historical necessity and political freedom: “Totalitarianism is not something that *had to happen*. She rightly abhorred any suggestion that somehow it was the *inevitable* consequence of the Enlightenment, the history of metaphysics,

the nature of Western rationalism, modern bureaucracy, or modern technology. Like any disastrous contingent political event, it might have been prevented if individuals had collectively assumed the political responsibility for combating it.”

Arendt did not imagine that the totalitarian danger would pass with the demise of the Soviet Union. “Perhaps the most grim, disturbing, but realistic sentence in the entire book,” writes Bernstein, “comes near its conclusion, when she says, ‘Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man.’”

“Anyone who has lived through the uses of terror and torture, the massacres, genocides, and ‘ethnic cleansings’ that have occurred all over the world during the past few decades,” adds Bernstein, “is painfully aware of how strong and ever present these temptations are.”

## *Prostitution and Freedom*

“Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution” by Scott A. Anderson, in *Ethics* (July 2002), Department of Philosophy, Northwestern University, 1818 Hinman Ave., Evanston, Ill. 60208–1315.

Is prostitution “just another recreation-oriented service industry?” Proponents of legalizing sex-work in the United States say it is. Working outside the law, prostitutes have few legal protections and no right to unionize. Making sex-work criminal reinforces what philosopher Martha Nussbaum, of the University of Chicago, believes to be “an unjust prejudice of the sort that once denigrated the activities of women actors, dancers, and singers.”

Allowing prostitution might even be a social good, advocates contend. The freedom to use one’s body as one wishes seems a basic right. And it gives everyone at least some fall-back employment. Prostitution might gain public esteem as what City University of New York philosopher Sybil Schwarzenbach calls “erotic therapy,” and allow the sex worker to “be respected for her

wealth of sexual and emotional knowledge.”

Three kinds of arguments are usually made against legalization. One is based on traditional morality. A second asserts that prostitution spawns crime and disease. Finally, many feminists argue that prostitution furthers the degradation and subordination of women.

Anderson, a visiting professor of philosophy at the State University of New York at Albany, makes a fourth case. Sex for pay should be illegal, he asserts, because the chance to sell sex impinges on the seller’s freedom—what he calls her right to “sexual autonomy.” “If sexual autonomy means anything, it means that sex does not become a necessary means for a person to avoid violence, brute force, or severe economic or other hardships.” Recognizing sexual autonomy, in other words, requires barring any interchange between the bedroom and the



*Is this autonomy? Prostitution in Amsterdam's red light district is both legal and highly visible.*

marketplace. Sex cannot be “just another use of the body.”

If society does not acknowledge sexual autonomy and legalizes prostitution, he asks, what's to prevent an increase of pressure to provide “unwanted sex”? Imagine the eerie results. Would schools offer vocational training in sex-work? Might welfare-to-work programs demand that clients consid-

er prostitution as employment?

Legalized prostitution exists under tightly restricted conditions in a few places in Europe and elsewhere. But Anderson does not see how it advances sexual equality. Commerce, built on openness and mutual agreement, will always be at odds with intimate matters of sex, ever founded on privacy and self-determination.

## *How Many Muslims?*

“The Muslim Population of the United States: The Methodology of Estimates” by Tom W. Smith, in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fall 2002), Journals Fulfillment Dept., Univ. of Chicago Press, P.O. Box 37005, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

How many Muslims live in the United States? The news media have reported many estimates—most of them vastly inflated, according to Smith, who is director of the General Social Survey at the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center. And the estimates have become more inflated since 9/11.

During the past year, news media reports have put the Muslim population at between five and eight million. These calculations average out to 6.7 million, or 2.4 percent of the U.S. population. But about half of these estimates come from Muslim organizations such as the Islamic Society of North America; most of the rest come from general reference works such as *The World Almanac*. Not one, Smith writes, is “based on

a scientifically sound or explicit methodology. . . . All can probably be characterized as guesses or assertions.”

Smith thinks the most reliable numbers come from public-opinion surveys in which people are asked about their religious affiliation. He cites 11 surveys conducted since 1998. Their results: Muslims make up between 0.2 and 0.6 percent of the U.S. population. Allowing for the fact that language barriers and other problems probably lead to an undercount of Muslims, Smith estimates that America's Muslim population might constitute as much as 0.67 percent of the population. That's only 1.9 million people, a far cry from the five to eight million routinely suggested in the nation's newspapers and TV news shows.

PRESS & MEDIA

## Is J-School a Joke?

"Can J-School Be Saved?" by Jack Shafer, in *Slate* (Oct. 7, 2002), [www.slate.msn.com](http://www.slate.msn.com);  
"Some Ruminations on Journalism Schools as Columbia Turns" by Orville Schell, and  
"Getting Journalism Education Out of the Way" by Betty Medsger, in *Zoned for Debate*  
(Sept. 16, 2002), [www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/journal/forum](http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/journal/forum).

The prestigious graduate school of journalism at Columbia University, the sainted press critic A. J. Liebling once wrote, had "all the intellectual status of a training school for future employees of the A&P." Columbia president Lee Bollinger may not have harbored so subversive a view last summer when he suspended the search for a new dean and called for communal reflection on the school's purpose. But some have begun to think the unthinkable.

"The biggest losers in J-school abolition . . . would be (in order) the janitors who maintain the physical plants, the faculties, and the Annenbergs and Gannetts who've purchased naming rights to the buildings," maintains Shafer, a *Slate* columnist who is a former editor of the weekly *Washington City Paper* and never went to J-school himself.

A 1996 survey, he notes, found that only 10 percent of newspaper editors and reporters had graduate degrees in journalism (though 54 percent held undergraduate degrees in journalism or communications). "In the 17 years that I hired and fired," Shafer says, "none of the J-school graduates who worked for me did better work than the many English majors I've employed." Medsger, a freelance writer, found in 1996 that 59 percent of the journalists who had won a Pulitzer Prize in the preceding 10

years had never studied journalism in college or graduate school.

The schools do serve a limited function, Shafer concludes: They help would-be journalists who are clueless about how to proceed and have \$10,000 or so to spend explore their interest and land a "substantial" journalism job. But he urges Bollinger to warn prospective students that "you can get as good a journalism education via an internship or by working a year on a small-town daily."

For the most part, however, "media outlets" no longer "mentor and cultivate young journalists in the best traditions of the craft at the lower reaches of the professional ladder," argues Schell, the dean of the journalism school at the University of California, Berkeley, who also enjoyed a successful career in the field without benefit of a journalism degree. That function now belongs to the journalism schools.

Schell agrees with Bollinger on the need to transcend the trade school model. He argues that M.A. programs must last two years instead of the usual one, and that the schools must "broaden their curricula" to include history, culture, science, and other subjects that a journalist—or any educated person—ought to know about.

## The Jungle of Journalism

"Upton Sinclair and the Contradictions of Capitalist Journalism" by Robert W. McChesney and Ben Scott, in *Monthly Review* (May 2002), 122 W. 27th St., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Just as his novel *The Jungle* (1906) led to reform in the meatpacking industry, so Upton Sinclair's *The Brass Check* (1919), a searing critique of the commercial press, helped bring about the rise of journalistic professionalism and "objectivity." Sinclair, however, was not impressed, and he was right not to be, argue McChesney, a professor of communications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Scott, a

graduate student at the university.

"American journalism is a class institution serving the rich and spurning the poor," Sinclair declared. Newspaper publishing, once crowded with highly partisan dailies of diverse viewpoints, had become, by the turn of the 20th century, a big business, and much less competitive. Sinclair saw most journalists as little better than prostitutes, the authors write, and he "believed that, ultimately, those



who own, and hire, and fire, and set budgets determine the values of the medium.”

For observers less radical than Sinclair, the rise of professionalism and the construction of a “Chinese wall” separating a newspaper’s editorial and business sides came to be seen as solutions. The authors acknowledge that professionalism “has provided a measure of autonomy for journalists from commercial pressures, and it has placed a premium upon factual accuracy.” But Sinclair’s skepticism about “professional journalism’s basic claims of fairness and social neutrality” has been justified by subsequent developments. “In professional journalism,” the authors argue, “business is assumed to be the natural steward of society, while labor is seen as a less benevolent force and left politics generally are held in suspicion.”

Deregulation of broadcasting and “lax

enforcement” of antitrust laws, the authors say, have put “the U.S. media system in the hands of a small number of colossal conglomerates.” They pay high prices for media properties and demand high returns. “The logical result has been a reduction in resources for journalism, a decline in costly and controversial investigative reporting, and a softening up of journalistic standards.” Business journalism flourishes, while labor coverage has nearly vanished. And media owners have increasingly breached the “Chinese wall.” One prominent journalist, quitting his job as editor of *The Chicago Tribune*, said the “corporate takeover” of the news had killed journalism. He is not alone in that view. The situation today, conclude the authors, is “not entirely unlike the one found by Sinclair and his compatriots 80-plus years ago.”

## The Maxim Way

“Does Size Matter?” by Michael Scherer and “The Curse of Tom Wolfe” by Michael Shapiro, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (Nov.–Dec. 2002), 200 Alton Pl., Marion, Ohio 43302.

In our breakneck jet-set age, long-form magazine articles have shrunk so much that in some places they’ve *poof!* disappeared entirely, leaving only contrails of photos, captions, and ads. What remains is the *Maxim* model, bite-sized advice pieces, space-devouring illustrations, and grab ‘n’ go anecdotes, perfect for the “chronically over-stimulated.” The day of the high-impact narrative that gets people thinking and talking—and maybe even changes the world—is done.

Slow down a minute, writes Scherer, an assistant editor at *Columbia Journalism Review*. Lengthy, elaborate pieces are flourishing. Even *Maxim*, the successful sex ‘n’ sports “lad mag” whose editor sneers at such behemoths, regularly runs 4,000- to 5,000-word pieces.

The conventional wisdom has it that serious magazine journalism is a victim of time-pressured readers, especially young readers who have their eyes glued to the TV. That’s not all wrong. Surveys show, for example, that younger readers spend about 29 minutes reading each issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*, down from 43 a dozen years ago. Yet researchers at the University of Maryland report that Americans actually have

more free time than ever before, and that younger folk—single, childless, and often still in school—have tons of leisure time. Reading remains as popular as ever. And while magazine sales have been flat for 10 years, the number of magazines has jumped 40 percent.

Therein lies a clue to what really ails the long magazine article, Scherer believes: People have far more choices than ever before, not only in magazines but in all media. In some ways, this has fostered illusions about the decline of serious writing. Long articles often do look shorter and sweeter now, but often only because they’ve been fitted with pull-quotes, graphs, and other “access points” by editors desperate to claim readers’ attention. New niche-market magazines such as the shopping-obsessed, paragraph-phobic *Lucky* have been born, but there’s no evidence that they’ve stolen readers from what former *New Yorker* editor Tina Brown once quaintly called “text-based” magazines.

Shapiro, an assistant professor of journalism at Columbia University, doesn’t think long articles are a dead form, either. They’re just not much fun to read, he says. Most now follow the same rubric: “anecdote; set-up graph;

scene, digression, scene, quote from Harvard sociologist”—leading to “a numbing predictability.”

Of course, magazine journalism has come a long way since the 1950s. The New Journalism, that gritty, involved, first-person form popularized in the 1960s by Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson, and Joan Didion, was every English composition teacher’s dream: New Journalism showed and did not tell, and varied in form while making a point. But along the way, style dethroned the story, Shapiro claims. As Wolfe wrote in 1973, “The proof of

one’s technical mastery as a writer becomes paramount and the demonstration of moral points becomes secondary.”

A great magazine story can still make people take notice. A recent example: William Langewiesche’s 70,000-word serialized report on the recovery of the World Trade Center site in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The biggest threat to the long-form article, Scherer suggests, isn’t pea-brained readers, but editors who believe their own condescending blather about what readers want.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

### *King Sugar*

“Sugar Rush” by Karen Schmidt, in *New Scientist* (Oct. 26, 2002),  
151 Wardour St., London, England W1F 8WE.

Move over, DNA, so-called blueprint of life! There’s a new player in town, one that’s actually been here all along but has been dismissed as unimportant. Now scientists know better: Sugar molecules play a leading role in the intricate drama of life.

“Until recently, biologists thought that living things used [sugar molecules] mainly for storing energy, as a structural material (in the form of cellulose, for example) or perhaps as mere decorations on the surfaces of cells,” says Schmidt, a California-based science writer. It turns out, however, “that sugars are involved in almost every aspect of biology, from recognizing pathogens, to blood clotting, to enabling sperm to penetrate an ovum.”

One reason sugar molecules remained hidden in plain sight for so long is their daunting complexity. They are built up from simple sugars, such as glucose, which are linked together in massive molecules that can contain more than 200 units. Often they form chains, but they also take the form of “intricately branched structures that decorate the surfaces of cells like a forest of sugary filigree.” In addition, atoms can be attached to the basic simple sugars, subtly altering their properties.

“Although genes don’t code for sugars themselves, in the way they code for proteins, they do code for the enzymes that our bodies use to build the sugars,” explains Schmidt.

Biologists began to open their eyes to sugars’ vital role in the late 1980s, when researchers isolated the first gene for an enzyme that adds sugars to fats and proteins, a process called glycosylation. In 1994, a team of researchers led by Jarney Marth at the University of California, San Diego, “found that unborn mice in which one glycosylation enzyme had been disabled developed misshapen hearts and died before birth.” Another mutation caused mice to develop an autoimmune illness like the human disease lupus. The discovery that people who lack a key sugar on a protein that transports iron into cells develop liver disorders and other problems led to a hunt for other such sugar defects, notes Hudson Freeze, a researcher at the Burnham Institute in La Jolla, California. Since the mid-1990s, 13 genetic disorders have been identified as “congenital disorders of glycosylation.” Even many common diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, have been found to have a sugar link.

Scientists now consider sugars so important that they’ve given them “an ‘ome’ of their own,” says Schmidt. “Just as the ‘genome’ of a creature refers to its entire set of genes, and its ‘proteome’ to its set of proteins, the ‘glycome’ of an organism or cell encompasses all the sugars it makes.” “This is one of the great frontiers of biochemistry,” says biochemist Gerald Hart of Johns Hopkins University. “We are where DNA was in 1950.”

# Attack of the Mustard Plants!

“Here Come the Hyper-Accumulators!” by Niall Kirkwood, in *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 2002–Winter 2003), 48 Quincy Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Aficionados of 1950s horror flicks who think they know everything there is to know about voracious plants might be surprised to learn that scientists are now enlisting certain strains of feisty flora in the fight against artificial toxins. This budding field is known as *phytoremediation*.

Kirkwood, director of the Harvard Design School’s Center for Technology and Environment, says there are three main branches of natural environment-scrubbers. First are the plants known collectively as *phyto-accumulators*, such as the Indian mustard plant, whose leaves and shoots can absorb toxic substances from soil; the leaves can then be harvested and disposed of several times during the growing season. This process has been used to extract lead from the grounds of a former battery factory, and was also used after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident to remove radioactive cesium and strontium from the soil.

A second, much slower process, called

*phytodegradation*, utilizes the enzymes secreted by certain toxin-resistant plants to break down harmful chemicals in the soil around their roots.

The final group of cleaners, represented by willow and poplar trees, uses hydraulic control to pump contaminated water up from their deep root systems to transpire it through their leaves.

Why turn to plants when there is a billion-dollar cleanup industry already in place? Because plants can be just as effective in dealing with some toxins, and at a fraction of the cost. Kirkwood cites a 1998 Environmental Protection Agency study demonstrating that mustard plants could reduce lead levels from 1,200 parts per million to below 400 parts per million (an acceptable level) at a projected cost of \$60,000 to \$100,000 per acre. Cleaning an acre this way requires the disposal of just 500 tons of mustard plants. The conventional approach would require hauling away 20,000 tons of contaminated soil, at a cost of \$600,000. Small



LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS © 1986 The Geffen Film Company. All Rights Reserved.

Little Shop of Horrors’ Audrey II was a people muncher, but now scientists are discovering a number of real-life plants that can help clean up the toxic messes that people leave behind.

wonder that the domestic market for phytoremediation is expected to grow from well under \$100 million in 2000 to between \$235 million and \$400 million by 2005.

The downside to phytoremediation is that it takes time for the plants to do their work. Such

techniques, says Kirkwood, “will make sense only if there are appropriate growing conditions, contaminant densities, and aeration of the soil.” But phytoremediation can also allow contaminated sites to be partially inhabited even while the cleanup is going on.

## *The Daughterless Gene*

“The Plot to Kill the Carp” by Todd Woody, in *Wired* (Oct. 2002), 520 Third St., 3rd Fl., San Francisco, Calif. 94107-1815.

Eight years ago, Australian wildlife officials were alarmed to discover environmentally destructive European carp—which are already dominant in mainland Australia’s waterways—swimming among the rare native fish in Tasmania’s Lake Crescent. Carp, writes Woody, a Sydney-based journalist, are “the Borg of the fish world.” Uprooting aquatic vegetation, they turn clear-running water muddy, depriving native fish of food, light, and oxygen.

Authorities held the rapidly multiplying Lake Crescent invaders in check by lowering the lake’s water levels and denying them space to spawn. But Australian scientists now believe they have a better solution: “daughterless” genes.

“Biologists have long known that female fish develop when an enzyme called aromatase transforms androgen into estrogen,” notes Woody. If aromatase were chemically blocked, fish could be made to produce only males. Biologist Ron Thresher and his colleagues developed a gene to do exactly that. As carp injected with daughterless genes produce single-sex offspring, “the population of each targeted river or lake will eventually drive itself to extinction.”

That’s the idea, at least. The scientists have

already proved they can develop a daughterless gene for the zebra fish, a two-inch cousin of the carp. Next comes the destructive, fast-breeding mosquito fish. If that effort is successful, work on the daughterless carp will begin.

Skeptics such as Bob Phelps, director of the Australian Gene Ethics Network, worry about the unknowable consequences of releasing “millions of genetically engineered fish into complex ecological systems.” Woody describes “the nightmare scenario: Daughterless carp somehow escape to other parts of the world and breed with dozens of closely related species. Or they evolve in unforeseen ways into superpests.” Thresher, however, says the daughterless carp would be introduced to a target population only gradually over many years, so there would be plenty of time to halt the process if something went awry.

With the continuing spread of destructive alien species around the world, defensive genetic technologies are also likely to spread, says Woody. Scientists and regulators who are dealing with the influx of alien species in North America’s Great Lakes, for example, are interested in the new technologies as a way of dealing with invaders such as the big head carp, a 50-pound monster from China.

### ARTS & LETTERS

## *How Blue Can You Get?*

“A Distinctly Bluesy Condition” by Carlo Rotella, in *The American Scholar* (Autumn 2002), 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., 4th Fl., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Buddy Guy’s blues guitar playing, “as instantly recognizable as his voice, can be shrewdly pent up, but when he lets himself go—which is most of the time—it soars

wildly over the top in a torrent of fast, loud, often distorted notes that regain their purity when sustained on a bent string pinned to the fingerboard.” That’s one of the characteristics

that have put the 62-year-old Guy squarely in the middle of an argument over the state of Chicago blues, writes Rotella, an English professor at Boston College.

Guy grew up in Lettsworth, Louisiana, and followed the well-worn track to Chicago in 1957, just in time to play a part in the golden age of Chicago-style electric blues. His name easily sidles in among those of the greats, now mostly departed: Muddy Waters, Junior Wells, Magic Sam, and others. But the city's blues scene started to break up during the mid-1960s. Shaking off the initial shock of urban life, black audiences increasingly found the music's "down home" sounds antique, while teenagers in thrall to the rock and soul music that borrowed so freely from the blues couldn't relate to the adult perspective of most blues songs. And the landscape of Chicago itself changed, as the South Side Bronzeville neighborhood that had long sustained the music disintegrated.

Today, the Chicago blues scene has shifted to a very different kind of neighborhood, including the affluent North Side lakefront, and a very different kind of audience. A white audience. That's roughly where the arguments start.

Critics such as Bill Dahl see the story of Chicago blues as a long slide since the '50s. They "see a once-vital genre reduced to a hot-licks subset of guitar rock, a new Dixieland (with 'Sweet Home Chicago' in the role of 'When the Saints Come Marching In') designed to satisfy tourists seeking the rock aesthetic's equivalent of the source of the Nile," writes Rotella.

The critics smell the stink of inauthenticity, with black musicians "playing white" and white musicians straining to "sound black" in pursuit of the new blues audience.

And then there's Buddy Guy, wailing away like some white "abstractionist guitar hero," an Eric Clapton or Jimmy Page. In classic Chicago blues, notes Rotella, hot guitar playing advertised itself as "an extension of the

human voice raised in song." In the new "postindustrial" blues, the guitar rules. And Guy is the case in point.

He is the dominant figure on the Chicago blues scene. He has an international reputation, his own successful South Loop blues bar, and, at long last, a solid recording contract. He's even appeared in a Gap ad. Guy is among those—such as Chicago's commissioner of cultural affairs, Lois Weisberg—who see the new Chicago blues as a triumph for the musicians (who, after all, didn't have to make up all those old songs about hard times), the city, and the



*Chicago guitarist Buddy Guy hits a satisfyingly blue note during a concert in Ohio in the 1990s.*

racers. The blues belongs to everybody, they proclaim.

Rotella himself comes down squarely on both sides. Yes, Guy acts like a rock guitar wizard, but you could hear that in his music in the 1950s, too. "His music reposes in a bed of changes and contradictions—a complicated situation, both decline and renaissance and also neither."

## The Mama of Dada

"Gertrude Stein Comes Home" by Seymour I. Toll, in *The Sewanee Review* (Spring 2002), 735 University Ave., Sewanee, Tenn. 37383.

When Gertrude Stein returned to America to begin her now-legendary lecture tour in 1934, it seemed that no one, perhaps not even the author herself, knew what Stein's writing was all about. "I wonder if you know what I mean," she mused to her audience on one occasion. "I do

Philadelphia attorney. By the time of Stein's homecoming, she had been living the comfortable life of an expatriate American intellectual in Paris for more than 30 years. With her partner, Alice B. Toklas, she had gained a certain renown for her salons (she befriended Picasso and Hemingway), her unconventional attire (sacklike dresses and thick stockings, "as if she wanted to be seen as a promenading stump"), and her impenetrable, "numbing" prose. The work she always considered her masterpiece, *The Making of Americans*, published in Paris in 1925, sold about 100 copies. It consists of 904 pages of sentences such as this: "Soon then there will be a history of every kind of men and women and of all the mixtures in them, sometime there will be a history of every man and every woman who ever were or are or will be living. . . ."

In 1933, Stein temporarily broke with her own literary conventions to publish a book written in comprehensible English, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (serialized in *The Atlantic Monthly*), though it retained one signature convention: It was Stein writing about Stein. The book put her in the public eye. She also wrote the libretto for Virgil Thomson's 1934 opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*, which Toll compares to the writing of Dr. Seuss. The artsy crowd loved it. A few critics of the time—like some today—championed Stein as a kind of founding mother of modernism. But



Gertrude Stein (left) with Alice B. Toklas on board the S.S. Champlain, bound for New York in October 1934.

not quite know whether I do myself." Yet Stein was such a celebrity that 15 reporters sailed out to meet her ship in New York harbor.

Though she's been dead since 1946, Stein's celebrity remains as intact as the mystery of how she won it, writes Toll, a

her disavowal of punctuation (“necessary only for the feeble-minded,” she claimed), chronology, and recognizable syntax flummoxed the American reading public, and even the great critic and early Stein supporter Edmund Wilson eventually threw up his hands.

On tour, Stein charmed the crowds by playing the “lighthearted aunt,” mixing witty aperçus with surprisingly straightforward talk. The reporters who dogged her steps hoping to make her seem a joke were instead made to look like “dullards,” says Toll. “Why don’t you write the way you talk?” one demanded. “Why don’t you read the way I write?” Stein shot back. She showed a natural instinct for self-

promotion. For example, she limited the number of tickets sold to each lecture, ensuring that wherever she traveled, she would be the hottest attraction in town. Everybody clamored for face time with the new literary sensation. Stein, who was a conservative Republican, gladly had tea with Eleanor Roosevelt and dinner with Charlie Chaplin.

Stein’s incomprehensible prose became a running joke, inviting parodies in *The New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair*. The dust jacket of one of the 26 books she published during her lifetime bore this note from publisher Bennett Cerf: “I do not know what Miss Stein is talking about. I do not even understand the title. I admire

#### EXCERPT

### *Naipaul’s Truths*

*Last December, on the day after being presented with the Nobel Prize for literature, V. S. Naipaul sat down in Stockholm for a televised conversation with three fellow literary laureates, Günter Grass, Nadine Gordimer, and Seamus Heaney, and with Per Wästberg, a member of the Swedish Academy. One might have expected that the topic under discussion would be writing and literature, but the Nobelists soon turned to politics. Naipaul, alone in resisting this direction, protested that he is not political: He just writes about people. “Perhaps that’s too frivolous,” he suggested slyly. Gordimer, perhaps failing to understand that there was more than a little irony in the air, and that in Naipaul’s view writing about people, far from being frivolous, is in fact precisely what a serious writer does, was quick to challenge his self-characterization, insisting: “Your very existence as a boy living under colonial rule in Trinidad was political!”*

*This was, needless to say, meant as praise. To many members of the literary (and academic) establishment, after all, colonialism is the paramount literary theme and political issue of our time, and to be a child growing up in a colonial setting is to fill a strictly defined role in a familiar morality play. It is to be a victim, and thus a figure of virtue, and thus, of course, political. And to be political is to be serious. (In such circles, indeed, politics is the ultimate seriousness.) For Naipaul, contrarily, who was that boy in Trinidad (he was born in Chaguanas, a village of 1,500 that his father sardonically called “the peasants’ paradise”), and who would certainly place colonialism at the head of his own list of literary themes, to be truly serious is to transcend the merely political. To be serious is to notice and remember the specifics, the contradictions, the ambiguities, to honor the whole human person rather than to reduce him or her to a one-dimensional symbol of virtuous victimhood or (for that matter) anything else. It is to tell the truth about the world, however much that truth may confound ideology, rather than (as Naipaul himself put it in his Nobel Prize speech) to turn “living issues into abstractions.”*

—Bruce Bawer, author of *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity*,  
in *The Hudson Review* (Autumn 2002)

Miss Stein tremendously, and I like to publish her books, although most of the time I do not know what she is driving at. That, Miss Stein tells me, is because I am dumb.”

Perhaps the secret to Stein’s continuing fame lies in the lingering idea that we’re just not getting it. More than 50 years after her death, she’s the subject of new

publications, websites, and academic conferences. Lexus ads make knowing allusions to Stein’s work, and journalists quote her—“Remarks are not literature,” she once quipped. “Legends endure because their meaning persists,” writes Toll. “Yet the Stein legend flourishes even though its meaning has always been a mess. Its point is pointlessness.”

## *The Art Museum Comes Home*

“A World Changed? Art Museums after September 11” by James Cuno, in *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences* (Summer 2002), 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Tom Krens, director of New York City’s Guggenheim Museum, thought he had a can’t-miss formula: “Great collections, great architecture, a great special exhibition, a great second exhibition, two shopping opportunities, two eating opportunities, a high-tech interface via the Internet, and economies of scale via a global network.” The museum opened flashy new branches in Bilbao and Las Vegas. Then came the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the Guggenheim was forced to lay off 20 percent of its staff. But the crisis for the Guggenheim and other museums is not just about money, argues Cuno, director of Harvard University Art Museums. The more significant issue is how museums “see their role changing as a result of those tragic events.”

The Guggenheim experienced phenomenal growth during the 1990s, but its ambitious global museum network eroded its endowment; more than \$23 million was shifted into its operating budget during 1999 and 2000. The New York museum relied heavily on tourist dollars to succeed, with more than 70 percent of its visitors coming from outside New York City, and 50 percent from abroad. When the terrorist attacks slashed those numbers by more than half, the museum’s finances suffered.

Many museums followed the Guggenheim model, embarking on major building expansions, opening restaurants and gift shops, and booking blockbuster exhibitions to attract more paying customers from out of town. There’s the problem.

They became ever more dependent on tourist dollars. More important, they started to forget what art museums really ought to be all about: the joy of art.

Cuno advocates the “better, surer strategy” of cultivating the museums’ “host communities.” By this he means developing life-long connections between the people who live closest to the museum and its permanent collections, connections that can lead to the kind of unrestricted donations that are the lifeblood of thriving museums. Curators would return to their more traditional roles as collection builders and researchers and move “away from the idea of the curator as ‘producer,’ as one curator recently described herself in a *New Yorker* profile.”

This strategy would take museums away from hunting for what Cuno calls “risky dollars” and making deals of the sort that have created an uproar over the nature of the sponsorship of the Brooklyn Museum’s *Sensation* exhibition and the since-aborted “hall of achievement” at the Smithsonian Institution.

While it may be too early to declare a universal victory for the “new, inwardly directed museum in place of the old, outwardly directed museum,” Cuno sees many hopeful signs. “Whereas one once heard museums described as contested sites, where ideas and social identities were in contest, one now hears museums described as sanctuaries, places of retreat, sites for spiritual and emotional nourishment and renewal.”



## *Too Much Testosterone?*

"A Surplus of Men, A Deficit of Peace" by Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea Den Boer, in *International Security* (Spring 2002), MIT Press Journals, 5 Cambridge Center, 4th Fl., Cambridge, Mass. 02142-1493.

In medieval Portugal, only the firstborn sons of noblemen could inherit land and property, depriving their younger brothers not only of wealth but any possibility of marriage. These solo "cadets" were a cause of turmoil at home and the fuel for Portugal's vigorous imperial expansion abroad. By the mid-16th century, almost 25 percent of Portugal's male nobles were dying in battle—which may not have entirely displeased Portugal's monarchs, who were trying to maintain stability at home.

Hudson, a political scientist at Brigham Young University, and Den Boer, a doctoral student at the University of Kent at Canterbury in Britain, fear there's a parallel between the Portuguese past and present-day developments in China and India,

where sex-determined abortions and female infanticide have produced an unnatural surplus of young men. China, with a total population of 1.3 billion, has 13 million more males than females in the 15–34 age group, while India, with a total population of one billion, has an oversupply of nearly 16 million. The surpluses will roughly double by 2020, Hudson and Den Boer project.

These unattached men pose at least as great a threat—probably greater—to domestic tranquility as the Portuguese cadets did and increase the danger of international conflict. "In a marriage market where women are scarce and thus able to 'marry up,'" the authors write, the "surplus" young men will be societal "losers"—likely "to come from the lowest socioeconomic class" and to be

EXCERPT

### *Sikkim's Silences*

*English was supposed to be the most abundant language in the world. All those words like gestalt and pasta and déjà vu, welcomed in from other languages. But no matter how many words it adopted, English could never seem to liberate itself from the logic of its own construction. I was the English teacher, but looking back, I don't think I truly appreciated the difficulty of what we were trying to accomplish, which was to enable those kids to express their own worldview in English.*

*Sikkimese was a language without sentences, sometimes without subjects, and spoken mostly in the passive voice. It was a language that constantly pointed out the inadequacy of words and sang the praises of silence. Once, I made a list of different ways to say "keep quiet" and got up to twelve without any effort at all.*

*Sometimes I thought this appreciation of silence was the effect of Buddhism trickling down into the language, but at other times I thought it was due to the steep terrain. All the huffing and puffing up and down mountains made talking seem superfluous. Or maybe it was the way that things, even ordinary things like cars and boats, became so imbued with life that what seemed like mythical stories to me were perfectly normal to the kids in my classes. It wasn't just people from long ago who had flown or turned into rainbows or learned the languages of birds. It was someone's aunt or grandfather or cousin. Who would care about talking if it were possible to fly or dissolve into a rainbow instead?*

—Maria Lauenstein, a Massachusetts writer, and former English teacher in Sikkim, an Indian state in the Himalayas, in *Ruminator Review* (Fall 2002)

rootless transients, unemployed or underemployed. In other words, they are doubly prone to vice and violence.

Hudson and Den Boer believe there's a relationship between violence against women within a society and violence "within and between" societies. "Exaggerated gender inequality," they argue, leads to heightened internal instability.

Even if begun now, efforts to reduce female infanticide and abortion for sex selection would not right the gender imbalance "for a generation or more." Hudson and Den Boer worry that the problem may undermine democracy in India and halt its

progress in China. There's some evidence that the regimes in both countries are already resorting to some of the time-honored means of thinning the ranks of violence-prone young men: recruiting them into police or military units, involving them in massive and dangerous public-works projects, and dispatching them overseas as colonists or migrant workers. Beijing, for example, is expanding its People's Armed Police and filling its ranks with what one observer calls "the dregs." Or, like the monarchs of 16th-century Portugal, the two governments may be tempted to send their surplus young men abroad "to die in some glorious national cause far from home."

## *The Resilient Swedish Model*

"Globalization and Taxation: Challenges to the Swedish Welfare State" by Sven Steinmo, in *Comparative Political Studies* (Sept. 2002), SAGE Publications Ltd., 6 Bonhill St., London EC2A 4PU, England.

In the early 1990s, the future looked bleak for the vaunted "Swedish model." To compete internationally, many predicted, Sweden would have to cut taxes and reduce its famously lavish welfare state. It hasn't worked out that way, reports Steinmo, a political scientist at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The Swedish model featured "very high marginal tax rates softened with very deep tax loopholes," he notes. Personal income and consumption were heavily taxed, but capital gains and corporate income were not. The Swedish government showered socialist corporations with tax incentives to invest at home.

By 1990, taxes had reached more than 60 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Expanding government programs and rising public employee wages had driven up tax rates, and inflation had pushed ordinary taxpayers into the upper tax brackets. Meanwhile, leading industries—mining, steel, shipbuilding, and automaking—faced growing foreign competition. Swedish employers complained that the tax incentive system made it hard to shift low-skill work abroad and "focus their Swedish investment where Sweden had a comparative advantage (i.e., where highly specialized skills were needed)," says Steinmo.

In 1991, Carl Bildt's new center-right government introduced what was called the "tax reform of the century." Income tax rates were cut across the board; the top rate dropped from more than 80 percent to 50 percent. "Tax expenditures" (aka loopholes) were hacked back. Bildt cut the marginal tax rate on corporate profits, and all capital income faced a flat 30 percent rate.

"Tax levels were still quite high," Steinmo says, but it appeared to many observers that "the public commitment to maintaining a progressive tax system" had vanished. Then a grinding recession drove the unemployment rate, which since World War II had never been higher than four percent, into double digits. Even so, when the long-ruling Social Democrats returned to office under Ingvar Carlsson in 1994, they began trimming certain social welfare benefits.

But the Swedish model was secure. The welfare cuts were not deep, and Carlsson raised the top marginal income-tax rate on the richest Swedes even as he cut the value-added tax on food by half. Tax revenues, especially from capital gains, *increased* during the decade. The government's share of GDP has dropped only a few percentage points, to around 57 percent. Reports of the death of the Swedish welfare state were, it seems, greatly exaggerated.

# CURRENT BOOKS

*Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction*

## *Prudence in Jurisprudence*

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*FIRST AMONG EQUALS:*

*The Supreme Court in American Life.*

By Kenneth W. Starr. Warner. 320 pp. \$26.95

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*NARROWING THE NATION'S POWER:*

*The Supreme Court Sides with the States.*

By John T. Noonan, Jr. Univ. of California Press. 203 pp. \$24.95

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*Reviewed by David J. Garrow*

Both Kenneth W. Starr and John T. Noonan, Jr., were among President Ronald Reagan's best-known nominees to the federal courts of appeal, which rank just below the Supreme Court in the American judicial hierarchy. Noonan, who still sits on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals as a senior judge, has written a shelf-load of distinguished books on religious and legal history but is perhaps most widely recognized as a leading scholarly critic of *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and legalized abortion. Starr, who stepped down from the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in 1989 to become solicitor general, the federal government's lead lawyer before the Supreme Court, is of course more widely remembered for his subsequent tenure as independent counsel investigating President Bill Clinton.

Starr's wide-ranging survey of the modern Supreme Court since the 1969 retirement of Chief Justice Earl Warren is an erudite historical essay, but *First Among Equals* is also a much more substantively opinionated piece of work than readers

might immediately appreciate. Starr's most visible theme is his praise of the post-Warren Supreme Court as "a more lawyerly tribunal" that "has become increasingly dedicated to stability and moderation." In significant part, as Starr notes, this alteration in the Court stems from the fact that every new justice since 1968 "has been a person of the law, not of politics," a huge change from earlier eras in which judicially inexperienced public figures such as Senator Hugo L. Black of Alabama and California governor Warren were named to the high bench. Some modern nominees, such as Clarence Thomas, may have had relatively brief judicial careers before their ascension to the Court, but every nominee since Lewis F. Powell, Jr., and William H. Rehnquist in 1972 has been a sitting jurist from a federal or (in the case of Sandra Day O'Connor) state court.

But Starr's recurrent praise of "a Court dedicated to stability, not change," has its limits and exceptions, given that Starr also asserts that the present-day Court "ought to



*A rare public gathering of the Supreme Court: From left, Chief Justice William Rehnquist, with Justices John Paul Stevens, Sandra Day O'Connor, Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, David Souter and Clarence Thomas (both behind Kennedy), Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer.*

be more willing to reassess its prior constitutional decisions” than it has been over the past decade. Starr’s number one candidate for reconsideration and reversal is *Roe v. Wade*, which he terms “unspeakably unacceptable,” but his feelings are equally strong concerning *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), which the Rehnquist Court reconsidered but then forcefully reaffirmed in *Dickerson v. United States* (2000), with a 7 to 2 majority opinion written by none other than Chief Justice Rehnquist. Careful Court watchers know that on many issues, Rehnquist as chief justice has been a far more moderate and restrained voice than he was as a junior conservative on the Burger Court between 1972 and 1986. Still, his longstanding antipathy toward *Miranda* made his *Dickerson* opinion especially remarkable. Starr asserts that “overruling *Miranda* would have been the best result,” and he terms *Dickerson* a regrettable example of “how restrained and cautious the Rehnquist Court tends to be.”

Yet two glaring contradictions mar Starr’s overall portrait of the Rehnquist Court. One, concerning *Bush v. Gore*

(2000), Starr confronts forthrightly, albeit only at the very end of *First Among Equals*. He correctly notes that “the most significant fact” about the case was that the high court “chose, twice, to become involved at all,” and he perceptively identifies crucial moments at the oral arguments when, first, a comment by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and, second, an unintended concession by Vice President Al Gore’s counsel, David Boies, marked turning points in the Court’s handling of the Florida dispute. But, perhaps surprisingly to some, Starr is openly uncomfortable with what he terms the “remarkably aggressive” 5 to 4 decision in *Bush v. Gore*. For someone who so visibly wants to champion judicial restraint when anything other than the survival of *Roe* or *Miranda* is on the line, *Bush v. Gore* is unpleasantly strong porridge.

Starr’s greater difficulty involves the popularly unappreciated but nonetheless remarkably transformative sets of 5 to 4 federalism decisions the Rehnquist Court’s reigning majority (the chief justice plus Justices O’Connor, Thomas, Antonin

Scalia, and Anthony Kennedy) has been handing down annually since *United States v. Lopez* (1995), which held unconstitutional the Gun-Free School Zones Act. Alfonzo Lopez, who took a .38-caliber handgun to his San Antonio high school, may never become as famous as Ernesto Miranda, but Lopez's successful challenge to Congress's use of the constitutional commerce power to make such an act a federal crime kicked off the most important jurisprudential development of the past quarter-century. Yet Starr refuses to acknowledge that these new federalism cases represent muscular judicial activism.

These cases come in three different but closely related flavors. Some of them, such as *Lopez*, entail new judicial constraints on the commerce power, while others, such as *City of Boerne v. Flores* (1997), greatly limit Congress's power to enforce the guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment by "appropriate legislation." A third set, heralded by *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Florida* (1996), uses the Eleventh Amendment to insulate state government entities from federal regulatory and anti-discrimination statutes.

Unlike Starr, Noonan sees the Rehnquist Court's federalism cases as not only remarkable but dangerously harmful. The key concepts in these cases may be unfamiliar even to attentive citizens, but Noonan's clearly written critique illuminates how damaging all three subsets are becoming. State "sovereign immunity" exemplifies the abstruse concepts involved, but Noonan pithily explains how it has "become the Court's way of restricting the powers of Congress and enlarging the areas where the states can escape effective control by Congress."

Anyone inclined to celebrate increased state independence, however, may miss the second essential ingredient in this below-the-radar constitutional revolution: The Court is dramatically constraining Congress's power, under both the commerce clause and the Fourteenth Amendment, while simultaneously enlarging and enhancing its own authority as the ulti-

mate arbiter of the distribution of government power, a development that could—if one chose to acknowledge it as such—be the most persuasive example of all in a book that characterizes the Court as "first among equals." But it's Noonan, not Starr, who has the will and the zeal to articulate so profound a critique of the Rehnquist Court majority's constitutional behavior. As Noonan writes, "If five members of the Supreme Court are in agreement on an agenda, they are mightier than 500 members of Congress with unmobilized or warring constituencies."

**N**arrowing the Nation's Power is inescapably demanding, for its subjects aren't household names—for instance, *United States v. Morrison* (2000), in which the 5 to 4 majority voided the Violence against Women Act, and *Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama v. Garrett* (2001), in which the same majority inoculated the states from having to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Still, this brief book is an immensely valuable and important critique of the Rehnquist Court's constitutional agenda. Noonan terms the current justices "highly original in their treatment of the Constitution," and adds: "It is an illusion to suppose that they are less inventive than their predecessors in their interpretation of constitutional texts."

As a judge with nearly two decades of experience, Noonan makes a further telling point about the impersonally abstract manner in which the Rehnquist Court majority has carried out its federalism revolution, a point that many academic critics of the Court overlook: "Facts should drive cases. That is the experience of most trial judges and of many appellate judges. . . . At the center of the facts are the persons who brought the facts into existence or responded to them. Forget the facts, and you forget the persons helped or hurt by the decisions." But for a Supreme Court "with an agenda," he adds, "the facts are of minor importance and the persons affected are worthy of almost no attention."

>DAVID J. GARROW is the author of *Liberty and Sexuality: The Right to Privacy and the Making of Roe v. Wade* (1994; updated 1998).

## *Altered States*

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*FORCES OF HABIT:*

*Drugs and the Making of the Modern World.*

By David T. Courtwright. Harvard Univ. Press. 277 pp. \$24.95 hardcover,  
\$16.95 paper

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*THE PURSUIT OF OBLIVION:*

*A Global History of Narcotics.*

By Richard Davenport-Hines. Norton. 576 pp. \$29.95

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*OUT OF IT:*

*A Cultural History of Intoxication.*

By Stuart Walton. Harmony. 366 pp. \$24

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*Reviewed by Andrew Barr*

Most of us, according to David Courtwright, are drug users. We may not smoke marijuana or inhale cocaine or inject heroin, but we smoke tobacco and drink alcohol and coffee. The fact that the last three drugs are legal does not make them any less dangerous than the three illegal ones. Indeed, according to an authoritative comparison of addictiveness published in a pharmacology textbook two generations ago, alcohol is the worst of all. In this comparison, points were assigned for a drug's ability to produce (a) tolerance, (b) emotional dependence, (c) physical dependence, (d) physical deterioration, (e) antisocial behavior during administration, and (f) similar behavior during withdrawal. The maximum score was 24, or 4 points in each category. Alcohol scored 21 points, heroin 16, cocaine 14, and marijuana 8. This analysis did not include nicotine, which Courtwright believes would merit a score of 14, the same as cocaine. Caffeine would score 4 or 5.

As Courtwright points out, an entire genre of drug literature assesses the ill effects of different drugs and then professes dismay at their misalignment with law. *Forces of Habit* is not quite in that genre. Instead, Courtwright, a professor of history at the University of North Florida, attempts to explain why we consume the drugs we do—and why some drugs are more legal than others. Alcohol has survived all attempts at prohibition,

he writes, principally because of the economic importance of the drinks industry and the essential contribution of alcohol taxes to national economies. Launched in 1920, Prohibition in the United States was repealed in 1933 because, in the depths of the depression, the government needed the revenues that taxes on alcohol would provide.

Beneath these prosaic explanations lies a deeper truth. Alcohol is legal because it is consumed, on the whole, by respectable, law-abiding citizens. Opiates, cocaine, and marijuana are illegal because their users are not—and, historically, have not been—upstanding members of society. Chinese laborers smoked opium; it was banned. Delinquent youths in big cities took heroin; it was banned. Out-of-control black men used cocaine; it was banned. Though “prejudice alone did not cause the bans,” Courtwright observes, “the smaller and lower-status the target population, the easier it is to enact such legislation—and the easier it is to keep it in place.”

When alcohol was banned in the United States a few years after opiates and cocaine, it, too, was associated with marginal elements in society, principally wine-drinking immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Many native-born Americans, who had long before given up alcoholic drinks themselves, believed that these immigrants would never become true Americans as long

as they retained old-country habits such as having wine with meals. Alcohol was banned to demonstrate the right way of living in their new home.

Once Prohibition was repealed, the drinks industry sought to make drinking beer and liquor a patriotic activity. During World War II, the brewing industry spent a lot of money on public-relations campaigns designed to show that beer was part of American culture and essential to good morale. After the war ended, the brewers' advertisements depicted beer as an integral part of everyday American life.

By the 1960s, alcohol had cemented its place as the legal drug of respectable society—and young people rebelled against that society by smoking marijuana. The National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse reported in 1972 that “use of the drug is linked with idleness, lack of motivation, hedonism, and sexual promiscuity. Many see the drug as fostering a counter-culture which conflicts with basic moral precepts as well as with the operating functions of our society. The ‘dropping out’ or rejection of the established value system is viewed with alarm. Marijuana becomes more than a drug; it becomes a symbol of the rejection of cherished values.”

It was at this point that President Richard Nixon launched the War on Drugs. Richard Davenport-Hines, the author of *Auden* (1995) and *Gothic* (1999), points out in his lavishly detailed *Pursuit of Oblivion* that “as a puritan and as a man perennially frustrated with his circumstances, Nixon detested the hedonism and easy gratification of many young people.” Though he himself was a clandestine addict—dependent on alcohol and sleeping pills—“Nixon’s outlook on drugs was bitter, rigid, triumphantly righteous, and as irredeemably self-centered as only a paranoiac’s can be.”

While Davenport-Hines never omits an opportunity for a cynical comment about the personnel, motives, and progress of the endless War on Drugs, he fails to offer any coherent argument to explain why Western governments should have been so hostile to some drugs yet so tolerant of others. For all its fascinating information, *The Pursuit of*

*Oblivion* provides a classic example of failing to see the forest for the trees.

Only in passing does one encounter here the suggestion that drugs have been banned if their primary goal is to give pleasure to the user. In 1967, philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre supported a British campaign to legalize marijuana. Davenport-Hines quotes MacIntyre’s response to the fierce public reaction: “Most of the hostility that I have met with comes from people who have never examined the facts at all. I suspect that what makes them dislike cannabis is not the belief that the effects of taking it are harmful, but rather a horrifying suspicion that here is a source of pure pleasure which is available for those who have not *earned it*, who do not *deserve it*. Pleasure has rarely gone down well with the English and pleasure for which there is practically no cost is the most abhorrent of all.”

Perhaps the best comparison of alcohol and marijuana is to be found in the work of anthropologist G.M. Carstairs, who spent 1951 living in a large village in the state of Rajasthan in northern India. The ruling caste was the Rajputs, fighting men who enjoyed certain prerogatives, notably the right to eat meat and drink alcohol in the form of a spirit called *daru*. They were taught that they must face danger with great bravery. Such danger seldom arose, but every young Rajput lived with the anxiety that he might not prove adequate to the occasion if it came. He was therefore inclined to assuage his worries in the convivial relaxation of a *daru* party.

The members of the other top caste group in the village, the Brahmans, denounced the Rajput habits as inimical to the religious life. “The result of eating meat and drinking liquor,” declared one of them, “is that you get filled with passion and rage, and then the spirit of God flies out from you.” The Brahmans themselves were often intoxicated with *bharg*, an infusion of marijuana leaves and stems that they believed enhanced the spiritual life. They said that it facilitated *bhakti*, a devotional act that required emptying the mind of all worldly distractions and thinking only of God. The Rajputs did not condemn *bharg* as fiercely as the Brahmans denounced *daru*, but, as one of them pointed out, *bharg* “makes you quite useless, unable

to do anything. *Daru* isn't like that, you may be drunk but you can still carry on."

In an article published in 1954 in the *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Carstairs compared Westerners to the Rajputs. Westerners too, he wrote, were committed to a life of action, were brought up to regard individual achievement as crucial, and found the experience of surrendering their powers of volition through marijuana to be threatening and distasteful. Like the Rajputs, they could drink alcohol yet remain in control.

Most consumers of alcoholic drinks manage to remain in control because they are able to measure quite precisely the amount of the drug they have ingested. The concept of moderation is very important in maintaining the social status of alcohol—which is why Stuart Walton, the author of *Out of It*, disapproves of the idea. In his well-argued if slightly self-indulgent thesis, wine writer Walton suggests that intoxication is an essential form of release from the pressures of existence, "the opportunity for a temporary

escape from the moderation that the rest of life is necessarily mortgaged to. It is the one aspect of our daily lives . . . that allows us radically to question the point of moderation as a desirable goal in itself."

Walton deems intoxication "a biological necessity, otherwise it wouldn't be so continuously prevalent in all human societies." As he points out, we possess an innate drive to alter our normal consciousness. Children spin round and round until they are giddy, and hold their breath until they feel thoroughly lightheaded. Holy men and women can lose themselves in meditation, but most adults cannot do this for themselves, or cannot be bothered to learn. "Drugs," summarizes Courtwright, "are powerful chemical shortcuts to altered states of mind." Whatever measures are taken to regulate or suppress the trade in them, their popularity is unlikely to diminish.

>ANDREW BARR, the author of *Drink: A Social History of America* (1999), is writing a social history of food.

## ARTS & LETTERS

### *THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES IN SCIENCE FICTION.*

By Justine Larbalestier. Wesleyan Univ. Press. 295 pp. \$50 hardcover, \$19.95 paper

My fondest hope for Larbalestier, identified on the jacket of this, her first book, as a research fellow in the Department of English at the University of Sydney, is that she get out of academia. A smart, assiduous writer with a good eye for telling detail, she uses her talents well in laying out the science-fiction landscape from the 1920s to the 1990s and in tracking the contributions (sometimes disguised) of women writers, ranging from the relatively obscure to such superstars as Marge Piercy and Octavia Butler.

Larbalestier focuses on battle-of-the-sexes stories, which ran chiefly in SF magazines beginning in the 1930s and feature pretty much all the variations you would expect—

worlds where men are subservient, or women procreate parthenogenetically, or indeterminate creatures morph seasonally into one or the other sex. Her brief summaries of the stories and her commentaries on their publication (and the public's reaction) are amusing, in a dry sort of way, and provide a nice antidote to the genre's tendency to take itself too seriously. But just when she's hitting her stride, you can almost feel the academic gear kick in. Instead of rattling on about the stories themselves or the pulp magazines (such as *Amazing Stories*, *Astounding Science-Fiction*, and *Wonder Stories*) that ran them, she falls back into murky jargon that seems designed to wow some tenure committee.

Which is a pity, because under the forbiddingly abstruse prose there remains a good story about the participation of women—as writers, editors, even readers—



in what was initially called “scientifiction.” (Hugo Gernsback first employed the term in 1926 for his magazine *Amazing Stories*. Later, after he lost control of that magazine and had to start another, he came up with “science fiction” in order to stake a fresh claim to the territory.)

Larbalestier organizes her book around chapter headings drawn from the work of one pioneering woman writer of SF, James Tiptree, Jr. (1915–87). You read that right. Although she was born Alice Bradley and lived much of her life under her married name, Alice Sheldon, she chose a nom de plume at the corner market—“I simply saw the name on some jam pots”—and used it for many years to conceal herself and her previous career as an experimental psychologist. During that time she wrote acclaimed and groundbreaking stories, among them “The Women Men Don’t See,” “Her Smoke Rose Up Forever,” and “Faithful to Thee, Terra, in Our Fashion,” which often carried off prestigious SF prizes such as the Nebula and the Hugo (named after Gernsback).

Since 1991, the James Tiptree, Jr., Memorial Award has recognized “fictional work that explores and expands the roles of women and men.” (Larbalestier herself has served as a judge.) Though you don’t have to be female to win, it helps; the prize has gone almost exclusively to women. If Larbalestier would ever like to play hooky from the stultifying academy and indulge her quite evident penchant for gender-bending SF, she might have a good shot at winning one. Nobody knows the intergalactic landscape better.

—ROBERT MASELLO

#### **A DARING YOUNG MAN:**

#### ***A Biography of William Saroyan.***

By John Leggett. Knopf. 462 pp. \$30

Bill Saroyan was somebody once—and never more so than in 1940, when he won the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for his play *The Time of Your Life*. Just 31 years old, the California-born son of Armenian immigrants was already known for several collections of fresh and appealing short stories, in particular *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* (1934). The stories celebrated life and life’s



*William Saroyan in 1940, directing rehearsals of his play, The Beautiful People.*

outsiders and the large heroism of little people in the face of adversity. Just the ticket for depression-worn America.

Saroyan was in the triumphant first stage of a writing career of boundless promise. He regularly believed that anything he wrote was great, and not just great but maybe the greatest thing he had ever written, and maybe the greatest thing of its kind in American literature. He had the same initials as Shakespeare, after all, and if he wasn’t on the road to greatness, it’s only because he had already arrived.

Well, he lived until 1981 and got to compete with his young self for four decades. He never stopped writing—stories, plays, memoirs, and novels, in staggering profusion and at blinding speed. He might do a story in two hours, a play in a week. Yet his early success proved a height from which the subsequent decades were mostly descent, professional and personal. The descent was sometimes precipitous and sometimes halting, and on occasion it was even reversed. At every stage it was self-propelled.

To the extent that he’s remembered at all today, Saroyan has a reputation as a sentimentalist, and that, says Leggett, is to misread not just the man but much of the work. In fact, the sentimentality of the early writing curdled into anger and resentment at the world’s all-too-frequent failure to share the author’s self-

regard, and, over the years, Saroyan “withdrew to the hermitage of his illusion, where even his children became part of the conspiracy threatening his immortality.”

In this new biography, which draws heavily on a journal Saroyan kept from 1934 until his death, the writer is an unappealing figure. Leggett, a novelist himself and the author of *Ross and Tom* (1974), an exemplary nonfiction account of the perils of literary success in America, has to explain up front why he nonetheless identifies with Saroyan: “because he found that being a writer lifted him out of obscurity and the scorn of family and friends. He also found that self-reliance, the dependence on his own mind and heart to find his way, was the only reliable compass.” In Leggett’s telling, Saroyan’s story, “so gallantly begun, becomes a tragedy of rage and rejection.”

Which may understate the matter. The accumulation of sad and incriminating (and, finally, trivial and wearisome) detail about Saroyan in these pages—the selfishness, the envy, the arrogance, the suspicion, the ingratitude, the hunger for money, the haggling for money, the irresponsibility with money, the body blows dealt love and friendship—keeps you reading all right, the way a highway accident keeps you looking. It also has you asking, with increasing frequency, Why did anyone put up with this man? And why did publishers continue to want to publish him when he offered them work of embarrassingly low quality?

Leggett omits the evidence that might have answered the questions and tempered the portrait. There are no pages, or even paragraphs, from Saroyan’s work, though time and again the book calls for them and even whets your appetite: “[Saroyan] had an ear for the rhythm, sonority, and sensuality of colloquial speech. He had an eye for the precisely right detail that revealed an emotion, a desire, an anxiety. Although a man stoutly opposed to his own formal education, his aim for the bull’s-eye word was a marksman’s.” Where the revelatory, and perhaps redeeming, passages of Saroyan’s prose might appear, there is only additional damning detail. The omission, surely intentional, is astonishing in a biography of a man whose only reason to be was to write. Saroyan

careens through triumph and failure and emotional disarray, and we watch. But we wait in vain to hear.

—JAMES MORRIS

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**WHY A PAINTING  
IS LIKE A PIZZA:**

***A Guide to Understanding  
and Enjoying Modern Art.***

By Nancy Heller. Princeton Univ. Press.

192 pp. \$29.95 hardcover, \$19.95 paper

When Morley Safer made fun of contemporary art in a notorious (at least in the art world) 1993 broadcast of *60 Minutes*, his scorn liberated thousands of people to say out loud what they had long thought. To wit: A child of five could do that; art ought to be beautiful; and, as Al Capp put it, “abstract art is a product of the untalented, sold by the unprincipled to the utterly bewildered.”

A professor of art history at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Heller wants to persuade the bewildered that the emperor of contemporary art does in fact have clothes—confusing and abstract clothes, but clothes nonetheless. She realizes that people dislike contemporary art because it makes them feel stupid, so she shies away from the conceptual in favor of formal aspects that everyone can appreciate: color, material, composition, and the like.

Pointing out that Monet’s technique, beloved today, once was reviled by critics and viewers, she demystifies the aesthetic choices and technical skills behind such works as Gene Davis’s stripe paintings and Robert Ryman’s all-white ones. She does a terrific job dissecting the brouhaha over the *Sensation* exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999, when Mayor Rudolph Giuliani fomented outrage over Chris Ofili’s elephant-dung-dotted portrait of the Virgin Mary. She also shows how installation art can recast our perspective on the objects and spaces of ordinary life. She admits to having been duped into thinking that a bronze plaque by Jenny Holzer was “real,” and not a piece of art. “After this discovery, I felt somewhat foolish,” she writes, “but ever since then I find myself looking far more carefully at every bronze plaque I pass.”

Yet for all her jargon-free charm, Heller is unlikely to convince the Morley Safers. In

choosing to focus on formal elements, she skirts the intellectual underpinnings crucial to an understanding of much contemporary art. The truth is that a great deal of it isn't self-explanatory, nor is it the kind of thing the average person would want hanging over the mantel. It often engages less with the world around it than with the art that preceded it or the museum that exhibits it. And in most cases, the viewer is helped immeasurably by learning the artist's biography and intellectual framework. Art has taken a journey away from the representational, and, however hard that makes life for tour guides, it isn't coming back.

Indeed, one wonders whether Heller's task is necessary. Why *should* art be equally accessible to all? What does it matter if most galleries attract only a cadre of well-informed insiders, while the rest of the world buys Thomas Kinkadee prints at the mall? It evidently matters to Heller, who wants people to stop worrying and enjoy the art. And it matters to museum curators, who hope to bring in the masses. Someday, a blockbuster Chris Ofili retrospective may attract the same adoring crowds that Monet's water lilies do today. Maybe we'll even see a line of dung-encrusted holiday greeting cards.

—ALIX OHLIN

### REMEMBERING PATSY.

By Brian Mansfield. Rutledge Hill Press. 95 pp. \$14.99

Forty years after her death, Patsy Cline (1932–63) is a bigger star than ever. She sells more albums than when she was alive. Her haunting rendition of “Crazy,” a Willie Nelson composition, is the most played song on jukeboxes. And for fans who want to “see” Patsy as well as hear her, two biographical plays are currently touring. It's a remarkable afterlife for any singer, especially one whose Nashville stardom lasted less than two years—from her first hit, “I Fall to Pieces,” in July 1961, until her death in March 1963.

Her short career (along with three other Grand Ole Opry stars, she was killed in a plane crash near Camden, Tennessee) left us with too few photographs, and the same ones tend to get reproduced over and over again. I praise Mansfield, a journalist and music critic, for

unearthing new pictures in the Nashville music establishment: the Grand Ole Opry Museum, the Country Music Hall of Fame, and particularly the files of Les Leverett, official Opry photographer in the 1960s. Mansfield's short book intersperses these photographs with quotations. Singer k.d. lang, for instance, tells of receiving two Patsy Cline albums on her 21st birthday: “I started listening to them seriously and just being blown away by her interpretative quality and the timbre of her voice. . . . It was pretty powerful stuff, powerful to the point where it was transforming.” In tribute, lang named her first band the “re-clines.”

*Remembering Patsy* is no scholarly treatise (so we don't know where the author got the lang quote), but a sort of love poem by someone who wishes to pay his respects to a voice we all recognize. Many of the book's images display Patsy Cline's appeal beyond the provinces of country music. Photograph after photograph has her in cocktail dresses, looking like Dinah Shore or Connie Francis. We also see her arguing with producers at Decca Records, making nice to disc jockeys who may play her songs, conferring with her manager, and schmoozing with country music star and Louisiana governor Jimmie Davis (best known for composing “You Are My Sunshine”). This is Patsy Cline at work, not singing but engaged in the real labor of keeping her singing career alive. The publicity photographs most familiar to us—Cline in a cowgirl outfit—reveal only a



*Patsy Cline shares a laugh in 1961 with Louisiana's governor Jimmie Davis.*

small part of the career, and of the talent.

No one-hit wonder, Patsy Cline amounts to a cultural icon of the later part of the 20th century. Mansfield offers fresh glimpses into her life, but he doesn't try to unravel the secret of her endurance. Why do we remember Patsy long after we have forgotten Del Wood and other singers who were just as popular in the early 1960s? Whoever manages to answer that question will make a significant contribution to the history of mass culture.

—DOUGLAS GOMERY

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JANE KENYON:

*A Literary Life.*

By John H. Timmerman. Eerdmans.

246 pp. \$28

In 1977, about five years after he married fellow poet Jane Kenyon, Donald Hall spoke to a class at Dartmouth College about the envy and rivalry that so often spoil literary marriages. He may have been thinking of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, or any number of equally turbulent couples. "It doesn't have to be that way," said Hall. He and Kenyon, he explained, managed to work and travel together without going for each other's throats.

A professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Timmerman corroborates what Hall told the class: "Their relationship may best be understood as a *community* of two writers who held in common their mutual calling as poets." That's not to say that the couple's life together was an idyll. Kenyon recurrently suffered from severe depression; Hall underwent cancer surgery several times in the late 1980s and early 1990s; in 1994, Kenyon began debilitating treatments for the leukemia that would kill her the following year, shortly before her 49th birthday.

Kenyon is best known for pastoral lyrics that focus on emotional and religious struggles against a backdrop of rural New England. In her devotion to narrative and linguistic simplicity she resembles Robert Frost, another outsider who came to New England and made it his own. Frost channeled his adopted Yankee voice into traditional verse forms; Kenyon, as her collection *Otherwise* (1996) makes eminently clear, wrote free verse that has all the suppleness, clarity, and concision of good prose.

Some reviewers liken her to another New

Englander. "She writes about [depression] more eloquently than anyone I can think of since Sylvia Plath," critic Paul Breslin observes. "Of course, the outcome, biographically and poetically, was vastly different. . . . Plath has the greater intensity, sublimity, power to conjure terror; Kenyon has greater subtlety, surer moral and poetic judgment, and a capacity for emotional generosity that eluded Plath almost completely. There is very little self-pity in Kenyon's writing, and she can portray the grief of others as memorably as her own."

Timmerman's biography is a kind of paean to Kenyon's abbreviated career. He ably recounts her music-filled childhood in a house on a dirt road outside Ann Arbor, Michigan (her father was a jazz musician, her mother a nightclub singer and seamstress), her first encounters with Hall in his University of Michigan class "Introduction to Poetry for Non-English Majors" (a class that once attracted the entire baseball team), her growing confidence and sophistication as a poet, her marriage to Hall in 1972, and their move in 1975 to his ancestral house on Eagle Pond Farm, near Wilnot, New Hampshire. The move, Kenyon once said, amounted to "a restoration of a kind of paradise."

Rural New Hampshire brought about another restoration as well. Although Kenyon had rejected Christianity as a teenager, partly in reaction against an overbearing grandmother, she began accompanying Hall to the South Danbury Christian Church. She soon experienced a religious reawakening. The minister, Jack Jensen, who also taught philosophy and religion at nearby Colby-Sawyer College, became her spiritual adviser and directed her to St. Teresa, Julian of Norwich, Simone Weil, and other devotional writers. "Jack gave me a spiritual life—it's that simple," Kenyon said. "Over the years my poetry changed to reflect my awakening. Life changed profoundly."

Though marred by repetition and, at times, excessive praise, Timmerman's biography provides a useful, well-researched, and often moving introduction to Kenyon's life and poetry. Readers will come away with an appreciation for her heroic battles against illness, for the spare and poignant lyrics that dramatized those battles, for Hall's harrowing grief after she died, and for the great loss her death meant to contemporary poetry.

—HENRY HART

## CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

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### *THE HUNGRY GENE: The Science of Fat and the Future of Thin.*

By Ellen Ruppel Shell. Atlantic Monthly Press. 294 pp. \$25

In the Gilded Age, when working people spent as much as 60 percent of their wages on food, obesity was a disorder of the wealthy, a side effect of success. Now, like many other comforts and privileges of the rich, weight gain has been democratized. Technology has driven down food prices and, like a team of efficient servants, removed from our lives the need for even minimal physical exertion. As a result, the United States is gripped by an epidemic of obesity that, according to a RAND Corporation study, constitutes a graver public-health problem than smoking, alcohol abuse, and poverty combined.

If it's any consolation, we're not alone. Other advanced countries are getting fatter too. Obesity is even spreading to the Third World, where the burgeoning middle classes enjoy chowing down and loafing as much as we do. "Obesity rates in urban areas of China have quadrupled in the past decade and nearly one in five Chinese are overweight," writes Shell, a science journalist who teaches at Boston University.

*The Hungry Gene* takes us on a fascinating worldwide inquiry into the biological and social roots of the obesity epidemic. Shell is a gifted writer and observer with a fine mastery of her subject, and her book is chock full of wonderful characterizations, rich ironies, and horrifying facts. Who knew that 60 percent of fast food sold in this country is dispensed through drive-up windows? Or that we drink more soda than coffee and tap water combined? Or that annual per capita consumption of sugar and other caloric sweeteners has increased by 32 pounds since 1970? Or that fat people actually have *faster-than-average* metabolisms?

Shell makes a charming and sympathetic guide, but one quibbles with some of her assertions. She errs, for instance, in suggesting that Americans have only the illusion of food choice (as in "with pickle or without?"). Exotic ethnic restaurants have cropped up all over the land, and supermarkets even in small

towns now stock fresh produce year round, as well as an array of ethnic foods. In fact, Americans have more healthy food choices than ever before. The bigger problem is that *The Hungry Gene* spends an awful lot of time barking up the wrong tree. Our genes, after all, haven't changed much in a generation, but our body mass index sure has. The issue is simple: People are getting fatter because we can afford too much fattening food, it's too easily eaten, and we spend too much time on our duffs.

Someday we'll probably develop a biochemical solution to the peculiarly modern problem of overnourishment. Maybe this miracle substance will even be cooked into foods, the way niacin came to be baked into commercial breads, eliminating the problem of pellagra. In the interim, perhaps the war on smoking offers worthwhile lessons. Education, taxes, lawsuits, and social stigma have all helped put tobacco on the run. Someday these weapons might have the same effect on Coke and Cheez-Doodles.

—DANIEL AKST

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### *AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment.*

By Martin E. P. Seligman. Free Press. 321 pp. \$26

It's an irony of inspirational literature that the dour skeptics and depressives who are arguably most in need of uplift scoff at books that presume to chart the way to good cheer. But Seligman, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, aims to galvanize just that grumpy clientele with *Authentic Happiness*, a guide that portrays the pursuit of hope and happiness as a serious, rigorous mission rather than a frivolous illusion or mere feel-goodism.

The author of *Learned Optimism* (1991) brings two unusual credentials to the task. First, he is a scientist—a cognitive psychologist who has been a pioneer in bringing "hope into the laboratory . . . [to] dissect it in order to understand how it works." Second, he claims to be (or to have been) a "dyed-in-the-wool pessimist" who spent "50 years enduring most-

ly wet weather in my soul”—“a grouch,” in the words of his kindergartner, who one day changed her father’s life by urging him to stop grumbling. “I was a whiner,” his daughter told him, holding herself up as an example, but “on my fifth birthday, I decided I wasn’t going to whine anymore.” For Seligman, it was the epiphany that launched the now four-year-old movement he calls Positive Psychology and infused his career and life with new meaning.

As the inspirational nugget about his wise child suggests, inside Seligman the downbeat realist has plainly lurked a romantic apostle eager to get out. And as the rest of his book reveals, Seligman the scientist does not always demand the greatest stringency of laboratory work, or dwell on its inevitable limitations. The many studies he cites (and the tests he invites readers to take) on such topics as optimism, gratitude, forgiveness, and “satisfaction with the past” do not generate quite the definitive data he would have you think. As he himself says, “how you feel about your life at any moment is a slippery matter,” far from easy to measure. “Perhaps neither response will seem to fit,” he prefaces his optimism assessment; “go ahead anyway and circle either A or B.”

Yet to say that the Positive Psychology project is driven perhaps as much by motivational fervor as by methodological rigor is not to suggest that it’s for softies. Seligman’s appeal is to those who pride themselves more on having heads on their shoulders than on getting in touch with their feelings. He has cobbled together interesting research done over the past 30 years, since the cognitive revolution in psychology and the advent of behavioral genetics. The research challenges both the fatalistic and the facile assumptions promoted in a Freudian era that found victims everywhere in need of cathartic release from anger and guilt repressed since childhood. Seligman’s “new”



Head (2001), by Mary Atkinson

psychology sounds decidedly more old-fashioned.

We are prisoners of our childhoods, he argues, only in the sense that “bubbliness (called positive affectivity)” is a “highly heritable trait.” Otherwise, our fate is in our hands—or rather in our heads and our characters. By learning to argue rationally and accurately against the “negative” emotions with which evolution has amply armed us, and even

better, by building on the “strengths and virtues” we recognize in ourselves (cross-cultural research has inspired a list of 24 to choose from), we can become more buoyant and resilient. Not least, we can discover true gratification, which brings a sense of selfless fulfillment.

A grouch might complain that when Seligman turns to apply his principles to work, love, and parenting in his closing chapters, he suddenly changes his mind about the secondary importance of childhood events. He joins countless experts in saying that a “securely attached” start in life—and lots of empathetic communication ever after—helps create more purposeful workers, loyal spouses, and competent, confident, committed children. Then again, if Seligman had prescribed a flashy, original formula for the age-old pursuit of the good life, wouldn’t you be skeptical?

—ANN HULBERT

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**THE GATEKEEPERS:**  
*Inside the Admissions Process of  
a Premier College.*

By Jacques Steinberg. Viking. 292 pp.  
\$25.95

For bewildered high schoolers seeking admission to the cluster of highly selective colleges essayist Joseph Epstein jokingly labels “Yarvton,” the mysteries are legion. Does having invented an innovative medical device as a sophomore outweigh lackluster grades and a

dearth of advanced-placement classes? Does coming from a top prep school help or hurt? How does Harvard University manage to reject a quarter of its applicants with perfect SAT scores? Doesn't every school need a talented oboist? Just what strange deals, back-of-the-envelope calculations, and personal crusades shape the next generation's elite?

A writer for *The New York Times*, Steinberg was given extraordinary access to Wesleyan University's admissions office and to the applications—and lives—of a half-dozen aspirants to the Connecticut school. College admissions, he finds, is “messy work,” filled with subjective judgments. Wesleyan's process tries to predict whether a student will “add” to the community, handle the rigor of the curriculum, and succeed after college. It seeks what admissions officers term the “angular” rather than the “well-rounded,” the student with, as Wesleyan's dean of admissions said in 1964, “the best chance of accomplishing something in his lifetime, as opposed to the dabbler.”

Admissions officers have seen it all: the fresh cookies, the daily postcards, the recommendations from senators and celebrities, the essays crafted to pull at the heartstrings. But sheer chance may make a more decisive difference.

One applicant devoted his essay to comic books; the Wesleyan officer who read the application, as it happened, “loved the X-Men.”

The officials strategize, too. Some colleges reject the most highly qualified applicants, “not wishing to waste an acceptance” on anyone who probably won't attend. (The *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, which matter to those good schools without centuries of prestige and tradition, rely in part on the percentage of accepted students who enroll.) And the schools hunt down, with free airfare and professor one-on-ones, the most desirable candidates.

This book has a less epic quality than, say, Ron Suskind's *A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League* (1998), but it depicts the admissions process with clarity and sympathy. Some readers may be troubled that admissions officers act not just as talent scouts but as social engineers, and that luck plays such a prominent role. Yet the officers' decisions, as they choose among far too many highly qualified applicants, are not arbitrary. Steinberg shows that they consider teacher recommendations as much as ethnicity, accomplishments as much as geography, and diligence as much as creativity.

—CHRISTOPHER MOORE

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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### *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC.*

By Mark Allan Powell. Hendrickson Publishers. 1,088 pp. \$29.95

Although *Rolling Stone* describes the world of contemporary Christian music as a “parallel universe,” there can be little doubt that, with annual sales approaching \$1 billion and such artists as Amy Grant and Jars of Clay regularly crossing over onto secular charts, the Christian music scene is thriving. By 1998, according to *Billboard*, contemporary Christian music accounted for a larger share of recording industry revenue than jazz, New Age, classical, and soundtracks combined.

Now, contemporary Christian music has its own encyclopedia. The massive and mind-numbing tome, with well over a thousand double-columned pages, provides more than

any sane person should care to know about everyone from rockers Larry Norman and Whiteheart to pop artists Michael W. Smith and Sandi Patty, as well as Bob Dylan, who for a time told concert audiences that “Jesus is the way of salvation.” The entries provide biography, discography, and a description of the musical styles of each artist or group, and the introduction offers a brief history of contemporary Christian music.

Scholars are now engaged in a lively debate about the origins of contemporary Christian music. Some trace its roots back to 19th-century shape-note singing in the South, although Powell insists that its history goes back no farther than the Jesus movement of the late 1960s. Today, contemporary Christian music embraces styles ranging from heavy metal to ska, and an equally lively debate is taking place over

whether lyrics have to be explicitly Christian, or whether the disposition of the artist alone suffices to define music as Christian.

Although he is a professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, Powell writes that rock 'n' roll "has done a lot more for the good of humanity in the last 30-plus years than all the theologians on the planet." His entries are analytical, occasionally amusing (not often enough, perhaps), and frequently opinionated.

He notes, for instance, that Pat Boone helped make rhythm and blues safe for a skittish general audience in the 1950s, an effort that met with opposition—southern pastors burned his records and accused him of plotting "to destroy the moral fiber of white youth." Powell observes: "Boone can be viewed either as pillager or promoter; there is no question that he benefited commercially from the racism of white music fans by getting hits with songs by people who couldn't get a hearing themselves, but there can also be little doubt that he did as much as anyone to deconstruct that racism. Indeed, one might say that he worked to put himself out of business: He labored to teach white America to like the R&B music that he obviously loved, and to the extent that he succeeded in doing this, his fans found they no longer needed him."

The book is cumbersome (a companion CD-ROM replicates the text and provides links to artists' web sites), and it omits some useful data, such as artists' dates of birth. Still, the volume represents a significant achievement, and its appearance marks the coming of age of contemporary Christian music.

—RANDALL BALMER

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**GIRL MEETS GOD.**

By Lauren F. Winner. Algonquin Books. 303 pp. \$23.95

Lauren Winner never met a sacrament she didn't like, and she has had more chances than most of us to test the pleasures of sacramental life. The 27-year-old daughter of a Reformed Jewish father and a lapsed Southern Baptist mother, Winner grew up Orthodox, her parents having decided to raise their kids Jewish. Smart and bookish as well as dutiful, Winner embraced her reli-

gious training enthusiastically. She observed religious holidays, studied with a Hebrew tutor, joined a Jewish meditation group, and read every book she could find about Jewish history, Jewish ritual, and Jewish law. Like the graduate student she was shortly to become, the teenage Winner mastered the available literature, tested every observance, and had her adolescent identity shaped by her faith experience and commitment.

No wonder her parents, by then divorced, were surprised to learn, shortly after Lauren's enrollment at Columbia University, that their daughter had decided to become an Episcopalian.

This book is about her transition to a new faith, though it's neither a repudiation of Orthodox Judaism nor a celebration of Protestantism's putatively unique virtues. Instead, it's an account of a scholarly, warm-hearted, sometimes impulsive, always deeply thoughtful young woman searching for, and possibly finding, an incarnational experience (that is, apprehending the presence of Jesus in human form). The saga includes moments of near-comedy (when Winner's Columbia-based Episcopalian rector asks her to give up, for Lent, "the thing you love most"—reading—she agrees, though reluctantly, and holds to her disciplined self-denial for most of two days) and, of course, puzzlement, but no one can doubt Winner's straight-ahead seriousness.

*Girl Meets God* is not so much organized as constructed, like a particularly elaborate salad. Its sections are based roughly on the elements of the Protestant liturgical year, though the connection between memoir and liturgy is frequently a stretch. The story proceeds in fits and starts, often reversing itself and leaving only marginally developed many of its potentially potent elements: a married friend's determination to have an affair; Winner's on-again, off-again relationship with a suitor she discards with a phone call; an open-eyed enjoyment of sex and alcohol.

Winner's book is learned and discerning about the two religious traditions she knows best, and unpretentious in exploring her abandonment of one in favor of the other. If there's a lesson here, it may be, simply, that God is love. Couldn't happen to a nicer woman.

—C. MICHAEL CURTIS



# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

**BUG:**

*The Strange Mutations of the World's Most Famous Automobile.*

By Phil Patton. Simon & Schuster.

248 pp. \$25

**DISASTER IN DEARBORN:**

*The Story of the Edsel.*

By Thomas E. Bonsall. Stanford Univ. Press.

230 pp. \$35.95

In *Bug*, Patton plays Herodotus and regales readers with tales and customs of the folks behind the Volkswagen Beetle. Conceived as “The People’s Car” at the behest of Adolf Hitler in 1937 and still being built to this day, the Bug is an entertaining piece of practical whimsy that is well served by its latest chronicler. Patton, an elegant design writer who often covers the car industry, displays his considerable wit and erudition in a book filled with pithy and pointed recaps of everything from Nazi industrial policy to the design of Swatch watches to a postmodern reading of the “Love Bug” movies. He cites naturalist Sue Hubbell, artist Albrecht Dürer, Kafka protagonist Gregor Samsa, and novelist Vladimir Nabokov in four successive sentences.

But considering that a car is his ostensible subject, Patton displays curiously little interest in the Beetle as a machine, pre-

ferring instead to focus on its marketing and Larger Meaning. In fact, the liveliest section of his book tracks the creation in the 1990s of the New Beetle, a car for the upwardly mobile that has virtually nothing in common with Ferdinand Porsche’s original masterpiece other than general design language. (The New Beetle is essentially a VW Golf in funkier duds.) Patton seems more energized by this case study of the modern synergy between styling and marketing than he is by the genesis of the old Beetle, which was the product of the Teutonic ascendancy of engineering over styling.

Like the New Beetle, the Edsel was an attempt to refashion an existing car (a mid-priced Mercury) to appeal to a new market. But, in a story that has generated perverse fascination ever since the car debuted in 1957, the Edsel became the industry’s most infamous failure. Automotive historian Bonsall’s leaden, academic postmortem will scare away all but the most determined readers. Car industry types will enjoy some fine material about, for example, General Motors’ seminal system of sharing car bodies. But Bonsall’s conclusion—that the Edsel was “a modest success” unfairly killed by beancounters—seems as fanciful as the myths he sets out to debunk.

Bottom line? The Edsel was a mediocre, overpriced, notoriously homely product that deserved to fail. The Beetle, on the other hand, was a masterwork of industrial design—cheap to build, easy to maintain, utilitarian, robust, and, above all, fun. Sure, the brilliant Doyle Dane Bernbach ad campaigns in the 1960s helped sell the car, and so did a smiley-face personality that made its otherness palatable to the masses. But if the Beetle and the Edsel teach us anything, it’s that product comes first.

—PRESTON LERNER



Ferdinand Porsche (left) gave this scale model of the Volkswagen to Adolf Hitler for his birthday in 1938. The Führer was clearly charmed.

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**IN DARWIN'S SHADOW:**

***The Life and Science of  
Alfred Russel Wallace.***

By Michael Shermer. Oxford Univ. Press.  
422 pp. \$35

Casual students of biology know that in 1858 Charles Darwin received a letter from a naturalist named Alfred Russel Wallace which described independently some of the general ideas of evolution and natural selection that Darwin was about to make famous. And that's about *all* that most students know. History has placed Wallace (1823–1913) in the role of evolution's second banana. Shermer's thorough and intelligent account makes Wallace's originality clear, while leaving no doubt that history has, on the whole, judged him rightly.

Darwin had family money to support his famous voyage on the *Beagle* and his subsequent thinking and writing. Wallace, born poor, lived hand to mouth most of his life, financing long travels in South America and the Malay Archipelago by collecting novel specimens to sell in London. Later he made a precarious living by writing, but his interests were always more intellectual than commercial. In the Far East he was struck by the way butterflies and other creatures showed a vast range of tiny variations across the islands. While laid up with malaria, he recollected Malthus and saw how the struggle for existence, acting on the endless variations he had observed, would lead to natural selection. In modern terms, the survival of the fittest drives the evolution of species. This is what Wallace wrote about to Darwin.

Shermer's level-headed analysis gives Wallace due credit even as it persuasively debunks conspiracy theories holding that Darwin connived with the London scientific establishment to usurp the younger man's place in history. In fact, Darwin helped publicize Wallace's work, and was impelled by it to hurry up and finish his *Origin of Species* (1859), on which he had been working for many years. Darwin acknowledged Wallace's independent thought, and Wallace acknowledged Darwin's priority. They remained on friendly terms.

Back in England, Wallace never became part of the inner circle of British scientists. He came to think that natural selection could not account for human intelligence, and he got caught up in the late-Victorian craze for

phrenology and spiritualism, which diminished his scientific reputation.

At this point in his account of Wallace's life, Shermer, the author of *Why People Believe Weird Things* (1997), embarks on a rather different book. Eager to make his history scientific, he offers statistical analyses of Wallace's writings, along with psychological assessments, on a numerical five-factor scale, of his subject's personality. He concludes, in brief, that Wallace was a natural heretic—a bit of a sucker for radical ideas and hopeless causes, with an innocence that verged on gullibility.

Shermer spends far too much of the book trying to justify, with limited success, his quantitative methods. He seems to believe that once he has found a way of attaching a number to something, he has hit on objective truth, and that whatever cannot be measured numerically is of meager value. Nevertheless, his emphasis on understanding Wallace's science and beliefs through his individual psychology stands in welcome contrast to the approach taken by most academic historians of science, who aim to reduce original thinkers to anonymous blobs of gray matter responding to sociological forces that only the historians have the wit to perceive.

Shermer is an enthusiastic if raggedy writer, and his book, idiosyncrasies included, gives a compelling and fair assessment of a man too often overlooked.

—DAVID LINDLEY

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**MATHEMATICS ELSEWHERE:**

***An Exploration of Ideas Across Cultures.***

By Marcia Ascher. Princeton Univ. Press.  
207 pp. \$24.95

I'm probably not the only one who's going to throw an "End of the World" party on December 21, 2012, the day that the 5,125-year cycle of the Mayan "long count" calendar ends. The Maya themselves never thought that the end of the long count would mark the end of the world, but some modern New Agers fear the apocalypse when the last hour of the last day on the Mayan calendar ticks away.

Whereas the Western calendar (like most other modern calendars) is linear—the numbered years get greater and greater without end—the Mayan calendar is cyclical, resetting every 5,125 years. The Maya perceived some-

thing as basic as the passage of time from a totally different viewpoint. In *Mathematics Elsewhere*, Ascher, a professor emerita of mathematics at Ithaca College, seeks to enter the mathematical mindsets of other cultures through the Mayan calendar, the Marshall Islanders' intricate maps, the Tongan system of social ranking, the ornate flour figures that Tamil women would draw on their thresholds, and a number of other customs. The result is both fascinating and frustrating.

At times, the book provides a compelling glimpse into another civilization. For example, one chapter describes how the Marshall Islanders, who live on tiny islands scattered across a million square kilometers of the Pacific, were able to navigate vast stretches of seemingly featureless ocean. Ascher delves deeply into the islanders' once-mysterious methods, including the frail-looking frameworks of palm ribs lashed together with coconut fibers that guided canoes from island to island, and the training of the navigators (lying in their outriggers, they learned to sense the interplay of wind, water, and land).

By depicting "some mathematical ideas of people in traditional or small-scale cultures," Ascher aims to contribute to "a global and humanistic history of mathematics." But while the practices in the book are describable by

mathematics, there is, with few exceptions, little evidence that they reflect a different type of mathematical thought than Westerners'. Just because Marshall Islanders represented ocean swells rather than physical distances on their maps doesn't mean that they had a fundamentally different view of relationships in space, nor does our ability to represent Tamil drawings by a mathematical formalism known as an "L-system" mean that Tamil matrons implicitly understood formal systems and recursive algorithms.

When there is a clear mathematical conclusion to be drawn—for example, that the Maya used zero some centuries before it appeared in Europe—Ascher curiously shies away from it. This is particularly disappointing because the Mayan and other calendars give her the strongest case for seeing a different type of mathematics in another culture—cyclical calendars may have forced a few cultures' timekeepers to explore rudimentary ideas in mathematical group theory, a subject that didn't captivate the West until later.

Despite the weak mathematics, *Mathematics Elsewhere* provides interesting snapshots of different cultures. Perhaps it should have been titled simply *Elsewhere*.

—CHARLES SEIFE

## HISTORY

### *PARIS 1919: Six Months That Changed the World.*

By Margaret MacMillan. Random House.  
570 pp. \$35

Occasionally an anecdote—such as the tale of Napoleon dousing himself daily in eau de cologne because he feared baths—casts intriguing new light on an event or a time we thought we knew. MacMillan, a professor of history at the University of Toronto, offers many such stories in this history of negotiations toward the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I. One day, for example, Olwen Lloyd George, the attractive young daughter of British prime minister David Lloyd George, was invited to go for a drive with French premier Georges Clemenceau, a fiery old socialist nicknamed the Tiger. In the course of their excursion,

Clemenceau turned to Olwen and asked whether she appreciated art. Indeed, she replied, whereupon the old rogue whipped out a batch of naughty photos.

As that story reminds us, the Treaty of Versailles was not just an abortive attempt to bring peace to a devastated Europe. Nor was it simply an attempt by President Woodrow Wilson, with his Fourteen Points and League of Nations, to bring American fairness and decency to the squalid deal making of discredited European empires. It was also a bridging event that took Europe from the moral laxities of a bloody war into the Jazz Age.

"Elsa Maxwell, not yet the doyenne of international café society that she would become, secured a passage from New York as companion to a glamorous divorced woman who was on the

lookout for a new husband,” MacMillan records. “The two women gave marvelous parties in a rented house. General [John] Pershing supplied the drink; Maxwell played the latest Cole Porter songs on the piano; and the divorcée found her husband, a handsome American captain called Douglas MacArthur. Outside, early one morning, two young officers fought a duel with sabers over yet another American beauty.” This is a rather different account of what went on at Versailles from the classic one by Harold Nicolson, who maintained that participants kept themselves “alert, stern, righteous, and ascetic,” for “there was about us the halo of some divine mission.”

MacMillan’s splendidly readable book is enlivened not only by romantic dalliances but by a perspective that gives all the nations represented at Versailles their due. Her most prescient chapter relates the sad failure of the Chinese delegation to hold the Shantung Peninsula against Japan’s demands. The Chinese had put their faith in Wilson and his Fourteen Points. Wilson was sympathetic, but the Italians had already walked out because he wouldn’t

grant them the loot promised in secret clauses of the treaty that had brought them into the war. “If Italy remains away and Japan goes home, what remains of the League of Nations?” he plaintively asked. At the very moment China’s idealist and pro-Western intellectuals were abandoned, Russia’s new Bolshevik government offered to return all the concessions extracted from China by the tsars. Within months, the disappointed Chinese delegates to Versailles helped found the Chinese Communist Party.

MacMillan also relates a conversation between Wilson and the Australian prime minister, the cheeky Billy Hughes, who wanted to annex the former German colony of New Guinea. Wilson asked whether Christian missionaries would have open access to the pagan natives. Certainly, Hughes replied—“There are many days when the poor devils do not get half enough missionaries to eat.”

A reader enthralled by MacMillan’s wonderful anecdotes might easily fail to notice that this is an impressive work by a serious historian.

—MARTIN WALKER

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Daniel Akst** is the author of *St. Burl’s Obituary* (1996), a novel about a food-obsessed writer. **Randall Balmer**, a professor of American religion at Barnard College, is the author of eight books, including *The Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (2002), *Growing Pains: Learning to Love My Father’s Faith* (2001), and *Religion in 20th-Century America* (2001). **C. Michael Curtis** is a senior editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* and the editor of *God: Stories* (1998). **Douglas Gomery** teaches media history at the University of Maryland. **Henry Hart**, a professor of English at the College of William and Mary, is the author of two books of poetry, the biography *James Dickey: The World as a Lie* (2000), and critical studies of Seamus Heaney, Geoffrey Hill, and Robert Lowell. **Ann Hulbert**, a former Wilson Center fellow, is the author of the forthcoming book *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children*. **Preston Lerner** is a novelist, playwright, and journalist who often writes about automobiles. **David Lindley**, the author of *Boltzmann’s Atom: The Great Debate That Launched a Revolution in Physics* (2000) and the coeditor of *Webster’s New World Dictionary of Science* (1998), is writing a biography of the Victorian scientist and entrepreneur Lord Kelvin. **Robert Masello**, currently the visiting lecturer in journalism at Claremont McKenna College, has written several books and many television episodes of a science-fiction and supernatural bent. **Christopher Moore** is a researcher at *The Wilson Quarterly*. **James Morris** is a senior editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*. **Alix Ohlin**, the author of a forthcoming novel, has written about contemporary art for *Art Journal*, *Art Papers*, and *Boston Review*. **Charles Seife**, the author of *Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea* (1999), writes for *Science* magazine. **Martin Walker** is the author most recently of *America Reborn: A Twentieth-Century Narrative in Twenty-Six Lives* (2000) and the novel *The Caves of Périgord* (2002).

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## PORTRAIT: 1903



When President Theodore Roosevelt reviewed the U.S. North Atlantic Fleet on Long Island Sound in August, the United States was still a middling power—but wouldn't be for long. The previous December, TR had dispatched U.S. warships to Venezuela, informing Germany “that I should be obliged to interfere, by force if necessary,” if it tried to seize territory there. In November 1903, the navy lent a hand when Panamanian rebels declared independence from Colombia; within weeks, Roosevelt submitted to Congress a treaty for a canal in Panama. By the time he left office in 1909, America possessed a navy second only to Britain's, with ambitions to grow.

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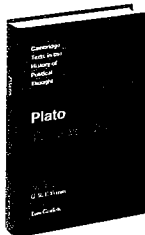
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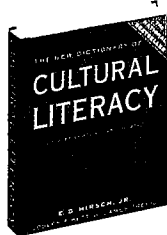
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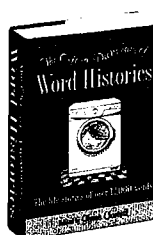
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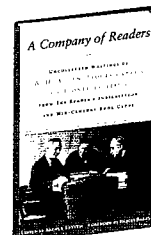
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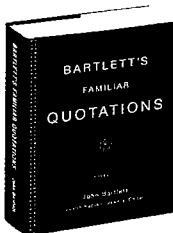
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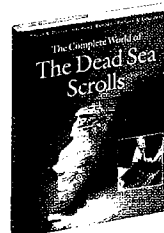
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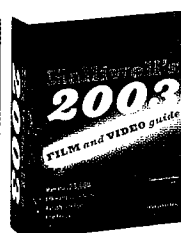
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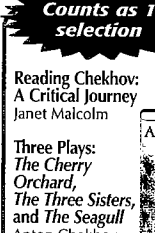
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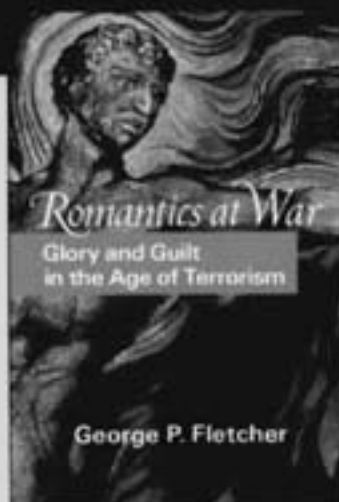
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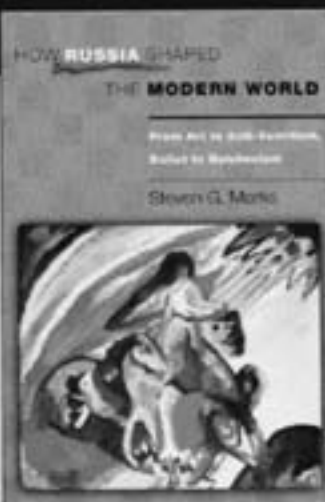
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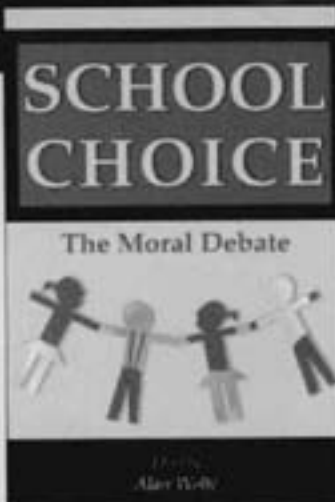
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