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EDITOR'S COMMENT

I don't think it's a trade secret that editors have more than one reason to feel relieved when an issue goes off to the printer. In the endless reading and rereading that occurs as an essay moves from manuscript to final form, more than a few pieces lose some of their charm. As we go to press, however, historian Wilfred M. McClay's cover story continues to spark discussion around the office. McClay holds up to the light an idea widely taken for granted and, by and large, endorsed in America: secularism. He comes away with wise counsel for parties on all sides of today's fevered debates about the role of religion in American society.

McClay is no stranger to our pages, or to the Wilson Center, where he was a Fellow during 1997–98. His last essay for the *WQ*, "Fifty Years of *The Lonely Crowd*" (Summer 1998), dealt with that surprise bestseller of 1950 and the efforts of its principal author, the eminent sociologist David Riesman (who is the subject of a forthcoming McClay biography), to understand how modern institutions were reshaping the American character.

If Riesman's book belongs on any list of indispensable books on the nature of American life written in the last 50 years, so does McClay's less well-known *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America* (1994). It is a book that easily earns the accolade suggested by its title, a masterful inquiry into the ways American thinkers since the Civil War have tried to reconcile dreams of individualism with both the desire for social connection and the realities of mass society. True freedom, McClay suggests, is to be found neither in splendid isolation nor in ideological formulas for society.

A similar concern emerges in his essay in this issue, in which he asks if a version of secularism that leaves citizens free to exercise religious beliefs in private but bars religion from the public realm offers any true freedom at all.

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Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.

Agrarian Myths

I agree with Victor Davis Hanson ["Democracy without Farmers," WQ, Spring '00] that the disappearance of farmland and the culture of farming is a blow to America's vitality, but his suggestion that the freeholding yeoman's middle ground is essential for the survival of democracy in its largest sense is part and parcel of the romantic myth of farming we live with today, a myth that persists however devalued the actual life of the farmer has become. The family farm is not now what it once was. In Crèvecoeur's time, it consisted of a small, nearly self-reliant holding where the husband, wife, and children all worked toward the upkeep of the house and acreage. Over time, as the West opened up and new markets for agricultural products developed, farmers increasingly turned outward, depending more and more on income from those markets until, in the present day, the family farmer has become closer kin to a modern businessman than to Crèvecoeur's yeoman, and his wife and children sometimes work off the farm, not only to bring in needed extra income but to ease the strain on familial relations that farming in contemporary society often brings.

Perhaps this trajectory is most evident in New England, where farming has been in decline for nearly two centuries. Thoreau saw it in his time: "None of the farmers' sons are willing to be farmers," he wrote, "and the apple trees are decayed and the cellarholes are more numerous than the houses." The sons had gone to the West or the cities, the daughters to the first industrial textile mills. You could even say that, by the beginning of the 20th century, the European immigrants who inherited the factory jobs from those farm girls were the ones who best understood the value of democracy and what it took to uphold it. As the region's farmers continued on their downward spiral, suspicious of change and the new people in their midst, true democratic energy shot through the nearby cities, where the immigrant laborers were striking for living wages and humane working conditions, helped in their efforts by

those whom Hanson has little patience for: activists and intellectuals.

The origin of democracy may have been inextricably linked to farming, but its maturation is not, and neither is its future, even if we find ourselves in a world where we no longer fully esteem the worth of the soil, or understand what it means to human life, and how it could define a world.

Jane Brox
Dracut, Mass.

What was missing in Victor Davis Hanson's essay is any reference to the vastly different aspect of farming today. The farmer today has learned to farm the government as much as he farms the land! Too many farmers lobby for—and their existing operations are dependent on—subsidies either for the direct operation or for the import-export actions of the government. The author should recognize this fact, not only as it affects the farmer's day-to-day operation, but also as it relates to the yeoman-citizen's connection with today's political scene. I don't think there can be a reasonable discussion of today's democracy without taking this into consideration.

E. H. Mergens
Pagosa Springs, Colo.

LBJ's Legacy

I agree in its broad strokes with the new scholarly picture of Lyndon B. Johnson ["Reconsidering LBJ," WQ, Spring '00] as a man whose outsized paranoia and outsized heart did epic battle for possession of his soul. But in his review of new LBJ scholarship, Lewis L. Gould goes a little too far in the direction of a whitewash. "The 1993 decision to release the audiotapes of Johnson White House conversations gave another lift to LBJ's standing among scholars and researchers," he writes. But research for my own book, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (Hill & Wang, 2000), led me to the conclusion that at many points the tapes also show Johnson as hardly a more hon-

orable figure than Richard Nixon. We hear him selling ambassadorships in exchange for \$100,000 campaign donations, promising to short-circuit a Justice Department investigation of a bank merger on behalf of a contributor if the price is right. "I've got considerably more detail on Reynolds's love life," LBJ aide Walter Jenkins says at one point of the president's accuser in a complicated financial scandal Congress is investigating. "Well, get it all typed up for me," the president responds impatiently, without any discernible compunction. What's more, far from vindicating Johnson by exposing his "doubts on Vietnam," these conversations reveal his doubts as almost exclusively political, not humanitarian.

In his literature review, Gould neglected the contributions of H. R. McMaster in his important study of Vietnam decision making, *Dereliction of Duty* (1997), which traces the quandary partly to LBJ's perverse administrative style: keeping around him those whom he knew would never say "no" to him—and men who were willing to lie for him—and purging all the rest. In *WQ*'s forum on his legacy comes one of those same yes men, Jack Valenti, pathetically trying to repeat the lie that "we began to bomb in 1965, because Pleiku was attacked, and we had to answer." Valenti, whose office in the White House was closest to the president's, was surely in a position to know that the decision to bomb North Vietnam was locked in as early as September of 1964.

*Rick Perlstein
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

I was a junior and highly expendable young staff member at the White House during the last two years of the Johnson administration, and had the rare privilege of daily observing LBJ and his many talented advisers and staff members as they addressed difficult issues in those final years of LBJ's presidency. Now that I am the age that LBJ was when I served him, I appreciate more than ever the stress under which he operated and the strength of mind and spirit he maintained during those troubled times. His strengths and weaknesses, his virtues and vices, as has been often noted, were larger than life. While far from being a perfect man or leader, he had a vision for social reform and the knowledge and tenacity to accomplish much that he sought for the benefit of those who had long been treated,

at best, as second-class citizens. As Goethe famously observed: "Thinking is easy; action is difficult. To act in accordance with one's thought is the most difficult thing in the world."

*William M. Blackburn
Dallas, Texas*

Harry McPherson and Jack Valenti find it difficult to explain why Lyndon B. Johnson's superb political instincts failed him when he had to deal with the problem of Vietnam. The answer is simple: Dwight D. Eisenhower. The president who had rejected the French plea for military help at Dien Bien Phu changed his tune completely once he was safely out of office. As a raging hawk, he used his tremendous prestige to make sure that presidents Kennedy and Johnson marched ever deeper into the quagmire. In the words of biographer Stephen Ambrose, "Eisenhower was far more belligerent, more ready to take extreme action as an outsider than he had been when he was the man on the spot."

In his companion essay, Lewis L. Gould argues that the pendulum of presidential prestige is now swinging in Johnson's favor, largely because of his impressive record of achievement in domestic affairs. But meanwhile, the pendulum may be shifting against Eisenhower, because many of our most intractable problems today stem from the foreign policy decisions he made almost half a century ago. If Eisenhower had not overturned the legitimate government of Iran, we might have been spared the Islamic fundamentalism of the ayatollahs. If he had not overturned the legitimate government of Guatemala, we might have been spared a half-century of bloody horrors in Latin America. And if he had not instigated the Bay of Pigs invasion, we might have been spared the threat of annihilation from missiles, not to mention the threat to social stability caused by the presence in our midst of six-year-old Cuban boys.

*William M. Burke
San Francisco, Calif.*

I would agree with your authors that Medicare, the Civil Rights Act, and the Voting Rights Act alone represent truly historic achievements for Lyndon Johnson.

The most disturbing facts about the Johnson



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administration, however, more than offset his achievements.

First, his administration consistently lied to the American people about the country's involvement in Vietnam, thus launching an era of deepening cynical distrust of virtually all federal government activity. Second, the Johnson administration so increased the dependence of states, municipalities, and even individuals on federal government largess as to make the voter's only criterion for choosing a president the cynical "what's-in-it-for-me" standard.

A people can be taught dependence as well as compassion. Surely LBJ taught both and sacrificed much in that process.

*Donald M. Barnes
Spokane, Wash.*

I thought "The Revised LBJ" was outstanding. However, I wish Lewis Gould had mentioned the Immigration Act of 1965 in his list of LBJ's legislative accomplishments. While this piece of legislation is rarely noticed, in some ways it has had as significant an impact for Asian and other immigrants as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had for African Americans.

Before 1965, legal immigration in the United States was narrowly based upon the national origin system, which was heavily weighted, based on the 1900 census, in favor of European immigrants. While the UK quota prior to the '65 Act was 65,000 immigrants per year, most other non-European countries, other than Latin American ones, had an annual quota of 100, which would effectively mean no more than 25 families per year could immigrate, and backlogs longer than the lifespan of most individuals.

As a result of the '65 Act, the United States has greatly benefited from a broader cross-section of immigrants from all over the world, and particularly addressed the years of highly biased anti-immigration legislation directed toward Asia.

*Charles C. Foster
Houston, Texas*

Lewis Gould and the Lyndon Johnson apologists seem to be missing the plain truth. Lyndon Johnson, for all intents and purposes, single-handedly sent over 50,000

boys to die in the Vietnam War for purposes that were not then and are not now even remotely clear.

Despite Gould's assertion that Johnson's performance should somehow be judged more forgivingly because of the "continuity of errors and failures from the administrations of Eisenhower to Nixon," the simple fact is that Johnson had the power, all by himself, to stop the bloodshed. All he had to do was to go on television and drawl, "My fellow Americans, we're getting out."

But to his everlasting discredit, he didn't. He lacked either the wisdom, personal courage, or political will to do so. Instead, he condemned tens of thousands of our boys to death, and more tens of thousands to permanent physical and psychological damage, and plunged the nation into a divisive cynicism and financial morass from which it required nearly a generation to recover. In developing a "more balanced, nuanced portrait of the man," Gould should start by taking a slow walk past the Vietnam War Memorial and finish with visits to a few Veterans Administration hospitals. We don't need a nuanced view of Lyndon Johnson from historians. Whatever positive accomplishments the man may have had apart from his prosecution of the war are offset a hundred times, no, a thousand times, by the swath of death, disillusionment, sadness, cynicism, and self-loathing this war left in its wake. In his life, he was called upon to make one supremely important decision, and he failed.

David R. Bryant
San Francisco, Calif.

The Russian Future

Amy Knight's polemic against Russian President Vladimir Putin ["The KGB," WQ, Spring '00] is premature, to say the least. Certainly Stalin's secret services (the GPU, NKVD, NKGB, MVD) compared in depravity with Hitler's Gestapo and the SS, but Russia's post-Stalin secret services have not always acted worse than our own FBI or CIA.

Knight was understandably annoyed with KGB surveillance when she was "bucking the system" as a student in Russia in 1967, but at that very same time during the Vietnam War, the FBI also had American college students under surveillance. J. Edgar Hoover even had the FBI

infiltrate Martin Luther King's civil rights movement.

As for the CIA, it has the blood of quite a few civilians on its hands, having aided and abetted coups in Guatemala, Chile, and Iran, to note but a few of its more notorious machinations. Is it inconceivable that simple patriotism or idealism (even if naive or misplaced) led the young Putin to enter the KGB? And isn't calling him "a nobody" because of his modest position in that organization incongruous in the extreme? Would he be a more acceptable president had he headed the KGB (as former President George Bush once headed the CIA)? In governmental bureaucracies (in any country), it is usually the cleverest sycophants who reach the top positions.

We have little moral authority to question the war in Chechnya either. The U.S. involvement in Vietnam was a costly, bloody mistake, and the My Lai massacre was hardly an example of humane conduct toward civilians. Nor was Kent State. However, all of the above is virtually insignificant in comparison with the following consideration: Given the presence of numerous, powerful private-security forces in Russia, plus countless well-armed *mafia* gangs (often stronger than the underpaid and demoralized local police), plus the undisputed fact that the military forces are likewise impoverished and demoralized, how could any leader restore law, order, and security to Russia's chaotic society without the full support of both the military and the FSB? And who is in a better position to secure that vital support than Putin? Knight may be proven correct that "a banal evil has reached the summit of power in the Kremlin" (echoes of "the evil empire"), but she may also be wrong. A bit of restraint in anathematizing Putin seems in order, at least until he has had a chance to prove himself.

Allen F. Chew
Colorado Springs, Colo.

I applaud Michael McFaul's impressive account of Boris Yeltsin's tenure ["Yeltsin's Legacy," WQ, Spring '00]. However, I am puzzled at his conclusions. My wife is Ukrainian, and a recent immigrant to this country. She is not a scholar, but her views are common among many in the former Soviet Union who lived through the transition, and they explain the failures that trouble Mr. McFaul. In their common understanding,

the transition between Mikhail Gorbachev and Yeltsin was the work of either KGB agents or Russian *mafia* thugs who gave Gorbachev little choice.

These toughs did not bring Boris Yeltsin to power because they supported him. They pushed him to the leadership position because they could control him. The billions of dollars bled from Russia after Yeltsin took the reins were not incidental to his policies; the bleeding *was* the policy. The amounts involved are too great, and the relationships of the benefactors to Yeltsin too close, for one to reach any other conclusion.

Boris Yeltsin did not fail. He was there to facilitate the looting of Russia, and he performed magnificently. McFaul is seeking a statesman where none exists. It is like calling a burglar an animal lover because he throws a sausage to the guard dog, and then criticizing him for not also brushing and training the beast. Except, of course, that Boris Yeltsin was not the burglar, only the lookout.

Richard Barr
Manassas, Va.

More on the KGB

I'd like to respond to several issues raised by Amy Knight in "The Selling of the KGB" (WQ, Winter '00).

It is certainly true that *The Crown Jewels*, which I co-authored with Oleg Tsarev, was dependent upon documents declassified and released by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS), but there is no evidence to suggest that either that organization or its predecessor falsified any of them. Indeed, I was equally dependent upon documents declassified by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) and the Central Intelligence Agency when I wrote *VENONA: The Greatest Secret of the Cold War* (1999). However, Knight's assertion that the Russian documents are unavailable for independent scrutiny is incorrect, at least as far as the material quoted in *The Crown Jewels* is concerned. Much of the material contained therein is written in English by Anthony Blunt, Kim Philby, and Donald Maclean, who, at the time they wrote it, could not speak Russian and communicated with their handlers in English. All the Soviet originals are available for inspection in Moscow, and they were officially released on

our publication day. I have photocopies of all the papers in English and am willing to share them with anyone who cares to see them. There has not been any challenge to their authenticity, and I know from my own research that they are genuine. Those that are in manuscript are in the verified handwriting of the attributed authors.

I quite accept Knight's point that the FIS may have its own agenda for making its selection (and doubtless the same could be said for the NSA's motive in releasing redacted versions of the VENONA files), but she is wrong to suggest that the documents uniformly show the KGB in the best possible light. On the contrary, we not only point out the horror of the purges, but show how Beria's paranoia handicapped the London *rezidentura's* operations, and led the NKVD to distrust its most loyal star performers.

We are also taken to task for making insufficient disclosures regarding the Oxford network, beyond mentioning its unidentified leader, code named SCOTT. Actually, we reproduce six hitherto unseen documents relating to the mysterious SCOTT, and while I accept the criticism that I was unable to give his true name, it was not for want of trying. The same comment, of course, could be made of the NSA, which redacted dozens of names from the VENONA texts.

As for Knight's view that *The Crown Jewels* does not contain enough bombshells, I think the revelation of Edith Tudor Hart's role as Philby's recruiter fits that category, not to mention the first detailed description of the spy ring headed by the journalist William Ewer.

I have no firsthand knowledge of how Vasili Mitrokhin came to make his contribution to the literature, but from what I have learned, Amy Knight's skepticism is wholly unjustified, and the author acted alone to develop his collection.

Nigel West
London, England

Amy Knight responds:

I did not say that the documents used for *The Crown Jewels* were falsified or unavailable, merely that they were handpicked by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. This selection process enabled the FIS to put forth its version of history.

FINDINGS

Baby, It's Warmer Outside

Yet another pleasure may be fading from modern life. We're speaking, of course, of the wind-chill factor, and the perverse thrill to be had upon hearing it announced over the airwaves. "Oh God," we think with a shiver of strange delight, "it's even colder out there than I thought!" It seems we were a bit hasty in passing out medals for braving the cold: The 55-year-old wind-chill formula is flawed, badly exaggerating the cold.

That was the consensus at an online workshop (<http://windchill.ec.gc.ca>) hosted by the Meteorological Service of Canada in



Feeling the chill in Cincinnati

April, where scientists gathered to critique the prevailing Siple-Passel wind-chill formula. Devised in 1945 by Antarctic explorers Paul Siple and Charles Passel, the index does not take into account the human body's ability to generate its own heat. In fact, it has little to do with the human condition at all, having been devised after experiments with water-filled plastic cylinders. This shortcoming has been recognized for decades, but scientists have been unable to agree on an alternative measure.

The public is not clamoring for a replacement. It loves to show its mettle in the face of brutal cold, a Canadian reporter comments online, and demands the low numbers to prove it. To satisfy the public's urge, "broadcast media and commentators often appear to scramble to find low numbers," adds Edwin Kessler of the University of Oklahoma.

The three alternative formulas put on the table may ruin the public's visions of meteorological heroism. Each equation—the Steadman, Bluestein-Zecher, and Osczevski—pegs the wind chill at a higher temperature than does the Siple-Passel. With a temperature of 20°F and a windspeed of 20 mph, the alternatives put the wind chill, respectively, 14, 9, and 14 degrees higher than the Siple-Passel number.

It's also debatable how the information should be reported to the public: Should it be converted from watts of energy lost per square meter of body surface to a "discomfort scale," like Canada's 10 levels of warning? Or should it be converted to equivalent temperature, as in the United States?

It is not just a fetish for scientific accuracy that drives the researchers. They fear that the inaccuracies are dangerous. Since under the Siple-Passel formula a day with -9° wind chill is not actually as cold as a windless day with a temperature of -9°, people could misjudge the elements. Dressing too lightly on a truly cold day, some could suffer frostbite or hypothermia.

Don't expect a change soon, however. The U.S. National Weather Service is reluctant to spend the money needed to launch a new gauge and educate the public. Sounds cold-hearted to us.

Vodka's Toll

Alcoholism, a plague of the old Soviet Union, does not seem to have abated in the new Russia. A recent study of families in Moscow and Udmurtia, reported Radio Free Europe on May 22, found that most deaths among Russian men occur on Mondays, apparently after weekends spent consuming large amounts of alcohol.

Two-thirds of Russian men between the ages of 20 and 55 who died in the two cities over the last three years were drunk at the

time of death, although the deaths were caused by a variety of other factors, including disease, accidents, and suicide. But it takes only a small stretch of the imagination to hypothesize that two-thirds of 20- to 55-year-olds in Russia are drunk every weekend.

Bards of Summer

Baseball, the favored sport of intellectuals, has inspired more than its share of painful tributes. But amid another fine season, Mikhail Horowitz's Big League Poets (1978) still seems worth recalling.



William CASEY SHAKESPEARE made every play look easy. As a shortstop for the Los Angeles Learjets, he was known as “The Speed Merchant of Venice Beach.” Most Voluminous Player ten times, Casey later took over the Houston Yoricks and designed their fabulous Globe Stadium. The Greatest Big League Poet of them all, he ended up as an umpire, and would baffle almost everybody with such ambiguous calls as “fair is foul and foul is fair.”

Looking Good

The body image and eating disorder crisis among American girls is a depressingly familiar story. But a new study by University of Arizona anthropologist Mimi Nichter shows that the experiences of black and white teenage girls are poles apart. Although subjected to the same barrage of unrealistic standards as white girls, a majority of black girls have somehow withstood the pressure from *Cosmopolitan* and its ilk and view their bodies in a positive light, no matter what their weight.

In *Fat Talk: What Girls and Their Parents Say about Dieting* (2000), Nichter asked 44 African American girls how satisfied they were with their weight. Seventy percent responded that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied,” although 18 percent of these girls were significantly overweight by biomedical standards. (In an earlier study of African American women, 40 percent of the respondents who fell in the overweight categories considered their figures “attractive” or “very attractive.”) By contrast, Nichter found that almost 90 percent of the white girls she surveyed were *dissatisfied* with their bodies, including girls of average and below-average weight.

Wildly different as well were the two groups’ descriptions of “the ideal girl.” African American teenagers “often began with a list of personality traits rather than physical attributes,” says Nichter. “They did not describe beauty in relation to a particular size or set of body statistics,” but instead admired girls who were smart, friendly, and had a good sense of humor. Pressed to name a physical trait, black girls applauded those who made “what they had work for them” — whether it be long nails or pretty eyes.

An ideal white girl, Nichter found, appeared to have no personality whatsoever. Almost without fail, the “perfect” girl was 5'7" and between 100 and 110 pounds with long, blonde hair — and little else. “I was continually struck by the uniformity of their descriptions, regardless of what the speaker herself looked like,” Nichter explains.

The source of the disparity, argues Nichter, can be found in the social network of the African American community.

Instead of being encouraged to conform, she explains, “African-American girls reported receiving positive feedback for creating their own style around their given attributes. In contrast, white girls received support for altering their looks to fit an established beauty ideal.” “Looking good” in the black community, Nichter concludes, has more to do with attitude than appearance.

Of Bytes and Beans

Humankind’s ancient quest for a decent cup of coffee continues. Palm, Inc., the maker of hand-held wireless devices linked to the Web, reports that one question tops the list of user queries: Where is the nearest Starbucks?

Listening to the City

The sounds of sizzle are back in many American downtowns. The restaurants are full, the clubs are rocking, and crowds are said to be lining up for big-city condos, co-ops, and apartments. But noted urban observer Witold Rybczynski, who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, warns that talk of an urban renaissance is premature. Not only is the influx of city-dwellers exaggerated, he says, but most American cities are a long way from claiming the kind of population heft and density needed to sustain big-city claims.

It’s stunning to be reminded how lightly populated most American downtowns are (and traditionally have been). In *Wharton Real Estate Review* (Spring 2000), Rybczynski estimates that it takes 40,000 residents to make a vibrant downtown—a standard that only a half-dozen meet. Some of the big winners of the 1990s are, even with luck, many decades away from that level. Denver, a star of the 1990s boom, had only 3,597 downtown residents in 1999, after a 29 percent increase during the decade. (Portland, Oregon, had 10,916; Pittsburgh had 3,175).

Density (at least 20 people per acre) is also needed to sustain mass transit, retail,



As every schoolboy doubtless knows, **LONG JOHN MILTON** pitched for Paradise and Paradise Lost.

and other urban amenities. In a University of Pennsylvania study of 15 cities (excluding the “big four” of Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.), only Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, and Seattle came close. All the rest were under 10 residents per acre—practically suburban levels. And then there’s the fact that most downtowns are vastly outweighed in population by the surrounding urban and suburban areas. Only 14 percent of Bostonians live downtown—and only 2.4 percent of those in the entire Boston metropolitan region do so.

Rybczynski doesn’t quite say so, but what seems to be driving the downtown revival is a powerful process of specialization not unlike that which is remaking everything from the modern corporation (remember conglomerates?) to the university, with its thousands of proliferating niche specialties. Downtown, once the nucleus of the American city, is becoming just one of its many nodes, a specialized zone for entertainment and a select group of enterprises whose employees find urban amenities enticing. As analysts Joel Kotkin and Fred Siegel write in *American Outlook* (Winter 2000), digital technologies that increasingly enable work to move anywhere put cities in competition not only with their own sprawling suburbs but with the likes of

Aspen, Colorado, and Silicon Valley.

Kotkin and Siegel argue that “quality of life” factors—good schools, low crime—may be more important to the future of downtowns than the cost of land, labor, and taxes. Rybczynski believes that to regain some of their old preeminence, downtowns must attract not just today’s young professionals and empty-nesters but young families with children—which suggests that sizzle won’t be the loudest sound to be heard in the successful cities of the future.

Pachyderm Painters

When the logging of teak was banned in Thailand in 1983, some 3,000 log-hauling elephants were thrown out of work. When word of the elephants’ plight reached Soviet emigré artists Alexander Melamid and Vitaly Komar in the mid-1990s, they sensed a great opportunity. Not for an online elephant auction, but for something equally unlikely: They would make artists out of the former working stiffs. Already aware of the earning power of artistic elephants—Ruby, an elephant at the Phoenix Zoo, regularly brought in \$100,000 a year with her



Melamid (left) and Komar stand with one of their famed Thai elephant artists.

paintings—they launched the Asian Elephant Art and Conservation Project.

The idea blossomed: After establishing three painting schools in Thailand, the project went on to get footholds in India and Indonesia. There, the behemoths are taught to paint using brushes grasped in their trunks. The program now ensures the livelihood of 50 elephants, and its goal is to have “thousands of elephants producing hundreds of thousands of paintings,” said Melamid. A recent Christie’s auction featuring 50 paintings by seven Asian elephants earned more than \$30,000.

Elephant art has drawn raves from the public and critics alike. Afficionados insist that the pachyderms—thought to be color-blind—develop their own palettes and styles as distinct as Jackson Pollock’s and Willem de Kooning’s. Mia Fineman, an art historian at Yale University and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, has compared the paintings of Sao—a Thai elephant—to no less than those of Paul Gauguin. The buyer of a Lulkang original said, simply, “I love the color selection. I love the lines. I just had to have it.”

Retro-Medicine

We’re just as thrilled as the next person by the resurgence of “natural” medicine, but there are some things we’d still rather not know about. It’s bad enough that leeches are back in style. (In the reattachment of severed body parts, for example, *Hirudo medicinalis* often saves the day by preventing renewed blood flow from overwhelming the reattached appendage.) But maggots? As M. Lee Goff, a forensic entymologist, notes in *A Fly for the Prosecution: How Insect Evidence Helps Solve Crimes* (2000):

“The beneficial effect of maggots was first recorded by Napoleon’s battlefield surgeon, Savrey, in 1799. He observed that soldiers who had been wounded in battle but left on the field long enough for maggots to develop in their wounds had a greater chance of recovery than those who received immediate medical attention. The explanation is simple. The maggots involved feed only on

dead tissues, and they remove those tissues from wounds more efficiently than any physician. In addition, the allantoin excreted by the feeding maggots aids in healing and preventing infections. . . .

“Maggots have recently begun to be used again in hospitals in the United States to clean badly infected wounds, an effort championed by Ronald A. Sherman of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Long Beach, California.”

The lovely creatures are now even sold online.

Extreme Etiquette

“I’m honored to be in this distinguished place, in this distinguished company. . . . And I’m especially honored to be associated with the name of Theodore White.” So said the distinguished historian Garry Wills, delivering the 10th annual Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government last November. Apparently, Wills has radically revised his opinion in the decades since he reviewed one of White’s famed *Making of the President* books in the *New York Review of Books* (Oct. 4, 1973):

“The ‘Whitiad,’ now into its second decade, gets worse stanza by stanza. The race this time is between Professor McGovern (“the underthrust of his learning could carry his conversation to the uplands of history”) and Old Pro Nixon (“then his mind locked into tight reasoning”). The author seems to mistake them, in mid-interview, for Plato and Aristotle. Most people did not catch on to White until his 1968 volume. It was one thing to attend the enthronement in 1960 and describe at length the Emperor’s nonexistent coronation robes. People wanted to be fooled by Kennedy, and White was just the first in a long line of celebrants (Schlesinger, Sorensen, Salinger, just to dip into one part of the alphabet). But not even Nixon’s voters considered him majestic. When White managed to squeeze out a modicum of awe for *this* President, he blew his act....

“Journalists will lose respect for Teddy White when he becomes a hack, buying special privilege by toadying.”

Oh well. As Dr. Johnson said, “In lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath.”

America, You Have a Choice

Beneath an electoral landscape dominated by two monoliths named Al and W. lies a hidden reservoir of passionate, inspired, and virtuous candidates vying for your vote in November. These men and women have been politically active for years, running for office and even founding their own parties. Yet they would have gone unnoticed had it not been for the egalitarian online database provided by Project Vote Smart (www.vote-smart.org).

Selected by the American Political Science Association as the “Best Political Web Site” in existence, Project Vote Smart profiles more than 12,000 worthy candidates for national, state, and local offices throughout the United States. But the organization’s objectivity is perhaps best reflected in its equitable coverage of the kooks.

Falling (probably) into this latter category is Caesar St. Augustine, of Malibu, Calif. Asked for his political background, he responds, “I am already an Emperor therefore I need no experience for a hypocrite country like the alleged United States of America.” Clifford R. Catton is more worried than confident, explaining that U.S. Postal Service “employees have been stealing my mail since 1981 suppressing my First Amendment rights to raise up a NEW Christian denomination.” Fortunately, the Internet now allows him to circumvent the prying fingers of postal employees.

Conspiracy theories proliferate in this political underworld. Jeffrey G. Winter (www.guerillacampaign.com) provides links to more than a dozen articles on treasonous plots, covering everything from John F. Kennedy’s assassination to pro wrestling. He also offers a long list of campaign vows, including promises not to “bounce any more checks” or “get drunk or stoned” if elected president.

The Other Tempest

As they try to imagine a future without Fidel Castro, Cubans are enacting a drama far more significant than the saga of Elián González.

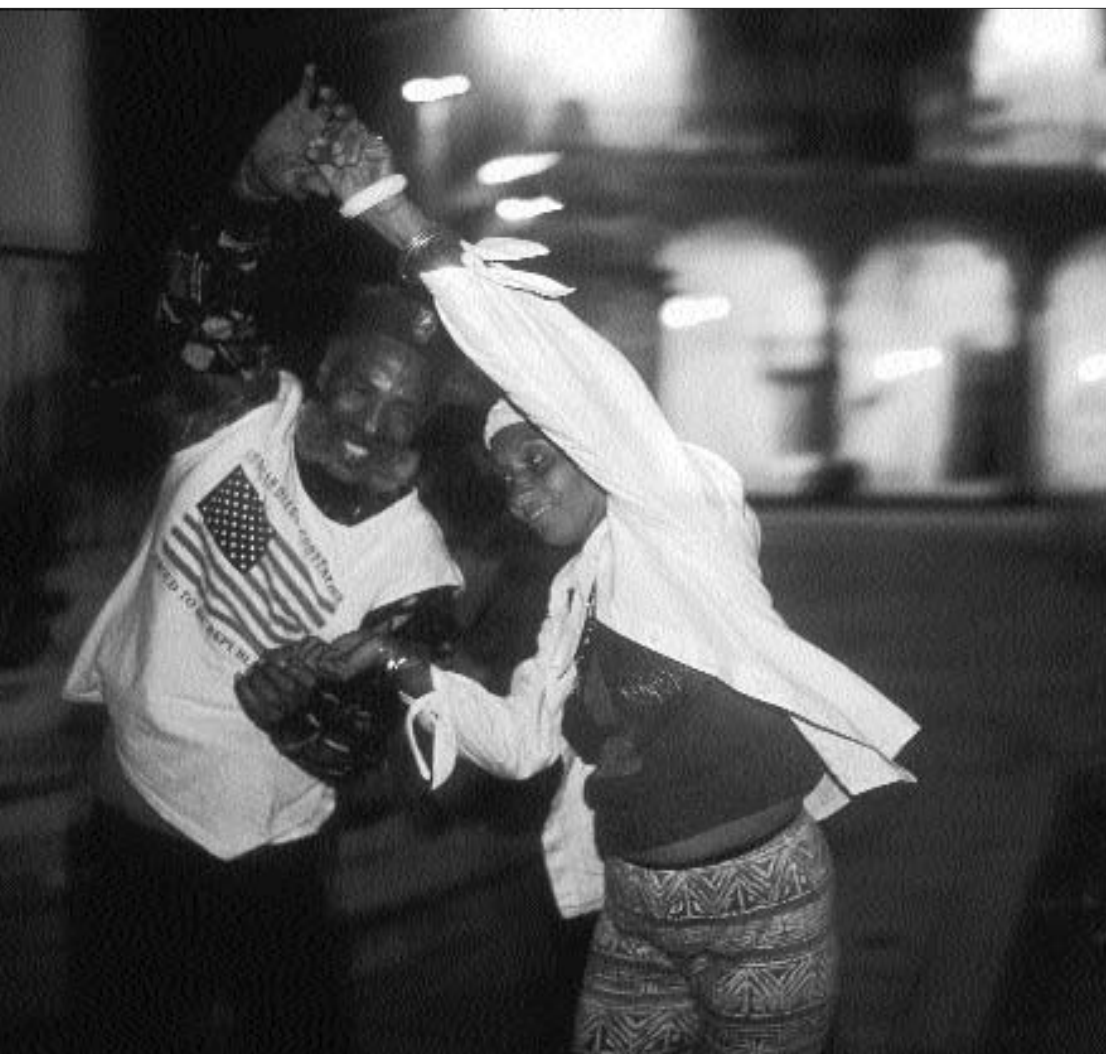
by Bob Shacochis

In April, as the tempo of the Elián González custody dispute accelerated toward its predawn climax in Miami, across the Florida Straits in Havana, news of Elián was temporarily eclipsed by less sensational, if no less predictable, headlines: Fidel Castro's pro forma denunciation of the global market economy at the Group of 77 South Summit (the underdeveloped nations' version of the Group of 7), and traffic-snarling demonstrations at the Czech Embassy protesting that republic's UN resolution condemning, for the second year in a row, human rights violations in Cuba. The bitter divisions within the Cuban family, free-market systems, civil liberties—these aging issues, intermittently masquerading behind new faces, obscure the fact that for the past decade, Cuba has successfully transformed itself from Potemkin village to Investment City. It is institutionalizing economic arrangements (if not top-to-bottom reforms) that for all intents and purposes will one day undermine both the mundane and the mythic pillars of Castro's "unfinished" revolution.

What might remain, or by any reasonable standard should remain, of Cuba's revolution in the uncertain years ahead is the question of the day. Will the assembled heirs, the generation of young, intelligent leaders well positioned to carry on the affairs of the Cuban state, remain, in whatever fashion or degree, ideologically betrothed to the revolutionary past and its ghostscape of glories, even as they improvise on Castro's stubborn politics of contradiction (which amount to a risky prescribed burn of capitalism through Cuba's debris-strewn socialist wilderness)?

Whatever the case, the Cuba of today is not the bleak, starving, demoralized Cuba of 10 years ago, or five years ago; in fact, the re-energized streets of Havana resonate most evocatively with a Cuba that hasn't existed for more than 40 years. Significant changes have already affected the contours of Cuban society, perhaps irreversibly, and today a widespread acceptance that





In Old Havana, a Cuban couple dances in the street outside a tourist club they are not allowed to enter.

changes even more profound are just around the historical corner has settled into the Cuban psyche. What most interested me, when I traveled to the island this spring, was determining how concerned the Cubans themselves were about their future *as Cubans*, as a patriotic people invested emotionally and morally in their country and its destiny, even as an after-chill of the expired Cold War continues to numb and restrict their movement toward freedoms taken for granted throughout Western culture (of which Latin American culture is no small part). Pathetically, Cuba is still at war these days, mostly with Jesse Helms and a relentless battalion of

its own hate-inspired Miami relatives, but the ideological tide of the conflict has ebbed with history, stranding both sets of scarred antagonists on opposite shores of ego, paranoia, and passionate delusion.

Not surprisingly, whomever I spoke with—tobacco workers and cab drivers and families at the beach, housewives and artists and hitchhikers—readily expressed interest in preserving the revolution's trio of hard-earned accomplishments: the educational system that has endowed Cuba with the highest literacy rate in the world, a universal health care system internationally acknowledged for the

expertise of its doctors and the ingenuity of its research and pharmacological entities, and social security programs that provide pensions, housing benefits, and food subsidies to most of the population. Indeed, any post-Castro, or post-revolutionary, government would be guilty of negligence, a careless disregard for the (re)established social standard of life, however modest, for the average Cuban, if it allowed the status quo in these areas of society to erode, as happened in the early '90s. Save education and health care and the roofs over our heads, people on the street seemed to be saying, and the rest can go, for all we care.

But to guarantee a place for the revolution in the country's future won't be as simple as all that, and in my conversations with Cuban writers at the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC)—the organization within the Ministry of Culture that oversees the arts—in a once-elegant mansion in Havana's Vedado district, I was exposed to a far more complex and revealing perspective on the revolution's potential legacy.

"For me," said Francisco Sacha, the president of UNEAC's Writers' Association, "the first thing that must survive from the revolution is the culture. If we save the culture, we will have saved the nation. A way of life, expression, communication. Popular traditions. And art, literature. The first thing. Where the revolution is strongest, where the deepest roots are, is in the life of the people. The other things will modify: the economy, the politics, the social situation, the legal system. But it stays and it grows, the Cuban culture. That's the foundation.

"Certain capitalist spirits and prejudices can endanger future social development. Specifically, economic changes. The capitalist culture is antithetical to Cuban culture, which is an ethical culture," Sacha insisted. "Our culture is not a business."

And yet that is exactly the paradoxical effect of Castro's reinvention of Cuba as a tourist destination: It has gradually turned Cuban culture into an enterprise, and cre-

ated a parallel economy within the socialist state, comfortably inhabited by multinational corporations—real estate conglomerates, banks, car rental agencies, resort companies—that fueled economic growth of more than six percent in 1999. An expanding sector of the population devotes itself to constructing, operating, and servicing this world of pleasure and luxury superimposed on, and yet increasingly a part of, the texture of Cuban life, if not culture per se, since Cubans themselves are forbidden access to this world and its temptations except as employees. But what does it mean that tourist revenues—\$1.7 billion last year—and remittances (*remesas*)—about \$800 million annually—from Cubans overseas, mostly in the United States, are solely responsible for the relative vitality of the economy? Perhaps it means that Cuban economic viability has grown dependent on two sources—foreign investors and exiles—that are anathema to its revolution and bewildering to its national identity, which is to say, its culture.

This contradiction, this dichotomy and its dizzying balancing act, is at the heart of the current *Zeitgeist* in Cuban society. "Within the revolution, everything; outside the revolution, nothing," Castro proclaimed 39 years ago, a truth severely tested throughout the "special period" of the '90s, and never so relevant as it is today. Clearly, at the moment in Cuba, anything is possible *within the revolution*—two economies, two cultures, a population of *haves* (Cubans with dollars) and *have-nots* (Cubans with pesos)—even a dual morality (*la doble moral*), the epidemic blend of massive (albeit petty) corruption and revolutionary fidelity that is the product of two intertwining survival tactics practiced by the population: loyalty to the state, and stealing from the state.

What then is the revolution, suddenly so porous and mutable, so strained by paradox? Castro's ability to beach Cuban culture securely on the rocks

>BOB SHACOCHIS is a novelist, essayist, journalist, and educator. His latest book is *The Immaculate Invasion* (1999). Copyright © 2000 by Bob Shacochis.



A familiar slogan adorns a construction site wall at the Varadero beach resort: “Socialism or Death.”

of the future may be all that’s really left of the once potent journey. His undiminished domestic power, supplemented by whatever moral nostalgia he can summon (in contrast to the enormous moral credibility the 26-year-old Castro commanded so brilliantly during his “History Will Absolve Me” defense against the Batista regime in 1953), presents him with that opportunity, if little else. Yet one must wonder if Castro, the tireless navigator, has already lost control of the culture, by doing what Gorbachev could not, or would not, do to hold together the Soviet Union—slowly sipping the “poison” of capitalism in an attempt to immunize the revolution against a free fall into the contagion of democracy, and thus preserve the authority of the centralized state.

Ironically, with the exception of the humble Lada automobile, 30 years of intense interaction between the Soviets and the Cubans left no trace of Soviet culture on the island, a testimony to both the strength of Cuban culture and the incompatibility of Soviet culture with anything but itself, especially Afro-Caribbean sensibilities. On the other

hand, as Francisco Sacha lamented during our conversation, no culture is immune to American culture. “When I first went to Cuba,” said Jean-Paul Sartre in 1974, “I remember that one of the Cubans’ chief concerns was to resuscitate their old culture . . . to guard against the absorbing influence of the United States.”

“Every part of the postmodern aesthetic,” said Sacha, recognizing that the problem for Cubans has only magnified in the passing years, “is to take the subculture and assimilate it into the mainstream culture. That’s the core of our fear. If we’re not able to achieve a more authentic culture, we’re in danger of losing. And that’s the fight of Cuban culture today. The world doesn’t need another Miami—it needs a real, authentic Havana.

“There are laws for cultural protection, so that the great predator of tourism does not destroy the culture, which happens so often in developing countries. We’ve argued about [tourist apartheid]. Every ministry in Cuba connected with tourism has set up a list of accords to confront these problems. As a base for these accords, they’re using rules established by UNEAC to guide architects. We don’t want this to be

another Cancún. We're trying to humanize Varadero [a huge new beach resort]—they don't have an urbanization plan. This is part of the spirit of the writer."

The word "authentic" is, of course, problematic, though it also seems true that a quality loosely defined as "authenticity," or timelessness, has been nurtured in Cuba's culture, thanks to the decades-long insularity of the U.S. embargo. Any objective visitor to Cuba senses this immediately: Cuban popular culture (the music, the sensuality, the spirit of the people) is as strong and rich as its coffee, although increasingly less pure (but no less seductive) as it drifts in the world. One wishes the writers good luck in their attempt to dilute the artificiality of Varadero, which was filled with sullen, bored Europeans during my last visit to Cuba. The island hosted 1.5 million tourists in 1999. Add an estimated 50,000 *yanqui* vacationers a month into the mix once the embargo is lifted, and theme parks can't be far behind: Ché vying with Mickey Mouse for brand-name recognition.

Listening to Francisco Sacha discuss the polarity between culture and business, I was reminded of a similar conversation I'd had 11 years earlier, as a debt-ridden "revolutionary" Mexico sought economic salvation in mass tourism. At the time, I took a walk on an unpaved coastal road on Mexico's southwestern coast with Dr. Ricardo Ferré, the regional director of Fonatur, the National Trust Fund for Tourism Development, the federal agency given oversight of the Banco de México's 30-year plan to construct five megaresorts that would serve as economic detonators at the nucleus of a moribund economy. Cancún, begun in 1970, was the first of these resorts; Hualtulco, in the destitute state of Oaxaca, was the last, and Ferré was the helmsman for its nascent metamorphosis from virtually uninhabited malarial coastline to a thriving tourist mecca with a projected permanent population of 600,000.

Ferré, who described himself whimsically as a "soul engineer," told me of an experience he'd had earlier in the day, out on his morning constitutional through the

still-untamed countryside. In the misty light he crested a hill and saw, there in the road, horses, wild horses, "savage horses," as he called them. They stampeded and, electrified by the sound of their hooves, Ferré had the fantastic feeling he was in prehistoric times, clutching a stone in his hands. I suggested to him that such an experience could be placed on the endangered list: Five years hence, his revelatory moment couldn't possibly exist in Hualtulco unless he fabricated it himself.

"Exactly," Ferré agreed. "But this is a laboratory of what happened many years ago in different parts of the world, a laboratory for what happens when society shifts from a neolithic peasant pattern into a society that is an urban society. It's the new city coming into reality. What I want to prove are the limits of Utopia. If possible."

I inquired about his plans to manufacture cultural ambiance in Hualtulco, since he had, in the process of raising his city, already destroyed what little indigenous culture existed there before his arrival. Would he have to ship Mexico's traditional culture in from the mountains for the tourists? "Yes," he admitted. "That's engineering, social engineering. I will take many ideas from Mao's Cultural Revolution," he laughed. One of Ferré's pet projects was to remake the local subsistence fishermen who lived on the beach (but were now being forcibly relocated) into "businessmen with big, big boats." (The difference between Fidel and Ferré, of course, is that Ferré would let the boatmen keep their profits, minus federal taxes. Fidel's fishermen would be entitled only to their paychecks from the state: about \$8 a month, the average wage in Cuba.)

The decision for Ferré was without angst, without ambivalence. Hualtulco's transactions would employ hundreds of thousands; its opportunities would provide a catalyst for democratization and upward mobility. What was the value of traditional culture, "authentic" culture, a culture of poverty and sacrifice, compared with that? That a hard-scrabble but spiritually rich way of life might be transformed into a homogenized global culture stamped with a Mexican impri-

matur seemed irrelevant to him, so long as the money flowed and Mexico prospered. Its revolution atrophied by corruption, Mexico would become a commodity, its culture a benign theme piped into resorts by the government. Foreign currency would drizzle down like democratic rain on the peasants. Presumably, life would be better for everyone.

In my meditation on Cuban culture, what strikes me now is the underlying symbolism of Ferré's rapturous epiphany with the wild horses. The horses prompted him to momentarily forget who he was, who he had become in the service of his post-revolutionary nation, and to remember who he had been—Caliban, the New World barbarian, clutching a rock in his hand.

Dramaturgy quietly thrives in Havana, and recent productions such as Albert Camus's original *Caligula* and *La Otra Tempestá*, a Cubanization of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, customarily fill the theaters with intellectuals, university students, foreign journalists, and members of the Communist Party elite. In the Havana staging of Camus's anti-fascist allegory, the emperor Caligula stands atop a carpet of *Granma*, Cuba's official, government-run

newspaper, reading his tax reports. At one point in the play, the audience is required to come on stage to pay tribute to Caligula. The actors deliver their lines in classical Spanish, except for a single startling sentence spoken in the rapid, slurring inflections of Cubano during a scene when a group of conspirators plot to overthrow the dictator. One of the actors turns to the audience and says, in an aside, "*Oye, compañero, eso no está fácil!*" "Hey, comrade, that won't be easy!" In its unexpectedly intimate directness, the line stuns audiences for several moments before their silence is broken by nervous laughter. The message isn't subtle, but the target is ambiguous, and even the most astute observers exit the theater unable to decide whether the play was about the defeat of Batista or the intrigues in present-day Cuba.

In *La Otra Tempestá* ("The Other Tempest") Prospero and his followers, intent on building a utopia, inhabit a tropical island controlled by Santería gods, but everything goes wrong, and the quest for an ideal society ends in a bloodbath. What's worth noting here is that for the past 150 years, Latin American, Caribbean, and European intellectuals, scholars, and artists



The critically acclaimed Buena Vista Social Club (1999), a film about the life and art of a group of forgotten Cuban musicians, provided the wider world a glimpse of Cuban culture.

have seized upon Shakespeare's final play and its cast of characters tossed together on a New World tropical island (much like Cuba) as a grand metaphor to express the dialectical tensions—colonial, postcolonial, neocolonial, according to the period—between “civilization” and “barbarism,” white exploiters and the multiracial exploited, oppressors and the oppressed, bourgeois culture and revolutionary culture. Between Prospero, the master of the kingdom, and Caliban, the deformed, enslaved brute who exists on the margins of civilized society. Between, in a nutshell, the United States and Cuba.

Since 1900, when, immediately after the U.S. intervention in Cuba, the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó wrote and published *Ariel*, which identified North America as the greatest enemy of Latin American culture in his time, Shakespeare's *Tempest* has been used to construct a type of geopolitical road map, or manifesto, for Latin American and Caribbean writers, both for and against revolution, struggling to shape their own identity in the shadows cast by history, Eurocentrism, and the colossus to the north. More specifically, with the publication of Cuban poet and essayist Roberto Fernández Retamar's *Caliban* in 1971, Caliban himself became the primary symbol of Cuban culture, his unruly presence demanding a realignment of the role of the intellectual and artist in revolutionary society. “What is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban?” wrote Fernández Retamar.

At the end of World War II, according to Fernández Retamar, when the United Nations invented the term “economically underdeveloped area” for what had until then been called “colonial area” or “backward area,” Caliban appeared on the cultural and political doorstep of Latin America as “the suffering masses, Ariel [as] the genius of the air without any ties to life,” and both in the service of an imperial, metropolitan Prospero. Thus was constructed one of the central myths of the Cuban revolution: Caliban's birthright placed him in natural opposition to Prospero, the foreign magician who taught Caliban language so that he

could make himself understood, only to be cursed by the aboriginal slave. Ariel, the intellectual, now must choose between serving Prospero and “allying himself with Caliban in his struggle for true freedom.”

“We are Caliban,” the president of the Writers' Association said emphatically during our discussion at UNEAC. “We respect Ariel, but Caliban must develop his personality to fight and resist Prospero.”

The metaphor did not escape El Comandante's attention. Fidel on the 10th anniversary in 1971 of the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón): “For the imperialists, we are nothing more than despised and despicable peoples. At least that was what we were. Since Girón they have begun to change their thinking. Racial contempt—to be a Creole, to be a mestizo, to be black, to be, simply, a Latin American, is for them contemptible.” Fidel's “Words to the Intellectuals,” addressing the value of literature and the arts, again in 1971: “We, a revolutionary people, value cultural and artistic creations in proportion to what they offer mankind, in proportion to the revindication of man, the liberation of man, the happiness of man. . . . Our evaluation is political. There can be no aesthetic value in opposition to man. Aesthetic value cannot exist in opposition to justice, in opposition to welfare or in opposition to the happiness of man. It cannot exist!”

Thus was Caliban embraced, and Ariel warned, by the revolution. Freedom of speech, never very high on the menu of rights available to the Cuban people, either in Havana or Miami (where dissidents fear for their lives), became synonymous with counterrevolutionary activities. The same year, writers and artists, most notoriously the poet Heriberto Padilla, began to be arrested and detained with what would become alarming regularity.

“What about dissident writers?” I felt obliged to ask Francisco Sacha, though I knew the answer, and I regard dissidents as a type of warrior, fully aware of the consequence of their actions, worthy of the highest respect and empathy, but not pity. Certainly, as an independent writer living in a repressive society, I wouldn't last very long.

"You don't get into any trouble if you make literature," he replied. "Nobody decides [what's politically correct or not]. What's published depends on the natural relationship between the editor and the writer." On the other hand, "Raul Rivera is a traditional, old-fashioned poet without politics in his work, but because of what he says in the press, he's a political dissident."

That's been the story all along—which is not to say that the boundaries haven't shifted radically for writers and artists in Cuba today.

About the same time Hualtulco was being platted by surveyors in the late '80s, Fidel Castro, his economy imploding with the collapse of the Eastern bloc, made a similar decision, in his words, to "exploit the sun." We know that the decadence of Batista's Havana—its casinos, prostitutes, and narcotics luring a vulgar class of tourists and criminals from around the world—fed the rationale of Castro's mobilization against the status quo. A year before the insurrection, the island had attracted 350,000 tourists; in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, the industry ceased to exist. Like Jesus driving the Pharisees from the temple, Castro kicked out the hedonists, dismantled the playground, and began a laborious process of institutionalizing a more virtuous, egalitarian, and—as of 1961—Marxist-Leninist culture. Literacy programs and art schools proliferated throughout Cuban society. The first books published by the revolution were Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*.

Inevitably, the culture and its institutionalization became inseparable, and the massification of Cuban culture sucked in a large number of party functionaries who couldn't tell a sonnet from a soliloquy, and who looked upon the life of the intellectual imagination—in other words, Ariel—with incomprehension and, finally, suspicion. An internecine cultural war erupted, revolving around *Mundo Nuevo*, a journal of Latin American intellectual thought, published in Paris with CIA funding. "A Literary Bay of Pigs," the *Sunday Times* called the affair, and Fernández Retamar admitted that "among all sorts of people [of good faith]

[the magazine] sowed seeds of possible distrust" toward the Cuban revolution. Rifts developed throughout the arts, aesthetics clashed with ideology, creativity became embalmed in bureaucracy, professional jealousies were suddenly politicized—as in the case of Padilla, whose 1968 literary prize awarded by UNEAC was the subject of a three-year-long cat fight among the literati, culminating in a jail term for the poet and a highly transparent "confession"—and artists began defecting into exile. Even as he chastised Cuban novelists for the timid nature of their work, and criticized the Latin boom (Gabriel García Márquez et al.) as a phenomenon of *yanqui* political and business interests, Fernández Retamar, the Cuban revolution's primary cultural and literary voice, argued ever more strenuously for the "functional instrumentality" of Cuban literature, asking that it abandon purist notions of literary aesthetics in favor of "heroic creations" that would "service and influence society." Identifying and publishing works that merited broad circulation was not a theoretical or critical process, Fernández Retamar declared, "but a political task proper to cultural politics."

It would take another generation of writers and artists to figure out that the strategy of "functional instrumentality" was in fact dysfunctional. Whether harsh or gentle in tone, remedial or reactive in intent, the literature of political experience, the literature of human awakening, is ultimately subversive of any system of authority, democratic as much as totalitarian, given that all governments are imperfect, some vastly more so than others. Human nature would not have it otherwise. The poetic word, as Octavio Paz understood, "could never be revolution's servant," although I think the truth remains that, in the most heartfelt of circumstances, it can be, as Pablo Neruda would have it, its ally, or, as Paz would have it, its nemesis. Again—Ariel, Caliban, are on stage.

Until recently, acknowledged the writer Roger Avila as we spoke in an austere office at UNEAC, "people who were trying to direct and organize the culture were not best

suited to do it. But through all the hardest times, the culture survived.”

“The new generation”—personified by the novelist Abel Prieto (a towering Stephen King look-alike), former head of UNEAC and now minister of culture—“is changing all the rules,” said Francisco Sacha. “It began exactly in 1990, like a clock.”

Two works of fiction published in the 1990s exploded on the Cuban literary scene. *El Lobo, El Bosque, e El Hombre* (*The Wolf, the Forest, and the New Man*), by Senel Paz, which provided the story line for the movie *Strawberry and Chocolate*, received the Juan Rulfo Prize for Literature. This book, said Sacha, created “an inner rupture in subject matter.” The second book, *Alguien Se Va Lamiendo Todo*, by Ricardo Arrieta and Ronaldo Menéndez, an avant-garde text linking performance art and short stories, introduced new choices of form into the Cuban narrative. Together, both works merged with “the marginal world, an intellectual and social world different than [my] generation [in the ’80s],” Sacha explained.

“Intellectual and existential short stories went down in the late ’50s. Violence, war, social commentaries, class struggle, provided the context for Cuban literature between the late ’50s and the ’90s. That’s not the case in the ’90s. These new writers want to seek and identify the problems that are taboo in Cuban society. It was once prostitution and homosexuality, and now it’s the exiles, the exodus in Cuban society. The doubts about utopian society. Greater and greater weight to the role of sex in the lives of Cubans—even the establishment is concerned with sex today. These are the preoccupations, among other things, of course. Unlike in the ’80s, [writers are] not attempting a reflection of the society, necessarily. More accurately, they are questioning. They’re trying to free themselves from localism and turning toward more universal themes. They’re assimilating the philosophical essay. Derrida, Foucault, Lacan. Everything comes in and is absorbed. Tournier, Kundera, others.

“In the ’70s, literature was asleep. In the ’70s and ’80s, the literature was homogenous,

a melting pot. But in the ’90s, it is very awake, with many voices and many tendencies—the marginalized, the feminists, the gays, the French sense of writing. The new ones just pop up, like a wildflower: *I don’t owe anything to anybody—here I am.*

“Literature changes certain ways of thinking in this society, the spirit in this society. Literature influences, but softly. It’s not its mission to change one reality for another. The most important thing is that there’s an awareness of what literature is, and this is what we have won back after many years. Always the great battle was between literature as a tool in the society and literature as an end to itself. This has been the great triumph.

“The *nuevos* are the iconoclasts. They’re picking up from the late ’50s what had been lost formally. They’re leaping back to the ’50s to get to the ’90s. In my opinion, nothing’s ever lost until the cycle is complete. That cycle was interrupted, and every cycle must be complete.”

That’s an extraordinary assertion: The changes that have suddenly surfaced in Cuban literature reveal a deep affinity with, even an intellectual obligation to, the 1950s, connecting contemporary Cuban writers with a pre-revolutionary world and thus “completing a cycle,” reimagining a bridge between past and future, making history and memory whole again. Sustain the culture and its revolutionary energies by rewiring it aesthetically, even metaphysically, to a time before the bearded ones marched out of the Sierra Maestra mountains.

What’s most striking about Sacha’s analysis of Cuban literature is how accurately it mirrors what’s taken place in the shape and arc of his nation—the evolution of revolutionary consciousness from naive idealism to rigid social realism to single-voiced internationalism to provincial existentialism (who am I and why am I all alone?) to folksy absurdism to, as the world sweeps back in, multivoiced postmodernism emerging from a bizarre juxtaposition of high-finance capitalism and low-gain socialism. Economically, if not politically, the revolution has learned to have its cake and eat it too, and that split personality is most evi-



Afro-Cuban rhythms propel Cuba's Trinidad Folkloric Ballet, which performs around the world.

dent, and most volatile, in the culture, which frankly cannot survive such hypocrisy. The cosmology of *The Tempest*, so essential to the Cuban sense of purpose and self-knowledge, has been scrambled. Ariel, dressed in drag, is having tea on the veranda of his grandmother's mansion in Miramar. Caliban has a night job as a *jina*tero (prostitute). By invitation, Prospero has returned to the isle, organizing trade and technology fairs, buying up condominiums. Again, the stage is set for a hurricane.

"In all revolutionary movements," wrote Octavio Paz, "the sacred time of myth is transformed inexorably into the profane time of history." Once Castro goes, any systemic weakening of authority will automatically trigger the mafiaization of the Cuban state, which would likely replace the current socialist government with a Russian-style oligarchy, a profane alliance between unpaid apparatchiks, already well trained in stealing from the state, and foreign businessmen (primarily Cuban American businessmen) who will divvy up the country's resources in an orgy of privatization. Centralized power will default to decentralized greed, the revolutionary impulse to the insider's deal. In its worst aspects,

post-revolutionary Cuba may very well come to resemble pre-revolutionary Cuba, and more's the pity. Meanwhile, American policymakers have quite a dilemma on their hands. Only a strong, modern economy in Cuba, guided by uncompromising leaders, will preserve the two main policy goals of the United States more relevant than Washington's archaic obsession with communism and Castro—stopping drug transshipments and illegal immigration.

This is the bedrock logic of an otherwise nonsensical embargo that serves the needs, and the public relations, of both Washington and Havana. "I love the embargo. It keeps the Miami mafia from returning," the novelist Pablo Armando Fernández said into the camera on state-run television in Havana. When he saw the news clip, Castro laughed and applauded.

It was Fernández who offered the most genuine answer when I asked him what I had been asking everybody else: What might remain, or what should remain, of Cuba's revolution? Education, health care, social security, sure, but who knows? The culture? Naturally, but the culture, with or without the revolution, is cutting a new

orbit. What do you want for Cubans, I asked Fernández, five years from now, 10 years from now? “I want,” he said simply, “to maintain our dignity.” This from a writer entangled in the Herberto Padilla scandal, ostracized by Cuban writers from the right as well as the left, and forced to spend 14 years in internal exile at his house in Miramar in Havana’s western suburbs.

Twentieth-century revolutions have sought to liberate impoverished populations from a plethora of injustices, but mostly these revolutions have kidnapped the masses, holding them hostage to a range of dogmatic delusions and puerile, unworldly fantasies, often re-exposing them to oppressions that echo directly from the former regimes. Surely Cuba, like most of Latin America in the 1950s, needed changing. Surely, given the course of history, especially in the Western hemisphere, Cuba would have changed regardless of Castro’s extravagantly messianic, aggressively exported, and ultimately paranoid revolution, and changed probably for the better, at a rate that would have advanced the nation more quickly into the modern envelope of social justice and democratic liberalism, however much it remained a satellite of American interests. Still, the people of Cuba must be allowed to inherit and refine, for a new age, their social and cultural accomplishments, the human rewards from the pain and sacrifice of their briefly noble but mostly illusory revolution. Anyone who claims to have the best interest of the Cuban people at heart would do well to consider that most Cubans are exemplary citizens in their loyalty to their homeland. Their sense of sovereignty is paramount, their patriotism a matter of pride and identity, and what they feel they most risk in the changes ahead is their capacity to retain their dignity, much abused in the so-called special period—what the Russians, to no one’s benefit, have lost.

Caliban’s wounded pride—to hurtle forward from slavery into power, and then to be betrayed by history and turned out onto

the geopolitical streets a beggar—is today as much a leitmotif in the Cuban culture, in revolutionary self-image, as anything else. Vindication is a moot issue, as is revolutionary prestige, except for its sentimental value. Yet Castro squanders precious resources erecting, directly across the street from the U.S. Interest Section, the Plaza of Dignity of the Cuban People, where he stages Elián rallies.

The two-thirds of the population born after 1959 can’t comprehend the Faulknerian notion, so dear, it seems, to Castro and the revolution, that the past is not dead—it isn’t even past. As much as Castro has tried to win back his country’s alienated youth to revolutionary values through the “Send Back Elián” campaign, Cuba’s children care more about cyberspace than sugar quotas, and are deeply infatuated with American culture, American styles. At a mass demonstration for Elián, in which schoolchildren came forward to pay tribute to their classmate shipwrecked in Miami, one kid wanted to sing something by the Backstreet Boys.

Iasked my friend Francisco Sacha, “Have you paid too much for too little?” He quoted Faulkner: “Love is worth the price you pay for it.”

But the price is inflating at an astronomical rate. Maybe, subconsciously at least, Sacha understood that the myths of *The Tempest* weren’t working any more, because he switched authors on me, and metaphors, and took up the story of Santiago in Hemingway’s *Old Man and the Sea*. A man, a country, can be conquered but not defeated, said Sacha. “We’ve had a terrible crisis, but we can survive and endure because Cuba has the spirit of Santiago. Santiago has to fight for days and days to keep the sharks away. And he brings back proof of what he’s done—the skeleton of the fish. But in the metaphor, we, Cuba, wouldn’t have brought back a skeleton. We would have brought home the fish.”

No, my brother, that’s pride speaking, not reality. The revolution did not land the magnificent fish you dreamed of, and its flyblown skeleton is for sale. □



The Fires of the Sun

No anniversary of Hiroshima passes without reminding the world of the vast power revealed by the deceptively simple formula $E=mc^2$. But Albert Einstein's famous equation had another career, illuminating, among other things, the origins of the universe and its likely end. In one important chapter of that career a young scientist named Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin (1900–79) played the leading role.

by David Bodanis

One-and-a-half seconds after the atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima on the morning of August 6, 1945, the flash of light from the explosion reached the Moon. Some of the

light bounced back to Earth; much of the rest continued onward, traveling all the way to the Sun, and then indefinitely beyond. The glare would have been visible from Jupiter.

In the perspective of the galaxy, it was the most insignificant flicker. Our Sun, alone, explodes the equivalent of many millions of such bombs every second. As Albert Einstein and other physicists had long recognized, $E=mc^2$ does not apply just on Earth. It was just a quirk that the accelerated technology and pressures of wartime led to the equation's first applications being focused on the development of weaponry.

Ever since the discovery of radioactivity in the 1890s, researchers had suspected that uranium or a similar fuel might be operating in the wider universe, and in particular, in the Sun to keep it burning. Something that powerful was needed because Charles Darwin's insights as well as findings in geology had shown that the Earth must have been in existence—and warmed by the Sun—for billions of years. Coal or other conventional fuels would not have supplied enough energy to do that.

Astronomers, however, couldn't find any signs of uranium in the Sun. Every element gives off a distinctive visual signal, and the optical device called the spectroscope (because it breaks apart the light spectrum) allows them to be identified. But point a spectroscope at the Sun, and the signals are clear: There is no uranium or thorium or other known radioactively glowing element up there.

What did seem to leap out, in readings from distant stars as well as the Sun, was that there was always iron inside these celestial bodies: lots and lots of metallic bulky iron. By the time Einstein was finally able to leave his job at the Swiss patent office, four years after publishing the 1905 paper setting forth his famous equation, the best evidence suggested that the Sun was about 66 percent pure iron.

This was a disheartening result. Uranium could pour out energy in accord with $E=mc^2$, because the urani-

um nucleus is so large and overstuffed that it barely holds together. (According to Einstein's equation, mass and energy are interchangeable: The energy [E] in any substance can be found by multiplying its mass [m] by the speed of light [c] squared.) Iron is different. Its nucleus is one of the most perfect and most stable imaginable. A sphere made of iron, even if it were molten or gaseous or ionized iron, could not pour out heat for thousands of millions of years. Suddenly the vision of using $E=mc^2$ and related equations to explain the whole universe was blocked.

The individual who broke that barrier—letting $E=mc^2$ slip the surly bonds of Earth—was a young Englishwoman named Cecilia Payne, who loved seeing how far her mind could take her. Unfortunately, the first teachers she found at Cambridge University when she entered in 1919 had no interest in such explorations. She switched majors, and then switched again, which led to her reading up on astronomy, and when Payne started anything, the effects were impressive. She terrified the night assistant at the university's telescope her first night there, after she'd been reading for only a few days. (He "fled down the stairs," she recalled, gasping, "'There's a woman out there asking questions.'") But she wasn't put off, and a few weeks later, she recalled in her autobiography,* "I bicycled up to the Solar Physics Observatory with a question in my mind. I found a young man, his fair hair tumbling over his eyes, sitting astride the roof of one of the buildings, repairing it. 'I have come to ask,' I shouted up at him, 'why the Stark effect is not observed in stellar spectra.'"

This time her subject did not flee. He

**Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin: An Autobiography and Other Reflections* (1984), edited by Katherine Haramundanis.

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was an astronomer himself, Edward Milne, and they became friends. Payne tried to pull her art student friends into her astronomical excitements, and even though they might not have understood much of what she was saying, she was the sort of person others liked being around. Her rooms at Newham College were almost always crowded. “When safely lying on her back on the floor (she despises armchairs),” a friend wrote, “she will talk of all things under the sun, from ethics to a new theory of making cocoa.”

Ernest Rutherford, whose work helped reveal the structure of the atom, was then a key figure at Cambridge. With men he was bluff and friendly, but with women he was bluff and close to thuggish. He was cruel to Payne at lectures, trying to get all the male students to laugh at this one female in their midst. It didn’t stop her from going—she could hold her own with his best students in tutorials—but even 40 years later, retired from her professorship at Harvard University, she remembered the rows of braying young men, nervously trying to do what their teacher expected of them.

But also at the university was Arthur Eddington, a quiet Quaker who was happy to take her on as a tutorial student. Although his reserve never lifted—tea with students was always in the presence of his elderly unmarried sister—the 20-year-old Payne picked up Eddington’s barely stated awe at the potential power



Cecilia Payne sets sail for America aboard the Caronia in 1923.

of pure thought. He liked to show how creatures who lived on a planet entirely shrouded in clouds would be able to deduce the main features of the unseen universe above them. There would have to be glowing spheres up in space, he imagined them reasoning, for a ball of vaporized elements sufficiently large and sufficiently dense would compress the elements inside it to start a nuclear reaction that would make it light up—it would be a sun. These glowing spheres would be dense enough to pull planets swinging around them. If the beings on Eddington’s mythical planet ever did find that a sudden wind had blown an opening in their blanket of clouds, they would look up to see a universe of glowing stars with circling planets, just as they’d expected.

It was exhilarating to think that someone on Earth might solve the problem presented by the presence of so much iron in the Sun, and so be able to fulfill Eddington's vision. When Eddington first assigned Payne a problem on stellar interiors, which might at least be a start toward achieving this, "the problem haunted me day and night. I recall a vivid dream that I was at the center of [the giant star] Betelgeuse, and that, as seen from there, the solution was perfectly plain; but it

Raw enthusiasm is dangerous for young researchers. If you're excited by a new field that usually means you'll try to fit in with your elders' approaches to intellectual problems.

did not seem so in the light of day."

Even with this kind man's backing, however, a woman couldn't do graduate work in England, so Payne went to Harvard, and there blossomed even more. She found a thesis adviser, Harlow Shapley, who was an up-and-coming astrophysicist. She savored the liberty she found in the dorms, and the fresh topics in the university seminars. She even exchanged her heavy English woolen clothing for the lighter fashions of 1920s America. She was bursting with enthusiasm. And that could have spoiled everything.

Raw enthusiasm is dangerous for young researchers. If you're excited by a new field—keen to join in with what your professors and fellow students are doing—that usually means you'll try to fit in with their approaches to intellectual problems. But students whose work stands out usually have some reason to

avoid this, and keep a critical distance. Einstein didn't especially respect his Zurich professors: Most, he thought, were drudges who never questioned the foundations of their teaching. Michael Faraday, the 19th-century discoverer of electromagnetic induction, couldn't be content with explanations that left out the inner feelings of his religion; Antoine Lavoisier was offended by the vague, inexact chemistry handed down by his

18th-century predecessors. For Payne, some of that needed distance came from getting to know her fellow students and their sometimes strange American ways a little better. Shortly after arriving, "I expressed to a friend that I liked one of the other girls in the House where I lived at Radcliffe College. She was shocked: 'But she's a Jew!' was her comment. This frankly puzzled me. . . . I found the same attitude towards those of

African descent."

She also got a glimpse of what was going on in the backrooms at the Harvard College Observatory. In 1923, the word computer did not mean an electrical machine. It meant a person whose sole job was to compute. At Harvard, it was applied to ranks of slump-shouldered spinsters in those backrooms. A few of them had once had first-rate scientific talent, but in most cases that had been long since crushed out of them, as they were kept busy measuring star locations or cataloging volumes of previous results. If they married, they could be fired; if they complained about their low salaries, they could be fired as well.

A few of the Harvard "computers," in several decades of bent-back work, succeeded in measuring more than 100,000 spectral lines. But what their findings meant, or how they fit in with the latest developments in physics, was not for them to understand.

Payne was not going to be pushed into their ranks. Spectroscope readings can be ambiguous where they overlap. Payne began to wonder how much the way her professors broke them apart depended on what they already had in mind. For example, try to read the following letters:

n o t e
v e r y
o n e w
i l l g
e t i t

It's not easy. But if you start reading it as "Not everyone . . ." then it leaps out. What Cecilia Payne decided on, there in 1920s Boston, was a Ph.D. project that would re-examine the accepted ways of building up spectroscope interpretations. Her work was vastly complicated by the fact that spectroscope lines from the Sun and other stars always include fragments of several elements, and are distorted by the great temperature as well.

An analogy can show what she did. For astronomers convinced there must be lots of iron in the Sun (which seemed reasonable, since there was so much iron on Earth and in asteroids), there would be only one way to read an ambiguous string of lines from a spectroscope. If they came out, for example, as

t h e y s a i d i r o n a g a i e n

one would read, "they said iron again." There would be no need to worry too much about the odd spelling of *agaien*—the extra *e* could be a fault in the spectroscope, or some odd reaction on the Sun, or just a fragment that was slipped in from some other element. There is always something that doesn't fit. But Payne kept an open mind. What if the real message was

t h e y s a i d i r o n a g a i e n

She went through the spectroscope

lines over and over again, checking for such ambiguities. Everyone had boosted the lines in one way, to make it read as if they showed the presence of iron. But it wasn't too much of a stretch to boost them differently, to come out with hydrogen.

Even before Payne finished her doctoral thesis, news of her results began to spread among astrophysicists. While the old explanation of the spectroscope data had been that the Sun was two-thirds iron or more, this young woman's interpretation suggested that it was more than 90 percent hydrogen, with most of the rest being helium, which is nearly as light. If she was right, it would change what was understood about how stars burn. Iron is so stable that no one could imagine it might be transformed through $E=mc^2$ to generate heat in the Sun. But who knew what hydrogen might do?

The old guard knew. Hydrogen would do nothing. It wasn't there, it couldn't be there: Their careers—all their detailed calculations, and the power and patronage that stemmed from them—depended on iron being what was in the Sun. After all, hadn't this young woman only picked up the spectroscopic lines from the Sun's outer atmosphere, rather than its deep interior? Maybe her readings were simply confused by the temperature shifts. Her thesis adviser, Shapley, declared her wrong, and then *his* old thesis adviser, the imperious Henry Nonis Russell, declared her wrong, and against him there was very little recourse. Russell was an exceptionally pompous man who would never accept that he could be wrong—and he also controlled most grants and job appointments in astronomy on the East Coast.

For a while Payne tried to fight: repeating her evidence; showing the way her hydrogen interpretation was just as plausible in the spectroscope lines as the iron interpretation; even more, the way new insights—the latest in European theoretical physics—were suggesting a way hydrogen really could power the Sun. It

didn't matter. She even tried reaching out to Eddington, but he withdrew, possibly out of conviction, possibly out of caution before Russell—or possibly just from a middle-aged bachelor's fear of a young woman turning to him with emotion. Her friend from her student days at the Cambridge Solar Physics Observatory, the fair-haired young Edward Milne, was by now an established astronomer, and he did try to help, but he didn't have enough power. Letters were exchanged between Payne and Russell, but if she wanted to get her research accepted she'd have to recant. In her published 1925 doctoral thesis she had to insert the humiliating lines: "The enormous abundance [of hydrogen] . . . is almost certainly not real."

A few years later, though, the full power of Payne's work became clear, for independent research by other teams backed her spectroscope reinterpretations. She was vindicated, and her professors were shown to have been wrong.

Although Payne's teachers never really apologized, and tried to thwart her career for as long as they could, the way was now open to applying $E=mc^2$ to explain the fires of the Sun. She had shown that the right fuel was floating up in space that the Sun and all the stars we see actually are great $E=mc^2$ pumping stations. They seem to squeeze hydrogen mass entirely out of existence. But in fact they are simply squeezing it along the equals sign of the equation, so that what had appeared as mass now bursts into the form of billowing, explosive energy. Several researchers made starts on the details, but the main work was done by Hans Bethe, the German-born physicist, who went on to play an important role in the top-secret research at Los Alamos that led to the first atomic bomb.

On Earth, the few hydrogen atoms in our atmosphere just fly past each other. Even if crushed under a mountain of rock, they won't really stick together. But trapped near the center of the Sun, under thousands of miles of weighty substance overhead, hydrogen nuclei can be

squeezed close enough together that they will, in time, join to become the element helium.

If this were all that happened, it wouldn't be very important. But it isn't. The mass of four hydrogen nuclei can be written as $1+1+1+1$. But when they join together as helium, their sum is not equal to four. Measure a helium nucleus very carefully, and it's about 0.007 less, or just 3.993. That missing mass comes out as roaring energy.

The bomb over Hiroshima destroyed an entire city simply by sucking several ounces of uranium out of existence and transforming it into glowing energy. The Sun, however, pumps 700 million *tons* of hydrogen into pure energy each second. One could see our sun's explosions clearly from the star Alpha Centauri, separated from us by 253 trillion miles of space, and from unimagined planets around stars far along the spiral arm of our galaxy as well.

What of Cecilia Payne? Her thesis adviser, Shapley, hindered her career by making sure she was kept from any of the new electronic equipment coming in. She stayed involved in research as best she could, but he also ensured, as director of the Harvard Observatory, that when she taught a course, it wasn't listed in the Harvard or Radcliffe catalog. As she discovered years later, he had even had her salary paid out of "equipment expenses." When the worst of the sexism ended and a new director took over at the observatory in the postwar era, she had such a heavy teaching load, she wrote, that "there was literally no time for research, a setback from which I have never fully recovered." She did finally win a professorship in 1956, and became a noted writer of textbooks. She was also known as one of the kindest supporters of the next generation at Radcliffe. Married in 1934, Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin had the pleasure of seeing her only daughter become an astronomer—and of publishing several papers with her. □

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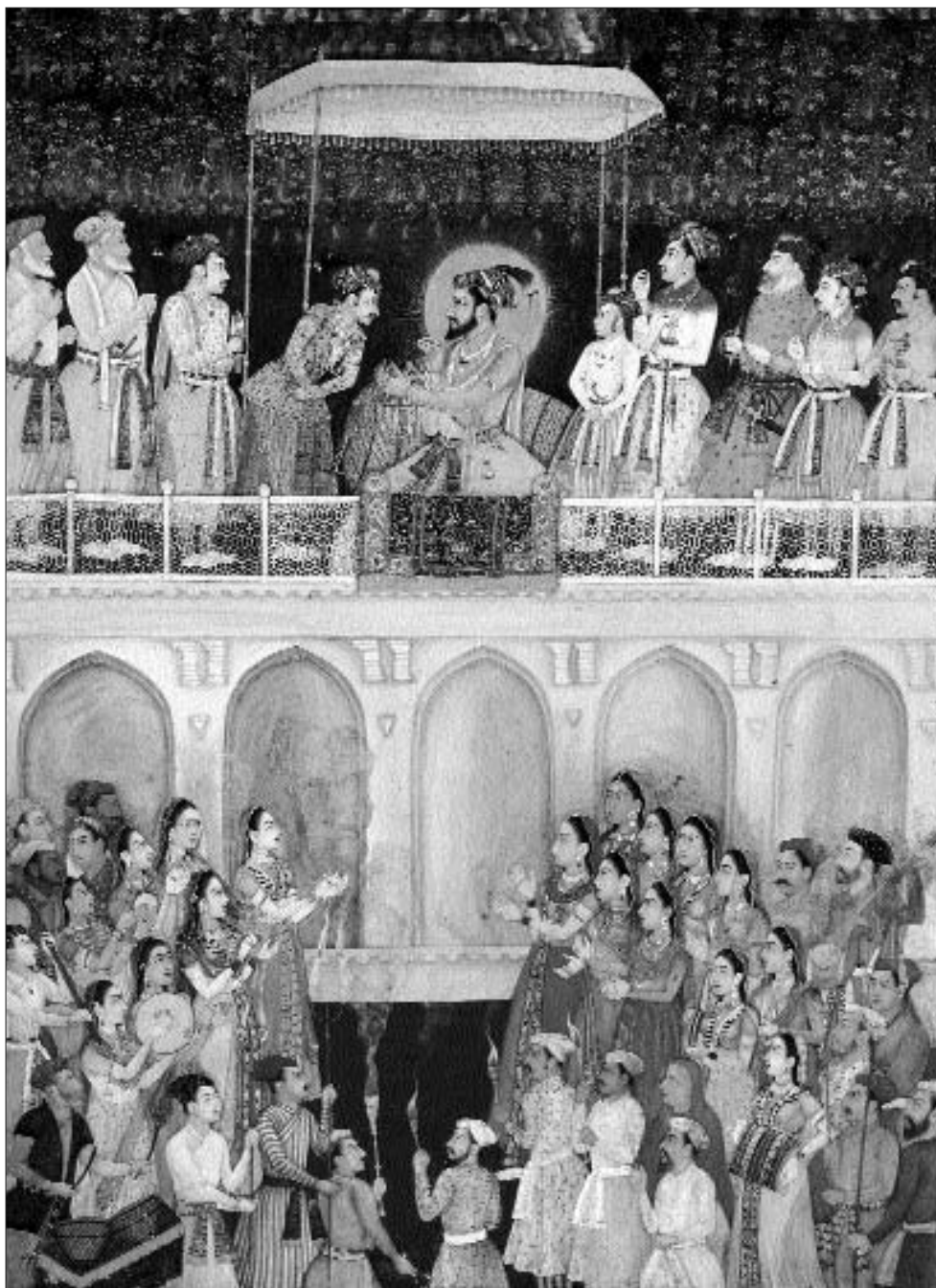
India Rising

In the wake of dramatic nuclear tests, quickening economic growth, and a highly publicized American presidential visit, India seems ready to take its place among the world's leading nations. But for that to happen, India will need to act like a major power, and the United States will need to recognize how much India has changed.

by Stephen P. Cohen

Since its birth as a nation more than 50 years ago, India has seemed poised on the edge of two very different futures. On one side lay greatness; on the other, collapse. That drama has now ended and a new one has begun. The specter of collapse has passed and India is emerging as a major Asian power, joining China and Japan. The 1998 nuclear tests in the Rajasthan desert that announced India's entry into the nuclear club only served to underscore the nation's new stature. India has begun economic reforms that promise at last to realize its vast economic potential. It possesses the world's third largest army. It occupies a strategic position at the crossroads of the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. Its population, which crossed the one billion mark this year, may surpass China's within two decades. It is the site of one of the world's oldest civilizations, a powerful influence throughout Asia for thousands of years, and for the last 53 years, against all odds, it has maintained a functioning democracy.

For most of those 53 years, the United States and India have maintained a strained relationship—a relationship that has not been helped by years of American neglect and misunderstanding. Now there are signs of change. Despite the administration's anger over India's nuclear tests, Bill Clinton in March became the first American president to visit the subcontinent in more than two decades. Addressing the Indian Parliament, he acknowledged the richness of Indian civilization, noted the country's economic and scientific progress, and praised its



Ironically, India's greatness and unity traces in part to the Mughal Empire (1526–1761), ruled by Muslim emperors who put all religions on an equal footing. It stretched almost as far south as Mumbai. Here, Emperor Shah-Jahan bestows favors on a prince in 1628.

adherence to democratic norms. “India is a leader,” Clinton said, “a great nation, which by virtue of its size, its achievements, and its example, has the ability to shape the character of our time.” Yet he tactfully noted areas of American concern and expressed alarm about Kashmir, India’s relations with Pakistan, and nuclear proliferation. Speaking less guardedly before his visit, he had called the Indian subcontinent “perhaps the most dangerous place in the world.”

Before winning independence in 1947, India was the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, an important military resource in a location of great geostrategic significance. But the Cold War diminished India's importance. Because it did not play a significant role in the balance of power between the Soviet Union and the Western alliance, the superpowers often took India for granted. At most, the two sides saw India as a potential counter to the People's Republic of China on the international chessboard—but only one of several.

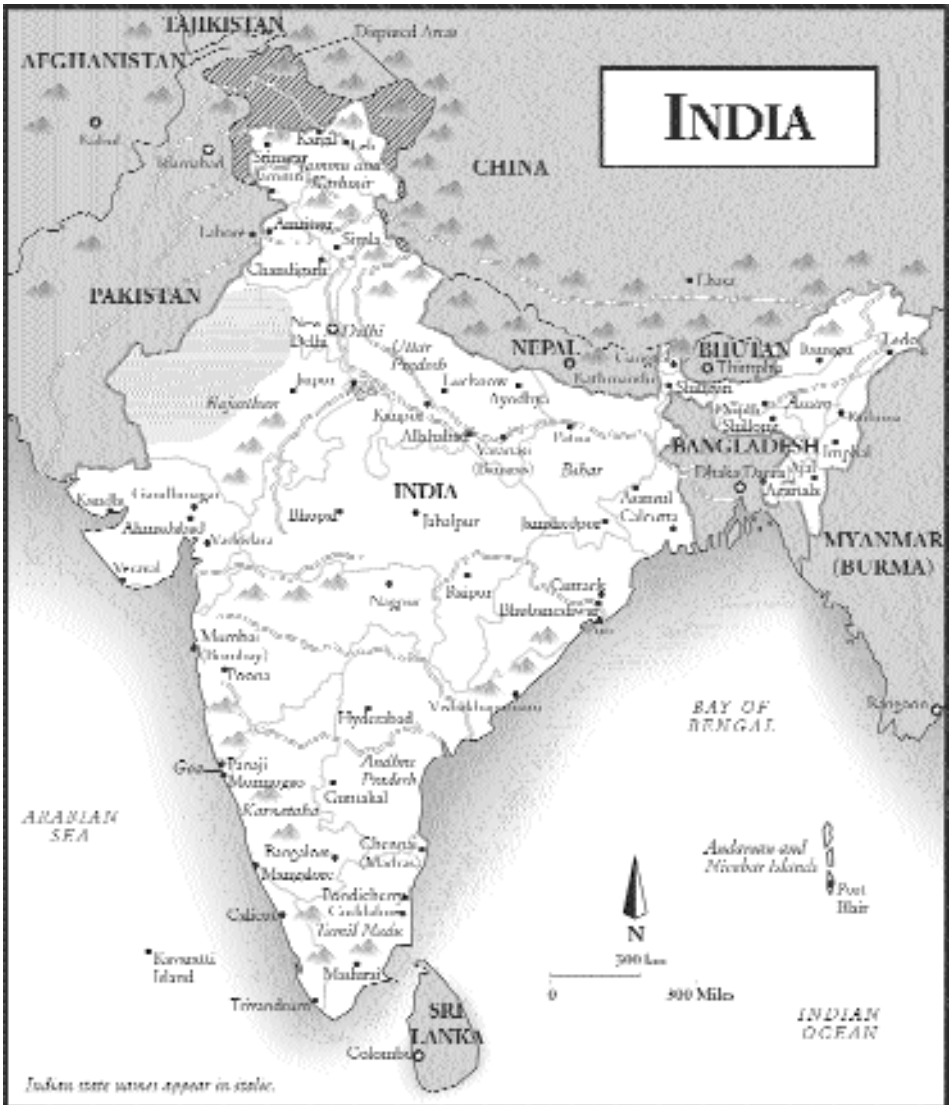
American and Indian interests in China did briefly run along parallel lines. In the late 1950s, when the United States tried to weaken the Chinese hold on Tibet, the Indians provided a refuge for the Dalai Lama. When the short India-China war broke out in 1962 over what remains one of the world's longest contested borders, Washington sent a military mission to India and supplied the country with small arms and a defensive radar system. This was a period of intense cooperation, with joint military exercises, U.S. military assistance, and U.S. help in setting up India's foreign intelligence service. President John F. Kennedy saw the competition between India and China as a struggle between the world's largest democracy and communism for the future of all of Asia; he continued the shift toward India that had begun in the last years of the Eisenhower administration. Kennedy praised the "soaring idealism" of Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister from 1947 to 1964 (although his contacts with Nehru were to prove disillusioning). Some in Washington even argued that India should be encouraged to develop its own nuclear weapons program.

But India's long-simmering dispute with Pakistan (an American ally) over Kashmir kept the relationship from developing further, especially after the Sino-Indian clash ended. As the United States became increasingly entangled in Vietnam during the 1960s, interest in South Asia faded. The final break occurred after President Richard M. Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972. With China enlisted against the Soviets, India seemed irrelevant. This U.S. "tilt" toward China remains a major source of Indian anti-Americanism.

On the American side, India increasingly came to be seen as a de facto ally of Moscow. After 1971, the Soviet Union stepped in to forge an alliance with India, but it too sought to use Delhi against the Chinese. Over the years, the Soviets gave India billions of dollars worth of modern warplanes, tanks, and ships, and even loaned a nuclear submarine. At the United Nations, the Soviet Union and India were close partners; in 1970, the two powers signed a 25-year treaty of peace and friendship.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 reawakened American interest in South Asia, but in reviving its alliance with

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India boasts a population of one billion and a host of outsized cities (Mumbai's population exceeds 15 million), but more than 70 percent of its people still live in rural areas.

Pakistan, the United States only further alienated India. More recently, the Clinton administration pressured India to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—which had the unintended consequence of strengthening the bomb lobby in Delhi.

In May 1998, India tested five nuclear devices. Pakistan promptly responded with its own nuclear tests. The United States reacted by imposing economic and political sanctions on Delhi. As if that weren't enough turmoil, India has had three national elections in three years, with the current government, led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), being the country's third coalition government. Events took an alarming turn in

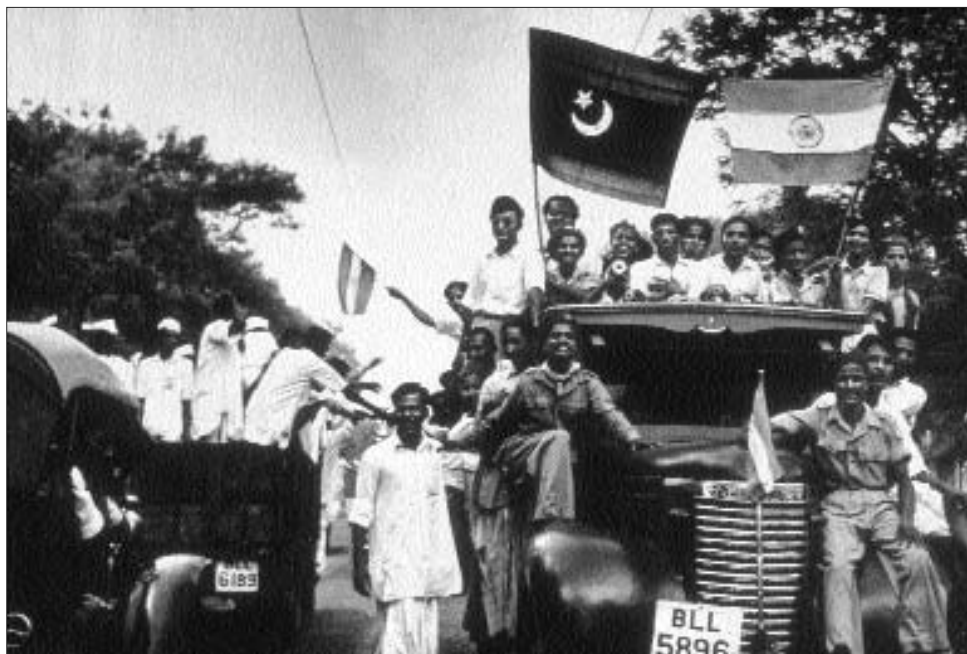
the summer of 1999, when India clashed with Pakistan in the Kargil district of Kashmir, raising fears that the war would escalate into a nuclear conflict. A few months later Pakistan's civilian government fell to a military coup, and in December 1999 Indians were unnerved by the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight by Islamic extremists.

In the United States, India's nuclear tests and the events that followed have led to a certain amount of finger pointing in foreign policy circles, but the failure of American policy goes deeper than yesterday's decisions. For most of the last 50 years, America has had a hard time "getting India right." Americans have consistently failed to understand the reasons for Indian behavior—and more often failed even to try. Whether or not India joins the ranks of major powers, and whether or not it pursues policies that are hostile to American interests, the United States will need to gain a deeper understanding of the subcontinent. That will require relinquishing a number of stereotypes that have long governed the American view of India.

India is virtually synonymous with poverty in the Western mind, and poverty will remain both a moral and a practical problem and a political embarrassment to any Indian government. More than half of the world's poorest people live in India, mostly in the rural north and east. Calcutta, the epicenter of this ocean of grief, has long been a universal metaphor for absolute poverty. The poorest 10 percent of the Indian population (more than 100 million people) earn slightly less than \$1 a day, and 35 percent of all Indians—approximately 300 million people—fall below the government's own poverty line.

In the south and the west, however, many Indians are enjoying unprecedented economic growth. These are the regions, with a population much larger than that of either Indonesia or the United States, that have seen more thoroughgoing land reform. Along the coast, there is a long tradition of trade and contact with other countries. Major cities such as Hyderabad, Chennai, and Bangalore appear to be on their way to becoming world-class high-technology centers, attracting investment from dozens of American, Japanese, and Southeast Asian firms. India's 1998 gross national product of \$420 billion was the world's 11th largest, and its annual growth rate exceeds five percent. (Gauged in terms of purchasing power parity, an alternative measure, India has the world's fifth largest economy, behind those of the United States, China, Japan, and Germany.)

India had a late start on economic reform. The Congress Party, which ruled India from 1947 to 1978 under Nehru and his daughter, Indira Gandhi, was deeply influenced by British Fabian socialism. The country's "top-down" approach to economic planning paralleled a political system dominated by the upper castes. The castes and classes involved in business and commerce were held in low esteem in much of the country. Such traditions are now fading fast. In 1991, Congress Party Prime Minister Narasimha Rao began a program of economic



In a rare moment of optimism around the time of Partition in 1947, Hindus and Muslims flew the flags of the emerging Pakistan (left) and India in the streets of Calcutta.

liberalization, including industry deregulation, privatization of state monopolies, and easing of foreign investment rules. There is still a danger that unbalanced growth will exacerbate economic tensions within Indian society, but the old Fabian shibboleths about the need for slow, state-led growth have been shed.

The transition to a more market-oriented economy accelerated after the BJP came to power last year. Even though elements of the party are opposed to the internationalization of the Indian economy (the BJP has the reputation of drawing key support from the small shopkeepers of India), the more liberal leadership at its top has systematically moved ahead with reform. The notorious system of quotas and import licenses for machinery and consumer goods has been dismantled. Foreign ownership of Indian firms is now possible, and international brands including Pepsi, Coca-Cola, IBM, Sony, and Phillips have entered the Indian marketplace, giving consumers a much wider range of choice. India offers overseas firms a unique asset: the talents of an educated, highly trained, English-speaking elite. (Most of the 100 million members of the middle class speak at least some English.)

Foreign trade is growing smartly, more in services than in the traditional manufacturing sector. The nascent Indian software industry is spreading from its Bangalore and Hyderabad base and finding new customers abroad, especially in the United States. Software exports have been growing at an annual rate of 50 percent. Foreign firms trying to do business in India still complain about red tape and protectionism,

but they see the country as a \$100 billion market, especially in infrastructure sectors such as electrical power generation and roads. The foreigners are learning the ropes; India's much-maligned bureaucracy has even earned praise from business leaders for providing stability and balance during a decade of political turmoil.

During the past 15 years, American perceptions have also been clouded by the revival of the old image of India as a violent, unstable country. Two prime ministers have been assassinated—Indira Gandhi in 1984 by her two Sikh bodyguards, and her son, Rajiv Gandhi, in 1991 by a suicide bomber sent by the insurgent Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers. Graphic television coverage has thrown a spotlight on caste and religious riots, which reached a peak with the destruction in December 1992 of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, in eastern Uttar Pradesh, by saffron-clad Hindu fanatics. The incident sparked Hindu-Muslim riots throughout India that left some 2,000 dead. Limited but highly publicized subsequent attacks on Indian Christians and foreign missionaries by radical (and unrepentant) Hindu extremists have received wide publicity. Crime is up sharply in Delhi and other Indian cities, especially in the north, and officials admit that more than 200 of India's 534 districts (the basic administrative units of India's 25 states) are affected by insurgency, ethnic conflict, political extremism, or caste conflicts. Increasing population pressures, along with the conflicting demands of 20 different linguistic



The eruption of Hindu violence at Ayodhya in 1992 left a scar on Indian politics.

groups, 50,000 castes, and 500,000 villages all point to the prospect of disintegration.

This turmoil, however, is at least partly an unavoidable manifestation of healthy new forces at work in India. If India used to be easy to govern but hard to change, now it is quick to change and difficult to govern. The old bureaucratic systems have collapsed, and political parties have mushroomed in number and strength by voicing the demands of newly empowered castes and ethnic groups. The results are often messy. And because India has become a major center for Asian television services, images of Indian violence are far more visible to Indians and the rest of the world.

India has endured bloody social violence before, and, if the past is any guide, today's strife does not presage the unraveling of the state. During the 1950s and 1960s, rioters clashed in several states, especially in the south, over language and caste politics. A few states had to be placed under "President's Rule" and were governed directly from Delhi. Many pundits predicted the breakup of India or the paralysis of the state, if not a movement to an authoritarian system. None of these things happened (although Indira Gandhi did impose a 15-month "emergency" rule in the 1970s). Instead, southern states such as Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka became among the most orderly (and prosperous) in the country, in large part because the great caste and language disputes were eventually resolved or negotiated away by new political parties that developed in each of the states. Today these southern states are in the forefront of a transformation of India's federal system, as the central government yields power and influence, especially on economic matters.

The turmoil and transformation owe a great deal to the decline of the long-ruling Indian National Congress Party. By the 1980s, Congress had become a highly centralized party that relied on a strong central leader to manage party affairs from Delhi. The "old" Congress Party had grassroots support, and Nehru tolerated strong state leaders. This system was swept away by Indira Gandhi and her son (and successor) Rajiv after she came to power in 1966. Today, the states are reasserting themselves. While Congress remains one of India's most popular parties, it has lost the support of key regional leaders, many of whom have formed their own state parties, appealing to regional pride and local economic and political interests. Indians have drifted away from the idea of government as *maa-baap*—mother and father.

The decline of the Congress Party has also led to a series of fragile coalition governments in the center since 1989. The BJP, which won only two parliamentary seats in the 1984 election, thereafter embarked on a mass mobilization of voters, built around the themes of Hindu pride, Indian nationalism, and economic reform. Yet the BJP's popular vote barely matches that of Congress, and it is dependent on its

The Hindu Experience in America

In May of 1990 in a suburb of Boston, New England's first traditional Hindu temple was consecrated. Sanctified waters from hundreds of pots that bore the waters of India's Ganges River mingled with those of the Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Colorado Rivers, were showered over the temple towers and the divine images within. More than 3,000 Boston-area Hindus cheered, stretching their hands heavenward to catch the blessings of the water.

In the central sanctuary of the temple sits the image of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune. To the right is a shrine housing the image of Vishnu, the transcendent lord and husband of Lakshmi, and to the left is a shrine for the image of Ganesha, the auspicious elephant-headed remover of obstacles. These dark granite images were made in India at Mahabalipuram, south of Madras, and shipped to Boston. After years of makeshift worship—renting halls, setting up tables as altars, and invoking the temporary presence of the Divine in small images—the Hindu immigrant community of New England brought to America the most important immigrants of all: the divine embodiments of the gods.

Without visas, green cards, or citizenship papers, Lakshmi, Vishnu, and Ganesha had settled permanently in Massachusetts.

The growth of the Sri Lakshmi Temple is typical of many American Hindu communities in the 35 years since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act. Today there are more than one million residents of Indian origin in the United States. In the 1970s, new Indian immigrants—mostly professionals who settled in the United States early in their careers—began to raise families and realized that their children would have no cultural or religious roots at all unless they planted the seeds.

These Hindus were engineers and doctors, metallurgists and biochemists, not scholars of religion or temple builders. Few thought of themselves as actively religious, and none would have been involved in building a temple in India.

The Massachusetts temple is one of more than 400 Hindu temples in the United States. Most are located in quarters transformed from other uses and would be quite invisible to the passing eye: a warehouse in Edison, New Jersey; a suburban home in Maryland; a former church in Minneapolis. In the past two decades, however, more than 30 new temples have been built from the ground up, and many more are underway. The first ones were constructed in Pittsburgh and Flushing, Queens in 1977. Within a few years, Hindu temple societies were forming in a dozen American cities. The newly built temples are the most visible markers of the life of immigrant Hindu communities in the U.S. and their public presence as religious communities.



Consecrating Sri Lakshmi Temple in 1990

First-generation Hindu immigrants from India are not a homogeneous group; they bring with them many different regional and sectarian traditions. In the United States, they have met in a place that is the home terrain of no one group. The term “diaspora” is often used loosely to describe the dispersal of a religious or ethnic community from its homeland to other parts of the world. The very notion of a diaspora requires a strong sense of homeland, and most Hindus from India have that sense not only culturally as Indians but also religiously as Hindus. But the dispersal of Hindus outside India is considerably more complex than the term might convey, for they were already “dispersed” in the varieties of regional and sectarian traditions that compose Hindu religious life in India. In American cities and towns, the diaspora often brings together people who never had to cooperate on a project in the scattered communities of the homeland.

Temple-centered devotional Hinduism was introduced into the United States by the Krishna consciousness movement, in many ways the most notable Hindu movement that took root in the United States, in the late 1960s. Among the Hindu teachers who first benefited from the new immigration laws was an elderly Bengali, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta. Arriving nearly penniless in New York in 1965 and chanting “Hare Krishna, Hare Rama” in Tompkins Square Park, he opened America’s first Krishna temple in a storefront on Second Avenue. Within five years, there were “Hare Krishna” temples in 30 cities in the United States. When the new immigrants arrived, these Krishna temples were almost the only temples in America, and they soon became the first temple-homes of many new Hindu settlers. In some cities—Chicago, Dallas, Denver, and Philadelphia—Hindu immigrants have continued to participate in the life of these temples, transforming them into multiethnic Hindu communities.

In the 1890s, Americans had the opportunity to hear their first Hindu: Swami Vivekenanda came to the United States in 1893 for the World’s Parliament of Religions and stayed on to travel and lecture, eventually leaving to America its first Hindu institutions: the Vedanta societies in New York and San Francisco.

One hundred years after his visit, the Hindu tradition has taken root in America in ways Swami Vivekenanda could not have imagined. Were he to return to tour the country, perhaps he would not be surprised to find Indian professionals studying Vedanta under the pines in Pennsylvania. But he would be quite surprised to find Bengali summer picnics in Boston, a temple youth choir learning Hindi devotional songs in suburban Maryland, a group singing the Hindi Ramayana in Chicago, a procession of Lord Ganesh through the streets of San Francisco, and the marshals of the Harvard and Radcliffe graduating classes, both American-born Hindus, chanting from the Vedas at the baccalaureate service. All across the United States, a new and somehow “American” Hinduism is coming into being.

—Diana L. Eck

>DIANA L. ECK is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University and editor of the CD-ROM *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*. This essay is adapted from “Negotiating Hindu Identities in America,” published in *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States* (2000). Copyright © 2000 by Diana L. Eck.

coalition partners (mostly state-based parties) to continue in office. The present government, elected last year, is likely to remain in power a few more years, but it could fall quickly if its partners were to work out a power-sharing arrangement with the Congress Party. Yet neither Congress nor the BJP will be able to restore the old system of one-party predominance.

Today, the social turmoil that plagued the south 30 years ago afflicts some important northern states, especially the vast farm state of Uttar Pradesh (which would be the world's sixth most populous country if it were independent) and its neighbor, Bihar, once a superbly administered state but now the butt of jokes. (In responding to an offer by the Japanese prime minister to turn Bihar into a Japan in three years, a former chief minister of Bihar is said to have responded that, given three months, he could turn Japan into a Bihar.) These conflicts stem from a vast Indian social revolution, comparable to the civil rights movement in the United States or the antiapartheid campaigns in South Africa, that is the practical working out of the logic of democratic politics embedded in the Indian Constitution.

It has taken several generations, but many of India's lowest and poorest castes, including the Dalits (formerly labeled "untouchables"), are turning to the ballot and the street to gain political power. These castes—and poorer Muslims and other non-Hindu groups, including India's large heavily Christian and animist tribal population—have discovered that their one great political advantage in India's democracy is their numbers. They have learned to develop "vote banks" and negotiate with the political parties for their support, election by election, candidate by candidate. But in caste-ridden areas such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and parts of other states, the democratic revolution meets stiff resistance from middle and high castes that are reluctant to share power. Violence is one result.

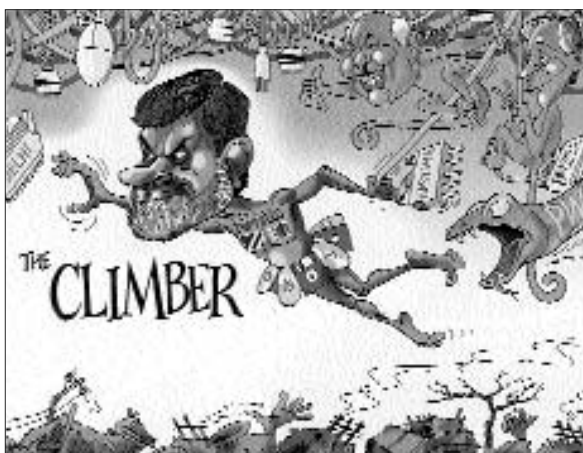
The social revolutions in the north parallel and sometimes intersect with the nationwide struggle between Hindu nationalists and a variety of other forces, including India's 120 million Muslims, its Christian population, most of the Congress Party, and the vast majority of intellectuals, who are staunch secularists. This battle for the ideological soul of India has been the cause of several major religious riots, turning Hindus against Muslims and, on occasion, Christians.

Yet there are practical limits to these conflicts. India is, overall, a highly accommodating society, and its politicians are skilled at the art of compromise. Historically, Hinduism has absorbed and incorporated outside ideologies and cultures, even as it has helped spawn other faiths, including Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. There is no Hindu church, nor is there agreement on a "standard" Hinduism.

India's caste and class warfare will likely be confined to a few northern states. As for the struggle for a new Indian identity, the BJP does not want to push Muslims (who make up 12 percent of the population)

into the arms of the Congress Party or alienate its coalition partners. Moderate elements of the BJP are aware that the extremism of the National Service Society (RSS), and other members of the family of Hindu organizations that provide the party's intellectual and political support could damage India's reputation abroad and hurt the party at the polls. Despite India's difficulties the BJP has been able to conduct a vigorous foreign policy and it has used foreign policy issues to rally the nation. Most recently, it turned the Kargil war into a demonstration of "Indian unity" by celebrating the valor of the Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs who fought under the Indian flag.

India's political system is a complex machine that requires an enormous amount of maintenance, but it functions well enough to satisfy most of its members most of the time. Its national elites — managers of major corporations, leaders of the larger political parties, commanders of the armed forces, and the intellectuals, scientists, and academics of the "chat-tering classes" — have demonstrated a flexibility that has been absent in other complex, multiethnic, multinational states such as Pakistan, Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet Union. Like a ship with many watertight compartments, it is relatively immune to the kinds of large-scale, extremist, or totalitarian movements that have afflicted more homogeneous states such as China and Cambodia.



Political decentralization is shifting power to state leaders like N. Chandrababu Naidu, the technology-minded chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, home to the city of Hyderabad.

India's growing strength has been amplified by the end of the Cold War. Today the country sits in the middle of a vast band of economic and military power unregulated by any Cold War framework. The Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons tests completed a chain of nuclear-capable states (most of which have strategic missiles) that stretches from Israel to North Korea and includes Iraq, China, Pakistan, and potentially Iran, Taiwan, and South Korea. Many of the states to India's east are economic "tigers" (Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Taiwan); to the north and west are the Central Asian and Persian Gulf states with their vast reserves of oil and gas.

With its highly professional million-man army, significant naval forces, and a modern air force, India could be a strategic force in the

Asia's Exceptional Nation

In coming decades, Asia—the world's most dynamic but also most restless continent—will be the site of struggles that will decisively alter the distribution of international power. It will also be the arena where the future of democracy outside the West will be decided. Undoubtedly, China will be the mightiest protagonist in this contest for power. But, as President Bill Clinton and Washington policymakers have belatedly realized, India will also be a very significant actor in the game.

U.S. foreign policy as defined by Washington's policy wonks has long been driven by realism and *realpolitik*. Aside from its fellow big leaguers, the United States has only taken notice of other countries when they become a nuisance or pose a threat. Even the recent efforts, entirely salutary, by American scholars and commentators to focus more attention on India have tended to remain overconcentrated on the peculiarity of those currently in office in New Delhi. The new attentiveness toward India should—and can—rest more firmly on principles.

Since India gained independence from British rule in 1947, its sense of its place in the world has been shaped by a glaring discrepancy. In the distant past, India was a civilizational epicenter: The extensive, diffuse edges of its influence stretched from Bamiyan in Afghanistan to Borabudur in Indonesia. Its strategic location, fabled opulence, and sheer territorial and demographic scale made it an object of desire to colonists; and indeed for the British, it was the jewel in their imperial crown. Yet once independent, the Indian state was unable to translate this historical legacy into anything like a major global presence.

This predicament has motivated two sorts of Indian responses. The first was based on a profound understanding of India's inherent weakness in the international arena, and saw a need to transform this into a strength by trying to change the conventional terms of international debate. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, hoped to do this by applying Mahatma Gandhi's policy of moral one-upmanship in the international domain. It is a common mistake to think of Nehru's foreign policy as pure idealism: in fact it derived from a judgment about the distribution of power among states during the Cold War, and about India's possible role in this system. It secured for India a position outside the orbital pulls of the two superpowers, and set it up as something of a moral champion on issues such as decolonization and disarmament. This policy had some purchase during the 1950s, but was undermined by the Chinese invasion of India in 1962; subsequently, during the 1970s and 80s, it received sporadic and incoherent affirmation.

By the 1990s, this policy had lost its conceptual shape, as well as any rationale, yet no new vision emerged to take its place. At exactly the moment when the global map was undergoing nothing more than glacial shifts, India was caught in the toils of domestic political upheaval. A declining Congress Party gave way to a more complex mix: The rise of movements of Hindu chauvinism and nationalism fronted by their political wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), sharp conflicts of interest focused around caste identities, and the beginnings of major economic reform, together altered the language of Indian politics. Still smarting from the humiliation of its disastrous Sri Lanka intervention of 1987–90, India let its external horizons shrink. Inwardness was all.

Throughout the decade, government was by coalition and increasingly fragile. The Hindu nationalist BJP, sensing it could no longer draw electoral profit from the issue that had brought it onto the national stage (the cry to build a temple on the site of a mosque at Ayodhya), began to dabble in international affairs.

The earlier conception had represented an effort to develop an effective policy built around the fact of weakness: Its adherents used ambiguity and equivocation, played great powers against each other, and struck moral poses. This high-minded fudging was now replaced by a more grandiose, not to say bombastic, view of India in the world. What nourished it was not empirical indicators of newfound strength but the resentment that characterizes every arriviste. A few weeks after entering government, in May 1998, the BJP chose to explode a series of nuclear devices—thus forgoing by a single act decades of carefully cultivated ambiguity about nuclearization that had served India well. The BJP wished symbolically to assert India's claim to be recognized as a great power, able to control its own security destiny; more practically and locally, the party wished to strengthen its precarious electoral position.

On both counts, the choices of the BJP-led coalition government failed. India's security now stands in more—not less—jeopardy. The studied and advantageous policy of nuclear ambiguity worked to India's favor; India's tests, and Pakistan's reply, placed both countries on an even footing. India's superiority in conventional weapons is now worthless; as its tactics make clear, Pakistan can engage in regular border skirmishing in the knowledge that India will be most reluctant to allow this to escalate. India, meanwhile—at great cost—will have to deploy more troops along its vast border. Last year's Kargil war illustrated the effects. Although touted as an Indian triumph, it was a severe setback for India's long-term interests. The Kashmir issue has been more internationalized than ever before (a long-standing goal of Pakistan's), with the United States for the first time playing a direct role in restraining Pakistan. Moreover, the war led to the fall of a (no doubt corrupt) civilian government in Islamabad and its replacement by a military government.

One should not therefore think New Delhi's policy choices are currently in the hands of the most farsighted minds. Likewise, it is a mistake to overestimate the legitimacy of the BJP and its policies: Less than a quarter of the electorate voted for the party in 1999. (In fact, its share of the vote was down compared with the 1998 elections, despite the nuclear tests and the Kargil war.) Conversely, one should not underestimate the degree to which the BJP is merely the visible form of a web of esoteric power (something Americans are not very good at comprehending). Behind the BJP lurks a movement organized with military precision and neofascist in its mindset—the National Service Society. (It was men associated with this group who were responsible for Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948.) The movement is dedicated to constructing a militaristic national state, based on a culturally and religiously uniform India that can stand up to the world.

Gauged by conventional international measures—economic power, military might—India is unlikely to achieve anything like great-power status in the foreseeable future. India is moderately powerful across a range of different fields. But there is one fact that does make it exceptional: the scale and depth of its democracy. This is the deep reason why Americans, ordinary citizens as well as the policy elite, should be interested in it. India is the most important bridgehead of democracy in Asia, the most populous continent; the future of democracy in Asia is linked to India's future. America, as the most powerful vehicle for the ideology of modern democracy, has much at stake in its vicissitudes, both in India and in the vast hinterlands of Asia. Here, for once, principles and realpolitik might come together to redefine America's policy and attitude toward India.

—Sunil Khilnani

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region. In 1990, on the eve of the Persian Gulf War, it demonstrated some of these capabilities with one of the largest airlifts in history, quickly evacuating more than 100,000 Indian nationals from Iraq and Kuwait. India also plays an important role in UN peacekeeping operations. It recently sent to Sierra Leone a contingent of battle-hardened troops authorized to use deadly force.

India's expected prosperity would allow it to add teeth to a foreign policy that has been long on rhetoric about India's global greatness but short on achievement. Delhi has long maintained a number of small aid programs (in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and several African states), and these can be expected to grow. The economy can also support a considerably larger defense budget, even after increases of 10 percent in 1997 and '98, and a 28 percent rise in 1999.

India will, for the first time, have the material means to be a major arms supplier, and to build sea-projection and airlift capabilities that could extend its military power across Asia. India could also forge alliances with other important states, providing personnel, some high-technology expertise, and an important location in exchange for political and military assistance. Delhi had expected such an arrangement to emerge from its ties to the Soviet Union. Now it is working closely with Israel; it has ties to Vietnam and other Asian middle powers, and its foreign policy experts even talk of a strategic relationship with the United States.

What will India do with its new power? Since the heady days of Nehru, all Indian leaders have proclaimed a special destiny or mission for India in Asia and the world, based on the greatness of its civilization, its strategic location, and its distinctive view of the world. The BJP's leaders are no exception, and the 1998 nuclear tests were one way of stating India's ambition to be taken seriously as a major power. But outsiders, contrasting the grand schemes of India's foreign policy establishment with the *jhuggis* (urban slums) of Delhi and Mumbai, not to mention those of Calcutta, wonder if it is serious. How can India, with a national literacy rate of only 55 percent, much lower than that in the poorest and most backward states, stake a claim to greatness?

The answer is that unlike the people of other middle powers such as Indonesia, Brazil, and Nigeria, Indians believe that their country has both a destiny and an obligation to play a large role on the international stage. India and China, after all, are the world's only major states that embody grand civilizations. India also claims to speak for the vast majority of the world, especially its poorest and most underrepresented people. Hence its demands for a seat on the UN Security Council.

India also has practical economic and strategic reasons for staking a claim to great-power status. Two years ago it joined the World Trade Organization, and with this opening to the world's markets, both as an importer and an exporter, it wants a larger voice in setting the rules and norms of the international economy.

Since the Nehru era, Indians have seen the world as unjust and dangerous. Nehru pursued a wide-ranging foreign policy with two major aims. The first was to speed up decolonization in Asia and Africa, the second to reduce the threat of nuclear war. In 1954, India became the first state to propose a comprehensive test ban treaty, and it has long been a major force in global disarmament discussions. Ironically, one of the Indian bomb lobby's arguments during the 1990s was that India had to go nuclear itself in order to put pressure on the existing nuclear powers to fulfill their obligation under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to discuss nuclear disarmament. (India, however, has refused to sign the treaty.)

Nehru's successors continue to challenge the world order, proposing schemes for nuclear disarmament and the radical restructuring of the UN Security Council. India emerged from World War II as the world's fourth largest industrial power and second most populous state, but it was not considered for a Security Council seat, nor did the Indian leadership, swamped with the politics of partition and independence, press for one. (Nehru rejected an American proposal that India take China's seat on the Security Council, believing that China would eventually be grateful for this gesture.) Now India seeks a seat both for the status it would confer and the voice (and veto) it would provide on major global issues. Not incidentally, a veto would also allow Delhi to keep the United Nations out of the Kashmir conflict.

In the past, India was a less-than-great power attempting to act like a great one, which sometimes made it look foolish. When it challenged the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in a UN vote, only two countries—renegade Libya and India's vassal, Bhutan—supported it. But the gap between Indian ambitions and capabilities is slowly narrowing. Under the more assertive leadership of the BJP, despite the constraints of a coalition government, India has demonstrated a surprising ability to undertake bold initiatives: It has tested nuclear weapons, restructured its relationship with the United States, further liberalized the economy, established close relations with once-scorned Israel, and attempted a dramatic rapprochement with Pakistan. That effort, culminating in Prime Minister Vajpayee's trip last year to the city of Lahore in eastern Pakistan, ended in failure.

A new generation of Indian strategists, politicians, and officials is increasingly aware that the hectoring style of Krishna Menon, Nehru's defense minister, is counterproductive. Slowly, a new realism is creeping into the Indian foreign ministry, hitherto famed as one of the world's most skilled bureaucracies at "getting to no." Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, for example, has held 13 meetings with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, the longest sustained dialogue ever between senior Indian and American policymakers. Yet there are important areas where American and Indian policies are at cross-purposes, none more so than India's nuclear program.

No issue has contributed more to the failure of U.S. policy in South Asia than India's nuclear weapons program. But American policymak-

ers who failed to prevent the Indian tests can plead extenuating circumstances, since the Indians themselves had long been of two minds about the pursuit of the bomb. Delhi's spokesmen traditionally had cast their opposition to all nuclear weapons in highly moralistic terms, leading many Americans to conclude that India was an ally in preventing their spread.

This was a miscalculation. While India strongly opposed "vertical" proliferation (the nuclear arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States, for example), it was more tolerant of "horizontal" proliferation (the spread of nuclear weapons from state to state) and fought bitterly to retain the option of becoming a nuclear weapons state, albeit choosing not to exercise it for several decades. After 1991, however, the world looked very different to Delhi. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, it had lost its major supporter in the world arena. The United States still seemed indifferent, even as Pakistan issued ambiguous nuclear threats, and China gained economic strength. Nuclear weapons suddenly had stronger appeal.

After the Cold War, Washington treated India (and Pakistan) simply like two more states that were part of the global proliferation problem. India, it was thought, could be induced—or coerced—into signing the nonproliferation and test ban treaties. Washington showed no understanding of India's acute sense of isolation, or of its feeling that the United States ranked it with Pakistan and accorded greater importance to China. The United States yielded to China during negotiations for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, yet after the Indian nuclear tests, President Clinton stood next to Chinese President Jiang Zemin as they jointly condemned Delhi.

The appearance of a Pakistan-China-U.S. axis played into the hands of Indian hawks. India's most eminent nuclear theoretician, K. Subrahmanyam, argued that the country was compelled to go nuclear because of threats to its national security from its two traditional rivals and (implicitly) the United States. The United States, he argued, wished to strip India of its nuclear option. Once India joined the nuclear club, he continued, it could force the other members, especially the United States, to take serious steps toward global disarmament.

This argument may seem hypocritical, but it was widely believed and deeply felt in India. The Clinton administration never developed an effective response. President Clinton said on one occasion that the United States and India shared the ultimate goal of nuclear abolition, but senior administration officials privately contradicted him, even as others publicly reiterated earlier presidential commitments.

India's relationship with its neighbors, especially Pakistan, will be the most important factor in determining whether it emerges as a great Asian power.

The dispute with Pakistan has many layers, beginning with the botched partition of British India more than 50 years ago. Among the



A 17th-century rebel meets his death. Political conflict is a prominent theme in the history of the Indian subcontinent—but so is the theme of political survival.

questions it left unanswered was the disposition of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Because Kashmir was primarily Muslim, Pakistan argued that it should be part of Islamic Pakistan. India claimed that since British India was not divided strictly along religious lines (India still had a vast Muslim population), Kashmir should join secular India. The land is mostly mountainous and barren, but it has military value. Both nations agreed on one thing: Self-determination (which is what most Kashmiris wanted) could be ruled out.

After India's nuclear tests in 1998, the overt nuclearization of South Asia emboldened Islamabad to launch a brilliantly conceived (but strategically disastrous) attack across the line of control that temporarily separates Indian and Pakistani forces in Kashmir. The pressure on India was further increased after Pakistan's military coup last October.

Pakistan's army chief, General Pervaiz Musharraf, who assumed the title of "chief executive," promised continued support for the separatist "freedom fighters" inside Kashmir.

Indian decisionmakers cannot bring themselves to negotiate with the new military regime, fearing that this would grant legitimacy to the idea of rule by the armed forces in South Asia, perhaps giving their own generals ideas. There are also powerful groups in both countries that oppose normalization or dialogue on almost every issue, including even people-to-people exchanges. Among them are smugglers and parts of the intelligence services, both of which stand to lose a great deal. Some diplomats and strategists in both countries fear that concessions would be the first step on a slippery slope.

As the larger power, India will have to figure out a way to initiate a credible dialogue with Pakistan, either directly or through intermediaries. The difficulty of doing this is especially evident in the case of Kashmir, where the two countries had to resort to secret diplomacy—which failed—for even the most preliminary talks. While the Indian government has issued strong statements about countering terrorism and isolating Pakistan, it is often in the position of merely reacting to Islamabad's increasingly risky measures. Instead, it needs to sort out those areas where cooperation and accommodation (by both countries) are possible from those areas where the two states have incompatible interests. And it needs to recognize that a failed Pakistan, with its potential to spread nuclear weapons and Islamic terrorism (as well as millions of refugees), would harm Indian interests.

Despite its own ambitions, India still finds itself linked with Pakistan, a country one-fifth its size. In international affairs, states are known by the enemies they keep, so India is doomed to be paired with Pakistan until it can either defeat or accommodate Islamabad.

India's other major neighbor, China, presents obstacles of a different sort to its aspirations for a larger world role. Delhi remains deeply ambivalent about Beijing. Nehru had envisioned a cooperative relationship between the two states, and some in Delhi still believe that India and China have a common interest in moderating American dominance. China, however, was responsible for India's humiliation in the 1962 war. So bad was the Indian military performance, and so incompetent India's political leadership, that this defeat ended any notion of a rivalry between the two states. If any doubt remained, it was laid to rest by China's speedier economic growth and the seat it eventually obtained on the UN Security Council.

Indians are also wary of becoming surrogates for the West as part of an anti-China alliance. If the Chinese conclude that India is actively opposing them (perhaps through increased support for Tibetan exiles, or support for ethnic minorities in western China), Beijing could easily increase its support of Islamabad and separatist movements in India itself.

Delhi is plagued by unresolved policy disagreements. After the

1998 nuclear tests, the BJP government labeled China the chief strategic threat to India. A few months later, it retreated from this confrontational line and completed another round of (fruitless) talks with Beijing on the border dispute. At the same moment, India was making a serious effort to begin a dialogue with Pakistan. That policy, too, was soon reversed. Indecision and ambiguity might have had certain advantages in the bipolar Cold War world, but they are liabilities today.

If India is slowly moving toward greatness, how should the United States respond? Traditionally, the great states of the world have resisted the entry of new members into the “club.” Japan and the Soviet Union, for example, found their way blocked after World War I—which helped bring on the next world war.

The failure of the United States to reconsider how aspiring middle powers such as India might shape the emerging global order in the wake of the Cold War was a costly error. An India that did not seem to count for very much (in Washington, at least) became embroiled in crises and made itself (and thus Pakistan) a new member of the nuclear club. The time has come for the United States to reconsider its relationship with India. If it reforms its economy and comes to terms with Pakistan, India could be a force for stability in Asia and for the containment of China, as well as a strong support for humanitarian intervention in Africa and other war-torn regions. If it does not, it still will continue to have great influence in the non-Western world.

There are also negative reasons for the United States to re-examine its approach. Within the Indian military, some experts now argue that Delhi should abandon its historic restraint about exporting sensitive technologies. India, they say, can earn much-needed foreign exchange and tweak the nose of the West (and China) by selling nuclear knowledge and missile technology to Middle Eastern, Asian, and even lesser European states. And while India is unlikely ever to become an ally of China, it could side with Beijing (and Moscow) to challenge the American-dominated alliance system in East and Southeast Asia. Left to its own devices, it might also pursue a riskier strategy for dealing with Pakistan. Indian strategists have already increased tensions by embracing the idea that “limited” war between nuclear powers is possible.

The United States ought to recognize that India is not just another South Asian state but a player in the larger Asian sphere with an interest in—and influence on—the worldwide community of ex-colonial states. This does not mean abandoning important U.S. interests in Pakistan, a nuclear power that will soon be the world’s fifth largest state. It means the expansion of American engagement with Delhi, including discussion of shared policy concerns (terrorism; narcotics; humanitarian intervention; political stability in fragmented, ethnically complex countries; and China). The Clinton visit produced a “vision statement” embracing such ideas, but it remains to be seen whether this commitment will extend beyond the Clinton administration, or even to its conclusion.

Treating India as a rising power means Delhi should be one of the capitals—along with London, Berlin, Beijing, Moscow, and Tokyo—that senior American officials visit and telephone about global developments. Like the French, Indians have a different and not necessarily hostile view of how the world should be organized. Regular consultation should help temper the sometimes abrasive Indian style.

The United States can also do more than merely point out the virtues of regional accommodation. It should encourage a greater sense of realism in Pakistan about possible solutions to the Kashmir conflict, while also urging the Indians to accommodate Pakistan's concerns about the treatment of Muslim Kashmiris. A more active yet low-key diplomacy is in order. It will not lead to an easy or rapid resolution of the Kashmir dispute, but it will enable the United States to retain influence in both countries should its services again be required to avert a war, or even a future nuclear crisis.

Finally, the United States must put nuclear proliferation in proper perspective. Many American officials remain embittered by what they believe to be Indian duplicity over the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the 1998 nuclear tests. Yet both countries are essentially status quo powers when it comes to the proliferation of nuclear (and other) weapons and to crises that could escalate to a nuclear conflict. The next U.S. administration may be able to strike a bargain with Delhi, obtaining Indian cooperation on nuclear proliferation in exchange for dual-use technologies such as advanced computers, aerospace technology, and even civilian nuclear assistance.

A sound prescription for the U.S.-India relationship calls for neither opposition nor alliance but for something in between. There is no need to contain or oppose an India that is still struggling to reshape its economic and political order, especially since it is in America's interest that such reforms proceed. But the United States cannot expect, nor should it seek, a strategic alliance that Delhi would view as part of an anti-Pakistan or anti-China campaign. An "in-between" relationship would require developing new understandings in several areas: The conditions under which India and the United States might jointly engage in humanitarian intervention in various parts of the world, the means of deploying new defensive military technologies (such as theater missile defenses) without triggering regional arms races in Taiwan and South Asia, and the joint steps the two might take to strengthen fragile democratic regimes in Asia and elsewhere. A relationship with India offers an opportunity to influence directly the Indian worldview on issues that are of importance to the United States. India would also provide early warning of potentially harmful policies.

But even the best-intentioned American policy will have little impact if India cannot bring itself to think and behave strategically. The most important choice it must make concerns its relationship with



The Boy in the City (1999), by Sanjay Bhattacharyya

Pakistan, but it must also show a greater willingness to engage with the United States. It must avail itself of its own cultural, economic, and ideological resources and not assume that great-power status will accrue because it can lay claim to a marginal nuclear weapons program or a history of accomplishments as a great civilization.

India is not a great power in the classic sense; it cannot challenge American military or economic strength. But in a transformed international order, its assets and resources are more relevant to a wide range of American interests than they have been for 50 years. They cannot be safely ignored in the future, as they have been in the past. □

Two Concepts of Secularism

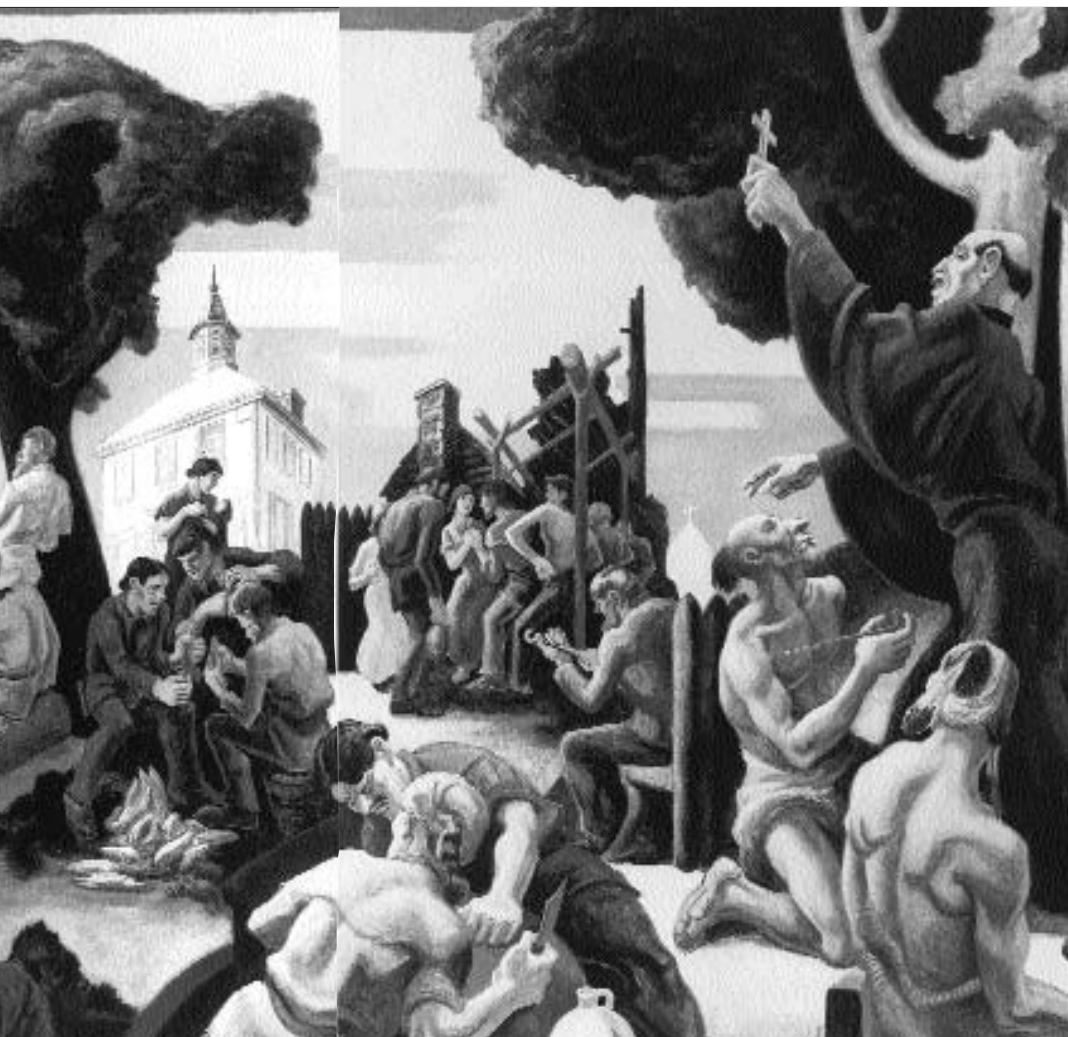
Most Americans would likely agree that they live in a secular society. But today, two very different ideas of what it means to be secular are at war.

by Wilfred M. McClay

Whenever one sets out in search of the simple and obvious in American history, one soon comes face to face with a crowd of paradoxes. And none is greater than this: that the vanguard nation of technological and social innovation is also the developed world's principal bastion of religious faith and practice. The United States has managed to sustain remarkably high levels of traditional religious belief and affiliation, even as it careens merrily down the whitewater rapids of modernity.

This was not supposed to happen. Sociologists from Max Weber to Peter Berger were convinced that secularization was one facet of the powerful monolith called "modernization," and trusted that secularization would come along bundled with a comprehensive package of modernizing forces: urbanization, rationalization, professionalization, functional differentiation, bureaucratization, and so on. If by "secularism" we mean a perspective that dismisses the possibility of a transcendent realm of being, or treats the existence (or nonexistence) of such a realm as an irrelevancy, then we should have expected religious beliefs and practices to wither away by now. To be sure, one can grant that the taboos and superstitions of the great religions transmitted a useful kernel of moral teaching. But their supernaturalism and irrationality have to be regarded, in this view,





Cultural Progress (1933), by Thomas Hart Benton

as vestiges of humanity's childhood. Our growing mastery of our material existence enables us to understand and manipulate this world on our own terms, through the exercise of instrumental rationality. Secularity in all its fullness should have arrived as naturally as adulthood.

Yet the world at the dawn of the 21st century remains energetically, even maniacally, religious, in ways large and small. And if the "secularization theory" long promoted by social-scientific students of religion has in fact been discredited, the unanticipated resiliency of religious faith in 20th-century America may well be the single most arresting demonstration of the theory's inadequacy.

But perhaps one should not accept this claim too quickly. Perhaps the religious efflorescence we see today is merely defensive, and fleeting. It could be argued persuasively that the United States has never been more thoroughly under the command of secular ideas than it is today. The

nation's elite culture, as it is mirrored in mass media and academe, is committed to a standard of antiseptically secular discourse, in which the ostensibly value-neutral languages of science and therapy have displaced the value-laden language of faith and morals. A steady stream of court decisions since the 1940s has severely circumscribed the public manifestation of traditional religious symbols and sentiments, helping to create what has been called "the naked public square." Perhaps the United States has lagged behind Western Europe in completing the movement toward a purer form of secularity—but it is getting there just the same. Religious expression has not been stamped out—but it has been pushed to the margins, confined to a sort of cultural red-light district, along with all the other frailties to which we are liable. The point is to confine such beliefs to the private realm and deny them public exposure. Some who hold to this view offer themselves as friends of religion. Others are skeptics, or enemies. But all are united in the belief that a "naked public square" is the price we must pay for the non-establishment and liberty embodied in the First Amendment.

There is, however, another way of seeing matters. In this view, it is secularism, rather than religion, whose power is ebbing away. In this view, the claim that religious liberty can only be protected by the federal government's imposition of a naked public square has come to seem as absurd as the Vietnam-era tactic of destroying villages in order to save them. Small wonder, then, that religion has responded to the challenge of secularism with a vigorous defense of its role in public life—a role that, whatever one thinks of it, shows no sign of going away quietly.

Indeed, there is a growing sense that religion may be an indispensable force for the upholding of human dignity and moral order in a world dominated by voracious state bureaucracies and sprawling transnational corporations that are neither effectively accountable to national law nor effectively answerable to well-established codes of behavior. As the sociologist José Casanova argues, modernity runs the risk of being "devoured by the inflexible, inhuman logic of its own creations," unless it restores a "creative dialogue" with the very religious traditions it has so successfully challenged. Perhaps no event in the last quarter-century has given more credibility to this view than the profound influence of the Roman Catholic Church in promoting the downfall of communism in parts of the former Soviet empire; and no modern religious leader has been more keenly alert to the public uses of his faith than the current pope. But even in America there is plentiful evidence that publicly vigorous religious

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beliefs and practices have survived all efforts to suppress or supersede them, and are now ascendant.

One can gauge the extent of this shift not only by recourse to Gallup, Roper, and Barna polls, but by examining shifts in public discourse. Ever since the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976, the taboo on public expression of religious sentiments by American political leaders seems to have been steadily eroding, to the extent that the presidential candidates in the current campaign have been publicly invoking God and Jesus Christ at a pace not seen since the days of William Jennings Bryan. The principal candidates, and President Bill Clinton himself, have warmly endorsed the efforts of what are called “faith-based” organizations for the provision of social welfare services. Clinton has repeatedly and successfully employed biblical and quasi-biblical language, particularly in his own defense. One may feel tempted to chuckle, or snarl, at these rhetorical gestures, but the fact remains that they are a form of recognition. One cannot successfully appeal to a standard, even if one does it cynically or ritualistically, if that standard is not widely acknowledged as legitimate.

The signs of desecularization are reflected, too, in a long list of developments in the realms of law and governance. The overwhelming support accorded the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, although it was later overturned by the Supreme Court, was a highly significant example of this process. So too was the landmark 1996 welfare reform legislation, which included an option for “charitable choice,” permitting the contracting out of public social-welfare services to openly religious organizations. As always, controversies over schooling have supplied a significant share of the flashpoints. Not only has there been some leveling of the playing field in the competition between religious and nonreligious schools, but there is movement toward a reassertion of religious expression in public institutions, seen, for example, in the current court cases involving the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools and the sanctioning of student-led prayer at graduation ceremonies and football games. Not all of these efforts will succeed. Not all of them ought to. But the trend seems unmistakable.

And some things have never changed, even with secularism’s impressive victories in the courts and in the halls of government and academe. Prayers are still uttered at the commencement of congressional sessions. God’s name appears on our currency and in the oaths we take in court. Chaplains are still employed by Congress and the armed services. The tax-exempt status of religious institutions remains intact. Avowed belief in God remains astonishingly pervasive, and church and synagogue attendance rates remain high, at least relative to rates in other Western countries. Whether one looks upon these phenomena with approval or disapproval, the fact is that America is still not an entirely secular country, one sanitized of any form of public sanction for religion.



Presidential candidates continue to publicly identify themselves with religion, as Vice President Al Gore did in Houston in March.

One could continue in this vein for some time. Yet the partisans of the secularizing view would likely not be persuaded. They might well respond that the majority's professed belief in God is thinner than skim milk. The now-dominant secularism might seem to be

conceding a good deal of ground to religion. But this concession only serves to consolidate its rule, by seeming to show flexibility on relatively small points. Such concessions serve to sugarcoat more consequential social changes, which, once they have fully taken root, will eventually empty the old moral and theological language of all meaning. The drama of President Clinton's impeachment suggests that the stern moralism once associated with American Protestantism is a thing of the distant past. It costs nothing for an American politician these days to genuflect in the direction of "religion," particularly if that "religion" is increasingly vague and morally undemanding. Such gestures, in the secularizing view, are merely the verbal tics of a civilization in transition.

There is some truth in this view. But it underestimates the importance of words and gestures as markers of legitimacy. And the very fact of such genuflection, even if that is all that it is, may nevertheless indicate how precarious all the secularist advances are. No one builds pedestals to the god of scientific rationality or the Comtean religion of humanity—although there is a booming trade in crystals, pyramids, horoscopes, and the services of psychics. Even the public prestige of science has receded somewhat in our own day, as a consequence of science's growing politicization, its blizzard of inflated and conflicting claims about matters such as health and diet, and the public's fears, founded and unfounded, that scientific and technological innovation has become a juggernaut lacking any sense of moral proportionality or ultimate ends.

One thing can be said without qualification: Secularism in our day boasts no energizing vision and no revolutionary élan. Instead, it must await the excesses of the Religious Right or some similar foe to make its case, stir up its fading enthusiasm, and rally its remaining troops. Secularism sits uneasy upon its throne, a monarch that dares not speak its proper name, and dares not openly propound its agenda, if indeed it

still has one. For all its gains, it seems peculiarly on the defensive, a tenured radical that has ascended to the endowed chair of culture only to spend its days shoring up the principle of *stare decisis*.

There are no envelopes left to push. Its victory, if that is what it has

enjoyed, has not come without cost. For better or worse, the *élan vital* has gravitated elsewhere. These days it is more fashionable to be “spiritual” than to be secular.



Critics of governor George W. Bush's February visit to Bob Jones University focused on the school's policies, not its religious character.

There is no more powerful indication of secularism's rule—and the precariousness of that rule—than the challenge to it being mounted by an intellectually sophisticated, and increasingly ecumenical conservative religious counterculture. First drawn together in reaction to the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* and the subsequent liberalization of abortion laws, this counterculture is made up mainly of theological and moral conservatives drawn from the full range of organized denominations: mainline and evangelical Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. Such an entity, particularly as embodied in Richard John Neuhaus's influential journal *First Things*, would have been inconceivable if a powerful and entrenched secularist enemy did not exist to hold such a coalition together. In the past, it would have been precisely the most conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Jews who would have been the *least* likely to seek out common ground. That they are now willing to do so, with growing enthusiasm and commitment, is a tribute to their secularist foe. It was once the case that to be ecumenical one had to be a liberal. But that is no longer true. Now something much larger than the historical differential of the respective faiths is seen to be at stake. That “something” is at the bottom of what we have come to call “the culture wars.”

The reaction against secularism in recent years is by no means restricted to political or cultural conservatives. Prominent liberals such as the journalist E. J. Dionne, the law professor Stephen Carter, the theologian Harvey Cox, the psychologist Robert Coles, and the political theorist William Connolly all have written on the inadequacies of a purely secular view of the world. They may offer the most powerful evidence of all for the decoupling of secularism from modernization,

since they take the position that a “progressive” or modernizing agenda need not be a secularizing one.

In addition, an increasingly influential critique is emerging from the perspectives of academic postmodernism and postcolonialism, in which Western secularism’s claims to universal truth and impersonal rationality are decried as a form of cognitive imperialism. As a result, the claims of religion are no longer so easily bracketed as private and subjective. In the postmodern dispensation, where knowledge is understood as inseparable from the discourse of particular communities, religious assertions have as good a claim as anything else, and a better one than most, to the mantle of “truth.” Such arguments tend in practice to favor “indigenous” religion, and often leave mainstream Christianity and Judaism out of the picture, perhaps considering them too much a part of the “Western universalist hegemony” to be worthy of attention. And in any event, these arguments may have little staying power outside the hothouse of the academy. But their appearance certainly indicates a restlessness with the regime of secularism, from a position that can hardly be called “conservative” in any usual sense of the word.

So not everything we see in the challenges to secularism can be made to take the shape of a culture war. But a great deal of it does. Defenders of religion see an aggressive secularism, which controls academia, the media, and the federal courts, and thereby largely controls public discourse. Secularists and their allies see in their opponents an incipient religious reaction, a dangerous cultural regression, a “return of the repressed” that would obliterate scientific inquiry and demolish individual liberty, and take us back to the Middle Ages. There is nothing imaginary about these conflicts. But there is nothing inevitable about their being couched in such extreme terms.

As the 21st century begins, we need a way of understanding our cultural conflict that faces the facts of social division without becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy of civil war. The obstacles to this are formidable. As the sociologist James Davison Hunter has pointed out, our national debates are now conducted within frameworks that tend to polarize arguments, harden lines of division, and accentuate the most extreme positions of either camp in order to mobilize both donors and troops.

If the conception of “culture wars” may well further the very tendencies it describes, it also is admirably clarifying. By establishing a rough parity between the sides, the term helps us see that the struggle between modernization and its discontents is not merely the battle of light against darkness, progress against backwardness, but does indeed have many of the qualities of a confessional struggle, pitting genuine and deeply held worldviews against each other—a struggle in which there is plenty of light and darkness, virtue and vice, to go around.

Moreover, the culture war model suggests that the conflicts described are not mere illusions or anxieties to be soothed away by therapy. Rather, to speak of “culture war” is to insist that we are experi-

encing genuine conflicts over genuine issues. The effort to simply split the differences by counseling moderation and prudence, and by following the utilitarian principle that one should give the least possible displeasure to the largest possible number, may have the effect of denying what is at stake for the “hard” minorities on either side. Majorities can be wrong. And in this particular conflict, the stakes are high. The battle is being fought over nothing less than who will get to occupy the commanding heights of American life, and thereby define the nature of the culture.

To speak of “commanding heights” is to raise the question of whether the United States is, or should be, an officially secular nation. In a sense, therefore, it is also to raise the question of whether there is a *de facto* religious establishment in America. This has always been a tangled and complex subject. Officially, of course, there never has been an American religious establishment. There are, as everyone knows, two clauses expressing the First Amendment’s view of religion: a free exercise clause and a non-establishment clause. The two clauses are part of a single vision, because they complement and mutually support each other, non-establishment being a necessary precondition for free exercise, and free exercise being the surest way of ensuring the perpetuation of non-establishment.

Of the two, non-establishment is surely the harder provision to observe and perpetuate. It is not hard to understand why this should be so. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, so the polity seeks unifying and binding principles. There has to be a “final say” in a durable political order, and it is hard to keep a “final say” potent with nothing more than an avowedly neutral proceduralism. On the contrary: Everything we know about the functioning of a healthy political entity suggests the need for governing assumptions, legitimating myths, and foundational narratives. We have always tended to have informal establishments play that role for us. And clearly those establishments have been in flux.

Consider the situation in the American demimonde called academe. The historian George Marsden has argued that the American academy has merely exchanged one orthodoxy for another, granting today the same kind of commanding status to a strictly secular understanding of human existence that yesterday it granted to a Protestant orthodoxy. This would be remarkable, if true. Is there now a regnant secularist orthodoxy, which, while it usually rules genially and tolerantly, is ultimately intolerant of threatening deviations from its norms? There is certainly evidence of this in the academy’s suppression of explicit religious discourse and religious perspectives in scholarly discourse, not to mention hiring and promotion, and in its ferocious antagonism to the mere presentation of religious perspectives on such controversial subjects as human origins. And is this the inevitable tendency of secularism, to be as domineering and triumphalist as the religious faiths it once opposed? Is it accurate to speak of secularism as a kind of substitute religion, a reservoir of



AMENDMENT I

*Congress shall make no law
respecting an establishment of religion,
or prohibiting the free exercise
thereof . . .*

ultimate beliefs about ultimate things which stands in a continuum with conventional religious faiths? Or is secularism more properly understood as something quite distinct from, and more modest than, a religion? Has the culture war dynamic of secularism versus desecularization caused us to lose sight of this distinctive quality of “the secular,” when it is rightly understood?

This question takes on an entirely different cast if one looks for a moment beyond the Western world—the West being, as Peter Berger has repeatedly pointed out, the only part of the world where secularization has been triumphant—and considers a place where the connotations of the word *secularism* are rather different. An example is provided by a *New York Times* news story dated December 6, 1999, dispatched from India. On that day, the *Times* reported, police arrested dozens of activists who had gathered in the northern Indian temple town of Ayodhya to protest against, and mark

the memory of, the demolition of a 16th-century Muslim mosque by Hindu zealots seven years earlier. That earlier event sparked massive riots throughout the country, leaving several thousand people dead, and has remained a simmering issue ever since. Both Hindu and Islamic organizations mounted demonstrations for the anniversary. Ever since the mosque’s destruction, militant Hindu groups, which

refer to December 6th as “Victory Day,” have been pushing to have a temple built on the site, which they believe to be the birthplace of the god-king Rama. Muslims, conversely, have vowed to rebuild the mosque, carrying signs that read “The *jihad* will go on.” Meanwhile, miles away in Delhi, 300 activists from an organization called Citizens for Secularism marked December 6th with a march protesting the mosque’s demolition.

This story neatly illustrates a simple point. What is meant by “secularism” will depend upon the cultural and historical context in which one uses the word. In contemporary American society, it means one thing: the demystified and disenchanted worldview of an affluent, postreligious society. But in the title of the Indian protesters’ organization, Citizens for Secularism, it means something else. Not an antireligious worldview imposed by the state, but instead, an antitheocratic understanding of a *secular* state which is fully compatible with the protection of religious liberty.

This is not what we would normally call secularism in the West. But that is precisely why I have found it valuable to insist upon using the word *secularism* in as broad a sense as possible in what follows, even if doing so has the effect of making that word even more problematic than it already is. For in preserving possibilities in words, one preserves their possibility in practice—including the possibility that there is such a thing as “secularism rightly understood.” Indeed, the Indian protesters’ understanding of secularism is regarded favorably by most thoughtful religionists in the West, as a vital instrument to refine and restrain religious commitments, and to protect religious devotees from their own all-too-human tendencies toward fanaticism and blindness—traits that their own faiths themselves predict. To be antitheocratic is by no means to oppose religion. On the contrary, one can argue—as did Tocqueville, the godfather of all “rightly understood” words—that the American antitheocratic tradition has by and large proven a great boon to religion, practically and morally, and essential to the maintenance of healthy religious commitments.

How then are we to find the right balance in these matters, preserving what is good in secularism without ceding to it more than its due? We can start by distinguishing two ways of understanding the concept, only one of which is an enemy of religion. First, the secular idea can be understood as an opponent of established belief—including a *nonreligious* establishment—and a protector of the rights of free exercise and free association. Second, it can be understood as a proponent of established *unbelief* and a protector of strictly individual expressive rights.

The former view, on the one hand, is a minimal, even “negative” understanding of secularism, as a freedom “from” establishmentarian imposition. For it, the secular idiom is merely a provisional lingua franca that serves to facilitate commerce among different kinds of belief,

rather than establish some new “absolute” language, an Esperanto of postreligious truth. The latter view, on the other hand, is the more robust, more assertive, more “positive” understanding of secularism with which I began—the one that affirms secularism as an ultimate faith that rightfully supersedes the tragic blindnesses and destructive irrationalities of the historical religions, at least so far as activity in public is concerned. By understanding religious liberty as a subcategory of individual expressive liberty, it confines religion to a strictly private sphere, where it can do little public harm—and little public good.

The first of these two concepts of secularism, “negative” secularism, sounds almost identical to the language of the First Amendment. This in turn suggests the possibility of a nonestablished secular order, one equally respectful of religionists and nonreligionists alike. Such an order preserves the freedom of the unconcoerced individual conscience. But it has a capacious understanding of the religious needs of humanity, and therefore does not presume that the religious impulse should be understood as a merely individual matter. On the contrary, it insists that religion is a social institution, for whose flourishing the right of free association—by which we mean the right of coreligionists to form moral communities, which can include or exclude others precisely as they please—is just as important as the right of individual expression. Pluralism is a necessary concomitant of liberalism, precisely because we are social creatures, whose social existence is a prior condition to all else that we value.

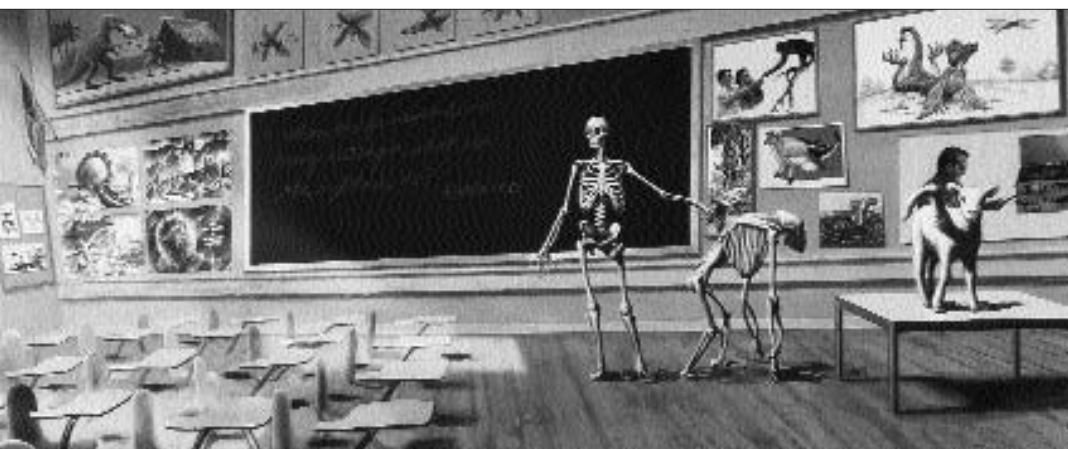
It might also be pointed out that the distinction between “negative” and “positive” understandings of secularism is neatly paralleled by competing understandings of the scope and meaning of the secular activity we call “science.” There has been a powerful tendency since the advent of modern science to see its claims as competitive with, and ultimately triumphant over, those of traditional religion. This tendency may have been just as bad for science as it was for religion, tending to inflate the claims of science into a reductive “scientism,” replete with the declaration of metaphysical and cosmological certitudes that science, as such, cannot sustain on its own terms. A more modest, “negative” understanding of science sees it as an inherently tentative and provisional form of knowledge, defined by strict adherence to procedural norms involving the formulation of hypotheses and chains of inference, and by the careful conduct of observable and replicable experiments to test those hypotheses. Science, in this view, is unable by its very nature to affirm or deny untestable claims about the nature of ultimate reality. Science is required to presume naturalism methodologically—but not ontologically. Such a carefully limited understanding gives the magnificent achievements of Western science their full measure of respect, without obliging us to construe science as a form of metaphysics, and a sworn enemy of religion.



Such distinctions have generally been lost on the more militant secularists, whom we can call the establishmentarian or “positive” secularists. Marx knew precisely what he was doing in attacking religion, but today’s positive secularists are not so clear. In many cases, they honestly cannot imagine that they are imposing anything on anyone, which is why they consistently style themselves heroic defenders of civil liberties—or, more modestly, People for the American Way. Indeed, that name, whose breathtakingly self-aggrandizing qualities surely match any parallel offenses committed by the late Moral Majority, perfectly expresses the unstated presumptions of our informal secular establishment. Its efforts have been aimed at creating and enforcing the naked public square. Under the guise of separating church and state, it seeks to exclude religious thought and discourse from any serious part in public life, and to confine religious belief and practice, as much as possible, to the realm of private predilection and individual taste.

So we return to a key question: Is secularism itself a kind of faith, our new established religion? Or is it rightly understood as something very different from religion, in the way that science as a mode of inquiry and understanding is distinct from religion? Is there a way we can enjoy the fruits of secularism without elevating it into a substitute orthodoxy, a new establishment, not of a religion, but of irreligion?

The use of the modifiers “negative” and “positive” here will remind some of Isaiah Berlin’s 1958 essay “Two Concepts of Liberty,” to whose title I have shamelessly alluded in my own. I have not done so merely for literary effect. The dichotomy that Berlin devised can help clarify the concept of secularism. The parallels arise almost immediately. Berlin set out in his essay to explore “the permissible limits of coercion” in political life. Our concern here is not at all dissimilar, since it deals with the appropriate limits of what I have called “establishment,” which is itself a kind of moral and intellectual boundary constraint. But Berlin’s suggestiveness does not stop there. It



Creationist's Classroom (1998), by Alexis Rockman.

can be traced to the very heart of the essay, and Berlin's distinction between *negative liberty*, which designates a freedom from external interference, a freedom to be left alone, and *positive liberty*, which means a freedom to be self-governing and self-directed, to be "one's own master."

Stated this way—as freedom from meddling, versus freedom to be one's own boss—the two concepts of liberty may not seem very different. But each had implications buried within it that would ultimately cause the two to diverge sharply, and arrive at very different destinations, with very different consequences. Negative liberty is freedom *from*; it involves the deflection of potential hindrances and the guarding of privacy, in the interest of creating the maximum "free area for action." Positive liberty had aims that were higher and nobler. It sought to free human beings to fulfill the most exalted elements of their nature. But it also was far more dangerous than negative liberty in Berlin's eyes, because its pursuit could so easily lead to authoritarian or totalitarian political arrangements.

The logic by which Berlin arrived at this conclusion is especially relevant. He emphasized that for human beings to become masters of themselves they had to be self-overcoming, bringing the elements of recalcitrance or false consciousness in their makeup under the control of their rational faculties and "better selves." This meant the practice of relentless self-coercion, in the name of a "higher freedom," precisely the sort of activity we would call "self-discipline." But what starts out as self-coercion may in time become hard to distinguish from external coercion, since, as Berlin observed, "we recognize that it is . . . at times justifiable to coerce men in the name of some goal (let us say, justice or public health) which they would, if they were more enlightened, themselves pursue, but do not, because they are blind or ignorant or corrupt."

Thus, however, is the door opened to coercion, in the name of honoring the "true self" and freeing it from illusion, from being "ruled by myths," and from various forms of "heteronomy," or external domination. Positive liberty aspires to nothing short of a godlike state of autonomy and self-mastery. In so doing, it relies upon the demystifying power of modern science to dissolve the illusions that support irrationality. The greatest thinkers of the 19th century, men such as Comte and Marx, were partisans of various forms of positive liberty. They believed, Berlin wrote, that "to understand the world is to be freed," but that most people are "enslaved by despots—institutions or beliefs or neuroses—which could be removed only by being analyzed and understood." Most of us are "imprisoned by evil spirits which we have ourselves . . . created, and can exorcize them only by becoming conscious and acting appropriately." Ye shall know the truth—a scientific, secular, and naturalistic truth—and that truth shall make you free.

But the very beliefs that enable one to penetrate the fog of irrationalist obfuscation can also tempt one "to ignore the actual wishes of men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture them in the name, and

on behalf, of their ‘real’ selves, in the secure knowledge that whatever is the true goal of man . . . must be identical with his freedom—the free choice of his ‘true’, albeit often submerged and inarticulate, self.” In the end, the ideal of positive liberty seemed to Berlin too dangerous—too arrogant and presumptuous, too prone to monism and “final solutions,” too controlling and depersonalizing—to be endorsed. Hence Berlin’s preference for negative liberty, and the pluralism it engenders, as “a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of ‘positive’ self-mastery.”

Pluralism was, of course, the central political and social idea of Berlin’s entire career. There are many goods in the world, he repeatedly asserted, and they are not necessarily in harmony with one another, or compatible with one another; indeed, they may even be mutually exclusive, without thereby ceasing to be good. Liberty exists in palpable tension with other goods such as equality, justice, happiness, security, and order. Therefore, a political order that grants the greatest possible scope to the full variety of human goods is preferable to an order that insists upon only one. The consecrated life may represent a beautiful and noble ambition, perhaps the highest goal to which we can aspire as individual human beings. But not unless we feel inwardly called to it. And it makes a very bad basis for a public philosophy.

Two Concepts” remains, even after nearly a half-century, a suggestive analysis, whose implications and ramifications extend far beyond the range of what Berlin himself could have possibly envisioned. His way of dividing up the concept of liberty proves to be remarkably congruent with the different strains of secularism. “Negative” secularism, the secularism of non-establishment, has many of the same virtues as negative liberty—an openness to diverse perspectives, whether religious or nonreligious, a commitment to free inquiry, free expression, and free association, and a “freedom from” the coerciveness of any “official” perspective, including that of militant secularism.

By the same token, positive secularism, the secularism of established unbelief, proves to have many of the same pitfalls as positive liberty. In affirming the secular ideal as an ultimate and alternative comprehensive faith, “positive” secularism in effect embraces the ideal of self-mastery. In so doing, it also embraces an obligation to dispel the damaging misconceptions that prey on the minds of others, and to liberate them from the spell of priests, televangelists, and other purveyors of illusion. This will allow them to discover their “true selves,” and help them along in the direction of greater and greater “autonomy.” Whether this takes the form of coercion or not, the fact remains that “positive” secularism has all the features of a crusading ideal—the sort of ideal Berlin warned against.

In the penultimate paragraph of his essay, Berlin offered the words that form the culminating stroke in his defense of pluralism, but which also well express the importance of religious faith in human existence: “In the

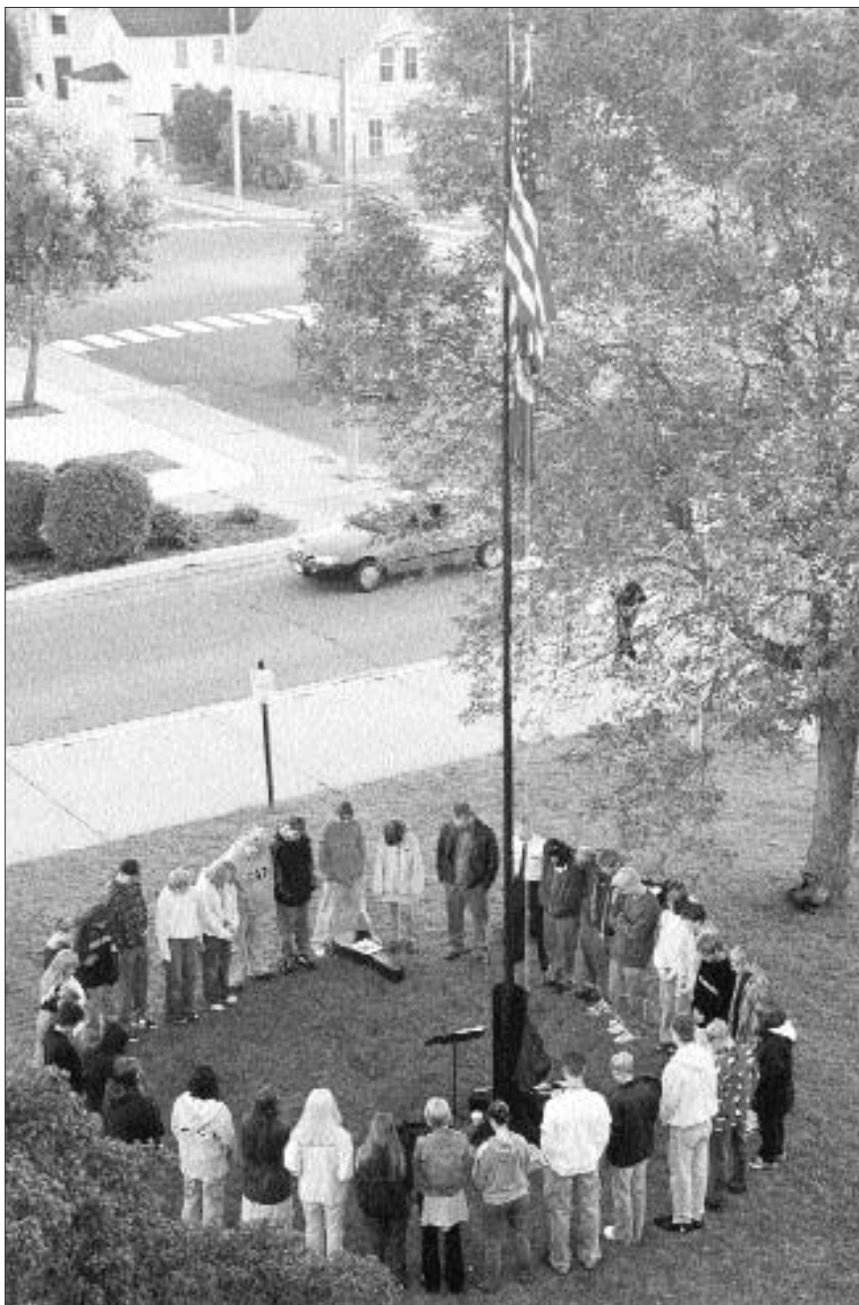
end, men choose between ultimate values; they choose as they do, because their life and thought are determined by fundamental moral categories and concepts that are, at any rate over large stretches of time and space, a part of their being and thought and sense of their own identity; part of what makes them human.”

Berlin could hardly have offered a more apt account of the reasons why a vibrantly pluralistic religious life is the one most compatible with the fullest possible respect for the dignity of the human person. For what is religion if not the most powerful of all expressions of ultimate values? What “positive” secularizers have regarded with fear and contempt, or as a burden from which our “better selves” need liberation, the “negative” secularizer regards as an essential element in the warp and woof of our humanity.

This understanding of two secularisms may help explain the paradoxical situation at the beginning of this essay, in which secularism seems at one and the same time both victor and vanquished. In a sense, both assertions are true. Americans have by and large accepted negative secularism as an essential basis for peaceful coexistence in a religiously pluralistic society. Any large-scale religious revivalism or enthusiasm the United States is likely to see in the years to come will have accepted the prior restraint that negative secularism imposes as a precondition of its very existence. Indeed, a well-considered theological basis for respecting the “others” who lie outside one’s own tradition will be essential to any religion hoping to have a public presence. Religious activity and expression will likely continue to grow, further eroding the rule of positive secularism—but it will do so largely *within* the container of a negative-secularist understanding of “the world.” The return of religious faith is not likely to be a fearsome “return of the repressed,” at least not in the United States.

It follows, however, that religious faiths must undergo some degree of adaptation in accommodating themselves to negative secularism. To begin with, they must, as it were, learn how to behave around strangers. But there is more to it than that. The key question adherents must ask is whether such an adaptation represents a compromise of their faith, or a deepening and clarifying of it. The answer may be surprising to those who think only in terms of the “warfare of science and religion,” or the final triumph or final defeat of positive secularism, and who assume that all adaptation is mere trimming or acculturation. The problem may pose insuperable obstacles to intransigent religious outlooks, with a rigid or poorly developed understanding of “the world” and of its relationship to the ultimate. They will be quite understandably resistant to an adaptation that would concede any authority to “the world.”

But that need not be universally the case. Speaking for a moment only of the Christian faith, the effects of such adaptation would seem to be largely positive, and an important example of what theologian John Henry Newman called a “development of doctrine.” It would serve to remind Christians of something they sometimes lose sight of—that their faith



A sign of the times? Students gather for prayer before classes at Minnesota's Brainerd High School.

affirms the world. Not as an absolute good, sufficient unto itself. Not as an exclusive focus for their energies. And not as the ultimate audience before which the drama of their lives is played. But as a very great good nonetheless, a world whose goodness and order are inherent, since it is a world understood to be endowed by a Creator God with harmony, beauty, intelligibility, and commodity that have not been entirely erased by the effects of sin. Even the most unregenerate of that world's inhabitants still bear the *imago Dei*, and all are beneficiaries of what is called "common grace,"

which means that they remain fully capable of the finest acts of nobility, justice, love, and wisdom. It is not only an observable fact but a theologically sustainable truth that admirable qualities of mind and soul are not the exclusive property of one's coreligionists, and are not withheld from the nonbelieving artist, thinker, or politician.

Therefore, the quality of mind we call "humanism" should not be seen as the sinister offspring of a positive secularism, but the lively child of a negative secularism, one that takes a soberly affirmative view of the natural potential inherent in human reason and imagination. "It is vital," writes the cultural critic Ken Myers, that Christians "not regard art or science or the humanities to be evangelism carried out by other means." Nor, one might add, should complete withdrawal into gnostic otherworldliness, or any other form of extreme renunciation, be a collective goal. Instead, argues Myers, the purpose of these human pursuits, like the purpose of government and politics, is "simply to maintain fallen yet rich human life on the planet." Even Jesus' command to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" represents a real commitment by the Christian to the legitimacy of even the most unbelieving political rulers, and therefore the intrinsic worthiness and dignity, from the Christian perspective, of the worldly task of political governance.

Yet from this follows a final observation, which I fear may run the risk of restoring some of the knotty complexity I have tried to unravel. Given negative secularism's implicit respect for the world on its own terms, is it not necessary that we be prepared to endorse some set of normative standards inherent in nature—inherent limits and boundaries from which negative secularism derives its sense of the world's beauty, orderliness, regularities, and moral economy? And, to go to the heart of the matter, how much longer can it be meaningful to speak of the liberty of the individual person, when we are rapidly approaching the point where that liberty is taken to include the sovereign right to do whatever one wants with the human body and mind, including the comprehensive genetic or pharmacological refashioning of both? Is the very concept of individual liberty even intelligible under such circumstances, unless we can presume some measure of fixity and givenness in the person, and resistance in the medium in which he or she acts? Does the very concept of liberty evaporate when its triumph is too complete, just as a business firm becomes transformed into something different when it becomes a monopoly? Is there any reason powerful enough to persuade us not to tinker with that fixity, and thereby risk making ourselves into the first posthuman creatures—any reason, that is, other than the Judeo-Christian understanding of the human person as a *created* being whose dignity and fundamental characteristics are a divine *endowment* from that Creator? Where, in the traditions of *either* form of secularism, does one find an adequate defense against such temptation?

Such questions not only take us even further away from positive secularism. They also may force us to reconsider the necessity of

something resembling a religious establishment. They suggest the possibility that a decent and sustainable secularism cannot ever exist entirely as a nonestablished order, i.e. without the assumption of an orderly and *given* world undergirding it. This is not just a matter of the need for some kind of social and political axioms and norms. It is also a matter of having the right axioms—axioms that provide a coherent idea of what it means to be a human person. For without something like the Judeo-Christian conception of the created order superintending the works of secular society, and the notion that the individual person has an inviolable dignity simply because he or she is created by God, there may be no effective way of containing the powerful impulses that would work to undermine that order. We see the first inklings of this possibility in the ease with which unexceptionable interventions, such as cosmetic surgery or the use of drugs to treat severe psychological disorders, blur into more questionable ones, such as gender alteration, the pharmacological remaking of the self, and the melding of species, with nary a bright line in sight to be drawn, except arbitrarily. Whether its proponents know it or not, the world-affirming work of secularism has always tacitly depended upon the givenness and ultimate rightness of an orderly nature, whose scope and majesty are too great to be entirely overcome by the human will. Paradoxically, belief in the existence of considerations beyond the world's reach has served to give the world its solidity, to underwrite the possibility of human dignity, and to discipline human will. Our dignity is in overcoming—and in not overcoming. What will take these considerations' place when all that was once solid is turned into clay of infinite malleability?

Berlin seemed to recognize something like this later in his life, that both positive and negative liberty must somehow be confined within a certain radius. He believed those confinements could be arrived at by entirely conventional means, and continued to the end to reject emphatically any notion of universally valid norms. To have believed otherwise, he thought, would have violated his understanding of pluralism. But it may not be so easy for us. The weakest and most disappointing points in Berlin's work reliably come at those moments when he is forced to appeal to a vague traditional standard of "those principles that most people have accepted for a very long time," rather than commit the unpardonable sin of proclaiming an absolute. He perhaps could not see the extent to which his rather English reliance upon the residuum of Western cultural practice as a counterweight to liberty—and by extension, to secularism—made presumptions that we can no longer presume, and no longer rely upon. Berlin resisted monism, the tyranny of the one truth. But perhaps he needed to be more skeptical of his own skepticism, just as one needs always to be moderate in one's moderation. At the beginning of a new century, it now seems that even negative secularism may need to fall back on stronger stuff than mere convention if it is to survive and thrive. □



Graduation (1948), by Jacob Lawrence

Explaining the Black Education Gap

The rise of a new black middle class has lifted hopes that African Americans are entering the economic mainstream. But an alarming obstacle has appeared: Many children of this new middle class significantly lag their white peers in important measures of school performance. The gap threatens the goal of quickly achieving racial equality—and the logic of the American experience itself, with its promise of upward mobility and social inclusion. Here, an African American educator offers his view of what's gone wrong.

by John H. McWhorter

There is no surer way to get a whoop of appreciation from a black audience than to affirm how strong black people are, how we have survived. As the title of a popular motivational book for African Americans puts it, *Success Runs in Our Veins*. Yet almost everyone would have to agree that when it comes to schooling, our record of success has not been impressive. Almost 40 years after the Civil Rights Act, African American students, on average, record the poorest academic performance of any major racial or ethnic group in the United States, at all ages, in all subjects, and regardless of class level.

Despite decades of affirmative action and other forms of assistance, the gap extends all the way from the bottom rungs of the American educational system to the top. In 1997, for example, some 70,000 students applied for admission to American law schools. Among them were only 16 black students who scored 164 or higher on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)—enough to put them at least in the bottom quartile of the entering class at the nation's top six law schools—and had a college grade point average of 3.5 or better. That year, 2,646 white applicants offered such credentials.

The victimologist mindset that prevails among black Americans, in the news media, and in other quarters of American society, ensures that the lagging academic performance of black Americans is viewed solely as a result of black suffering and deprivation. Victimologist thinking infuses almost all discussions of education with the assumption that “black” means “poor,” and that the dismal school performance of black youngsters is the product of inequities in school resources, racism among teachers, and chaotic home lives. But today the majority of black children do not grow up in poverty. The black middle class is growing rapidly, yet its children, too, are falling behind in school. As I will show, the victimologist roster of black disadvantages provides only secondary causes. These disadvantages affect blacks’ performance in school the same way a weakened immune system leaves a person vulnerable to the common cold. Many factors can increase a person’s susceptibility, but if the cold virus is not present, all the other factors combined cannot cause the illness to emerge.

Why do students in other minority groups with similar vulnerabilities still manage to make excellent grades? Why do black students often continue to perform below standards even in affluent, enlightened settings where all efforts are made to help them? The chief cause is not racism, inadequate school funding, class status, parental education level, or any other commonly cited factor, but a variety of anti-intellectualism that plagues the black community. This anti-intellectualism is the product of centuries of slavery and segregation during which blacks were denied education, but it has been perpetuated by the powerful strand of separatism in black culture, a legacy of the 1960s, that rejects as illegitimate all things “white.” The worlds of the school and books are seen as suspicious and alien things that no authentically black person would embrace—except perhaps to make money or to chronicle black victories and the injustices blacks have endured. A black teacher friend of mine calls this the African American “cultural disconnect” from learning.

This attitude permeates black culture, on both a conscious and a subconscious level, all the way to the upper class. Yet it goes unrecognized because of the widespread insistence on viewing blacks as victims. Programs and policies such as affirmative action, Head Start, campus minority counseling, and African American studies curricula are all based on this misconceived view. They have improved black school performance only a notch or two—a neat measurement of how much black victimhood actually contributes to the problem. Only by taking a deep

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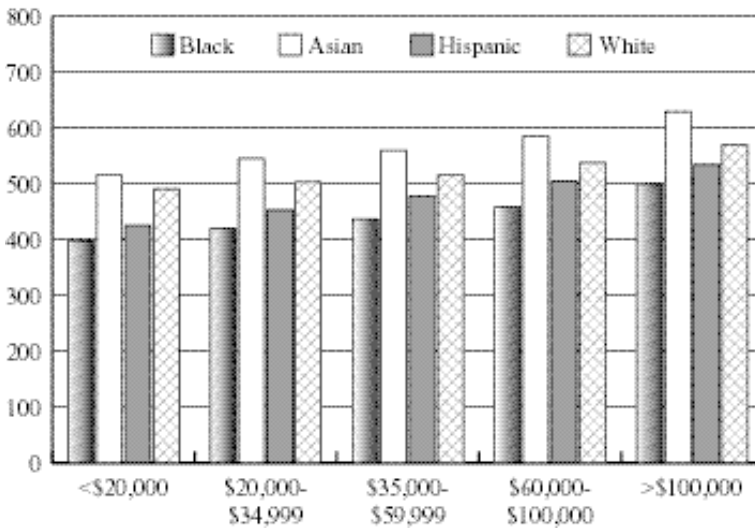


Untitled, Side A, (1999) by James Brantley

breath and devoting as much attention to the cultural problem as we currently do to victimhood can we really start black students on the path to doing as well in school as anyone else—something that has become alarmingly inconceivable to many Americans, black and white alike.

The size of the education gap comes most clearly into focus at that all-important break point in the American educational system, the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). For all the anxious discussions about SATs and affirmative action, few Americans are aware of the size of the performance gap between black students and others in this nationwide college entrance exam—and even fewer are

An SAT Snapshot (Mean math SAT scores, 1999)



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Average SAT scores rise with family income, regardless of group membership. But African Americans' average scores are lower than those of other groups in every income bracket. In the highest income bracket, the white-black difference is 70 points on the math portion of the SAT and 51 points on the verbal portion (not shown).

aware that the gap remains large regardless of income. The numbers are disheartening. In *The Shape of the River* (1998), their important pro-affirmative action study of students at 28 selective universities, William G. Bowen and Derek Bok found that almost three-quarters of the white students who applied to five elite institutions in 1989 scored over 1200 out of 1600, while little more than one-quarter of the black applicants did so. The practical implications of such differences can be striking. At the University of California, Berkeley, where I teach, the top scores among black freshmen in 1988 clustered in the lowest quarter of all scores at the university. Nationwide, the black-white gap in SAT scores has changed little since the late 1980s.

Is black poverty to blame? It is only a subsidiary factor. Indeed, few poor black students take the SAT. Even those who aren't poor don't do well. In 1995, the mean SAT for black students from families making \$50,000 or more was a mere 849 out of 1600. Compare that with the mean score in 1995 for white students from families earning \$10,000 or less: 869. The level of parental education is not a factor: In the same year, the mean SAT score for black students whose parents held graduate degrees was 844, even lower than the overall middle-class black mean.

Statistics can deceive, but here a simple headcount tells the

story: In 1995, exactly 184 black students in the United States scored over 700 on the verbal portion of the SAT—not even enough to fill a passenger airplane. Only 616 scored over 700 on the math portion. (The top score possible in each case is 800.) This was 0.2 percent and 0.6 percent, respectively, of the black test takers. Among white test takers, by contrast, the proportion scoring over 700 was five times greater on the verbal portion and 10 times greater on the math portion.

Bowen and Bok, the former presidents of Princeton and Harvard Universities, respectively, highlight the fact that the SAT scores of most blacks at top schools are above the national white average. The average scores of black teens, they add, exceed the national average among all test takers in 1951, the first year the test was given. But these points distract us from the crucial question. Even if blacks at top schools have higher SAT scores than the national white average, why are their scores still the lowest among their peers at the elite schools? Even if blacks score better on the SAT than some prototypically middle-American Archie Andrews did in 1951, why are their scores still closer than those of any other group to the lower averages of yesteryear?

Many critics attack the validity of SAT scores, asserting that the tests do not measure the true competence of black students. Black students may not score well on the SATs, it is said, but they go on to perform as well as other students in college. During the debate that erupted at Berkeley in 1995 when Californians endorsed Proposition 209 barring affirmative action at state institutions, one Berkeley professor, mocking white objections to affirmative action, put it this way: “We hear these abstruse philosophical discussions: ‘I got a higher SAT score than you, it’s not fair.’ Let’s know what SAT scores mean!” But there are figures on what they mean, and lower SAT scores mean lower grades in college for both blacks and whites.

The correlation between SAT scores and college performance is nowhere near a lock step, but it is significant. Even Bowen and Bok concede this point. After tabulating data from their 28 universities, they found that

the simple association between SAT scores and grades is clear-cut. As one would have expected, class rank varies directly with SAT scores. Among both black and white students, those in the highest SAT interval had an appreciably higher average rank in class. . . . Moreover, the positive relationship between students’ SAT scores and their rank in class . . . remains after we control for gender, high school grades, socioeconomic status, school selectivity, and major, as well as for race.

Indeed, studies have shown that SAT scores *overpredict* the performance of black students. In other words, black students tend to make poorer grades in college than white students with the same SAT scores.

Some critics, insisting that test scores are unrelated to students' performance in the classroom, argue that high school grades ought to be the central criteria in college admissions. Yet in *Beyond the Classroom* (1996), Temple University researcher Laurence Steinberg and his colleagues found that in nine high schools in California and Wisconsin, including both predominantly white suburban schools and inner-city minority-dominated ones, black (and Latino) students made the lowest grades regardless of family income. Low-income Asian Americans regularly outperformed middle-class black students by a wide margin.

If some doubt the ability of the SAT to predict school performance, others doubt the validity of the tests in measuring intelligence at all. Some critics still claim that the SAT is culturally biased, but since the creators of standardized tests have become almost obsessed with eliminating such bias, the grounds for these complaints have vanished. A newer argument charges that the SAT measures only certain varieties of intelligence, what psychologist Howard Gardner calls "linguistic" and "logical-mathematical" intelligences. Gardner urges teachers to take into account spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, existential, and musical intelligences as well. He may have a point, but unless teaching techniques change radically, "linguistic" and "logical-mathematical" intelligences will remain the most applicable to the tasks at hand: reading critically, writing coherent papers, and doing problem sets. In any case, almost every other group in the country manages to develop its "linguistic" and "logical-mathematical" intelligences and achieve average scores or better on the SAT. Why can't blacks?

The separatist impulse encourages some activists to believe that African Americans possess a "black intelligence" separate from wonky "logical-mathematicality," but this assertion recalls some highly unsavory arguments. An America where black students are encouraged to nurture their artistic and spatial intelligence out of respect for their culture is an America where black people are our house entertainers and athletes. Last time I checked, we were trying to get past that. Isn't this what Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein told blacks they should sit back and be satisfied with in *The Bell Curve* (1994)?

To me, the depressing statistics about black academic performance are not merely numbers. They have been sadly confirmed by my own experience during five years on the faculty at Berkeley. I have taught large numbers of students of every race, and I spent a long time trying not to give credence to a pattern that ultimately became too consistent and obvious to ignore, namely, that black undergraduates at Berkeley tended to be among the worst students on campus. I tried my best to chalk up each experience to local factors and personalities, but as one

episode piled upon another it became impossible to avoid the conclusion that there was a connection among them all.

There was the black student who, with a jolly smile, handed in a test containing an answer to an essay question that consisted entirely of two literally incomprehensible sentences. There was the student in a class in which I had repeatedly told the students they could write on any pertinent topic for their final paper except for one thing: They could not write a biographical essay, since it would be too easy simply to parrot other books. Left under my door two months after the end of the class was none other than a biographical sketch of a performer derived entirely from one book.

The stories go on and on; for each one, I could tell another two. One black student set out to write a senior honors thesis transforming episodes of her family history into fiction. At the beginning of the semester, she submitted a three-page selection she had written for a previous class. As the semester passed, while my white senior honors students were deeply engaged in research for their papers and consulting with me weekly or biweekly, this student came by only twice, regaling me with tales of her family history and promising written work “soon.” I let her know that she would have to submit some kind of written work before the end of the semester. Even that was generous, but I got nothing from her until just before Christmas break—her family tree, drawn in pencil on a piece of notebook paper. I never saw her again.


A black student joined one of my linguistics department classes. He had never taken linguistics before, but the nature of the subject was such that this was not a great handicap. I assured him that I would help him through any rough spots. He was very good at giving dramatic speeches about discrimination when race issues happened to come up in class, but his homework showed that he was simply not taking in the concepts of the course, and he did not improve even after I had tutored him in my office several times. Shortly before the final he vanished, and I did not hear from him again until months later, when he said he had frozen at the thought of taking the exam.

I arranged for this student to take an African American studies course I also taught, hoping he would be able to cancel out the failing grade I had been forced to give him. But it was the same story: an almost strangely clueless first midterm and spotty attendance. He disappeared before the second midterm, later explaining that a relative had died. When he came back, I made up a few extra-credit research questions for him to take home and answer. What he gave me showed some effort, but little understanding.

These stories are painful to recount because I felt a certain kinship with these students, and many of them have been among my personal favorites. I have also taught some excellent black students, notably during a year I spent at Cornell

University, but they are exceptions. In my experience, the stories I have told do not represent occasional disappointments but the norm—though the quality of black students at Berkeley has risen since the first post-affirmative action class was admitted in 1998. The behavior of these students has nothing to do with the ‘hood. Not a single one of them grew up penniless in the ghetto, or anything close to a ghetto. Black Berkeley undergraduates are almost all upwardly mobile, bright-eyed young people, many with cars, none of whom would be uncomfortable in a nice restaurant.

The urge is very strong to frame each of these students as individuals and avoid “stereotyping,” or to tacitly assume that racism is ultimately to blame for their behavior. This is what I did during my first years at Berkeley. But two other experiences made it painfully clear that something else was at work. Twice during my years at Berkeley I have had the occasion to teach the same course to nearly all-white classes and nearly all-black classes. The contrast was too stark and too consistent to be explained away.

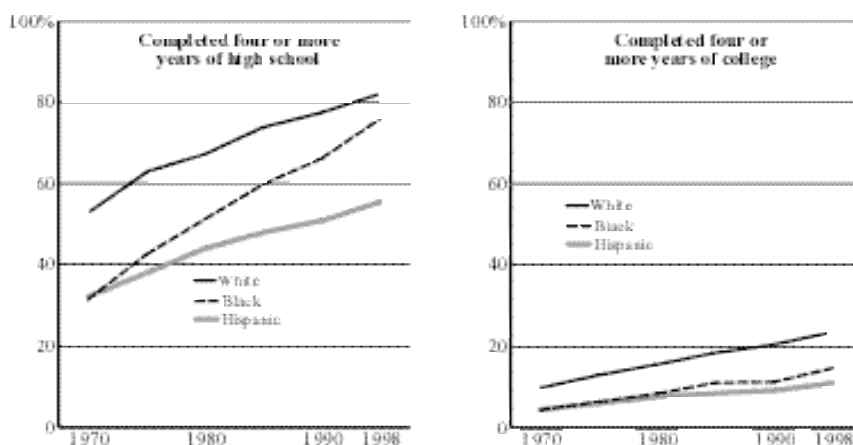
ne of the courses covered the history of black musical theater. The first year, most of the students happened to be white or Asian American, and the class was a success. The students loved the material, many of them wrote great papers, and some of them kept in touch afterward. The black version was another world. The white students had enjoyed the historical material, such as anecdotes about bygone performers, old recordings, and weird film clips. In presenting the same material to the black students, I might as well have been reading out of the phone book. The glazed eyes, aggressive doodling, and, in one case, comic book reading, were things I had never encountered as a teacher. Attendance was terrible; after the first couple of weeks I was lucky to have half of the class in the room on the same day.

Was it me? The other class had eaten up the same material—and a class about singing and dancing is not exactly difficult to make interesting. When Todd Duncan, the original Porgy in *Porgy and Bess*, died during the semester, I did a little tribute to him, dimming the lights and playing one of his recordings. A couple of weeks later, when we got to *Porgy and Bess*, I showed a video of him being interviewed shortly before his death. On the midterm, one question was “Name one of the principal performers in the original production of *Porgy and Bess*.” Only two people out of about 20 wrote “Todd Duncan.” Another named John Bubbles, who played Sportin’ Life. The others either answered incorrectly or gave no answer at all. I had to curve way up to avoid flunking most of the class.

I couldn’t help noticing a particular contrast. In the white class, interest waned a bit as we passed the 1970s. They got a kick out of the vintage stuff. *The Wiz* and *Once on This Island* were more recognizable and thus less interesting; they reveled in learning the

The Rise in Educational Attainment, 1970–98

(Persons 25 years old and over)



Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1999

Rising graduation rates have narrowed some group differences in education. The proportion of adult African Americans with high school diplomas more than doubled over the past 30 years. The proportion with college degrees more than tripled. Today, 15 percent of black adults and 25 percent of white adults hold college degrees, compared with four percent and 11 percent, respectively, in 1970.

unfamiliar. The black students, on the other hand, perked up a bit just as we got to the '70s—the official moment was when a few of them boogied in their seats to “Ease on Down the Road” from *The Wiz*. They were happy when we got to material they already knew, but the older material that required more active concentration was a turnoff, even though all the artists were black. Throughout the semester, however, I could count on a bit of a “click” when I talked about the discrimination these black artists had encountered. These students were open to reinforcement of the victimologist ideology, but close-minded when it came to new information. New ways of thinking and close engagement with the written word entail an openness, a sense of integral commitment and belonging to the world of the school, that black students tend to teach one another out of beginning at a very early age. Such “nerdy” thinking is painted as incompatible with membership in the group.

In 1998, several months before the arrival at Berkeley of the first entering class to be admitted after the demise of affirmative action, I spoke to a black undergraduate who was involved in recruiting black high school seniors. I asked why no one seemed terribly excited about the black students who had made it

in, a not inconsiderable number despite the sharp drop. The response: “We’re afraid that black students who perform at that high a level aren’t going to be concerned with nurturing an African American presence at Berkeley.”

There it was. The dissociation of “blackness” and school is so deeply ingrained that the black student admitted to Berkeley under the same standards as other students was regarded with suspicion. In other words, black students are not supposed to be star students, because then they’re not exactly “black,” are they? As it happened, come September, I heard two new black students, quite unprompted, say they had encountered a certain social coolness from black students in classes above them. Both were disappointed, having come to campus as outraged at the ban on affirmative action as the older students and having expected to take their place in the campus black community. But in embracing school openly enough to compete with whites and Asian Americans, they had almost unwittingly signaled disloyalty, even treachery.

Black anti-intellectualism has deep roots. It first gained a hold on African American culture under the slave system, which cut off Africans from black intellectual role models in their indigenous cultures. A Jewish person can look back to countless generations of Jewish scholars; even the most uneducated Chinese knows that China has been home to millennia of scholarship. But African slaves came from dozens of different kingdoms and societies and were thrown together in the New World, which prevented any single African cultural tradition from predominating. Their African heritage survived only as a generalized, although rich, element in a new, American-bred mix.

After slavery, blacks in America were brutally relegated to the margins of society and allowed, at best, only the most woefully inadequate education. Generation after generation of African Americans thus lived and died in a cultural context in which books and learning were actively withheld. The ways of thinking that are necessary to scholastic success came to be classified as alien or “other” —an idea powerfully reinforced by the separatist mindset of recent decades. Indeed, it was that separatist tendency, coming to the fore during the late 1960s, that helped undo the legacy of black academic excellence at exceptional black institutions such as Spelman College and Howard University.

When I finally recognized the pattern among black students at Berkeley, I began to recall that I had seen such attitudes at other schools throughout my life, as a graduate student at Stanford University, as an undergraduate at Rutgers University, and earlier.

The very first memory of my life is an afternoon in 1968 when a group of black kids, none older than eight, asked me how to spell *concrete*. I spelled it, only to have one of the older kids bring his little sister over to smack me repeatedly as the rest of the kids laughed and egged her on. That afternoon, the little girl was taught an explicit lesson:



Earlier in the century, all-black institutions such as the Tuskegee Institute, shown here in 1902, exemplified a commitment to educational excellence.

Disparage black kids who like learning and, by extension, school.

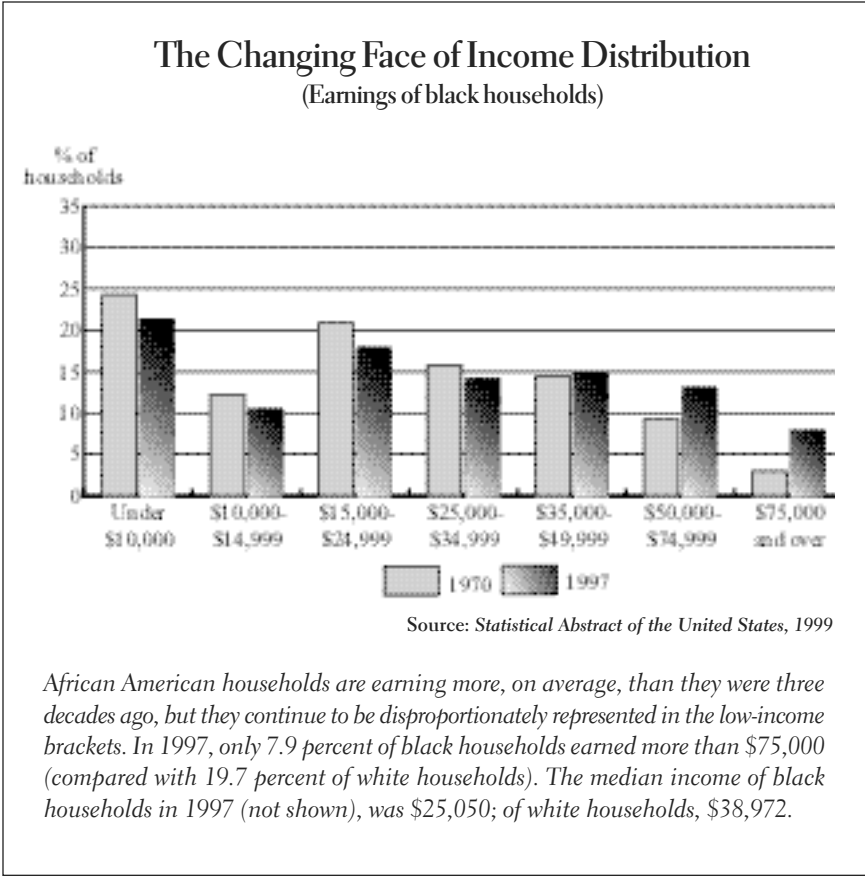
This happened in one of the first deliberately integrated neighborhoods in the country, Philadelphia's tree-shaded, middle-class West Mount Airy, where I spent most of my childhood. Not long ago, on one of my frequent visits back to the neighborhood, I ran into one of the ringleaders of that encounter, now grown up, smoking on a street corner at two in the afternoon. We shook hands in joyous surprise. But when I asked him what he was doing these days, he said "not much." He is not the only member of that old crowd who has not gone on to much, and yet he grew up in a quiet middle-class neighborhood with a solid public school staffed with a good number of black teachers. What did him in was not racism but a culture that taught him not to commit himself fully to education.

Teasing is one of the important ways this cultural legacy is kept alive. Berkeley High School Principal Theresa Saunders (who is black) told the *East Bay Express*, "We see it time and time again: [black] kids come in quite talented, and by the end of ninth grade, they're goofing off. The peer culture is such that it doesn't acknowledge or reward academic achievement."

The cultural disconnect from learning does not dissolve after childhood. For example, in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a much studied suburban school district that is half black, white parents vastly predominate in parent-teacher organizations

and as volunteers in the schools. There is no doubt that black parents are deeply committed to their children’s well-being, but such discrepancies reveal the lower priority accorded to “the books” in black culture. This often operates in subtle ways. The connection between education and earning power and status is too obvious to ignore, and many black adults do praise the value of education. Indeed, academic credentials often have a *higher* value in the black community than in the white—my own black students persist in calling me Professor McWhorter or even Dr. John long after my white students have taken to calling me simply John—but that is in part precisely because they are seen as something won in an alien realm.

Studies suggest that black parents demand less of their children in school than white and Asian American parents do. When asked in one study to state the lowest grade their parents would tolerate, black students specified a C minus, an average lower than whites and Asian Americans did. Many Asian American students said their parents would tolerate nothing less than an A minus! In a revealing study of eighth and ninth graders, education researcher Clifton Casteel found that white students were more likely to say that they



did schoolwork to please their parents, while black students were more likely to say they worked for their teachers.

Most discussions of black school performance remain shrouded in myths of victimology. Many focus on the barriers to learning in inner-city neighborhoods, as if “black” were synonymous with “poor.” When it is pointed out that poor school performance persists among blacks in the middle class, the usual response is that a rise in income does not guarantee a rise in class status. Black families considered “middle class” financially are generally “working class” or lower culturally, this response goes. The poor performance of the children is traceable to their parents’ lack of advanced degrees, the scarcity of books and magazines in their homes, or the absence of conversations about current events. But we have no trouble imagining a Chinese immigrant family that runs two restaurants sending their children to fine universities. Such parents are not very likely to talk politics over dinner or to read the *Economist*, but we do not conclude that their children are cursed by a “working-class culture” and condemned to low SAT scores.

What about racism? It is often said that the burdens of societal racism hinder all but a lucky few from doing well in school. This apparently sympathetic notion has mutated into nothing less than an infantilization of black people. Only victimology makes black thinkers so comfortable portraying their own people as the weakest, least resilient human beings in the history of the species. Racism is not dead. Being a middle-class black person in America still involves being classified as second-rung in all kinds of interactions. But this is rarely a matter of “endemic hostility,” as our Ralph Wileys and Derrick Bells would have it.

Imagine a young black man. This 18-year-old comes from a two-parent suburban home; his mother is a social work professor and his father is a public university administrator. He goes to good private schools, and on a day-to-day level leads a comfortable existence that includes a number of white friends and the same basic acknowledgment of his achievements as that accorded to whites. Once in his life he has been called “nigger.” He was once explicitly denied a summer job because of his race. Once he entered a store only to meet an expression of anxiety on the proprietor’s face, and was then followed. He can remember a few teachers over the years who, while well intentioned, obviously had rather lower expectations of him than they had of other students. On the first day of one undergraduate class, the professor told him he must be in the wrong class, openly implying that no black person could be interested in the subject. He is aware of media portrayals of blacks that are subtly racist. In innumerable ways he is now and then aware of being per-

The Opportunity Gap

Dysfunctional families, lazy and unmotivated students, and the “culture of poverty” in inner-city neighborhoods are all frequently cited as causes of the racial achievement gap. Left overlooked and unaddressed are the conditions under which children are educated and the quality of schools they attend. Since popular explanations often determine the types of remedies that are pursued, it is not surprising that the renewed attention directed toward the racial gap in academic achievement has not led to calls to address the real problem: inequality in education. . . .

Explaining why poor children of color perform comparatively less well in school is relatively easy: Consistently, such children are educated in schools that are woefully inadequate on most measures of quality and funding. . . . What makes the racial gap uniquely paradoxical is the fact that the benefits typically associated with middle-class status don’t accrue to African-American and, in many cases, Latino students. . . . This is the issue that has prompted 15 racially integrated, affluent school districts to form a consortium called the Minority Student Achievement Network. With the support of researchers assembled by the College Board, the network, comprising districts in such communities as White Plains, New York, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Berkeley, California, seeks to understand the causes of the racial achievement gap and to devise solutions for reversing it.

On the face of it, the potential for success in these districts would seem high. All 15 school districts have a track record of sending large numbers of affluent white students to the best colleges and universities in the country. Additionally, unlike schools in high-poverty areas, funding is largely not a major obstacle to reform. Each district is located in an affluent community with a highly educated population known for its commitment to liberal political and social values. Yet in all 15 districts there is a persistent, deeply ingrained sense that even this ambitious and well-intentioned effort will fail to alter student outcomes.

The pessimism in these districts, and in others that have launched efforts to overcome the racial achievement gap, must be understood in historical context. In many areas greater emphasis has been placed on how to achieve racial integration in schools than on how to serve the educational needs of a diverse student population. Even in the liberal districts in the Minority Student Achievement Network, some of which were among the first in the nation to voluntarily desegregate, the arrival of significant numbers of students of color in the late 1960s and early ’70s met with considerable opposition. From the very beginning, the presence of African American children, especially those from low-income families, was perceived as an intrusion, and because the children were perceived as disadvantaged and deficient in comparison with their white schoolmates, educating them has always been regarded as a challenge. Since students of color were framed as “problems” and “challenges” from the very start, it is hardly surprising that they would continue to be treated as a problem requiring special intervention years later.

Moreover, educational practices often have the effect of favoring white students and hindering the educational opportunities of African Americans and Latinos. This is particularly true when it comes to tracking and sorting students on the basis of ability.

A large body of research has shown that students of color are more likely to be excluded from classes for those deemed gifted in primary school, and from honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school. The Education Trust has shown, through its research on science and math education, that even students of color who meet the criteria for access to advanced courses are more likely to be turned away based on the recommendation of a counselor or teacher. They are also more likely to be placed in remedial and special-education classes, and to be subject to varying forms of school discipline.

A close examination of access to AP courses in California reveals how certain educational practices contribute to the maintenance of the racial achievement gap. Since the mid-

1980s, the number of AP courses available to students at high schools in California has tripled. This increase has been attributed to a 1984 decision by the University of California to give greater weight to the grades earned by students who enroll in AP courses. However, AP courses are not uniformly available to students. At some inner-city and rural schools, few if any such courses are offered, while at private and affluent suburban schools, it is not uncommon for students to have access to 15 or more AP courses. Moreover, our own research at Berkeley High School has shown that even when minority students are enrolled at schools that do offer a large number of AP courses, they are more likely to be actively discouraged from taking them by teachers and counselors.

Beyond the policies and practices that contribute to the achievement gap, a number of complex cultural factors are also important. Missing from the research and policy debates is an understanding of the ways in which children come to perceive the relationship between their racial identity and what they believe they can do academically. For many children, schools play an important role in shaping their racial identities because they are one of the few social settings where kids interact with people from different backgrounds. To the extent that a school's sorting processes disproportionately relegate black and brown children to spaces within schools that are perceived as negative and marginal, it is likely that children of color will come to perceive certain activities and courses as either unsuitable or off-limits for them.

In schools where few minority students are enrolled in AP courses, even students who meet the criteria for enrollment may refuse to take such courses out of concern that they will become isolated from their peers. The same is true for the school band, newspaper, debating team or honor society. When these activities are seen as the domain of white students, nonwhite students are less likely to join. . . .

There are also cultural factors related to the attitudes and behaviors of students and the childrearing practices of parents that influence student performance. Several studies, for example, have indicated that middle-class African-American and Latino students spend less time on homework and study in less effective ways than middle-class white and Asian students. Also, despite the visibility of African-American students in sports such as football and basketball, research shows that these students are less likely to be involved in other extracurricular activities (which are shown to positively influence achievement), and in their responses to surveys they are more likely to emphasize the importance of being popular among friends than doing well in school.

Finally, images rooted in racial stereotypes that permeate American society limit the aspirations of African-American and Latino students. Despite the daunting odds of success in professional sports and entertainment, many young people of color believe they have a greater chance of becoming a highly paid athlete or hip-hop artist than an engineer, doctor, or software programmer. And with the rollback of affirmative action at colleges and universities, there is little doubt that students who possess entertainment value to universities, who can slam-dunk or score touchdowns, will be admitted regardless of their academic performance, even as aspiring doctors and lawyers are turned away.

When placed within the broader context of race relations in American society, the causes of the racial achievement gap appear less complex and mysterious; the gap is merely another reflection of the disparities in experience and life chances for individuals from different racial groups. In fact, given the history of racism in the United States and the ongoing reality of racial discrimination, it would be more surprising if an achievement gap did not exist.

—Pedro A. Noguera and Antwi Akom

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ceived, despite superficial and sometimes even excessive respect, as on a lower rung than whites.

Do we spontaneously expect this young man's experiences—yes, they are mine—to prevent him from achieving a grade point average higher than 3.0 or an SAT score above 950? Is this the sort of experience that makes a 20-year-old student turn in a family tree as three months' work on an honor's thesis? Why, exactly, do we expect so little of the black person but not of, say, an overweight Jewish woman who experienced some anti-Semitism and cruel treatment for her appearance while growing up and whose parents and grandparents, like his, endured various forms of discrimination?

We are underestimating black people. Frankly, it insults me. Jews can survive centuries of persecution and a Holocaust and still expect their children to reach for any bar; Chinese of the early 20th century can be tortured on the streets of San Francisco and restricted to menial jobs and still expect their children to excel. But pull a well-fed suburban black kid over for a drug check one afternoon and subject him to a couple of teachers who don't call on him as often as other students and he's forever subject to lower expectations.

The victimologist party line claims that the typical black student regularly encounters a much more overt racism than this. "Under the banner of racial neutrality, white students have been encouraged to intimidate, terrorize, and make life miserable for African American students at many of our institutions of higher learning," John Hope Franklin declares in *The Color Line* (1994). Beverly Daniel Tatum writes in *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (1997):

Whether it is the loneliness of being routinely overlooked as a lab partner in science courses, the irritation of being continually asked by curious classmates about Black hairstyles, the discomfort of being singled out by a professor to give the "Black perspective" in class discussion, the pain of racist graffiti scrawled on dormitory room doors, the insult of racist jokes circulated through campus e-mail, or the injury inflicted by racial epithets (and sometimes beer bottles) hurled from a passing car, Black students on predominantly White college campuses must cope with ongoing affronts to their racial identity.

Portraits like these are more theater than reportage. Why is being asked about one's hair a "racist" imposition? And wouldn't Tatum be the first person to complain that black students felt "invisible" and "marginalized" if they weren't asked about their perspective in class? Openly racist episodes do occur, but they are very rare. I have spent over half of my life as a black person on white campuses, and the implication that white guys yell "nigger" out of passing cars on a



Studies show only “fitful” evidence that black teachers enhance black students’ performance.

typical day, or that something remotely like this happens to a black undergraduate even once in a typical year, is nonsense.

Victimologists argue that white teachers tend to grade and discipline black students harshly. But in his extensive survey of 20,000 teenagers and their families, Laurence Steinberg found not only that complaints of racist bias among teachers were rare, but that Latinos and Asian Americans registered the same levels of complaints as blacks—yet Asian Americans nevertheless managed to turn in excellent school performances.

Moreover, black students do not perform appreciably better in schools where most or all of the faculty is black. Studies have found only fitful correlations between the presence of black teachers and high performance among black students, with the social class of the teacher as important a factor as race and the results varying significantly by subject. (Apparently, both white and black teachers of higher socioeconomic status get better results.) At the same time, the children of black African and Caribbean immigrants, who share a legacy of slavery with black Americans, usually perform at the same level as whites. In my own teaching career, I have taught American-born black students who did well, but every black undergraduate who has been among the best in a class I taught has been of Caribbean extraction. The devaluation of education is local to black American culture.

In his widely publicized 1992 study *Information and Attitudes*,

psychologist Claude Steele opened yet another front in the victimologist argument. He showed that black students did better on sample tests when they were not required to indicate their race or when the test was not presented as a measure of racial ability. Steele also showed that black scores suffered when the tests were presented as a gauge of “the psychological factors involved in solving verbal problems.” These experiments suggest that the performance of black students is hindered by self-doubt linked to the stereotype of black mental inferiority. The “stereotype threat” was quickly accepted in many quarters.

But any person’s performance would suffer under such conditions. Steele himself showed that women and even white men get lower scores when told the results are to be measured against those of Asian Americans. Considering that students are never required to indicate their race on their schoolwork anyway, are Steele’s findings really that meaningful?

He argues that the subtle presence of the inferiority stereotype “in the air” interferes with black performance. Such a stereotype does exist. But why isn’t the stereotype of female mental inferiority equally crippling for women? Why aren’t Southeast Asian immigrants held back by the hurtful stereotypes they encounter? Some may object that Southeast Asians are not stereotyped as dim, but it would be difficult to tell this to a Vietnamese or Cambodian teen hobbled by a thick accent and partial command of the language, of which there are quite a few in some states.

Another widely cited cause of black-white education differences is the funding gap between mostly black urban schools and suburban white schools. Not only has the spending gap been closing, however, but funding levels don’t correlate well with the performance of schools or individual students. More than one study has found that children of poor refugees from Southeast Asia, arriving with limited English and going to school in the same crumbling, blighted inner-city public schools considered a sentence to failure for black kids, do very well in school and on standardized tests. In any event, the notion that most black students attend bombed-out, violence-ridden schools is an outdated stereotype. Forty-one percent of black children still do grow up in poverty, compared with 27 percent of white youth, but it is no longer the case that all but a lucky few black students are stuck in inner-city schools.

It is true, however, that many black youngsters are “tracked” into “slow” classes in the public school. This is said to snuff out their commitment to learning. There are two possible explanations: One is that racist teachers are responsible, the other is that the performance and commitment of the students themselves is the cause. Several studies show that the latter is overwhelmingly the case;

teachers place students not according to any detectable racial bias, but simply on the basis of prior performance. (See, for example, “Students, Courses, and Stratification,” by Michael S. Garet and Brian Delaney, in *Sociology of Education* [1988].) At Berkeley High School, not far from the campus where I teach, in one of the most “progressive” communities in the nation, blacks have long been overrepresented in the low track. But about 70 percent of entering black students generally read below grade level, according to principal Theresa Saunders, while perhaps 90 percent of whites read at or above grade level.

Victimologist arguments are put to a fuller test in another affluent community halfway across the country, the Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights. The community’s excellent public schools spent about \$10,000 a year per student in 1998, compared with a national average of \$6,842. The town is affluent and racially integrated; half of the student population is black. Students track themselves into advanced courses. There are after-school, weekend, and summer programs to help children whose grades are slipping, and a program in which older black students help younger ones. As early as kindergarten, students needing help with language arts skills are specially tutored. There are special sessions on taking standardized tests. A counselor works with students who have low grades but appear to have high potential. Shaker Heights is beautifully tailored to helping black students, and one would be hard pressed to call the black families sailing through these wide streets in their Saturns and Toyotas “struggling blue collar.” Yet in four recent graduating classes, blacks constituted just seven percent of the top fifth of their class—and 90 percent of the bottom fifth. Of the students who failed at least one portion of the ninth-grade proficiency test, 82 percent were black.


None of the old explanations work here. Teachers and administrators in Shaker Heights are perplexed by the performance of their black students. Straying beyond racism-based explanations is uncomfortable because it seems to feed into the stereotype of black mental inferiority. “If it’s not racism,” we think, “then what else could it be?”

It is not pleasant to think that blacks are held down by black culture itself. But it is absolutely vital that we address anti-intellectualism in black American culture honestly. To deny its pivotal significance is cultural self-sabotage.

We have arrived at a point where closing the black-white education gap will be possible only by allowing black students to spread their wings and compete freely with their peers of other races. More than 30 years of affirmative action have shown conclusively that programs that let black kids in through the back door will not solve the problem. Youngsters coming of age in a culture that does not

value educational achievement are not helped by a system that only reduces the incentives to excel.

Affirmative action was a necessary emergency measure in its early years, and I believe it is still justified in the business world, where hiring and advancement are based as much on personal contacts and social chemistry as on merit. But to focus in the educational realm upon the fact that minorities are underrepresented in top secondary schools, that some white teachers may be less likely to give top grades to black students, that black students may suffer from a lack of confidence because of racist stereotypes, or that vestigial societal racism persists, is less to open avenues to solutions than to embrace capitulation. These arguments imply that black students simply cannot do their best except under utopian conditions, even as other students regularly surmount similar obstacles. They cast black people as innately weak and unintelligent.

ur interest, then, must be in helping black students shed the shackles of anti-intellectualism. Any effort that prepares black students to compete is laudable: For example, secondary schools should urge black children to form study groups, which have been shown to improve minority students' performance. Immersing black students in extended academic work sessions with fellow blacks counters the conception that school is "white." Minority students should also be given standardized tests on a regular basis in all schools, even those with insufficient resources. This alone will raise students' test scores.

There are also strategies for encouraging "diversity" without reinforcing black students' sense of separation from school. Top universities should consider admitting high-performing students from high schools that offer few or no advanced placement courses. Because minorities are disproportionately represented in these schools, minority representation will increase. But it must be a race-blind policy, applicable to whites and others. Otherwise, we risk reinforcing the idea that academic achievement is a superhuman feat for the black student.

In *The Bell Curve*, Murray and Herrnstein told us that we should eliminate affirmative action because black people are simply too dumb to do any better. My reason for opposing it in higher education, by contrast, is practical. We must eliminate this obsolete program not for abstruse philosophical reasons, nor because it can rather laboriously be interpreted as discriminatory against whites, but because it is obstructing African Americans from showing that they are as capable as all other people. I have faith in black American students. I have seen nothing whatsoever in my life to suggest that they are incapable of performing as well as anyone else in school. But the black-white scholastic gap will close only when black students are required to compete under the same standards of excellence as whites. □

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

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Continents Apart?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Is the Atlantic Alliance doomed? For the progeny of America's "greatest generation," who grew up during the Cold War when the United States and its European partners stood together against the menace from the East, it's hard to imagine. Yet there are those who say it's so.

Stephen M. Walt, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, for example. Writing a year and a half ago in the *National Interest* (Winter 1998–99), he argued that with the Soviet threat gone, "it is time for Europe and the United States to begin a slow and gradual process of disengagement." This, he added, is bound to happen in any case.

But that, of course, was before the United States joined its European allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) first-ever exercise of military might that was more than an exercise, and, by raining bombs down on Yugoslavia, gained what all but spoilsport critics called a victory. Surely the Kosovo war of 1999 showed that the Atlantic Alliance is in splendid shape. But no, observes Peter W. Rodman, director of national security programs at the Nixon Center, writing in the *National Interest* (Summer 2000): "Instead of vindicating NATO and American leadership, [the war] had the effect of accelerating efforts to build a new all-European defense organization."

A bit humbled by the dazzling martial display of American technological prowess, and uncomfortable finding themselves under verbal assault from anti-American leftists (and in France, Gaullist rightists) for taking part in an American-led war, many European governments decided to avoid

such an embarrassing situation in the future, Rodman notes. At the Helsinki summit of the European Union (EU) last December, the Europeans announced they would field an all-European force of more than 50,000 by 2003.

These days, Rodman observes, much European rhetoric has a common theme: "It is time for Europe to make itself an equal of the United States, to be a counterweight to it, to achieve greater autonomy from it, [and] to lessen dependence on it." So uniquely extensive (supposedly) is U.S. dominance, stretching broadly across the political, military, economic, and cultural realms, that French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine has coined a new pejorative to describe it: *hyperpuissance* (hyper-power).

"It is an oddly schizoid experience to live in Europe these days," observes Martin Walker, former U.S. bureau chief and European editor of the London *Guardian*. "It is a place," he writes in *World Policy Journal* (Summer 2000), "where more and more people live and work and eat and dress and relax like Americans, while exercising considerable ingenuity in finding new complaints about the United States." Capital punishment, rampant handgun violence, puritanical anti-smoking crusades, and loony political correctness—all are grist for the anti-American mill.

As "a *de facto* military protectorate of the United States," Europe today is in a situation that "necessarily generates tensions and resentments," particularly with the Soviet threat gone, asserts Zbigniew

Brzezinski, who served as national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter. If “a truly politically united Europe” were to appear, he writes in the *National Interest* (Summer 2000), then indeed “a basic shift in the distribution of global power” would occur, with far-reaching consequences for America’s position in the world. But that will not happen anytime soon, he maintains, because the EU does not—not yet, at least—inspire the political commitment necessary for true political unity: “As of now, and for the foreseeable future . . . no ‘European’ is willing to die for ‘Europe.’” Most Europeans, he adds, are “unwilling . . . even to pay for Europe’s security.” Walker, too, sees “not the slightest sign that Europe’s taxpayers are prepared to pay more” for defense than they currently do. For any major mission, the planned European rapid reaction force would still rely heavily on NATO assets—thus effectively giving the United States a veto over the operation.

Though some dream of a unified Europe that will be a match for America, most Europeans regard unification in a more pragmatic, less idealistic way than Europe’s “founding fathers” did in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Brzezinski says. “European ‘integration’—largely a process of regulatory standardization—has become the alternative definition of unification.” Since the leading states in the EU each still insist on sovereignty in foreign policy, he observes, movement toward political unity is unlikely to accelerate. Nor can anti-Americanism provide the needed impetus, since “most Europeans do not subscribe to it.” As Walker notes, even the much-maligned Disneyland outside Paris has proven popular and profitable.

The EU, meanwhile, has been finding it hard to maintain internal unity. It has been paralyzed by indecision over enlargement and other fundamental issues, and the euro has suffered an embarrassing slide in value against the dollar since its debut last year.

Most of the reaction in Europe and elsewhere to American preeminence is only to be expected, quite in accord with classic “balance-of-power” theory, says Rodman, “and much of it is, in fact, healthy. For our allies in particular, the end of the Cold War is an opportunity to restore some balance to a relationship

of dependency. Such relationships are by their nature corrosive, breeding resentments on both sides.” The U.S. Congress, which has long complained about America bearing too much of the common burden, should hardly object to more European self-reliance.

Most Americans “do not see Europe threatening American vital interests,” notes Joseph S. Nye, Jr., dean of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. “On the contrary,” he writes in *International Affairs* (Jan. 2000), “as recent polls show, [they] see a united Europe itself as a vital interest . . . [and] better than the alternatives. A united Europe has the potential to clash periodically with American interests, but a Europe riven by internecine antagonisms would pose a far greater set of problems.” Europe also, of course, can be a welcome partner “in dealing with global challenges.”

“However reluctant some of America’s allies may be to trumpet the fact,” says François Heisbourg, chairman of the Geneva Center for Security Policy, writing in *Survival* (Winter 1999–2000), “leaders and, to varying degrees, public opinion in allied countries have a fairly clear perception of America’s role as a key element of what measure of international order may exist . . . [and] the only credible ultimate guarantor of that order.”

The U.S. military, observes Walker, “could quite probably take on all of the rest of the world’s military forces at the same time and beat them with ease. And so it should, given that the United States spends more on defense than the next nine biggest military powers combined. This would only be a problem if the United States showed a desire to achieve such a triumph, which it does not, or to claim the spoils by acting as if it had already done so.”

What, then, do Europeans want? “Some respect,” says Walker, “rather more consultation, and some American reassurance that they will be treated as allies and partners rather than as satellites. Traditionally in NATO, American diplomats and soldiers have been rather good at [such treatment].”

Despite “significant strains,” concludes Nye, the forecast is for continued transatlantic bickering but no divorce.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

The Swing Vote in 2000

"America's Forgotten Majority" by Joel Rogers and Ruy Teixeira, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (June 2000), 77 N. Washington St., Boston, Mass. 02114.

Forget the Soccer Moms, Wired Workers, and other recent journalistic chimera, exhort Rogers, a professor of sociology, law, and political science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Teixeira, author of *The Disappearing American Voter* (1992). The "real swing voters" are the white "working-class" Americans who make up about 55 percent of the electorate.

This "forgotten majority" is not, to be sure, the white working class of the past. Most of its members do not toil in factories or, for that matter, hold down any sort of blue-collar job. They are more likely engaged in low-level white-collar or service work. Many prefer to be considered "middle class." Yet "in economic terms," maintain Rogers and Teixeira, "they are not so different from the white working class of previous generations."

The new white working class is formed by what the authors call "the Great Divide" in American life today: the "difference in prospects" between the one white adult in four who has a college degree and the other three who don't (but generally do hold at least a high school diploma). Though some 20 percent of this new working class enjoy an annual household income greater than \$75,000, about 14 percent earn less than \$15,000 a year, and the median household income is only about \$42,000. While members of the new white working class make up three-fifths of suburban adults, the authors say, "their economic position in American society bears little resemblance to that of the suburban college-educated professionals we hear so much about."

Since the early 1970s, Rogers and Teixeira argue, the forgotten majority's common values—"opportunity, fair reward for effort, the centrality of hard work and individual achievement, and social commitment"—have been mocked by their

economic experience and "the tremendous slowdown [of the] escalator to the middle-class. The failure of activist government to get that escalator moving again, together with its apparent concentration on the problems or rights of others (minorities, the poor,

gays, even criminals)," has resulted in a widespread "sour and skeptical attitude toward government." The improved economy of recent years has taken the edge off that skeptical attitude, write Rogers and Teixeira, giving the two major political parties an opportunity to win "the long-term loyalty of these voters and thus to grasp and keep political dominance."

Leaving out union members, only 39 percent of the forgotten majority voted Democratic in contests for the House of Representatives in 1998, and only 41 percent voted for the Democratic incumbent for president in 1996. If the Democrats could just break even with nonunion forgotten-majority voters, who comprise 45 percent of the electorate, they could win the presidency and almost certainly the House, Rogers and Teixeira believe. The Republicans, meanwhile, who "do relatively well among unorganized forgotten-majority voters," need to strengthen that advantage, bringing their levels of support back up "to those of the Reagan-Bush years and of the congressional election of 1994."



In search of the "forgotten majority"?

The Hartz Mountain

“What Is Still Living in ‘Consensus’ History and Pluralist Social Theory” by Leo P. Ribuffo, in *American Studies International* (Feb. 2000), George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C. 20052; “The Perils of Particularism: Political History after Hartz” by John Gerring, in *Journal of Policy History* (1999: No. 3), St. Louis Univ., 3800 Lindell Blvd., P.O. Box 56907, St. Louis, Mo. 63156-0907.

The so-called consensus history of the 1950s—typified by Louis Hartz’s *Liberal Tradition in America* (1955) and stressing the liberal, Lockean values most Americans supposedly shared—has long been out of vogue in the academy, rejected as a Cold War relic. Recent historians have viewed the American past instead through the lenses of race, class, and gender, focusing on particular groups, cases, and eras. But have these historians been missing the forest for the trees? Ribuffo, a historian at George Washington University, and Gerring, a political scientist at Boston University, suggest it’s time for a fresh look at the old “consensus” orthodoxy.

The multiculturalist approach has borne some valuable fruit, notes Ribuffo, including detailed descriptions of “the lives of women as well as men, gays as well as heterosexuals, artisans and industrial workers as well as members of the old and new middle class. We know about their leisure time and their love lives as well as their occupational mobility and voting habits.” But historians on the “certain kind of left” that has triumphed in academe since the early 1980s—which bor-

rows concepts and issues from literary criticism and linguistically oriented philosophy and anthropology—have been reluctant “to examine the whole United States for fear of what might be discovered,” Ribuffo says.

He and his fellow historians, he writes, “need to re-examine the degree of consensus in American life past and present,” as well as the extent to which common convictions about politics, government, race, religion, and ethnicity “were imposed [rather than] accepted voluntarily. . . . [We] should not reject out of hand the possibility that most Americans have shared significant beliefs and values,” even if some have varied over the centuries.

Gerring agrees. No comprehensive thesis about the American past “has yet been formulated,” he says, “with power and sweep to match *The Liberal Tradition in America*.” That still may happen. But, Gerring asks, “are we—the current generation of writers—seeking to overthrow the old theory simply because it is old, and continually failing because it happens to offer the best arrangement of the facts? This may well be the case.”

Spinning Out

Paul Taylor, a former *Washington Post* political reporter and the director of the Alliance for Better Campaigns, on the decline of American political discourse, in *Mother Jones* (May-June 2000):

Let’s follow the vicious cycle here. We the public give the broadcast industry our airwaves for free, in return for their commitment to serve the public interest. At election time, the industry turns around and sells airtime to candidates, fueling a money chase that saps public confidence in the political process and restricts the field of candidates to the wealthy and their friends. The money pays for ads that reduce political discourse to its least attractive elements: The spots tend to be synthetic, deceptive, inflammatory, and grating.

As campaigns choke on money and ads, the public drifts away from politics in boredom or disgust. Ratings-sensitive broadcasters then scale back on substantive political coverage—forcing candidates to rely even more on paid ads as their sole means of getting a message out on television. And so the cycle keeps spinning.

Locking away the Future

“Lockbox Government” by Alasdair Roberts, in *Government Executive* (May 2000), 1501 M St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Are officials in the United States and abroad putting future governments in an antidemocratic straitjacket? That’s the question raised by “a broad new trend” that Roberts, a professor of public policy at Queen’s University, in Ontario, calls “lockbox government.”

The most recent example of the trend came last year, he says, when the Clinton administration proposed setting aside \$3 trillion in general revenues over the next 15 years to protect the Social Security and Medicare trust funds. Changes in the budgeting laws would keep future Congresses from touching those dollars—which would thus rest secure, President Bill Clinton said, in “a true lockbox.”

It wasn’t Clinton’s first, Roberts says. The Violent Crime Reduction Trust Fund, created in 1994, “mandated a transfer of general revenues into the fund for six years, imposed conditions on how money in the fund could be spent, and excluded that spending from budget enforcement rules.” Other “lockboxes” have been built since to protect spending in areas such as defense and transportation (home to that 1956 lockbox, the Highway Trust Fund), and many more have been proposed, in fields ranging from medical education to telecommunications. [Vice President Al Gore recently called for

putting “Medicare in a lockbox.”] Between 1987 and 1996, the number of federal accounts with permanent appropriations authority almost doubled. “The trend isn’t limited to the United States,” says Roberts, citing similar examples from Britain and Canada.

Besides protecting spending in broad areas from future cutbacks, governments also have constructed “narrower, agency-specific lockboxes,” he points out. A 1992 law guaranteed future funding for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, for instance, by letting it collect user fees from the drug companies it regulates. Still another governmental device for safeguarding future spending, Roberts says, is to arrange for private businesses to finance, build, and operate waste-processing facilities or other capital-intensive projects. Though usually promoted as a way to tap private-sector expertise, such “lockboxes” require long-term spending commitments.

There is “something anti-democratic” about the “lockbox” approach, Roberts believes. Democratic governments should adopt it only in cases where there is “clear evidence” that elected representatives cannot look beyond their immediate budgetary woes to meet the public’s long-term investment needs.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Hazards of Selfless War

“Virtual War” by Michael Ignatieff, in *Prospect* (Apr. 2000), 4 Bedford Sq., London WC1B 3RA, England.

For the comfortable citizens of the NATO countries, far removed from the bombing and killing, and with no vital national interests at stake, the “humanitarian” war in Kosovo last year was only a spectacle, in which they had nothing to lose. Though he believes that particular war was justified, Ignatieff, a journalist and historian, worries that democracies may too readily engage in such “virtual wars” in the future.

“Democracies may remain peace-loving only so long as the risks of war remain real to their citizens,” he writes. “If war becomes virtual—without risk—democratic electorates may be more willing to fight, especially if the cause is jus-

tified in the language of human rights and democracy itself.”

By “virtual,” he means not simply that war is waged largely with bombing and high-tech weaponry, and seems “to take place on a screen,” but that “it enlists societies only in virtual ways. Nothing ultimate is at stake: neither national survival nor the fate of the economy.” As a result, war becomes “a spectator sport,” with the media “a decisive theater of operations,” and both sides trying “to inflict perceptual damage.”

Two centuries ago, with the French revolutionary army of the 1790s, war became associ-



Do the B-2 Stealth Bomber and other high-tech weapons turn war into a spectator sport?

ated with mass mobilization. But in the United States, conscription ended more than a quarter-century ago. The Vietnam War, Ignatieff adds, “widened the gulf between civilian and military culture.” And for advanced societies, even the economic impact of war has much diminished. “In times past, wars could bankrupt societies, and economic constraints were a fundamental limit on the length and ferocity of conflict.” Today, America’s \$290 billion annual defense outlay is only three percent of its gross domestic product.

With “nothing ultimate” at stake in virtual war, Ignatieff contends, the democratic legislature’s check on the executive’s war-making powers becomes very important, as a way of clarifying the war’s purposes. In the Kosovo conflict, however, military operations were “unsanctioned and undeclared” by Congress or other national parliaments. Yet “the decay of institutional

checks and balances . . . has received little attention,” he says.

“Hidden in abstractions such as human rights” is “the potential for self-righteous irrationality,” Ignatieff warns, and for “a host of unwinnable wars.” There are, after all, “substantial” limits, “mainly self-imposed,” on the use of military power for such missions, that limit what can be achieved—the democracies are unwilling to take up an imperial burden. “The language of human rights easily lends itself to the invention of a virtual moral world peopled by demonized enemies and rogue states, facing virtuous allies and noble armies.” Those who support humanitarian interventions, he concludes, must pay close attention in each case to “the question of whether, by intervening, we end up destroying what we tried to save.”

Fighting Bio-Terrorism

“Bad Medicine for Biological Terror” by Andrew J. Bacevich, in *Orbis* (Spring 2000), Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1528 Walnut St., Ste. 610, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102–3684.

Fearing a biological Pearl Harbor, the Clinton administration has embarked upon a crash program that includes vaccinating more than two million soldiers, sailors, and pilots against anthrax. But the effort is running into highly publicized resistance—and rightly so, says Bacevich, director of Boston University’s

Center for International Relations. He contends that the effort is as misguided as the government’s bomb-shelter mania of the 1950s and early ’60s.

More than 300 protesters-in-uniform—insisting that the vaccine is unsafe and its long-term effects on health unknown—have refused

The Path Not Taken

In *The Nation* (May 8, 2000), Kai Bird, the author of *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy & William Bundy, Brothers in Arms* (1998), contends that those on the left who oppose humanitarian interventionism have forgotten the New Deal's vision of the American role in the world.

Sadly, in our determination to oppose nuclear brinkmanship and other idiocies that marked Washington's foreign policy for 44 years (1945-89), we have forgotten our basic radical principles and the common-sensical path not taken at the end of World War II. Most Americans have no memory of the designs Franklin Roosevelt's New Dealers had for postwar American foreign policy. Human rights, self-determination and an end to European colonization in the developing world, nuclear disarmament, international law, the World Court, the United Nations—these were all ideas of the progressive left. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were initially conceived as vehicles for internationalizing the New Deal.

the mandatory inoculations or left the military to avoid them. Many of the “refuseniks” are experienced pilots, field-grade officers, and combat veterans.

Though it pooh-poohs their complaints, says Bacevich, the Pentagon “has entrusted the manufacture of anthrax vaccine to a single firm of dubious reputation” (BioPort Corporation, of Lansing, Michigan), and Pentagon officials, including qualified medical professionals, privately acknowledge that the efficacy of the vaccine is open to question. It was developed in the 1950s not to protect against inhalation of anthrax spores but rather to safeguard tannery workers who risked contamination through the skin from handling the hides of anthrax-infected animals. “Some of the same Pentagon officials who today insist upon the safety of the anthrax vaccine,” Bacevich observes, “have themselves [in the recent past] suggested a link between the vaccine and Gulf War illness.”

Even if the vaccine does work against anthrax, Bacevich says, terrorists could select from a large array of other potent pathogens, including smallpox, botulism, bubonic plague, and the

Ebola virus. “Indeed, U.S. intelligence agencies believe that Iraq and North Korea are already developing the capability” to use smallpox as a weapon. And why, he asks, would terrorists target U.S. military bases rather than any of the much “softer” and readily available alternatives, such as the New York subway system?

In any event, the “biological Maginot Line” defense is bad strategy, Bacevich avers. The Clinton administration should instead issue a clear threat “to retaliate massively” in response to any biological (or chemical or nuclear) attack by terrorists, not only against the terrorist organizations themselves but against any regime that gives them direct or indirect support.

A “sense of proportion” is needed, Bacevich contends. “Fixating on the problem of fending off a biological calamity—a danger that has existed virtually unnoticed for decades—enables policymakers to avert their eyes” from larger questions, he says, such as the feasibility and costs of fulfilling the administration’s ambitious goal of making the world “peaceful, democratic, and respectful of human rights and free enterprise.”

How Ideas Rule the World

“The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations” by Daniel Philpott, in *World Politics* (Jan. 2000), Bendheim Hall, Princeton Univ., Princeton, N.J. 08544.

The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) ended the era of religious wars in Europe and brought into being the modern system of sov-

ereign territorial states. More than 350 years later, argues Philpott, a political scientist at the University of California, Santa



The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, said one scholar 300 years later, was “the majestic portal which leads from the old world into the new world.”

Barbara, the treaty remains relevant in a way that is not widely appreciated: It shows the momentous influence that ideas—in this case, religious ideas—can have in international affairs.

Though most political scientists maintain that the Westphalian system emerged as a result of the states’ gradual accumulation of armed might, wealth, and other forms of power, Philpott contends that the Protestant Reformation was “a central cause.”

Without the Reformation, he says, medieval impediments to a system of sovereign states would have remained: “the substantive powers of the Holy Roman Empire and its emperor, the formidable temporal powers of the church, religious uniformity, truncations of the sovereign powers of secular rulers, [and] Spain’s control of the Netherlands.” Protestantism, Philpott writes, “challenged all temporal powers of the church and the empire,” the latter of which was born by papal decree under Charlemagne in the ninth century and reached its fullest extent over much of Christian Europe during the 13th century.

Only where a strong clash between Protestants and Catholics over the political order took place, Philpott says, did an interest in the Westphalian notion of sovereign statehood develop. The German Protestant states and the northern provinces of the Netherlands, which were partly independent “protostates,” wanted full indepen-

dence. Already-independent France (which kept its Catholic monarchy but, after a civil war, opted for religious toleration) and independent Sweden wanted sovereign statehood for the rest of Europe. England and Denmark lent diplomatic support to the anti-imperial powers. But “none of the Catholic polities, the Catholic German principalities, Spain, Italy, or

Poland, developed any interest at all in a system of sovereign states,” notes Philpott. “They remained allies” of the Holy Roman Empire.

The case of Spain, early modern Europe’s strongest state, presents, Philpott believes, an especially damning argument against the conventional view that the impetus for modern statehood grew solely from polities’ rising material power. “Like other European states, Spain gained strength in the 15th century, unifying its territory and experiencing, by some measures, the earliest and most rapid growth of any contemporary European state. It expanded its military . . . to 150,000 [troops] in the 1550s (three times that of France), established an overseas empire that fed it hordes of silver and gold, and enlarged its treasury and royal bureaucracy. Yet the Spanish colossus never sought or fought for a Westphalian system of states and was indeed its arch-opponent, regarding it as heresy.”

If ideas—not just material forces—played a crucial role in the emergence of sovereign territorial states nearly four centuries ago, Philpott concludes, then other ideas may have a similar importance today. Ironically, he points out, ideas about human rights and democracy, and about federalism, now are encouraging movement away from sovereignty, in such “contemporary trends . . . as internationally sanctioned intervention and the expansion of the European Union.”

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

On the Frontiers of Economics

A Survey of Recent Articles

In the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Winter 2000), a host of noted economists examine the state of the economy (global and American) and of their own discipline. Among their findings:

- In 1848, John Stuart Mill thought that England was nearing the upper limit of economic output, and that it was “only in the backward countries of the world that increased production is still an important object.” Happily, Mill was wrong, notes Richard A. Easterlin, of the University of Southern California.

Living standards improved in ways that Mill could not have imagined, and Easterlin sees few limits on further growth. “Today . . . living levels in many parts of the less developed world are above those of England in Mill’s time,” and economic growth rates in those countries during the last 50 years “have substantially exceeded those in the historical experience of western Europe.” But historical scholarship now shows that economic growth does not automatically bring progress on a variety of fronts, from health to governance. Wider schooling typically *precedes* rapid growth, for example, while lengthened lifespans *follow* it. “In today’s less developed world,” moreover, “a half century of vigorous economic growth has occurred with little advance in political democracy.”

- Globalization is much less advanced than the conventional wisdom supposes, contends Dani Rodrik, a professor of international political economy at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. “National borders, such as the U.S.-Canadian one, seem to have a significantly depressing effect on commerce, even in the absence of serious formal tariff or non-tariff barriers, linguistic or cultural differences, exchange rate uncertainty, and other economic obstacles.” Why? Different laws and informal “social networks” for contract enforcement are among the reasons. National differences are reflected even on the Internet, so that Amazon.com,

for example, maintains a distinct British site (Amazon.co.uk). If full-fledged international economic integration is to take place, Rodrik avers, nation-states either must harmonize their laws and take other aggressive steps or cede powers to some form of world government. Rodrik himself favors a form of global federalism.

The latter prospect does not seem likely anytime soon. Indeed, according to many crystal balls today, a *second* “American century” is in the offing, notes Paul Krugman, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and also a columnist for the *New York Times*. With the strong U.S. economy of recent years in mind, American prognosticators have abandoned the “declinism” of the late 1980s and early ’90s to become “triumphalists.” But the truth is, Krugman says, that “the advanced nations . . . have broadly converged to similar levels of technology and productivity. The United States is likely neither to fall far behind nor pull dramatically ahead of that pack, although its sheer size guarantees its place as first among equals for many years to come.”

- In the United States, returning authority to the states is “all the rage today,” notes economist John Joseph Wallis, of the University of Maryland, College Park. In the past, he says, the “most active” level of government was the one that could collect the dominant type of revenue most cheaply. There have been three “fiscal regimes”: one (1790 to about 1842) dominated by the states, which collected “asset income” from land sales and investments in banks, canals, and other transportation improvements; a second (1842 to 1933) dominated by local governments, which relied on property taxes; and a third (1933 to the present) dominated by the federal government, collecting revenue through income and payroll taxes. If the states are now to take the lead again, Wallis says, they will have to find “a prominent new revenue source.” He ventures no suggestions. But he also

says that “tinkering with revenue structure” is unlikely to reduce the size of the public sector, so long as governmental commitments remain unchanged.

- Whatever happened to monetarism? asks J. Bradford De Long, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley. During the 1960s and ’70s, monetarist theorist Milton Friedman assailed the Keynesian notions that dominated economics. But the “simplified” version of monetarism that triumphed and guided Federal Reserve policy during the 1980s “crashed and burned,” De Long says. Controlling total spending by adjusting growth in the money supply “turned out to be very difficult indeed.” Yet other key monetarist ideas—e.g., the principle that in normal circumstances, monetary policy is a better stabilizing tool than fiscal policy, and the notion that the chief cause of economic ups and downs is the failure of prices to adjust rapidly to “nominal shocks”—quietly achieved “intellectual hegemony.” But they did so, ironically, under a strange banner: neo-Keynesianism. “The influence of monetarism on how we all think about macroeconomics today has been deep, pervasive, and subtle,” says De Long.

- Economic theory may be in for much more radical change, if economist Richard

H. Thaler, of the University of Chicago, is correct. He predicts that “*Homo economicus*” (Economic Man), that avatar of rationality so beloved by generations of dismal scientists, will finally evolve into “quasi-rational, emotional” *Homo sapiens*, as economists incorporate the findings of psychology and other disciplines. The new breed will be markedly dumber, slower to learn, and narrower in its perceptions than its forebears.

- Even economists’ basic theoretical approach to policy analysis may change, according to David Colander, of Middlebury College in Vermont. In an imaginary look back from the *next* half-century, he tells how, thanks to growing computer power, the discipline came to be regarded as a branch of complexity science. Instead of devising models they hope are in accord with basic economic principles and then testing them empirically, computer-aided “New Millennium” economists learned to search data for patterns, find temporary models that fit those patterns, and then study how the patterns change. “Rather than bounding after the unknowable, and trying to deduce analytically models that hold for all times,” Colander reports from 2050, “economics has reduced its search to what it believes is knowable.”

The New ‘Jungle’

“*The Jungle Revisited*” by Keith Nunes, in *Meat&Poultry* (Dec. 1999),
4800 Main St., Ste. 100, Kansas City, Mo. 64112.

In his muckraking 1906 novel *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair exposed the terrible working conditions in the Chicago Stockyards and accidentally stirred public alarm about contaminated meat, prompting Congress to quickly enact the Pure Food and Drug Act.

Today, the Chicago Stockyards are gone, the meatpacking plants in what is an \$8.5-billion-a-year industry are mainly in smaller cities and towns in the western Corn Belt, and the modern operation is in many ways a far cry from what it used to be. But the industry still depends heavily on “the individuals who stand next to the conveyer belts and rend meat from bone with honed steel”—

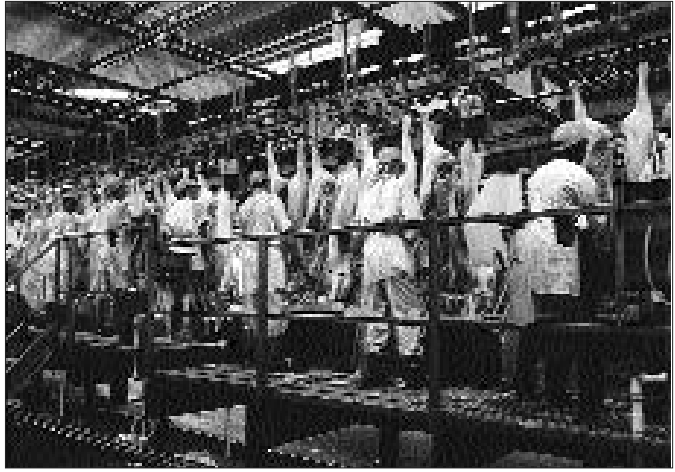
and for them, reports Nunes, associate publisher and senior editor of the trade journal *Meat&Poultry*, working conditions are still far from ideal.

“Sinclair paints a grim picture of how line workers were hired, injured, and essentially discarded. . . . Today,” Nunes writes, “despite the progress that has been made by industry members, meatpacking still ranks as one of the most dangerous jobs in the nation.” For every 100 full-time workers in meatpacking plants in 1997, there were 32.1 incidents of injury (or illness). Nor, despite advances in sanitation and food safety, Nunes points out, has the public threat of contaminated meat entirely

vanished: E. coli and other microbial dangers have replaced tuberculosis.

"In some ways, working conditions are better today than they were in *The Jungle*," notes Deborah Fink, the author of *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line* (1998), who spent four months in 1992 working undercover in a Perry, Iowa plant owned by IBP, the industry's largest employer. Workers today wear gloves and arm guards, and are at less risk of getting infections from cuts. "But [packers] have reduced entire jobs to a small set of motions," she says. "Twenty years ago it was considered a skill to be able to bone a ham. Now all workers do is make one cut all day." So, instead of infections, workers are prone to getting repetitive-motion injuries.

Worker turnover is high, "between 80 percent and 120 percent" for the major packers, says Nunes. While packers insist they want to reduce turnover in order to cut the expense of training new workers, critics strongly doubt it. "Employees stay for a limited time, earn no seniority, don't retire, and have no access to paid vacations or, in many cases, health benefits," observes Donald Stull, an anthropologist at the University of Kansas.



"Line work is demanding on people's bodies," but the meatpacking industry, says a specialist, assumes it can keep replacing workers.

In Sinclair's day, the Chicago-based "Beef Trust" actively recruited workers from Ireland and Eastern Europe. Today, the "Big Three" packers (IBP, Cargill's Excel Corporation, and Con-Agra's Monfort), have turned to Central America and Asia. Last year, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service "shook the foundation of the industry," Nunes says, when it methodically reviewed the papers of 24,310 Nebraska workers and found irregularities in a fifth of them.

For all the dramatic changes in the industry, Stull says, *The Jungle's* Jurgis Rudkis would be disappointed to learn how much in a 21st-century meatpacking plant remains sadly the same.

SOCIETY

Jack versus Jill

"The War against Boys" by Christina Hoff Sommers, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (May 2000), 77 N. Washington St., Boston, Mass. 02114.

A decade ago, Harvard University's Carol Gilligan, author of the influential *In a Different Voice* (1982), announced that America's adolescent girls were in crisis. Soon, with the help of two studies by the American Association of University Women, it became the conventional wisdom among educators that schools shortchange girls. Yet there is almost no solid empirical support for that conclusion,

asserts Sommers, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and author of *Who Stole Feminism?* (1994). She contends that it is adolescent boys who are the troubled sex.

"The typical boy is a year and a half behind the typical girl in reading and writing; he is less committed to school and less likely to go to college," she writes. In 1997, 55 percent of full-time college students were

female, and the gender gap in enrollment is projected to grow.

“Far from being shy and demoralized, today’s girls outshine boys,” Sommers says. “They get better grades. They have higher educational aspirations. They follow more rigorous academic programs and participate in advanced-placement classes at higher rates. . . . Girls, allegedly timorous and lacking in confidence, now outnumber boys in student government, in honor societies, on school newspapers, and in debating clubs. Only in sports are boys ahead. . . . Girls read more books. They outperform boys on tests for artistic and musical ability. More girls than boys study abroad. More join the Peace Corps.” Meanwhile, boys have the dubious edge in school suspensions, being held back, and dropping out. They are more likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. “More boys than girls are involved in crime, alcohol, and drugs.”

Boys score better on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and other standardized tests, Sommers acknowledges—but that’s

because of another male disadvantage. Boys from families with lower incomes or limited formal education—characteristics associated with below-average scores—are less likely than comparable girls to take the SAT. They don’t drag down male SAT averages—and they don’t go to college.

“Growing evidence that the scales are tipped not against girls but against boys is beginning to inspire a quiet revisionism,” observes Sommers. Even Gilligan—though “oblivious of all the factual evidence that paternal separation causes aberrant behavior in boys”—lately has given some attention to their problems, calling for basic changes in child rearing to get boys in touch with their inner nurturer. A far better solution, says Sommers, would be “the traditional approach” to civilizing young males: “through character education: Develop the young man’s sense of honor. Help him become a considerate, conscientious human being. Turn him into a gentleman. This approach respects boys’ masculine nature; it is time-tested, and it works.”

What’s in a Face?

“The Mythology of the Face-Lift” by Wendy Doniger, in *Social Research* (Spring 2000), New School Univ., 65 Fifth Ave., Rm. 354, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Though face-lifts and other kinds of cosmetic surgery are a distinctly modern phenomenon, myths both ancient and modern have something to say about it. They tell of the folly of the desire for a new face—and they are quite right, contends Doniger, a professor of history of religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

The folly is shown, for instance, in various versions of an Inuit tale: A jealous mother who desires her son-in-law kills her daughter and takes her face, putting it on over her own. The husband is fooled—but not for long. He soon notices the discrepancy between the beautiful young visage and the old woman’s skinny legs or shrunken body. Or, in a version told by Annie Dillard in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1975), the young man, wet from hunting, lies with the woman, and “the skin mask shrinks and slides, uncovering the shriveled face of the old mother, and the boy flees in horror, forever.”

The face-lift myths, like contemporary accounts of cosmetic surgery, “frequently express the desire to have not just any face but one’s own face as it once was in the past—to masquerade as one’s younger self, as it were,” Doniger says. But gaining the countenance of this younger self changes one into someone else, a person “different from who you really are now: a person with a soul and a face that are formed and scarred by experience.”

Myths warn of other dangers, Doniger notes. “Incest dogs the face-lift because of the confusion of generations, mothers looking just like their daughters, as they so proudly boast on returning from their surgeries and spas. Even when this doubling back does not result in actual incest, it arrests our abilities to move forward in time [to] become our parents and eventually accept our own deaths.”

In the film *Dave* (1993), a wife realizes that the man impersonating her husband has

none of the “scars” of their life together. “The scars that a face-lift removes,” says Doniger, “are the body’s memory, in a form visible to others, of what the mind may have forgotten.

Our scars may be the strongest signs of who we really are: Perhaps, at the final reckoning, the whole body will disappear, and only our scar tissue will be there to testify for us.”

Let Sprawl Sprawl

“How Cities Green the Planet” by Peter Huber and Mark P. Mills, in *City Journal* (Winter 2000),
Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Follow Portland’s lead and ring America’s cities with “urban growth boundaries” and greenbelts? That’s what some foes of “sprawl” urge. But it’s a bad idea that would result in “less wilderness, not more,” assert Huber and Mills, senior fellows at the Manhattan Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, respectively.

Yes, suburbs consume more land than cities do—but rural life eats up even more. City and suburbs should be regarded “as a single economic entity, growing organically together,” in their view. “The suburbs wouldn’t exist but for the city and its jobs and money.” And the city could not survive without its suburbs as a refuge from its “worst excesses and pathologies.” Stop the growth of suburbs, Huber and Mills argue, and you will send the refugees further out into the countryside, just as digital prophets are predicting. Cyberpundit Nicholas Negroponte, for example, foresees the digital world “redistribut[ing] jobs and wealth,” with the result being a flow of people “out of, not into, cities.”

One of the virtues of sprawl, Huber and Mills argue, is that it *saves* land. “Cities grow

not because they sprawl out from the center, but because they draw people in from the [rural] periphery . . . far beyond the suburbs.”

Over the last three decades, the authors calculate, about 95 million acres of farmland farther from the city “returned to wilderness or began . . . doing so.” Some 25 million acres, meanwhile, have been consumed by development—perhaps half of it “farmland that gave way to suburbs.”

Today, cities, suburbs, and local roads cover about 27 million acres, and highways a like expanse. The total of 54 million acres—though more than twice the area occupied in 1920—is less than three percent of the two billion acres in the lower 48 states. (Antisprawl activists often also count as “developed land” some 90 million acres of farmsteads, field windbreaks, barren land, and marshland, say Huber and Mills.)

Rural life consumes far more land than suburbia, Huber and Mills argue, and if anti-sprawl activists ultimately succeed, a wave of Information Age emigrants on new 10-acre farmettes will show us just how much more.

PRESS & MEDIA

Eyes on the Prize

“Journalism’s Prize Culture” by Alicia Shepard, in *American Journalism Review* (Apr. 2000),
Univ. of Maryland, 1117 Journalism Bldg., College Park, Md. 20742–7111.

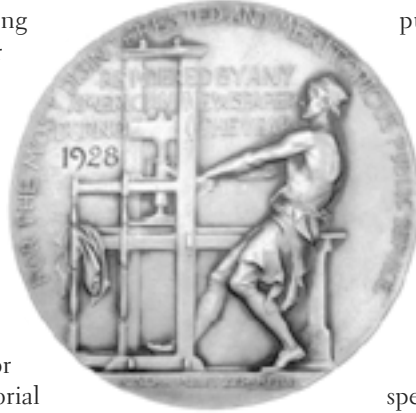
“We are the most self-congratulatory industry this side of Hollywood,” says Peter Leo, a (prize-winning) columnist for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. He’s talking about the news biz and its well-known fondness for showering itself in awards. In the frenzy for journalistic Oscars, are readers getting shortchanged? asks Shepard, a (prize-winning) senior writer for the *American Journalism Review*.

Some 230 newspapers and 14 syndicates

and chains submitted 1,516 entries (and \$75,800 in handling fees) for this year’s Pulitzer Prizes. There also were 650 entries for the TV and radio equivalent (the Alfred I. duPont awards), and 1,320 print entries and 60 online ones for the American Society of Magazine Editors’ National Magazine Awards. And those are just the most sought-after laurels. There are at least 200 national contests, and scores of state and local ones.

“Nothing illustrates the powerful passion for prizes quite so vividly,” Shepard says, “as the fact that for months on end, worrying about contests will be someone’s full-time job” at many large news organizations, such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (which won many Pulitzers during the 1970s and ’80s, under editor Gene Roberts). The payoff? Reporters who bear the “Pulitzer Prize-winning” tag usually find their services in greater demand, while winning newspapers take on new (if not necessarily permanent) allure for ambitious scribes and editorial overseers, near and far.

Defenders argue that the prizes not only reward deserving journalists but spur others to do better, including even publishers. “Newspapers get embarrassed when they don’t ever win,” says Roberts, now a journalism professor at the



The Pulitzer Prize

University of Maryland, College Park. “That’s a pretty good signal to send. The message is: They could be winning if they spent time, money and newshole [space for news] on good stories.”

Others worry that the frantic pursuit of prizes distracts news organizations from more important, less glamorous work. “Rather than devoting buckets of money to a knock-em-dead five-part series that has Pulitzer or duPont written all over it,” writes Shepard, critics “say resources might be better spent on more local gumshoe reporting or daily beat reporting.” And for those already in those essential jobs, it can be

demoralizing to see designated “stars” given oodles of time to work on megaprojects remote from “a paper or station’s core responsibilities.”

The No-News Media

“Media to Government: Drop Dead” by Stephen Hess, in *Brookings Review* (Winter 2000), 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Asked to define “real news,” a veteran journalist once said it is “the news you and I need to keep our freedom”—meaning, mainly governmental and political news. By that standard, most Americans now get much less real news than they did a few decades ago, contends Hess, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and long-time observer of Washington journalism.

In 1997, according to one study, only one-fifth of all the stories on the front pages of the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, on the network TV nightly news programs, and in *Time* and *Newsweek* were about government. Twenty years earlier, the proportion had been one-third.

Washington no longer gets the lion’s share of the news media’s attention, Hess points out. Newspapers he examined in 1978 averaged 12 Washington stories a day, and 45 percent of their lead front-page stories had a Washington dateline. Twenty years later, the

newspapers averaged only six stories a day from the nation’s capital, and took only 36 percent of their lead stories from there.

“As the ’90s evolved, our papers showed less and less interest in any news from Washington,” says Robert Rankin of the Knight-Ridder chain’s Washington bureau. In response, his bureau added national “theme specialties” such as science, religion, and consumer affairs to its traditional White House and congressional beats. Other Washington bureaus did the same.

Network TV news shows also have paid less attention to Washington in recent decades. And while local TV news operations started paying *more* attention in the early 1980s, capitalizing on the new availability of commercial satellites and lightweight video cameras, the novelty eventually wore off, Hess says, and station managers concluded that Washington stories simply “didn’t excite viewers.”

Local TV news programs have become Americans' "most popular source of information," says Hess, but their diet of crime, fires, and fluff leaves "little room for stories about municipal government or elections." A survey of 13 top-market cities during the month before the 1996 elections showed that only seven percent of the stories were about politics (compared with 22 percent about crime).

Hess doesn't think the shift is merely a reaction to political change. Political power

may have shifted from Washington to the states, but coverage of the statehouses has also declined. (See WQ, Autumn 1998, pp. 127–129.) Rather, he says, the shift emerged from within the news business itself. An influential 1980 report by focus group researcher Ruth Clark for the American Newspaper Publishers Association and work by TV consultants pointed the way toward "consumer-driven" journalism. "Self-help information was in. Celebrity features were in. Hard news about government was out."

Big Brother or Small Beer?

"Prime-time Propaganda," "Propaganda for Dollars," and "The Drug War Gravy Train" by Daniel Forbes, in *Salon* (Jan. 13, 14, Mar. 31, 2000), www.salon.com, and "White House Blasts *Salon*" by Robert Housman, in *Salon* (Apr. 20, 2000), www.salon.com.

Should the federal government have a say in the story line of *Chicago Hope* or other TV series? Should it be providing magazines with financial credits for articles whose content it approves? In its war against drugs, charges freelance writer Forbes, the government has been engaging in precisely those practices.

In late 1997, Congress authorized the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy to buy \$1 billion in antidrug ads over five years, so long as the TV networks or other media provided matching antidrug ads or editorial content free.

Not wanting to give up lucrative advertising, six networks—ABC, CBS, NBC, the WB, Fox, and, this past season, UPN—elected to use programming for some of the matching antidrug messages. According to Forbes: "In certain cases, the drug czar's office was allowed to review scripts and suggest changes before a show was broadcast. In some cases, the networks inserted government-approved anti-drug messages into TV sit-

coms and dramas in order to satisfy their obligations to their government 'client.'" Virtually none of the producers and writers involved in crafting the antidrug episodes knew of the arrangement with the government, however.

Forbes also says that *Parade* and five other magazines submitted some published articles for ad credit. But the drug control office did not review articles before publication. The editors involved all denied being influenced.

Perhaps because few question the government's antidrug message, the nation's usually hyperactive media watchers by and large have yawned at Forbes's disclosures. Tom Goldstein, dean of the Columbia University School of Journalism, told Forbes the arrangement with the magazines struck him as "highly dubious." But Jacqueline Leo, president of the American Society of Magazine Editors, said, "Given all the things editors can be pressured about, this doesn't ring my chimes."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

God Knows

"'We Speak to God with Our Thoughts': Abelard and the Implications of Private Communication with God" by Susan R. Kramer, in *Church History* (Mar. 2000), Divinity School, Duke Univ., Box 90975, Durham, N.C. 27708–0975.

During the "renaissance" of the 12th century, religious thinkers such as Peter Abelard (1079–1142?)—the famous French theolo-

gian who is best known to nonscholars for his tragic love affair with Héloïse—proposed a new purpose for penance, one that reflect-

ed the age's heightened interest in the self, writes Kramer, a graduate student in history at Columbia University.

In his classic *Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (1927), medievalist Charles Homer Haskins argued that the century's cultural and scientific flowering gave birth to modern Western civilization. More recent scholars, Kramer notes, have also examined religious thought in the period, finding "a new level of self-awareness or concern with the inner life."

Before the 12th century, Kramer says, the purpose of penance was to reconcile the sinner to the Catholic Church, "which then mediated with God on the sinner's behalf." In Abelard's influential interpretation, however, the object became the sinner's *direct* reconciliation to God.

Abelard—whose theological thinking twice won him condemnations for heresy from ecclesiastical councils—accepted the prevailing doctrine that a sinner's reconciliation to God had three parts: repentance, confession, and satisfaction. But he regarded oral confession to a priest or others as, in a sense, superfluous: God, being omniscient, already

knew the sinner's mind. "[W]ith the sigh and contrition of the heart which we call true repentance . . . we are instantly reconciled to God and we gain pardon for the preceding sin," he maintained.

Even so, confession—which was generally regarded as obligatory by the early-12th-century schoolmen (and which was mandated by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 as an annual duty for Christians)—still was useful, Abelard maintained.

In his *Ethics*, Kramer says, Abelard "explains that the faithful confess their sins to one another in order to obtain prayers from one another and 'because in the humility of confession a large part of satisfaction is performed and we obtain a greater indulgence in the relaxation of our penance.' Confession to priests is also instrumental for the imposition of appropriate satisfaction, although we may punish our sins sufficiently according to our own sentencing. Thus, the primary purpose of confession is to make known what had been hidden." Though God alone could truly judge that hidden, inner self, "shame and its expiation are human matters."

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Neandertal Scientists

"Who Were the Neandertals?" by Kate Wong, in *Scientific American* (Apr. 2000), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017-1111.

Were Neandertals (a.k.a. Neanderthals) more like modern humans than many of us care to admit? Were they (gasp!) our ancestors? A fierce scientific debate rages, reports Wong, a *Scientific American* staff writer.

Neandertals first came to researchers' attention in 1856, when a partial skeleton—a heavy skull with arched browridge and massive limb bones—turned up in Germany's Neander Valley. Scientists assigned the newfound hominids to their own species, *Homo neanderthalensis*. Then, a half-century later, came the sensational French discovery of the "Old Man" of La Chapelle-aux-Saints, prompting scientists to draw the now-familiar portrait of Neandertals as primitive protohumans.

After 200,000 years in Europe and western Asia, they said, the dimwitted brutes—stooped, lumbering, apelike—were driven to extinction, unable to compete once intelligent, sophisticated *Homo sapiens* arrived on the scene.

Scientists subsequently determined that Neandertals actually had the same upright posture and way of moving as modern humans have. Even so, such characteristic Neandertal features as robust skeletons, short limbs and barrel chests, prominent browridges and low, sloping foreheads, protruding midfaces and chinless jaws, says Wong, still clearly indicate to many paleo-anthropologists "an evolutionary trajectory separate from that of moderns."

Other scientists, such as Milford H.

Wolpoff of the University of Michigan, disagree. They argue that many of the Neandertal features are also seen in some early modern Europeans who came later, such as the ones found at Mladec, a site in Moravia (Czech Republic), and that this is evidence of extensive interbreeding.

But scientists who hold with the separate-species view dismiss that idea. “When I look at the morphology of these people [from Mladec],” says Christopher B. Stringer of London’s Natural History Museum, “I see robustness, I don’t see Neandertal.” The question seemed settled when a 1997 analysis found that mitochondrial DNA from a Neandertal fossil was vastly different from that of living moderns: “Neandertals Were Not Our Ancestors,” shouted the scientific journal *Cell* on its cover. Nevertheless, Wong says, “undercurrents of doubt have persisted.”

Much recent research also has focused on Neandertals’ behavior. In the past, they were often depicted as unable to hunt or plan ahead, but animal remains from a

Croatian site indicate they were skilled hunters, and several Neandertal burial sites contain what might have been grave goods, indicating a capacity for symbolic thought.

“If Neandertals possessed basically the same cognitive ability as moderns,” Wong says, their disappearance becomes all the more puzzling. It did not happen overnight. Anthropologists have recently shown that Neandertals still lived in central Europe 28,000 years ago, thousands of years after moderns appeared.

Gradually, in Stringer’s view, the Neandertals were supplanted by the new species, “because moderns were a bit more innovative, a bit better able to cope with rapid environmental change quickly, and they probably had bigger social networks.”

Not so, contends Wolpoff: The Neandertals were vastly outnumbered, and after thousands of years of interbreeding, their distinctive features were diluted and ultimately faded away. Clearly, the same cannot yet be said of the passionate scientific debate about Neandertals.

Paging Dr. Joe Camel

“The Good Side of Nicotine” by Mairin B. Brennan, in *Chemical & Engineering News* (Mar. 27, 2000), 1155 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

A good word about nicotine seldom is heard these days, but scientists have discovered that the demonic chemical that makes smoking addictive has some therapeutic virtues, reports Brennan, a *Chemical & Engineering News* senior editor.

Nicotine can help some people suffering from Tourette’s syndrome, an inherited neurological disorder that afflicts as many as 150,000 children and adults in the United States. Though some people with Tourette’s can lead productive lives without medication, others need help to control the

symptoms, which include repetitive twitching, shrugging, and gesturing, as well as “barking” and throat-clearing noises, word

repetition, and, in some cases, involuntary cursing. Haloperidol, which is an antipsychotic drug sold commercially under the name Haldol, controls the tics in most Tourette’s patients but has undesirable side effects. Researchers have learned that nicotine boosts the effectiveness of Haloperidol, enabling its

side effects to be minimized.

Nicotine may also be beneficial in treating other brain disorders, such as Alzheimer’s



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and Parkinson's diseases. "Cigarette smokers are believed to have a lower risk of contracting either of these diseases, and nicotine is thought to afford the protection," Brennan writes. Numerous studies have shown that smoking wards off Parkinson's; the evidence on Alzheimer's is less clear.

Of course, smoking carries lethal risks: lung cancer, heart disease, stroke. At a scientific symposium earlier this year on nicotine's therapeutic potential, Edward D. Levin, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University, began with this advice: "Don't smoke!"

Animal Numeracy

"What Do Animals Think about Numbers?" by Marc D. Hauser, in *American Scientist* (Mar.–Apr. 2000), P.O. Box 13975, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709–3975.

More than 1,000 rhesus monkeys live on the Puerto Rican island of Cayo Santiago. Hauser, a psychology professor at Harvard University and the author of *Wild Minds* (2000), gave some of the wild monkeys there an arithmetic test. He and his students conspicuously placed two bright purple eggplants behind a screen but when they removed the screen the monkeys might behold one, two, or three eggplants. Just as human infants had done in similar tests, the monkeys tended to look longer when one or three eggplants appeared instead of the expected two.

From those and other experiments, Hauser says, it appears that wild rhesus monkeys, like human infants, can distinguish among *one*, *two*, *three*, and *many* objects. Other research, moreover, has shown that with training, monkeys and other animals can develop more sophisticated numerical abilities. Pigeons and rats, for instance, have learned to peck or press a button 24 times, no more, no less, to obtain a food pellet. Recent experiments by Columbia University psychologists demonstrated that captive rhesus

monkeys can grasp the ordinal relations among the numbers one to nine and indicate the proper numerical order for various quantities of different images. "The rhesus monkeys' performance was excellent—but only after receiving hundreds of training trials," notes Hauser.

Though the situations that animals confront in the wild may call for limited numerical abilities—chimpanzees, for instance, insist on "strength in numbers" (at least three adult males) before they'll attack an intruding chimp from another pack—they apparently do not require the numerical precision and skills found in humans. This prompts Hauser to ask: "What kind of evolutionary or ecological pressures would have favored the numerical competence found in *Homo sapiens*?" His admittedly speculative answer: When trading appeared on the scene, precision became necessary to ensure a fair exchange. "Selection favored those individuals capable of enumeration and combinatorial computation with symbols." And thus, he says, was the groundwork laid for algebra, calculus, and set theory.

What's in a Meme?

"The Meme Metaphor" by Mark Jeffreys, in *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* (Winter 2000), Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, Journals Div., 2715 N. Charles St., Baltimore, Md. 21218–4363.

Darwinist Richard Dawkins's speculative concept of a *meme*—a replicating cultural entity analogous to a gene, that might explain how human culture evolves—has caught on in recent years. There's even a three-year-old academic journal devoted to the fledgling science of memetics. Unlike some prominent scientists, Jeffreys, an English professor

at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, does not dismiss memetics out of hand, but he says much work is needed to make the meme metaphor scientifically useful.

What is a meme? A lexicon on the *Journal of Memetics* website (www.cpm.mmu.ac.uk/jom-emit) gives this definition: "A contagious information pattern that replicates by para-

sitically infecting human minds and altering their behavior, causing them to propagate the pattern. . . . Individual slogans, catch-phrases, melodies, icons, inventions, and fashions are typical memes.”

Jeffreys, however, contends that memeticists are mixing metaphors—ones drawn from virology, such as hosts and parasites, with the basic metaphor drawn from genetics. That metaphor asserts “that memes parallel genes” and form an independent, cultural system of natural selection. Researchers should stick with it, he maintains. “If memetic replication is not based on genetic replication and is truly part of a new selection process,” he says, “it cannot be considered parasitic, nor can humans be called hosts. In certain respects, the spread of beliefs, fashions, technologies, and types of artifacts [does] resemble epidemics, but in those respects so does the spread of life on Earth in the first place, along with the subsequent waves and collapses of spreading speciation and mass extinctions.”

Yet even with the viral metaphors discarded, Jeffreys says, memetics still is not genetics,

nor “even a fully fledged theory of selection because it has proposed no plausible mechanism for sufficiently high-fidelity self-replication” of the memes. This is not a fatal flaw, in his view. It merely puts memetics in roughly the same situation as the “largely speculative” study of the origin of life, though without the plausibility that enterprise derives from “the success of the Darwinian explanations of speciation and the fossil record.”

That offers a clue as to how memeticists should proceed, Jeffreys believes. “Culture most probably evolves,” he says, “but relevant empirical evidence is desperately needed” to determine whether it evolves in memetic fashion, by a separate Darwinian system. Memeticists, he urges, should develop “a plausible model of replication,” and test it against existing “cultural equivalents of species, such as religions and ideologies.” If they can show, for instance, how the incest taboo or adoption, which run counter to people’s “genetic interests,” are culturally transmitted, then memetics “will no longer be ‘cocktail party science.’”

ARTS & LETTERS

The Other Daumier

“‘Strange Seriousness’: Discovering Daumier” by Roger Kimball, in *The New Criterion* (Apr. 2000), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.

Honoré Daumier’s amusing and clever caricatures of lawyers, doctors, politicians, and other denizens of 19th-century Paris remain well known today. But his haunting paintings of Don Quixote and other subjects have been far less celebrated—at least until the recent hit exhibition of his works at the Phillips Collection, in Washington. Much the same discrepancy in response confronted Daumier (1808–79) during his life, observes Kimball, managing editor of the *New Criterion*. “Time and



The exact subject of Daumier’s painting The Uprising (1852–58) is unknown, but it may have been the Revolution of 1848 in France.

again, he attempted to get his work as a painter taken seriously. The Salon was frosty, the public uninterested.”

Daumier, who had little formal education, excelled at caricature—and “became its slave,” Kimball says. His work for Charles Philipon’s *Le Charivari* and other satirical magazines “paid the bills, though barely.” It also earned him, on one occasion, a six-month prison term. The king was not amused by Daumier’s famous lithograph *Gargantua*, showing a pear-headed Louis-Philippe perched on a commode, taking in the country’s treasure from its starving citizens, while excreting writs, honors, and ribbons for royal ministers and favorites.

“There is plenty to admire in Daumier’s caricatures,” says Kimball. “But his paintings . . . exist in an entirely different spiritual and aesthetic register.” They have, as novelist Henry James commented, a “strange seriousness.” A few have religious

themes, Kimball notes, but “his best paintings—some family scenes, *Third-Class Carriage* (1862–64), *The Uprising* (1852–58), *The Fugitives* (1865–70), and several paintings of Don Quixote—are secular. Nevertheless, they possess rare depths of solitude and melancholy tenderness.”

In 1878, when Daumier was blind and one year from death, several friends organized a large retrospective at a gallery in Paris. By then, his oeuvre included nearly 300 paintings, along with thousands of caricatures. Although Daumier could not attend, the exhibition—“carefully designed,” Kimball says, “to highlight Daumier’s achievements as a serious painter”—was “a great moment” for him. At long last his paintings were being recognized. “The show was a rousing critical success,” writes Kimball. But “the masses whom Daumier had pleased, goaded, and amused for decades stayed away *en masse*.”

Shocking Exhibition

“The Business of Art” by András Szánto, in *The American Prospect* (Feb. 28, 2000),
Five Broad St., Boston, Mass. 02109.

The controversy last fall over the *Sensation* exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art left many besides New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani aghast. More disturbing to some than the elephant-dung Virgin Mary and other dubious works on display were the museum’s cozy financial relations with art patrons and dealers. The collection’s owner, Charles Saatchi, for instance, whose works were likely to fetch higher prices thanks to the prestige-enhancing exhibition, paid \$160,000 of the museum’s costs. Did commerce affect curatorial judgment in Brooklyn? *Of course* it did—as it does at most museums of contemporary art, argues Szánto, associate director of the National Arts Journalism Program at Columbia University.

“The art world isn’t an unscrupulous racket,” he says. “But only the most naïve could assume that money and influence do not play a role in deciding what kind of art gets to be exhibited in museums.” *Of course* “art-works placed in exhibitions and published in catalogues increase in monetary value”; *of course* “corporate sponsors are allowed to

wine and dine clients in museums”; *of course* “lenders to exhibitions are also asked to write checks.” The sorts of deals made in Brooklyn are pretty much SOP these days, says Szánto. “How could they not be? Over the past several decades, the art world has been hurled at the mercy of market forces.”

Between 1982 and 1998, according to a recent Alliance for the Arts report, funding from all governmental sources for New York arts organizations dropped from 28.9 percent of their income to 11.1 percent, with federal funding alone plummeting by 88 percent, to a negligible 1.2 percent. “Corporate funding, which comes with more and more strings attached,” Szánto says, “is also on the wane,” down to 3.9 percent. “Foundation support has been easier to come by in these flush times, but it is a hit-or-miss affair.” As for gift shop sales and other profit-making enterprises, no museum makes more than 10 percent of revenues that way. All this leaves private donors to take up the slack. Meanwhile, Szánto notes, art prices have skyrocketed. Works by Damien Hirst, whose

sliced barnyard animals appeared in *Sensation*, now fetch hundreds of thousands of dollars.

More *Sensation*-type deals are inevitable, says Szánto. The best way for museums to keep from becoming “galleries in disguise, mere means to augment the value of private

collections,” he believes, is to give up any “anachronistic belief in the purity of the [museum] project,” openly acknowledge the “business side” of their operations, as newspapers and other publishing companies do, and develop ethical guidelines to keep it from becoming dominant.

Follow the Pattern

“Architecture is a vernacular art,” asserts Roger Scruton, editor of *The Salisbury Review* (Spring 2000).

Although there are the great projects, and the great architects who succeed in them, both are exceptions. We build because we need to, and for a purpose. Most people who build have no special talent, and no high artistic ideals. For them, the aesthetic is important not because they have something special or entrancing to communicate, but merely because, being decent and alert to their neighbors, they want to do what is right. Hence modesty, repeatability and rule-guidedness are vital architectural resources. Style must be so defined that anyone, however uninspired, can make good use of it, and add thereby to the public dwelling space that is our common possession. That is why the most successful period of Western architecture—the period in which real and lasting towns of great size were envisaged and developed—was the period of the classical vernacular, when pattern books guided people who had not fallen prey to the illusion of their own genius.

This does not mean that creativity and imagination have no place in architecture. On the contrary. We depend upon the stylistic breakthroughs, the innovations and discoveries that create the repeatable vocabulary of forms. Palladian windows, Vignolesque cornices, the classical orders, the Gothic mouldings—these great artistic triumphs become types and patterns for lesser mortals. Our best bet in architecture is that the artistic geniuses should invest their energy as Palladio did, in patterns that can be reproduced at will by the rest of us.

Publishing's E-Savior

“The Rattle of Pebbles” by Jason Epstein, in *The New York Review of Books* (Apr. 27, 2000), 1755 Broadway, Fifth floor, New York, N.Y. 10019–3780.

Thanks to the World Wide Web and other new technologies, book publishing is on the brink of “a vast transformation”—and none too soon, argues Epstein, an industry veteran who recently stepped down as editorial director of Random House. Providentially, he writes, “these technologies have emerged just as the publishing industry has fallen into terminal collapse.”

Bertelsmann, a German-based media conglomerate, and four other corporate empires now

dominate book publishing in the United States, he notes. Bertelsmann, for example, owns such well-known imprints as Random House, Knopf, Doubleday, Bantam, Pantheon, Dell, Crown, and Ballantine. “By liquidating redundant overheads,” says Epstein, “these corporate owners hope to improve the low profit margins typical of the industry.” But they are likely to be disappointed.

Publishers have committed themselves, he says, to “an impossible goal”: turning out “a

constant supply of best sellers” to satisfy Borders and Barnes & Noble, the dominant bookstore chains, “whose high operating costs demand high rates of turnover” of titles. Most worthwhile books “are not meant to be best sellers,” Epstein points out, and though more such worthy books may be published today than ever before, they stay in print only briefly. Publishers once “cultivated their backlists as their major asset, choosing titles for their permanent value as much as for their immediate appeal.” Bestsellers were “lucky accidents.”

The million-copy sales of a handful of “name-brand” authors, such as John Grisham, have fostered the illusion that book publishing is “a predictable, mass market business,” Epstein says. Between 1986 and 1996, the share of all books sold represented by the 30 top bestsellers nearly doubled. But of the 100 bestsellers in roughly the same period, 63 were turned out by only six authors. This concentration was “a mixed blessing to publishers,” he observes, since profits are often gobbled up in the effort to keep “name-brand” writers.

To reach their mass readers, such authors real-

ly need only routine publishing services—printing, advertising, and distribution—which, in the likely event that publishers sooner or later cease to exist, Epstein speculates, could easily be provided by independent contractors.

With the emerging digital technologies, he says, writers and readers “will no longer need publishers or traditional booksellers to bring them together.” Recently, a Stephen King short story sold exclusively online resulted in 400,000 requests to download it in just the first day. But readers will still need help separating the literary wheat from the chaff, Epstein believes, so “distinguished websites, like good bookstores,” are likely to emerge. “On the infinitely expandable shelves of the World Wide Web, there will be room for an infinite variety of books.” None will ever have to go out of print.

Though distribution of books will radically change, “the essential work of editing and publicity” will remain, says Epstein. And book publishing may become again what it once was: “a cottage industry of diverse, creative, autonomous units.”

The Sins of Hawthorne’s Fathers

“Hawthorne’s Puritans: From Fact to Fiction” by Deborah L. Madsen, in *Journal of American Studies* (Dec. 1999), Cambridge Univ. Press, 40 W. 20th St., N.Y. 10011-4211.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) was merciless in his fictional portrayals of merciless Puritans, those upholders of dour orthodoxy, hot in pursuit of witches and heretics. But Madsen, an English professor at South Bank University, London, argues that Hawthorne did the Puritans, and one colonial family in particular, an injustice.

Hawthorne’s own 17th-century ancestors, as he frankly admitted, had been among the real-life Puritan zealots. One was a long-time magistrate of Salem, William Hathorne. (Nathaniel added the *w* to his surname when he began to write.) William Hathorne, says Madsen, was “a notorious persecutor of Quakers,” operating “a system of spies or informers who reported to him individuals who neglected their church and civil duties.” Hathorne’s son John was the “‘hanging judge’” of the Salem witchcraft trials in 1692.

After *The House of the Seven Gables* appeared in 1851, telling of the cursed Pyncheon family, Hawthorne acknowl-

edged—in response to complaints from members of a Pyncheon family (who spelled their name without the *e*)—that the Pyncheon name had been inspired by the name of their ancestor, Judge William Pyncheon (1590–1661), one of the 26 patentees of the Massachusetts Bay Company and the founder of Springfield, Massachusetts.

How odd then, suggests Madsen, that novelist Hawthorne paid no heed to the fact that Judge Pyncheon was cut from very different cloth than his own ancestors—“something of a thorn in the side of colonial authorities.” When he presided over an early witchcraft case in Springfield, the judge seems to have “simply performed his duty,” she says. In 1650, he was found guilty of heresy in connection with a book he had written about Christ and redemption, and arranged to return with his wife to England.

If Hawthorne knew about the real colonial Pynchons and their like, why did he ignore the varieties of Puritanism and portray it instead as a monolith (with heretics being only

exceptional individuals)? Because, Madsen says, he was able in that way “to excuse the sins

of his fathers by showing that they were incapable of acting otherwise.”

OTHER NATIONS

Europe's Real 'Haider' Problem

A Survey of Recent Articles

Has Adolf Hitler returned in the guise of a smooth-talking Austrian politician with the telegenic looks of an aging rock star? So it might seem from the European Union's swift imposition of diplomatic sanctions against Austria for allowing Jörg Haider's Freedom Party into its coalition government. Yet a closer look suggests that the real problem facing Europe today is not a revival of Nazism. Rather, says British historian Mark Mazower, of the University of Sussex, writing in *Civilization* (Apr.–May 2000), it is “the realities of democracy triumphant.”

By winning 27 percent of the vote in last October's parliamentary elections, Haider's right-wing populist party edged the conservative People's Party to finish in second place behind the Social Democrats. The People's Party conservatives then shattered their long-ruling “Grand Coalition” with the Social Democrats and formed a new government with Haider's party, which has a long history of xenophobia and sympathy for Nazism. Wolfgang Schüssel, the chairman of the People's Party, became chancellor. The diplomatic sanctions by the 14 other European Union (EU) members soon followed.

But foreign journalists and other close observers do not see in Haider's rise a resurgence of “the dark side of the Austrian soul,” notes Rainer Bauböck, a political scientist at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, writing in *Dissent* (Spring 2000). The lesson of Kurt Waldheim's presidency (1986–92), when his unsavory wartime past resulted in some diplomatic isolation for Austria, was not lost, Bauböck points out, on the conservatives and Social Democrats, who had “publicly accepted Austria's responsibility for its large share in Nazi atrocities.” Nearly three-fourths of Austrian voters did *not* vote for Haider's party last October. His electoral support, Bauböck says, represented “a diffuse protest vote rather than [an] endorsement for right-wing extremism.”

Other analysts agree. Robert S. Wistrich, who teaches modern Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, writes in *Commentary* (Apr. 2000) that Haider has succeeded by presenting himself as a reformist working for the “little man” and against the status quo created by the conservatives and Social Democrats.

In most respects, that status quo does not seem bad at all. Unemployment is low, inflation is minuscule, exports are high, labor is at peace, tourism is booming, and crime rates are down and falling. But immigrants and refugees—many from central and southeastern Europe—constitute more than 10 percent of the population and have made many Austrians uneasy. Haider's xenophobic rhetoric, observes Bauböck, often trailed behind the actual immigration policies of the ruling coalition parties, which “kept insisting, contrary to all evidence, that Austria was not a country of immigration [and] radically cut back family reunification.”

Exit polls showed that many Freedom Party votes last October were cast “more in protest against the Grand Coalition's abuse of its monopoly position . . . than out of agreement with Haider's views,” notes Richard Rose, director of the University of Strathclyde's Center for the Study of Public Policy, in Glasgow.

“Party patronage was said to reach down as far as the public lavatories, where the attendant on one side was *rot* [red] (Socialist) and the other *schwarz* [black] (a supporter of the People's Party),” Rose writes in the *Journal of Democracy* (Apr. 2000). Dissatisfied voters had little choice but to turn to protest parties. Haider's party attracted not only blue-collar workers but also entrepreneurs and yuppies.

Though Austria has a higher proportion of immigrants in its population than almost any other EU country, public opinion surveys, Rose says, “show that Austrians tend to be *more*

tolerant of immigrants than their neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe.” For instance, Austria accepted some 100,000 refugees from the 1992–95 war in Bosnia.

Indeed, “even as the EU categorically denounces Haider’s anti-immigration agenda,” writes Wistrich, “its own member nations—and especially the richer ones—have been competing with each other to keep out non-white immigrants. . . . In Denmark, for example, once considered one of the EU’s most tolerant countries, the socialist government has been implementing draconian restrictions on immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees—without, naturally, evoking the slightest hint of European sanctions.”

Never before, several analysts note, had the EU intervened in the affairs of a democratic member state. It had lodged no protests in the name of morality and democracy against the inclusion of Communists in the French gov-

ernment or against the inclusion of the far-right National Alliance in the Italian government in 1994. Why, then, Austria in 2000?

The answer, says Mazower, author of *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (1999), seems to be a fear that xenophobic parties may make inroads elsewhere in Europe. “In Italy and France, the established center-right has been challenged by xenophobic parties. . . . In Denmark, Belgium, and Switzerland, too, the new right has recently made electoral gains.” Germany’s scandal-ridden Christian Democratic Union could also face a challenge.

The European Union, in Mazower’s view, ought “to give up interfering in Austrian politics and obsessing about National Socialism.” EU member states should “make good on their own recent lofty rhetoric, supplementing their existing anti-immigration statutes with a genuine commitment to combating xenophobia at home.”

China’s Passé Party

“Membership Has Its Privileges: The Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communist Party Members in Urban China” by Bruce J. Dickson and Maria Rost Rublee, in *Comparative Political Studies* (Feb. 2000), Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91320.

It’s long been evident that (to paraphrase George Orwell) though all are equal in communist lands, some are more equal than others. But thanks to the economic reforms in post-Mao China, and the consequent need for professionals and technicians, it appears that membership in the Chinese Communist Party is no longer virtually the only path to “more equal” material rewards.

Party membership, to be sure, continues to provide tangible benefits, especially for cadres, note Dickson and Rublee, a political scientist and graduate student, respectively, at George Washington University. In 1988, when party members made up less than five percent of China’s total population, the average urban party member, a survey the following year showed, earned 191 yuan—40 more than the average urban nonmember did. (And that doesn’t count the income from bribery and other corrupt behavior, widespread among party and government officials.)

Yet, revealingly, party members were not concentrated in all of the most prestigious sorts of jobs. Yes, about 84 percent of the offi-

cials surveyed and 77 percent of the factory managers belonged to the party (in sharp contrast to the seven percent of laborers who belonged)—but 66 percent of the professionals and technicians did *not* belong to the party. Moreover, Dickson and Rublee found, for rank-and-file party members (though not the cadres), a college education provided a bigger wage boost than belonging to the party did.

The post-Mao reforms “created new opportunities for pursuing career goals,” observe the authors. “Individuals could seek advanced degrees from Chinese or foreign universities” and pursue technical careers, or go into business. Many who took those alternative paths “were reluctant to join the party,” because of its restrictions and its demands on members’ time. Despite its diminished appeal, however, party membership remains attractive to aspiring bureaucrats among “China’s best and brightest,” Dickson and Rublee note.

After the 1989 survey, which was conducted by a team of American, British, and Chinese scholars, the Chinese Communist

Party clamped down on such inquiries. As a result, Dickson and Rublee are able only to surmise about the impact of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 and the “explosive

growth” of the private sector during the 1990s. In all likelihood, say the authors, the appeal of China’s Communist Party has shrunk even further.

Rwanda’s Tangled Web

“Hate Crimes” by René Lemarchand, in *Transition* (2000: Nos. 81–82),
69 Dunster St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

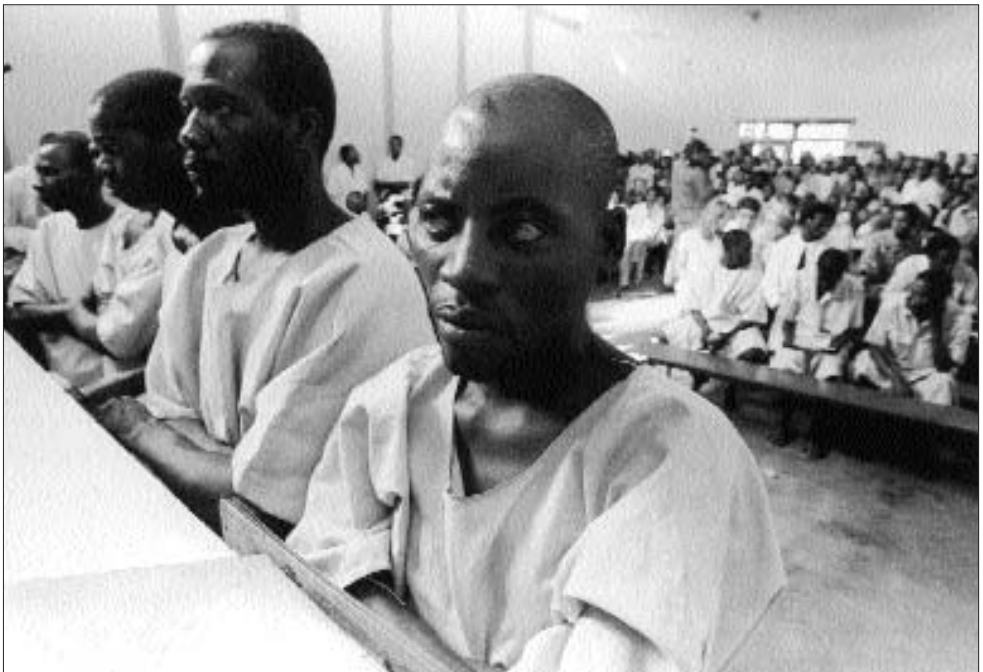
In cases of genocide such as the 1994 bloodbath in Rwanda, in which more than a half-million Tutsi perished at the hands of the Hutu, the division between good and evil comes to seem starkly clear. “In Rwanda today,” says Lemarchand, an emeritus professor of political science at the University of Florida, Gainesville, “guilt and innocence are increasingly becoming ethnicized,” with the minority Tutsi “now beyond reproach.” But while there’s no denying “the evil committed in the name of Hutu power,” it’s not the whole story, he argues.

In the first place, not all Hutu have blood on their hands, he points out. “If it’s true that 10 percent of the Hutu population participated in the killings . . . that leaves 90 percent . . . that did not—5.8 million Hutu.” Moreover, some Hutu, at “considerable risk,”

saved thousands of their Tutsi neighbors from the machete.

At least 600,000 Tutsi were slaughtered between April and July 1994, before Paul Kagame’s Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), made up mainly of Tutsi exiles, defeated the Hutu-dominated government. But the violent interethnic conflict began long before the genocide, Lemarchand avers, when the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Army, with support from the government of Uganda, launched a civil war against the government in 1990.

Nor were Tutsi the only victims of the Hutu rampage in 1994: It also claimed as many as 50,000 Hutu. “For many landless peasants,” Lemarchand explains, “the genocide was . . . an opportunity to grab land from their neighbors, Tutsi and Hutu alike.” Intra-Hutu



These Hutu men were among those convicted of taking part in the genocidal killings in Rwanda in 1994.

politics also figured, with the ruling party fearing that a rival one might join forces with the RPF. Most of the “moderate Hutu” killed during the genocide belonged to that rival party.

Indeed, Hutu deaths ran much higher, Lemarchand says. If those who were killed during and right after the RPF’s advance on the capital of Kigali are added in, along with those who fled to Zaire and were later killed by their pursuers or died of disease and starvation, then the grand total of Hutu deaths comes to perhaps a half-million—only 100,000 or so fewer than the Tutsi deaths during the genocide of 1994.

Today, says Lemarchand, Rwanda “is more profoundly divided” between Hutu and Tutsi than ever, despite the lip service paid

to “nonracialism” by the Tutsi-led government (which relies on foreign aid for two-thirds of its budget). Kagame, who recently assumed the presidency, “has the ear of many in the West, not least because he knows how to appeal to its shame for not acting to end the genocide itself. Very little is said about the 120,000 Hutu suspects still languishing in overcrowded prisons; about the Rwandan army’s continuing activities in the eastern Congo . . . or about brutal raids against Hutu communities suspected of harboring genocidaires in Rwanda itself.” Critics of these policies risk being accused of sympathy with genocidal forces, says Lemarchand, but “it is time to end the conspiracy of silence.”

Baht in Business

“The Big Mango Bounces Back” by Joshua Kurlantzick, in *World Policy Journal* (Spring 2000),
World Policy Institute, New School Univ., 65 Fifth Ave., Ste. 413, New York, N.Y. 10003.

After their bubble burst three years ago, economic forecasts turned gloomy for Thailand and the other Southeast Asian “tiger cubs.” With surprising speed, however, reports Kurlantzick, Bangkok correspondent for Agence France-Presse, the ailing whelps “have begun to heal themselves.”

The Thai economy last year grew by more than four percent, and other economies in the region posted similar growth rates. Unemployment has dropped, and both consumers and foreign investors have been regaining their confidence.

What’s responsible for this rapid reversal of fortune? In part, sheer luck, says Kurlantzick. The region’s weak currencies enhanced the appeal of its exports, and America showed a “seemingly bottomless” appetite for Malaysian disk drives, Thai semiconductors, and Singaporean telecommunications equipment. Malaysian exports grew by 7.6 percent last year. The weak baht in Thailand and peso in the Philippines also made these countries’ beaches, temples, and markets more inviting to foreign visitors. Meanwhile, the steep rise in world oil prices last year gave petroleum exporters Malaysia and Indonesia a windfall, and the excellent weather following droughts caused by El Niño let Indonesian coffee growers and Thai rice producers boost output for export. Japan also

helped, with more than \$35 billion in aid.

But Thailand and its neighbors themselves “deserve considerable credit” for the turnaround, Kurlantzick says. “The slump has forced [them] to embrace better governance, commercial and financial transparency, labor-management cooperation, and stronger work ethics.” The countries have shut down or recapitalized insolvent banks and gotten rid of “the most corrupt bank officials and finance ministry bureaucrats.” Several governments have enacted bankruptcy and foreclosure laws. And some commercial and industrial enterprises, abandoning their opposition to downsizing, “have slashed bloated management and employee rosters.”

Thailand and the other countries still “are far from complete recovery,” cautions Kurlantzick, who says further reforms are needed. Unless the banks use the new bankruptcy and foreclosure laws to move quickly against indebted companies, for example, nonperforming loans—which currently constitute up to half the loans in Thailand—“will remain on the balance sheets indefinitely, reducing the pool of money available to viable businesses.” But progress has been made, he concludes, and “in all of the [countries] except Indonesia, which is threatened by murderous ethnic cleavages, sustained growth looks likely for the next four or five years.”

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

“Campaign Warriors: The Role of Political Consultants in Elections.”

Brookings Institution Press, 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

216 pp. \$42.95; paper, \$17.95

Editors: James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson

When the *New York Times* described the 1993 New Jersey gubernatorial contest as a clash of “campaign titans,” it had in mind not the incumbent Democratic governor and his Republican opponent but rather their well-known consultants, James Carville and Ed Rollins. As political parties have receded in importance in recent decades, professional political consultants have come to the fore, advising candidates on polls, media, fundraising, and what to say (and not say) to the voters. Though perhaps not the omnipotent evil geniuses they are sometimes made out to be, political consultants clearly bear watching. In this volume, a host of political scientists put them under scholarly scrutiny.

The typical political consultant in what has become a multibillion dollar industry is white, male, fortyish, well paid (in excess of \$150,000 a year), and ideologically moderate, according to James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson, and graduate student David A. Dulio, all of American University. In a 1997–98 survey of 200 of the hired guns, they found that many take a dim view of their clients. More than 60 percent of the Democratic consultants rated today’s congressional candidates only “fair” or “poor,” and 53 percent said candidates for office have gotten worse in recent years. GOP consultants (perhaps reflecting greater recent success at the polls) were more upbeat: 71 percent deemed their candidates “excellent” or “good,” and only 27 percent thought candidate quality had deteriorated. But more than 40 percent of the Republicans (and 47 percent of the Democrats) regret having helped certain candidates get elected.

The consultants also are not in awe of the electorate’s knowledge. Seventy-five percent of the Democrats and 56 percent of the Republicans regard the voters as “somewhat poorly” or “very poorly” informed about major policy issues. Yet 77 percent of the

Democrats and 82 percent of the Republicans claim to have “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of confidence in the judgment of these dunces on major domestic issues. Go figure. (Perhaps the consultants agree with the theorists who surmise that voters take “short-cuts” around their ignorance, picking up cues that let them make the correct choice at the polls.)

Ranking much lower in consultants’ eyes than either voters or candidates are the journalists covering the contests. Republican and Democratic consultants stand shoulder to shoulder on this, with more than two-thirds giving political reporters only a “fair” or “poor” rating for their work. However, 56 percent admitted that media “ad watches” (dissecting particular ads) have affected campaigns at least “a fair amount.”

How much of an impact on election outcomes do consultants—their self-serving boasts aside—really have? Analyzing the 1992 campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives, Paul S. Herrnson of the University of Maryland, College Park, found that 92 percent of the incumbents who waged highly “professional” campaigns won reelection—but so did *all* those who ran “less professional” ones. Of course, he notes, incumbents in “safe” seats had no need to buy consultants’ costly services. With challengers (who are often strapped for cash), however, the situation was different: The candidates who ran “amateur campaigns” all lost, while six percent of those with “moderately professional” campaigns, and 14 percent of those with “highly professional” ones, won. And in contests without incumbents, 30 percent of the amateur campaigns resulted in victory, compared with 48 percent of the moderately professional ones and 63 percent of the highly professional. Sometimes, Herrnson concludes, the hired guns do “make the difference between victory and defeat.”

“Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don’t Know about the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Intervention.”

RAND, 1700 Main St., P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, Calif. 90407–2138. 159 pp. Paper, \$15.

Available free online at <http://www.rand.org>. Authors: Lynn A. Karoly et al.

Since the early 1960s, Project Head Start and other programs have sought to boost the learning ability, social skills, and health of disadvantaged youngsters in their earliest years, when most physical brain development occurs. Reviewing studies of Head Start and nine smaller programs, RAND researcher Karoly and her colleagues conclude: “In some situations, carefully targeted early childhood interventions *can* yield measurable benefits in the short run and [some] persist long after the program has ended.”

Evaluations of Head Start, which has served more than 15 million children since 1965, are hampered, the authors say, by the absence of any national randomized control trial, and by other factors. Head Start may lift youngsters’ IQs, but the gains don’t seem to last. Some studies, however, show that participants did better in school, made “socioemotional” gains, and were healthier.

Karoly and her colleagues find “favorable effects” common, some of them large, some of them lasting, in other closely studied programs. Participants in three programs had a 10-point or

higher IQ advantage (though typically short-lived). Children who took part in the preschool Carolina Abecedarian program in North Carolina scored significantly higher on reading and math tests at age 15 than their control-group counterparts; they also much less often had been held back a grade or placed in special education classes. Graduates of the famous Perry Preschool program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, had 60 percent higher earnings at age 27 than members of a control group. Most evaluations, however, did not involve such long-term follow-ups.

With “more than 95 percent” certainty, Karoly and her co-authors say that the later savings from reduced demand for special education and other public services outweigh the costs for the Perry Preschool program and for participants from “higher-risk” families in the Elmira, New York, Prenatal/Early Infancy Project. But “big unknowns” remain, including why some model programs work—and whether they could be replicated on a large scale and do as well.

“Workers without Frontiers: The Impact of Globalization on International Migration.”

International Labor Organization Publications Center, P.O. Box 753, Waldorf, Md. 20604–0753.

161 pp. Paper, \$18.95. Author: Peter Stalker

Discussions of globalization usually focus on international trade and investment, not global labor migration. This is not surprising, since global exports amounted (in 1996) to about 29 percent of world gross domestic product, while the 120 million workers who went to foreign lands were only 2.3 percent of the world’s population. But if globalization fails to reduce the wide gap between rich and poor countries, pressures for massive labor migration are likely to grow, warns Peter Stalker, a writer associated with the Geneva-based International Labor Organization.

While global per capita income tripled between 1960 and 1994, some 100 countries now have per capita incomes lower than in the 1980s, or in some cases, the 1970s or ’60s. Mainly seeking higher wages, people are moving about the world in much more varied and complicated patterns than in the past. Between

1970 and 1990, the number of major “receiving” countries increased from 39 to 67, while the number of major “sending” ones went from 29 to 55—and the number in both categories jumped from four to 15. Foreign workers have flowed in recent years into the newly industrializing countries in East and Southeast Asia. Singapore in 1995 had 350,000 foreign workers—one-fifth of its labor force.

Thus far, Stalker says, globalization “has been very lopsided. . . . The least-developed countries, with 10 percent of world population, have only 0.3 percent of world trade—and that is half the proportion of two decades ago.” Meanwhile, the labor force of low-income countries is growing, from 1.4 billion in 1995 to a projected 2.2 billion in 2025. If enough adequate jobs are not available, many workers will look for them elsewhere in the global village.

WILSON CENTER DIGEST

Summaries of recent papers, studies, and meetings at the Wilson Center

“The Global Infectious Disease Threat and Its Implications for the United States.”

A National Intelligence Estimate (NIE 99-17D) by the U.S. National Intelligence Council, presented at an Apr. 18, 2000, meeting sponsored by the Wilson Center’s Environmental Change and Security Project. Authors: *George Fides and Donald L. Noah*

Globalization has at least one indisputable major drawback: It facilitates the spread of infectious diseases, such as influenza, tuberculosis, AIDS, and hepatitis C. Since reaching a historic low in 1980, the annual death rate from infectious illnesses in the United States has nearly doubled, to some 170,000 a year, according to this report, prepared—and presented at the Wilson Center—by George Fides of the National Intelligence Council and Lt. Col. Donald L. Noah, M.D., of the Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center. Before 1980, the yearly death rate had been decreasing steadily for 15 years.

The problem is much more severe abroad, the report notes, particularly in the developing and ex-communist countries, which have “poor sanitation, poor water quality, and inadequate health care.” Of the roughly 54 million deaths worldwide in 1998, as many as a third were from infectious illnesses—and nearly half of these were in sub-Saharan Africa.

More than 57 million Americans went abroad in 1998 for business or pleasure, “often to high risk countries,” the report says. That was

more than twice the number a decade earlier. Tens of millions of foreign travelers also enter the United States each year, reaching the country in less time than it takes many infectious diseases to incubate. Some one million immigrants and refugees enter legally each year, “often from countries with high infectious disease prevalence,” and several hundred thousand enter illegally. Though immunized against many illnesses, U.S. soldiers and other military personnel abroad are at risk, particularly in developing countries, and may unknowingly bring viruses back with them. Food-borne illnesses also have become more common, thanks to Americans’ changing tastes and increased trade. Food imports have doubled over the last five years, and in certain seasons, more than three-fourths of the fruits and vegetables in supermarkets and restaurants are from outside the country. Food-borne illnesses now claim some 9,000 lives a year in the United States.

The authors expect the global problem to grow worse in the coming decade, but then—with improved prevention and control, new drugs and vaccines, and socioeconomic advances—to get fitfully better.

“Is Japan in the Midst of a Social Revolution?”

A report based on a Dec. 13, 1999, seminar, sponsored by the Wilson Center’s Asia Program.

Authors: *Gary D. Allinson, Merry I. White, and L. Keith Brown*

As if Japan’s economic woes were not enough, some observers report that the country also is being roiled by seismic social changes. Gary Allinson, a professor of East Asian studies at the University of Virginia and one of three specialists addressing this seminar, asserts that various generational fissures have opened in Japanese society, “heighten[ing] contention in political life, on the job, and in the family.”

During the 1990s, Allinson noted, Japan’s “volatile partisan conflicts brought seven different

men to the office of prime minister,” including five who did not become adults until after World War II. In 1990, two-thirds of the electorate had been born before 1945; by decade’s end, only one-third had been. This shrinkage translated into a diminished base of reliable voters for the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party, as well as for the socialist parties. Younger Japanese voters seem to harbor different values from those of their elders, he said. Many under 35 are “alarmingly uninformed” and “quite uninterested in politics.”

At work, a similar generation gap has opened between “the older men at the helm of firms and enterprises and the younger people whom they employed,” Allinson said. The former are typified by “the devoted, hard-working postwar company man, willing to sacrifice self and family for the good of the firm,” while the latter have been much more prone to avoid such sacrifice (particularly as dismissals mounted) and “to seek gratification outside of work, through a hedonistic consumer culture.”

At home, the Japanese family is now split three ways, Allinson said. The elderly members are “likely to have been reared in rural villages and towns . . . and to have worked on farms, in shops, and in small factories,” with the women usually not having worked outside the home. In the middle generation, women increasingly join men in such work to sustain “affluent lifestyles.” Younger family members, meanwhile, take part in “a youth culture” in malls, arcades, and the streets, or else stay in their rooms, watching TV, listening to music, and exploring the Internet.

Yet only 11 percent of Japanese households contain three generations, observed Merry I. White, an anthropologist at Boston University. Despite this, Japanese policymakers have tried “to shore up Confucian filiality” by encouraging daughters and daughters-in-law to care for

elderly parents. However, out of necessity, most women now work outside the home, White said. Though “the problems of caring for the aged and dealing with a shrinking population, labor force, and tax base are laid at women’s feet,” women alone can hardly solve them. “People have always complained that youth are selfish, materialist and amoral, and unfilial to their elders, and that women are prone to weakness and selfishness,” she said. But, in her view, families have been adapting to broader socioeconomic trends, not simply surrendering to individualism.

Still, for all the changes, basic Japanese culture remains much the same, asserted L. Keith Brown, an anthropologist at the University of Pittsburgh. In rural Mizusawa, 400 kilometers north of Tokyo, “the three-generation household is alive and well,” and government efforts to eliminate small and medium-size rice farming operations have had to take into account farmers’ determination to hold on to the land of their ancestors. “The natives of Mizusawa are not the only Japanese who think their ancestors matter,” he said. Fundamental Japanese values are “found in abundance in Tokyo as well as on the farms of Mizusawa.” Despite the economic “crisis,” Brown sees no “radical transformation” taking place in Japanese culture.

“The Peace Process in Colombia and U.S. Policy.”

A Working Paper, based on a Sept. 28, 1999, conference sponsored by the Wilson Center Latin American Program’s Project on Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America. Authors: Cynthia J. Amson *et al.*

Since winning the presidency of Colombia in 1998, Andrés Pastrana—with the Clinton administration’s support—has tried to give peace a chance. Early last year, he unilaterally withdrew all government troops from a Switzerland-sized swath of territory controlled by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. But the FARC has not responded in kind, notes Cynthia J. Amson, assistant director of the Wilson Center’s Latin American Program. The FARC murdered three American indigenous-rights activists in March 1999, strengthening suspicion in Washington that the “narco-guerrillas” are merely building up their military capacity in the demilitarized zone. A Clinton administration \$1.6 billion aid request passed the House and, in modified form, the Senate.

“What, after all, can the Colombian government give [the FARC guerrillas] that they cannot take by force or buy with their resources?” asks U.S. Representative Benjamin A. Gilman, R-N.Y., chairman of the House International Relations Committee. While Pastrana’s term expires in 2002, he notes, “the guerrillas have all the time in the world. . . . The indefinite extension of the unilateral DMZ means that there is . . . no real pressure on the FARC to act.”

“When one looks at the polls,” says Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombia’s ambassador to the United States, “it is clear that people believe overwhelmingly that the government of President Pastrana has given too much to the guerrillas, but those same people believe that the peace process should not be broken off.”

CURRENT BOOKS

Design for Living

SUBURBAN NATION:

The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream.

By Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk,
and Jeff Speck. North Point Press. 290 pp. \$30

by Suzannah Lessard

Can design affect whether a place develops a spirit of community? No doubt. Can a spirit of community be fostered simply by copying designs that worked well in the past? That seems more problematic, but those who promote such an approach as a solution to the alienating character of much suburban development can hardly be faulted when no one has come up with an alternative.

The architectural establishment has remained largely aloof from the phenomenon, but for several decades sprawl has been one of the most pressing crises of the built world: an aesthetic crisis, an environmental crisis, and, the authors of *Suburban Nation* contend, a societal crisis as well. In their view, suburban development has accelerated, if not caused, the waning of community in American life and, with it, the deterioration of the very fabric of society.

One of the great failings of intellectual elites is an abhorrence of the middle class, and there has probably never been a land-

scape as relentlessly middle class as suburbia. This strange, inverted snobbery that so many thoughtful people share may in part explain why architecture turned its back on this vast area of its professional domain. The typical thinking city dweller's contact with suburban sprawl has been limited to speeding through it as quickly as possible on the way to "country" homes, drives that have gotten longer and longer as the imperial advance of sprawl has moved inexorably outward from the cities.

In recent years, however, the configuration of sprawl has changed, eroding the distinction between city and country. Splotches of sprawl have begun to appear far beyond the expanding metropolis, deep in the erstwhile countryside. It's the information age that makes this possible: There's no need for businesses to cleave to the city anymore. This new pattern reflects the dissolution of geography as the basis of community, probably one of the most radical of the various revolutions that have turned the world inside out in the last 15 years.

The authors of this book are standout exceptions to the habits of denial and aloofness where sprawl is concerned. Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk lead the Miami-based design firm Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co., and Jeff Speck is director of town planning there. As founders of a movement called the New Urbanism, they have plunged into the business of developing work-



A pleasing blend of styles on a street in Annapolis, Maryland.

able alternatives to sprawl, and they have been scorned and berated for it—because of their aesthetic traditionalism and, most vociferously, because they actually build in suburbia, which, critics allege, only adds to sprawl. In fact, their firm has done quite a lot of neighborhood revitalization in cities, but it is their suburban work that has made them famous, in particular their “new towns” such as Seaside, Florida.

Seaside received national exposure in the 1998 film *The Truman Show*. Truman Burbank, played by Jim Carrey, is a young man whose whole life has been a 24-hour-a-day television show watched by the world. Though he doesn’t know it, the people around him are all actors playing parts, and the place where he lives is a stage set. Everything is manipulated; nothing is real. Seaside, a picturesque town of porches and picket fences, served perfectly as the place that was really a set.

The speed with which mass culture grasped what is disturbing about the New Urbanism is a marvel of criticism. However much one admires the initiative behind the New Urbanism, these new yet old-fashioned environments are strange to the point of being seriously disturbing. Indeed, they can make one feel like Truman Burbank, in a place where it is impossible to get to bedrock reality.

Another Duany Plater-Zyberk development, Kentlands, Maryland, looks like a blend of every WASP resort in the East stirred into Georgetown—and what’s most disconcerting is that the designers got it right. It’s very attractive, part of the marketing of WASP good taste. Indeed, you could say the authors are architecture’s Ralph Lauren by way of the Disney school. (Celebration, Florida, the reproduction of an old-fashioned Midwestern town financed by the Walt Disney Company, is not a Duany Plater-Zyberk project, but it is regarded as an exemplar of New Urbanism.) Kentlands’ attractiveness is that of the studied effect. It’s a kind of illusion, so expertly pulled off that one can momentarily lose one’s bearings in both time and place in a way that never happens in ordinary sprawl.

And yet places like Kentlands offer a substantive alternative to sprawl. What is revolutionary about these developments, as *Suburban Nation* explains, is that they are densely built and mix different income levels, anathema in the world of suburban development. In this way they consume far less land and offer environments far more conducive to community than the standard suburban subdivision. The book also explains in detail New Urbanism’s other key practices, such as connecting roads rather than ending them in cul de sacs, building corner stores, and favoring pedestrians through layouts that allow one to walk from the edge of a neighborhood to its center in no more than five minutes.

By not only embracing but executing these ideas, Duany Plater-Zyberk has crossed the Rubicon that has long separated suburban developers from establishment architects. The authors accept the realities of the American real estate market, and they look for ways to make it work to their ends. They scorn the scorn that the elite heaps on developers and market values. Of the accusation that their projects only add to the problem, they retort that suburban development is inevitable; better to influence it in benign ways than to hold oneself apart. This last point is incontrovertible. Even if our cities were completely restored to health, they would not provide nearly enough room for a burgeoning, prospering population, which in any event shows little inclination toward traditional urban settings.

Suburban Nation is a little like a New Urbanist town: smooth, adept, controlling in the way that tacitly excludes alternative views of reality. Written in a lucid style, the book implies that these are simple problems with solutions so obvious that only stupidity would resist them. It avoids coming to grips with the deeper paradoxes of the ever-changing world, whether it be the dissolution of geography as the basis of community or the fact that only the unemployed have time to sit on porches chatting with passersby nowadays. (In Kentlands last fall, the town was empty on weekdays—no matter how traditional the architecture, in most families both parents work—but the

displays of Indian corn and pumpkins on those empty porches were Martha Stewart-impeccable.)

One of the most chilling passages reveals the depth of manipulation that New Urbanism entails. A development in downtown Providence, Rhode Island, had flopped because the apartments came with dishwashers and frilly curtains, while “urban pioneers . . . cherish their edgy self-image and eschew iconography that smacks of middle-class contentment. Their taste for roughness cannot be overestimated. If the walls of the ele-

vator are covered with Formica paneling, better to rip it off and just leave the glue.” And, in the suburban development pretending to be an old-fashioned country town, make sure the corner store has sleeping dogs.

Read here of the first full-scale, reality-tested program for bringing sanity to the landscape of sprawl. If it disturbs our deepest beliefs about place and authenticity, then it’s up to us to invent something better. Any ideas?

>SUZANNAH LESSARD, the author of *The Architect of Desire: Beauty and Danger in the Stanford White Family* (1996), is writing a book about sprawl.

Grammar with Style

WORD COURT:

Wherein Verbal Virtue Is Rewarded, Crimes against the Language Are Punished, and Poetic Justice Is Done.

By Barbara Wallraff. Harcourt. 368 pp. \$23

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE

(4th ed.).

By William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White.

Allyn & Bacon. 105 pp.

\$14.95 hardcover, \$6.95 paper

by John Simon

Writers, readers, and reviewers of books about the English language must bear three things in mind. First, English has as many mystery-shrouded sources as the Nile, has felt as many influences as much-conquered Sicily, and has endured enough legislators for a combined Areopagus and Sanhedrin. From this it follows that, second, no grammar, dictionary, or other language book will go uncontested and become the sole and absolute authority on its subject. Third, no one owning all the books, including a dictionary occupying an entire shelf, can claim to have and know it all. Trying to navigate among these clashing tomes is as arduous as sailing between Scylla and Charybdis, though slightly less perilous. Skin and reputation may be saved, but the certainty of being right remains elusive.

From among a handful—more properly, an armload—of recent publications, I pick as deserving of prompt attention Barbara

Wallraff’s *Word Court* and the fourth edition of Strunk and White’s renowned *Elements of Style*. Wallraff is a senior editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the author of its popular “Word Court” column. E. B. White (1899–1985), a *New Yorker* mainstay and the author of *Charlotte’s Web* (1952), revised the notes for students’ use by his Cornell University professor William Strunk, Jr. (1869–1946), and first published them as *The Elements of Style* in 1959. The new edition, Roger Angell explains in the foreword, “has been modestly updated, with word processors and air conditioners making their first appearance among White’s references, and with a light redistribution of genders to permit a feminine pronoun or female farmer to take their places among the males.” *Word Court* is aimed at the desk in your study; *Elements* should companion you and settle arguments that arise along your peregrinations.

For arguments there will be. The lion’s

share of *Word Court* belongs to letters from readers seeking advice, and Wallraff's answers. It emerges that matters of usage and grammar are hotly and protractedly debated in schools, offices, bedrooms, and all sorts of other gathering and watering places. One could rashly conclude that correct speech and writing are of paramount concern to Americans, but I suspect these anxious seekers to represent no more than a tiny percentage of the people using and abusing our language. The rest flout correction, claiming to be perfectly comprehensible, mistakes and all; they may even jeeringly point to disagreement among the authorities as an excuse for anarchy.

But there is a right and wrong as dictated by tradition and usage, by concision and clarity, and sometimes even by logic and mere common sense. You may prefer getting your instruction from the slightly avuncular and often engagingly jocular Ms. W., or from the stricter, sometimes wryly ironic S&W. Whether with a nudge or a ferule, both books fill a need. "I believe that the highest purpose of language," Wallraff writes, "is to allow us to exhibit ourselves as the noble creatures we perceive ourselves to be. . . . We can be our best selves, and even selves better than our actual best." *Elements of Style* "concentrates on fundamentals: the rules of usage and principles of composition most commonly violated," White writes in the introduction. "The reader will soon discover that these rules and principles are in the form of sharp commands, Sergeant Strunk snapping orders to his platoon."

By now almost everyone knows that linguists, and even amateur language mavens, can be prescriptive or descriptive: those who posit rules and those who accommodate themselves to the vox populi, however multifurcated its tongue. The former tend to be politically conservative and elitist; the latter, liberal, populist, proud to endorse the speech of salt-of-the-earth Americans in their rural nooks or teeming inner cities. This conflict will remain forever undecided; the attainment of perfect English, a lost cause. But what truly good cause is not a lost one?

Word Court often turns into a causerie, an amiable chat among near-equals. Thus

Wallraff, leaning on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology psycholinguist Steven Pinker (not the most unwobbling of pivots), declares that using *fun* adjectivally, as in "a fun time," indicates that you are under 30. She disapproves, adding coyly, "And I'm not telling you how old I am." Perhaps as hints of youthfulness, she'll write "Just kidding" and "Yikes!" But as an earnest of her experience and maturity, she'll remark, "That one is right is unpleasant enough for others when one is tactful about it." So she gets her kicks more discreetly, as when someone declares himself nauseous instead of nauseated: "I admit I enjoy a cruel little frisson when I hear people unwittingly describe themselves as disgusting and politeness forbids me to contradict them." How nice to have it both ways and feel superior while keeping courteously mum.

The subtitle of *Word Court* is *Wherein Verbal Virtue Is Rewarded, Crimes against the Language Are Punished, and Poetic Justice Is Done*. Circumspect and judicious, the book strikes me as insufficiently punitive. The blunt terseness of Strunk and White is, I think, truer justice. Still, just how often does one get a chance to punish verbal criminals? How often can one deny them a job, shame them into doing better, or just rap them across the knuckles?

And what about rewarding verbal virtue? Ms. W., with commendable honesty, thanks her correspondents on the rare occasions when they teach her something. But wouldn't \$10 be a more useful reward? Well, to be told in print that you are right is an ego boost, and settling a festering uncertainty must soothe the fellow whose letter begins, "I am writing this in the desperate hope that you will save my marriage," or the one whose exordium is, "A friendship of more than 50 years hinges on your expertise." For the rest of us, the book becomes gleefully readable through the reprinting of the inquiring letters in extenso, affording insights into many people, even as the replies often prove enlightening. Whether any of this constitutes poetic justice may be irrelevant to us, who live our lives in humdrum, anomic prose.

What is good about Wallraff, as also about Strunk and White, is the colorfulness of style.

"Punctuating this sentence with a semicolon," she observes concerning "It's not a comet, it's a meteor," "would be like using a C-clamp to hold a sandwich together." *Thanks much* and *thank you much* are "jocular formations—not quite in the same ball park as *Who'd of thunk?* but perhaps lurking outside the gates, at a nearby souvenir stand."

Wallraff is so helpful and stimulating that I am shocked by her occasional lapses. We read about a sentence with "958 possible parses," though *parse* as a noun is impossible even once. She writes "referring back to an antecedent," as if an antecedent could follow. She reluctantly accepts "I could care less" as "by now an informal idiom," where S&W stand firm: "The error destroys the meaning of the sentence and is careless indeed." I do, however, forgive her much for defending the use of *gravitas* with: "Aren't you glad that it's not only people with rings in their bellybuttons and skateboards under their toes who are giving us words?"

The Elements of Style covers much less ground than *Word Court*, but it is also less peccant. It is a bit overfond of the word *forcible* (as Ms. W. is of *punctilios*), and a trifle schoolmasterly in tone. But it is not without a sense of humor as it dispenses its tough love. Still, concision comes at a price: Under *comprise* we do not get the abominable *comprised of*. Under the dubious *due to*, there is no mention

of the respectable *owing to*. Under the much misused *enormity*, there is no guidepost to the nonpejorative *enormousness*. But how priceless is the ironic remark such as "Youths . . . renovate the language with a wild vigor as they would a basement apartment."

Along with the somewhat laconic do's and don'ts, we get an invaluable chapter on style, on how to write not just correctly but also well. It includes such gems as "To achieve style, begin by affecting none," and "Think of the tragedies that are rooted in ambiguity, and be clear! When you say something, make sure you have said it. The chances of your having said it are only fair." Wallraff has no such chapter, but she does have a useful bibliography of good books about language. Although she omits Jacques Barzun's *Simple and Direct* (1985), as well as Eric Partridge's many excellent and entertaining works, she is right to praise H. W. Fowler's splendid *Modern English Usage* (1930), and to have serious doubts about its latest updater, the "not lovable" Robert Burchfield.

So get both *Word Court* and *Elements of Style*, and throw in Bryan A. Garner's indispensable *Dictionary of Modern American English* (1998). With these in hand, you will be ready to ramble in the language wars.

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What Makes a Great President?

PRESIDENTIAL GREATNESS.

By Marc Landy and Sidney M. Milkis. Univ. of Kansas Press. 278 pp. \$34.95

THE PRESIDENTIAL DIFFERENCE:

Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton.

By Fred I. Greenstein. Free Press. 282 pp. \$25

POWER AND THE PRESIDENCY.

Edited by Robert A. Wilson. PublicAffairs. 162 pp. \$20

by Godfrey Hodgson

Another four years have gone by, and once again the publishers' lists are overflowing with books about presidents

and the presidency. Many of the authors wear spectacles warmly tinted with national pride, sometimes qualified by a

sense of historical decline. Where, they ask, are the giants of yesteryear, the Washingtons and Jeffersons, the Jacksons and Lincolns?

A good example, full of shrewd obiter dicta, is *Presidential Greatness*. According to political scientists Marc Landy, of Boston College, and Sidney M. Milkis, of the University of Virginia, the test of greatness in the presidency is the ability to “engage the nation in a struggle for its constitutional soul.” By this test, the last great president was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and “all his successors have stood in his shadow.” The only epigoni who come even close, in the authors’ judgment—Lyndon Johnson and Ronald Reagan—both fall well short.

Greatness is an elusive concept. For historians, it is hard to dissociate from Carlyle’s discredited “great man theory of history,” which came perilously close to suggesting that the reasonable, constrained, and persuasive leaders of democracies were inferior to egotists and conquerors such as Napoleon and Frederick the Great. For some presidential scholars, greatness seems to represent admittance to the canon of the American political religion, with its trinity of Washington, the hypostasis of the old revelation; Jefferson, the spirit; and Lincoln, the martyred son. If the discussion of presidential greatness is truly about canonization or even apotheosis, no wonder the living Reagan and the dead but unsaintly Johnson cannot yet be admitted.

What is also striking, at least to a non-American student, is the exceptionalist character of such discussions. Not only does the very concept of presidential greatness automatically exclude all those

who are not American presidents, and therefore all non-Americans; it also relates specifically to the development and vicissitudes of the American Constitution. The discussion of who is a great president forecloses consideration of great leaders in other parts of American government and other political traditions. However erudite and graceful such debates may be, they strike me as a little too much like party games, or those futile arguments about whether the baseball

players of Babe Ruth’s generation were better than the contemporaries of Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire.

A more precise and verifiable criterion than greatness is leadership. In *The Presidential Difference*, Fred I. Greenstein, professor of politics at Princeton University and author of *The Hidden-Hand Presidency* (1982), uses it to make a far sharper comparison of all the presidents since FDR.

Greenstein evaluates those 11 men (and he is surely right that the presidency will not forever remain a masculine bastion) in terms of six characteristics: effectiveness as a communicator, organizational capacity, political skill, vision, cognitive skill (or what we might call intelligence), and what he calls “emotional intelligence.”

Greenstein’s work promises to stand alongside Richard E. Neustadt’s *Presidential Power* (1960) and James David Barber’s even more schematic *Presidential Character* (1972) as a benchmark for measuring presidential performance. His list of precise qualities is far more useful than the somewhat baroque abstraction “greatness,” which trails clouds of glory, not to mention angels with trumpets. Greenstein recognizes



A 1944 campaign poster

that those who are unusually gifted in one way can be unusually vulnerable in others. His conclusion, which may have been predictable from his preconceptions, is that the most important single trait is so-called emotional intelligence, which others might call “common sense” or even “sanity.”

Following Richard Nixon’s cabinet officer Elliot Richardson, he raises, at the end of his perceptive analysis, one of the most difficult matters that historians and biographers confront: the possible connections between a subject’s strengths and his weaknesses. Take away Nixon’s emotional flaws, Richardson suggested, and you would also strip away the insecurity that gave the man his creative energy. This issue goes to the heart of human character, and Greenstein side-steps it in a way that is reminiscent of William James’s “religion of healthy mindedness.” “Great political ability does sometimes derive from troubled emotions,” he says with something like a sniff, but that fact does not justify putting the emotionally troubled in charge of a nuclear arsenal. True, no doubt, but how do we make sure that those who reach the presidency pass the healthy-mindedness test?

And what of the office itself? Forty years ago, scholars such as Neustadt, Edwin S. Corwin, Louis Koenig, and Clinton Rossiter believed that the power of the presidency had increased, was increasing, and ought to increase. Now, by contrast, the consensus seems to be that the power of the office has diminished; in particular, the president has lost power in relation to the Congress, partly as a consequence of divided government. There is also a feeling that the presidency is locked into the permanent campaign, requiring presidents to spend too much time raising funds.

This new appraisal stems in part from a shift in the political marketplace. Every modern president is a trader, entering office with a stock of political capital. If he were to sit back and attempt to live

on the income from it, he would soon starve. So he must venture into the political market and trade. He proposes legislation, handles crises, applies leadership where required, and tries to avoid damaging associations. His record is observed and evaluated by Washington insiders and, in turn, transmitted to the wider public by the media. At the same time, polls recycle public opinion back to Washington, increasing or decreasing the president’s political capital.

During the Cold War, the president’s capital was greatly enhanced by his near-monopoly over issues of life and death. Is there going to be a war? Will we win? Will I survive? Since the fall of the Soviet Union, rightly or wrongly the nation’s security no longer seems threatened, and a near-monopoly over these issues has lost value in the political market. The president’s institutional competitors in the Congress have greater influence over the issues that now bulk large in the public mind: prosperity, equality, and, perhaps most of all, quality of life—health, education, the environment. While people expect as much as ever from presidents, the unfortunate presidents have less and less influence over the dominant issues.

Yet who is president still matters as much as ever. In *Power and the Presidency*, a collection of lectures given at Dartmouth College by a stellar cast of presidential biographers, it is Harry Truman’s biographer, David McCullough, who makes the point best. He quotes the prayer John Adams sent to his wife, Abigail, after spending his first night in the White House, a prayer Franklin Roosevelt had carved into the mantelpiece of the State Dining Room: “May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof.” And, before too long, honest and wise women.

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Religion & Philosophy

THE ETERNAL PITY: Reflections on Dying.

Edited by Richard John Neuhaus.
Univ. of Notre Dame Press. 181 pp.
\$25 cloth, \$15 paper

Too often in the expanding literature of mortality, the title tends to overwhelm the text. *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Civilization* (1998), for example, or *The American Way of Death* (1963)—either one could bear the subtitle *Answers to the Questions of the Ages*. The first volume, by the British scholar Jonathan Dollimore, surveys literary and cultural studies related to deathly metaphors and deadly images; the second, by the lately lamented and remarkable gadfly Jessica Mitford, surveys the math of caskets.

But *The Eternal Pity*, with its assemblage of voices, dead and living, crossing cultural, religious, and temporal borders, delivers on the title's promise. This quietly compelling anthology contains reflections—meditations, incantations, benedictions—long on wonder, short on polemics. Neuhaus, a Catholic priest who edits *First Things*, takes his title from Peter DeVries's fictional telling of his daughter's death, *The Blood of the Lamb* (1961), which manages to consider the notion of redemptive suffering without minimizing the horrible pain and the righteous outrage when a child gets leukemia and dies, or the salvation that might be claimed within it. DeVries wrote of "the recognition of how long, how very long, is the mourners' bench upon which we sit, arms linked in undeluded friendship—all of us, brief links ourselves, in the eternal pity."

What is best about this collection is that each voice is raised to the existential properties of death and dying, rather than the more typical (and more marketable) emotional or social or retail contexts. There is a welcome refusal to traffic in warm fuzzies or psychobabble, and an abundance of meaning and mystery and experience held up for consideration, not spectacle. From Charles Dickens to Dylan Thomas to Carol Zaleski, from the Upanishads to the Quran to the Book of Common Prayer, each piece calls

the reader to keep the difficult vigil that the living owe the dying and the dead. Ralph Abernathy's account of the burial, disinterment, and entombment of Martin Luther King, Jr., Milton Himmelfarb's "Going to Shul," A. Alvarez's homage to and horror at the suicide of Sylvia Plath ("Even now I find it hard to believe")—one senses in the 26 selections a search for that sacred space where we are hushed enough to listen for the din of creation in the rattle of death.

"A measure of reticence and silence is in order," Neuhaus writes. "There is a time simply to be present to death—whether one's own or that of others—without any felt urgencies about doing something about it or getting over it. The Preacher had it right: 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die . . . a time



The Death of the Strong Wicked Man, by William Blake

to mourn, and a time to dance.' One may be permitted to wonder about the wisdom of contemporary funeral rites that hurry to the dancing, displacing sorrow with the determined affirmation of resurrection hope, supplying a ready answer to a question that has not been given time to understand itself." The assembled voices—each of them worthy of inclusion—and the editor's guidance, in the powerful introduction and the notes that introduce the contributions, make *The Eternal Pity* the kind of whole-being exercise the subject requires. Neuhaus, ever generous with his gifts, gives yet another here.

—Thomas Lynch

ABRAHAM LINCOLN:

Redeemer President.

By Allen C. Guelzo. Eerdmans. 516 pp.
\$29

This rich and subtle study of Lincoln's intellectual life well deserves to have received the prestigious Lincoln Prize; it is superb. Guelzo, a professor of history and dean of the honors program at Eastern College outside Philadelphia, argues that the 16th president was no orthodox Christian and in some sense not even a believer. Though he loved many passages in the Bible and drew great comfort from them, his bereavements, losses, and crushing disappointments had left him inwardly empty. It was next to impossible for him to experience God as Father (or even as Redeemer), given his own tyrannical father. The one thing he knew for certain was the inscrutability of a harsh if somehow just Judge, counseling the utmost humility and forbearance.

Undergirding this belief was the terrifying "doctrine of necessity" that Lincoln's father dunned into the sensitive youth—as did, it sometimes seemed, Providence itself, through frequent visitations of death and setback. In Guelzo's telling, this doctrine gave Lincoln unparalleled strength, an iron fatalism that enabled him to endure, and wait, and bear intense suffering, until the outcome manifested itself—as he knew it would, no matter his exertions. Given his fatalism, he learned early to bear inner pain with outward humor, warmth, and wisdom, "with malice toward none." At the same time, by a kind of back door, the doctrine gave him the keenest possible pleasures in whatever liberty daily life afforded, and he learned to love biblical texts such as those instructing the laborer to labor while letting the harvest rest in the hands of a wiser Providence.

One of my favorite passages considers Lincoln's lifelong dislike for Jefferson, or at least for Jefferson's agrarian fancies. Lincoln was injured to 14 hours a day of farm labor under his father with nary a penny to show for years of toil. All well and good for the owner of a plantation to praise honest farm labor; he knew little of it. One day, young Abe was asked to row two men out to a riverboat, and they flipped him two silver half-dollars for this brief exertion. "That day," Guelzo writes, Lincoln "met the cash economy." He became a capitalist for life, the very progenitor of land ownership (a renewed Homestead Act), of research and invention (the

Morrill Land Grant Act), of "the fuel of interest" as the engine for economic betterment, and of liberty over slavery. Lincoln not only freed the slaves, he freed "white trash," too—indentured labor, quasi-serfs, slumbering rural oafs. His "new birth of freedom" was simultaneously a birth of industry, imagination, and discovery.

Without quibbling over the written record, I find Lincoln a bit more of a Christian than Guelzo does. Had Lincoln professed unmis-takable Christian belief but failed, like so many of us, to practice it, what sort of orthodoxy would that be? If we do not find in him a clear profession of faith, we do find its practice. Shouldn't that count for plenty?

—Michael Novak

LIFE IS A MIRACLE:

An Essay against Modern Superstition.

By Wendell Berry. Counterpoint. 153 pp.
\$21

The "against" tract has a long and mostly forgotten tradition in literature. The second-century African church father Tertullian, for example, came to prominence by writing Latin polemics with such titles as "Against Marcion" and "Against Hermogenes" in which he argued for his vision of faith. This short book by Berry, the naturalist and poet, might be called *Against Wilson*, for all its pages take issue with E. O. Wilson's *Consilience* (1998). And Berry, too, argues for a vision of faith—in his case, faith in the primacy of life and the irreducible mystery of why life is here.

Many critics have already taken on *Consilience* for, among other faults, proposing to "reconcile" science, religion, and art by letting science prevail on all counts, and for presenting Wilson's ideas as bold iconoclasm when most are conventional wisdom. In Wilson's defense, envy seems to have motivated some of the sniping—*Consilience* became a surprise bestseller, while many books of similar merit making similar points have sunk without a trace. Wilson may be defended, too, for championing the Enlightenment ideal of objective knowledge, a goal commonly scorned in today's upper academia.

Going further than other critics, Berry develops a nuanced and thought-provoking critique of *Consilience* and its rationality-rules worldview. He really doesn't like Wilson's book, though he speaks of it respectfully. (Wilson can't complain—reading *Life Is a Miracle*

won't mean much unless you also buy and read *Consilience*.) Berry's accusations boil down to these: First, Wilson would make science the new religion; second, contemporary science is guilty of hubris; third, Wilson would reduce all life to gears and whorls, eliminating wonder.

"This religification and evangelizing of science," Berry writes, "is now commonplace and widely accepted," as scientists rush in to fill the we-have-all-the-answers role once performed by priests. Berry believes this leads directly to the excessive materialism of our age, since, after all, science teaches that the material is all there is.

Life Is a Miracle takes strong exception to Wilson's boast concerning the celestial: "We can be proud as a species because, having discovered that we are alone, we owe the gods very little." I cheered along with Berry as he blasted the rivets off that sentence. The scientist's claim that we know we are alone is as dogmatic as the cleric's claim that there must be a God: It is far too early in the human quest for knowledge to be sure of either point. When scientists treat this matter as already settled, they betray a closed-mindedness that is supposedly the bane of the scientific method. As for our existence, we surely ought to take the humble position of admitting that we owe something to some office somewhere. Either the divine created us or nature created us; in either case, gratitude and humility are called for.

Perhaps the most telling section in *Life Is a Miracle* is where Berry objects to Wilson's use of the machine as a metaphor for life. Like many works of modern biology and materialist thought, *Consilience* stresses that life is a mechanism, just an organic machine. Wilson seems to want to persuade us that we are not miracles, merely the deterministic results of amino acids and heat exchange.

At the first level, the metaphor seems superfluous—who doesn't think that *Homo sapiens* is made up of lots of complicated parts with complicated functions? But at the second level, the one that concerns Berry, the metaphor is disturbing. If we are just machines, what is the worth of our lives? Why care about individual uniqueness? (All the cars in the parking lot are different, but hey, they're just machines.) And how will we preserve the status, to say nothing of the existence, of biological life if scientists devise electronic awareness and then teach the new life form that, in the end, people and com-

puters are interchangeable, all just machines? Berry probes these questions in depth in this beautifully humanistic book.

—Gregg Easterbrook

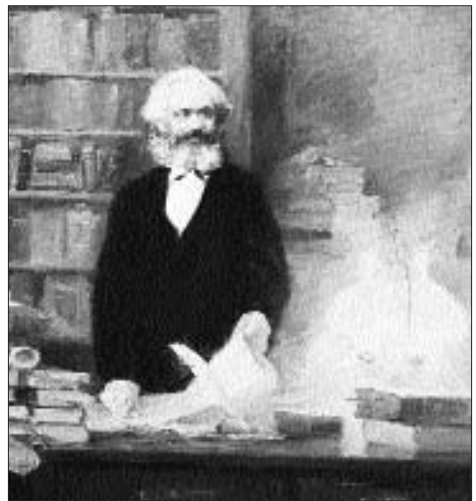
KARL MARX:

A Life.

By Francis Wheen. Norton. 431 pp.
\$27.95

There are good reasons for not reading this biography. First, although Marx was German, his mode of thought was German, and he wrote mainly in the German language, the author's reach does not extend beyond English-language sources. Second, Wheen, a columnist for the *Guardian* in London, sometimes writes in an infuriatingly chatty style, as if sitting in a pub describing an irksome colleague. When Marx embraced a bizarre theory that soil triggers evolutionary changes, for instance, we learn that his lifelong friend and patron Friedrich Engels "thought the old boy had gone barmy." A third possible complaint is that the book offers little that is new. The author simply read 10 or 20 books and wrote one more.

If these objections turn away the potential reader, though, it would be a pity, for this is a good read and something more besides. Having earlier published a study on the 1960s and a history of television, Wheen rolls out his tale at a brisk clip. He spares us the turgid details of how Marx the intellectual gymnast stood Hegel on his head. And, unlike most biographers of this prickly and often savage polemicist, Wheen actually seems to like Marx, or at least the Marx he conjures up for his 21st-century readers.



Karl Marx in His Study, by Zhang Wun

Wheen's Karl Marx is neither the laboring man's messiah who founded the revolutionary workers' movement nor the satanic force who unleashed the horrors of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. Having been stripped of this baggage by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of all but a few die-hard communist parties, Marx is now neither prophet nor threat. What is left? A peculiar, frustrated, and generally unhappy 19th-century intellectual, whose outer world was that of a stolid Victorian bourgeois and whose inner world was defined by "paradox, irony, and contradiction."

Later Marxists loved to speak of the "objective" forces that moved history, generally in the direction they wished. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to see the extent to which Marx's own life and thought were dominated by a veritable army of highly subjective prejudices, many of them quite nasty. The French were deceitful, the British obtuse and incapable of rigorous thought, and the Russians primitive and hell-bent on conquest. When provoked, he

could drop anti-Semitic or racist slurs as capably as any good 19th-century European burgher.

And that's just the point. As Marxism recedes into the past, the man who created it stands forth ever more clearly as an emanation of his era. His intellectual concerns, his hopes and fears, and even his private life (which Wheen, without resorting to Freud, describes with considerable sensitivity and skill), were all very much the product of his class, gender, and historical epoch.

Is there anything surprising in that? Certainly not. Nor is Wheen the first to make the observation. But, coming on the heels of the great communist crackup, this biography has a poignancy that earlier works lacked. As we part company with Marxism-Leninism, we also bid farewell to its chief architect, with all his will to power, apocalyptic dreams, petty squabbles, ritual humiliations of opponents, and wretched private life.

—S. Frederick Starr

Contemporary Affairs

THE JEWISH STATE: The Struggle for Israel's Soul.

By Yoram Hazony. Basic. 433 pp. \$28

For decades, the conflict between Israel and the Arabs—both the Arab states outside its borders and the Palestinians within—dominated the daily lives and consciousness of Israelis. "The Siege" is the label Conor Cruise O'Brien once gave the struggle and the mentality it produced among Israelis. It dictated everything from political discourse to ideology to which brand of car they could buy (for years, Subaru was the only Japanese brand available; other automakers scrupulously honored the Arab League embargo). But now the Siege is lifting, and Israelis find themselves facing turbulent internal issues they have long put off: church versus state, majority rule versus minority rights, and, broadly, what it means to live in a Jewish state.

The last question is at the heart of this book. In Hazony's view, the very concept of a Jewish state is under systematic and relentless assault from the country's own cultural and intellectual establishment. Virtually everywhere he looks—in the classrooms, books, museums, movie theaters, courtrooms, even in the bar-

racks of the country's proud citizen army—he sees materialism, deception, despair, and a loss of Zionist fervor. And he considers the Oslo accord with the Palestinians yet another betrayal of the dream of a Jewish state.

Although Hazony—who heads a Jerusalem think tank and has been an adviser to hard-line former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—holds strong, nationalistic views, he has written not a screed but a thoughtful and provocative historical analysis and critique. The book traces the development of the idea of the state from Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) to his ideological heir, David Ben Gurion (1886–1973), and chronicles their political and ideological battles with other Jewish leaders.

Hazony contends that a small faction of German Jewish intellectuals, led by the philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965), mounted a rear-guard action against classic Labor Zionism from their redoubt at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The intellectuals favored a binational state in which Jewish identity would take a back seat to secular citizenship. Although Buber and his followers were discredited and vanquished by Ben Gurion,

Hazony argues that their anti-Zionist ideology infected the second generation of the Israeli elite, and that this generation has now retreated from the vision and dreams of its forefathers.

To his credit, Hazony doesn't flinch from criticizing the Zionist giants he so admires. He accuses Ben Gurion and his heirs in the Labor Zionist movement of pursuing concrete achievement at the expense of ideas and vision, thereby leaving themselves vulnerable to Buber's intellectual counterattack. He contends that the Jewish settlement movement, which first arose after the triumphant Six Day War in 1967 and grew markedly in size and fervor after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, fell victim to the same syndrome: It built fortress communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip while never adequately articulating a compelling moral basis for doing so.

But Hazony overestimates the impact of a small group of isolated academics and underestimates the benefits of Israel's transformation. Though true believers scorn it as betrayal, the shift away from ideological fervor is nearly inevitable in post-revolutionary societies, few of which can sustain the fire and vision of the revolution's founders. Aspects of Israel's transformation are regrettable: the loss of egalitarianism and sense of community, and the eroding of the nation's distinctive culture and work ethic. But there are gains as well, for Israelis and Palestinians, from living in a mature, prosperous, and bourgeois society striving to make peace with its neighbors and with itself.

—Glenn Frankel

**THE PARADOX OF
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY:
*Elites, Special Interests, and the
Betrayal of Public Trust.***

By John B. Judis. Pantheon. 306 pp.
\$26

**BOBOS IN PARADISE:
*The New Upper Class and How
They Got There.***

By David Brooks. Simon & Schuster.
284 pp. \$25

Their books are vastly different, and Judis writes for liberal journals while Brooks writes for conservative ones, but both authors make the same complaint: American political life today lacks a public-spirited elite akin to John McCloy, Averell Harriman, and the other pow-

erful figures who served the national interest in World War II and its aftermath.

The absence of a disinterested elite lies at the center of Judis's case. A senior editor at the *New Republic*, Judis criticizes the populist and Marxist view that American democracy is a sham, its strings pulled not by voters or parties or interest groups but by a power elite or ruling class. In fact, he argues, if you look at the periods since 1900 when democracy has expanded, you find active voters, active parties, active interests, and an active (albeit disinterested) elite. In this sense, an elite is crucial to democracy—the paradox of the book's title. Today, though, the disinterested elite has given way to interested elites, represented by organizations such as the Business Roundtable and the Democratic Leadership Council.

For Brooks, a senior editor at the *Weekly Standard*, the absence of a disinterested elite is a corollary. His main point is this: College-educated members of the baby boom generation have fused what used to be contending sets of values, the bohemian and the bourgeois, chiefly by blending the liberationist cultural values of the 1960s with the liberationist economic values of the 1980s. This fusion has created a new and influential stratum, the bourgeois bohemians, or "Bobos": the stockbroker who sounds like a hippie, the hippie who sounds like a stockbroker. Since this fusion gives them such satisfying private and professional lives, Bobos tend to lack the zeal to venture into national public life. "The fear is that America will decline not because it overstretches," writes Brooks, "but because it enervates as its leading citizens decide that the pleasures of an oversized kitchen are more satisfying than the conflicts and challenges of patriotic service."

Daniel Bell famously observed that the corporation wants its employees "to work hard, pursue a career, accept delayed gratification," even as the company's products and advertisements "promote pleasure, instant joy, relaxing, and letting go." One can't do both, Bell maintained—but Bobos pull it off, according to Brooks. They work hard and play hard at the same time by working at play (climbing mountains, hiking the wilds) and playing at work (dressing casually in offices that evoke tree-houses). Brooks doesn't take himself seriously—he describes his method as comic sociology—but his book is just as incisive as Judis's.

A respectful question for both authors: On the

broad cluster of issues that we group under the rubric of multiculturalism, there is an elite consensus whose content meets a *prima facie* test of disinterestedness. Every elite white heterosexual male who endorses wider opportunity for those who are not elite, not white, not heterosexual, or not male holds a disinterested view. Is it possible that what's new is not the absence of a disinterested elite, but the presence of a disinterested elite whose agenda differs from its predecessors' and can be pursued by means other than government service?

—Ralph Whitehead, Jr.

THE KINDER, GENTLER MILITARY.

By Stephanie Gutmann. Scribner.
300 pp. \$25

The latest sex-related scandal to afflict the Pentagon—the U.S. Army's first-ever female three-star general alleges that a fellow general groped her—provides further testimony, if any were needed, that gender remains a problem for the American military. For more than a quarter-century, the armed services have been engaged in an extraordinary effort to integrate women fully into their ranks, prompted by the military's demand for "manpower" in a post-conscription era, and urged on by powerful forces promoting

ness, and combat effectiveness, incorporating women into the force has exacted a heavy toll. She concludes that, short of a full-fledged assault on human nature, the project is likely to mean the end of the American military as a serious fighting force.

Although by no means the only book on women in the military, this may well be the first to consider the subject honestly. Unlike other writers, whether on the left or the right, for whom the issue serves as a proxy for scoring points related to a larger political agenda, Gutmann considers the subject on its own terms. Her approach is that of a journalist. While stronger on anecdote than on theory and analysis, the result is nonetheless compelling.

She empathizes with the women (and men) in the ranks who signed up to soldier and find themselves wrestling with the realities of gender-integrated ships and ready rooms. She is appropriately skeptical toward the activists innocent of military experience who airily dismiss ancient truths about military culture and unit cohesion. She is withering in her contempt for the senior military professionals who, succumbing to political correctness, foster a climate in which double standards become the norm and inconvenient data about female availability for duty and washout rates are ignored or selectively interpreted. The result, Gutmann writes, is an atmosphere within the services of "official avoidance, doublespeak, and euphemism"—and a loss of confidence in the integrity of senior leaders.

Yet one is left wondering whether gender is at the heart of the problems ailing today's military, or whether it is merely one manifestation of a much larger and more complex phenomenon. Gutmann notes in passing that the ongoing transformation of the military "parallels a general cultural drift in the United States." That cultural tendency—pointing toward a society that is shallow, self-absorbed, obsessed with material consumption—is hardly conducive to the nurturing of military virtues in men or women. If the American military has entered a period of decline, as now seems the case, the explanation goes beyond matters of gender. Responsibility for that decline rests squarely with a people who take



Male and female trainees at morning exercises at San Antonio's Lackland Air Force Base in 1998

full equality for women in American society. A project without precedent in all of military history, it rests on the premise that, in war as in other fields of human endeavor, men and women are interchangeable, or at least they ought to be.

Gutmann, a freelance writer, questions that premise and totes up the price paid in attempting to demonstrate its validity. In morale, readi-

for granted their claims to military preeminence but evince little interest in or commitment to actually sustaining it. Simply returning to

the days of a male-dominated military won't solve that problem.

—Andrew J. Bacevich

History

THE OTHER AMERICAN:
The Untold Life of Michael Harrington.
By Maurice Isserman. PublicAffairs.
449 pp. \$28.50

Books as well as individuals live in particular moments of history—and, often enough, they are “made” by those moments, or, conversely, rendered ineffective by the fads, fashions, and pre-occupations of the time. We know Michael Harrington (1928–89) even today, more than a decade after his death, because his book *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (1962) became a decisive resource for many Americans who wanted to take a searching look at their country, its social and economic possibilities, its moral lapses. Now we are offered a chance to know yet again, this time in retrospect, the person often described as “the man who discovered poverty.”

Among those who tried to change the United States in the name of justice, Harrington was a distinct moral leader. He was ever eager to put his mind's energy and his body's vigorously attentive presence on the line, even as he penned scores of essays, polemical or persuasive, and showed up at countless conferences where he tried to speak for those otherwise ignored, or, all too commonly, written off as psychologically flawed, culturally backward, or otherwise deficient.

For Harrington, the poor were not only fellow citizens but kindred souls. He came to understand them as a member of Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker community in the early 1950s, and, in the first words of *The Other America*, he acknowledged a substantial debt to those with whom he worked in that spiritually vigorous, communitarian effort, which has prodded so many, of various faiths and backgrounds, to take seriously the message of the Hebrew prophets and of their itinerant, preaching descendent, Jesus of Nazareth.

Isserman, a history professor at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, does well by that important side of Harrington—the bright, idealistic, Midwestern Catholic boy, who came

from a family of comfortable means, who went to good schools, but who first chose to embrace Day's “voluntary poverty,” and then aligned himself with political outsiders who struggled earnestly, though with scant success, to further socialist programs in a nation resistant to their ideals. The biography also brings to life America's midcentury reform struggles—all the time and energy that eventually got labeled the “civil rights movement” or the “War on Poverty.”

Isserman, who, like Harrington, has a wonderful way with words, tells a clear, straightforward story, rich with the details of a life lived fully, honorably, generously. Readers soon become absorbed, edified, and at times worn down by the hectic pace of activity chronicled—even as Harrington himself broke down physically from constantly moving about, writing away, exhorting audiences, urging comrades, standing up to opponents. No wonder (we learn) his two sons missed him sorely, as he did his idealistic wife, Stephanie. And no wonder he himself wrote that there was “not too much energy left over for the intimacy and personal love that is supposed to be the essence of my imagined future.”

So it goes, alas: Passion expended in behalf of others can bear a melancholy significance for those loved all too often at a distance. That irony makes this book a morally and psychologically instructive one, even as its central figure impresses us so very much by his goodness of heart, mind, and soul, constantly extended to others in word and deed.

—Robert Coles

MI6:
Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service.
By Stephen Dorril. Free Press. 907 pp.
\$40

When *MI6* was serialized in London's *Sunday Times* on the eve of its publication this spring, British authorities raided the publisher to seize files and computers, and sought by a series of legal maneuvers to suppress the book.

They failed, thanks less to the robust state of civil liberties in Britain than to the fact that the author was able to show that he had used open and public sources. The fearsome Official Secrets Act has been largely outflanked by the U.S. Freedom of Information Act and the opening of once secret files in Eastern Europe (and to a lesser degree in Moscow). Moreover, by carefully cross-referencing these open sources with the published memoirs and diaries of senior politicians and civil servants and then with the crudely sanitized British cabinet papers, the careful researcher can piece together far more than the spymasters ever thought possible. After 15 years of research, Dorril, a don at the University of Huddersfield, has produced a book that amounts to a genuine breakthrough.

Naturally, the headlines were grabbed by the sensational revelations that African leaders, including Nelson Mandela, Kenneth Kaunda, and Thomas Mboya, were “agents of influence,” and that Mandela, on a recent trip to Britain, made a discreet trip to MI6 to thank the agency for its work in foiling two assassination attempts against him. (Mandela denies being an agent.) The claims of MI6 plots to kill Egyptian President Gamal Nasser, Libya’s Muammar al-Qaddafi, and Serbia’s Slobodan Milosevic also won much more publicity than the manifest incompetence of the agency in failing (like the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency) to foresee the invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982 or that of Kuwait in 1990. Again like the CIA, British intelligence in the mid-1980s underestimated both the weakness of the Soviet Union and Mikhail Gorbachev’s determination to reform it.

To the historian, however, the deeper interest in Dorril’s book (apart from his impressive research methods) lies in his well-documented argument that British intelligence helped bring about the Cold War by starting hostile operations against the Soviets in 1943, almost as soon as Stalingrad had shown that the Soviet Union would survive. “Now that the tide had turned, it was in our interest to let Germany and Russia bleed each other white,” wrote Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee. Where possible, British intelligence and guerrilla assets recruited to fight Hitler were redirected against the Soviet threat. In Greece, MI6 even joined the Nazi occupiers in funding the right-wing *gendarmes* to crush the procommunist guerrillas.

Not that MI6 can be held wholly to blame; Soviet intelligence had been running hostile operations against both Britain and the United States before and during the war. But it is ironic that British agents in the European communist parties were reporting by 1947 that Stalin had ordered them onto the defensive and that there was no expansionist Soviet threat. MI6 and the CIA responded with tragic attempts to roll back Soviet power, sending hundreds of brave emigrés (and a lot of old Nazi supporters) to their doom, betrayed by Soviet moles such as Kim Philby.

—Martin Walker

SECRET MESSAGES:

Codebreaking and American Diplomacy, 1930–1945.

By David Alvarez. University Press of Kansas. 292 pp. \$35

Even more than the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency (NSA) suffers from a schizophrenic attitude toward disclosure. On the one hand, even a public hint of its supersecret work intercepting and decrypting signals has always been anathema. On the other hand, success stories are vital PR for any bureaucracy dependent on congressional funding. In 1996 the proponents of disclosure briefly gained the upper hand, and NSA declassified some 5,000 files on America’s code-breaking activities during World War II. (If you’ve got to have a success story, it’s hard to beat World War II.) Pieces of the story had come out earlier, but many gaps remained.

In this lucid, comprehensive, and frequently entertaining account, Alvarez, a professor of politics at St. Mary’s College in California, helps fill two of the largest gaps. One is the human story of decoding hundreds of thousands of messages a month sent by enemies, neutrals, and allies alike. The new archival records and other sources (including declassified NSA oral histories and the author’s own interviews with veterans) permit the first reconstruction of day-to-day life at Arlington Hall, the U.S. Army’s wartime code-breaking headquarters in Arlington, Virginia—the mind-boggling work, the frustrations, the strokes of incredible luck, and the cast of extraordinary characters, including the cryptanalyst who sat with his feet in a wastebasket to protect himself from the imagined ill effects of drafty offices.

The other gap Alvarez fills is the effect of this intelligence on American foreign policy

and diplomacy. Code-breaking had an undeniable impact on military operations, but, before the 1996 releases, relatively little was known about Arlington Hall's work on foreign diplomatic traffic. Alvarez's surprising yet convincing conclusion is that the effect of this work was slight: The Allies' policy of unconditional surrender, combined with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's expectation that he could carry foreign leaders with him "through the exercise of will and persuasive charm," undercut the influence of signals intelligence in top policy circles.

Despite this admittedly disappointing conclusion, Alvarez tells a classic tale of secret agencies and intrigue. The army, bringing in some very unmilitary people to get the job done, emerges as a bureaucratic hero. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, it commissioned Alfred McCormack, a prominent New York lawyer with a tough legal mind, to shake up its intelligence system. McCormack created a new Special Branch within Arlington Hall to sift and analyze the code breakers' output and ensure that it at least reached top officials throughout the government. He filled the Special Branch with so many high-powered lawyers that people in the War Department began calling it the best law office in Washington.

In one of the book's most telling anecdotes, code breaker William Lutwiniak finds himself facing the prospect of being drafted after Pearl Harbor. His boss, Captain Harold Hayes, tells him to go to the army recruiting station and enlist. There, Lutwiniak is sworn in as a private and handed his orders: Report to Captain Harold Hayes for active duty. Back at Arlington Hall, Lutwiniak goes to see the captain, who promotes him on the spot to sergeant and tells him to get back to work and not to worry about basic training. There are lessons here for today's very bureaucratic intelligence bureaucracy.

—Stephen Budiansky

MEMOIR:

My Life and Themes.

By Conor Cruise O'Brien. Cooper Square. 460 pp. \$30

In an earlier age, Conor Cruise O'Brien would have been an ambassador for the Holy Roman Empire, or a Celtic princeling seeking adventure in the service of the Byzantines. As a diplomat with both the Irish foreign service and

the United Nations (including a harrowing period in the Congo as a close adviser to Dag Hammarskjöld during the 1960s), a university administrator in Ghana, a New York University professor during the student protests, a newspaper editor, and a legislator, O'Brien has participated in many of the major political debates of the last half-century. Along the way, he has written some two dozen books, including volumes on Edmund Burke, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Camus, Ireland, Israel, and the French Revolution. Now he takes as his subject his own extraordinary public life.

Nationalism and religion have been his abiding concerns, with roots running deep in his background and the tortuous history of Irish politics. His family had ties both to the United Kingdom, where his grandfather sat in the House of Commons, and to the quest for an independent Ireland, in which an uncle was killed. He recounts the family experiences that influenced his early thinking about "the Irish question," as well as his later, hands-on role in trying to deal with it: He served in the Dáil, the Irish legislature, and as a minister for the Labor government, rousing the ire of Sinn Féin more than once.

If some family connections pushed him toward Irish nationalism, his early rejection of Catholicism and his education at secular or Protestant schools made his way difficult in a country where politics and faith are tightly joined. This conflict sharpened when he began to express the view that those attempting to incorporate Northern Ireland were ignoring the wishes of its inhabitants and, in the process, echoing what the British had done in the first place.

Ireland looms large in this book, both in its own right and as a template for examining the connections between religion and politics. Unfortunately, the author never explains how his philosophy has developed. While he implies that he has been consistent, the liberal Conor Cruise O'Brien of 1961 is not the same man who now calls himself a Burkean, and who has devoted much of his recent work to defending the "moderate Enlightenment" against what he considers religious or political extremism. Had he given a fuller account of that intellectual evolution, coupled with this engrossing life, he would have more completely supplied the themes promised in the title.

—Gerald J. Russell

Science & Technology

SIX BRIDGES:

The Legacy of Othmar H. Ammann.

By Darl Rastorfer. Yale Univ. Press.

188 pp. \$39.95

The destiny of New York City has always rested on water. The great harbor gave birth to the city. The Hudson River provided an inland artery. The Erie Canal connected the Hudson to the heartland, guaranteeing the fortunes of the metropolis. Yet if water was a boon to the city's preeminence as a commercial entrepôt, it was also a bane to physical expansion and economic efficiency. Bounded by water, the city

he decided to submit plans for New York City's first bridge across the Hudson. His employer and mentor, Hell Gate designer Gustav Lindenthal, envisioned a gargantuan structure of 28 traffic lanes on a half-mile span, supported by cables strung from two massive granite towers. Lindenthal's drawings, reproduced in this book, show a plan captive to the expansive and overstuffed instincts of the Victorian Age, an architectural rendering in which exuberance passes over into sheer excess. By contrast, Ammann's design is an avatar of the modern—a slim, lithe, liberated Daisy Buchanan against

Lindenthal's dowager empress. The generational divide between old master and brilliant apprentice was unbridgeable. When the recently formed Port Authority of New York and New Jersey chose Ammann's design, a star was born.

The George Washington Bridge is, in Rastorfer's estimation, "the most significant long-span suspension bridge" of the 20th century. Part of its significance is owed to the sleek elegance of the design, and part to parsimoniousness: The Port Authority felt compelled by the Great Depression to cut back on expenses, so

it tossed aside Ammann's plan to dress the steel towers in stone. The serendipitous result was to heighten "the machined profile and transparency of the unfinished construction," creating a prototype for the stellar feats of bridge building that Ammann would complete over the next 35 years.

In the style of Ammann's six bridges—the George Washington, Bayonne, Triborough, Whitestone, Throgs Neck, and Verrazano—Rastorfer's account of the 20th century's *pontifex maximus* is spare and clean, free of superfluous detail. Rastorfer, curator of the Cooper Hewitt Museum exhibition *Six Bridges*, is equally enlightening about the theory behind the masterpieces and about Ammann's relationship with Robert Moses, the nonpareil power broker who paved the way for their construction. *Six Bridges* is a long-overdue tribute to perhaps the



Workmen attach a cable over the tower saddle on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in July 1963.

could develop only northward until George Augustus Roebling's epic bridging of the East River united Brooklyn and New York in 1883. The bridge brought about the demise of Brooklyn's independence and the eventual creation of Greater New York, a city sprawled across three islands (Manhattan, Staten Island, and Long Island), with only one borough, the Bronx, on the mainland of the United States.

Welding this archipelago into a coherent metropolitan whole required a vast and far-flung infrastructure, including tunnels, railway terminals, and more bridges. Six of the most important bridges were designed by a Swiss-born engineer named Othmar Ammann, the subject of this lucidly written and generously illustrated book.

Ammann's initial break came as inspector of construction on the Hell Gate Bridge. In 1923,

greatest artist-engineer of all time, and a poignant reminder of the heroic age that preceded the ethereal sway of cyberspace, an age when men labored, Prometheus-like, against the corporeal constraints of heaven and nature.

—Peter Quinn

**SOMETHING NEW UNDER
THE SUN:**

*An Environmental History
of the Twentieth-Century World.*

By J. R. McNeill. Norton. 421 pp.
\$29.95

In my youth in the 1950s, the Chesapeake Bay teemed with life. In summer we swam and fished in its clear, brackish waters. In winter we watched in awe as migrating ducks filled the evening sky and poured into the bay. Today, though, the ducks are nearly gone, and the brown waters are hostile to eelgrass, blue crabs, oysters, fish, and humans. Yet even in the 1950s, people reminisced about an earlier golden age when there had been far more ducks.

Do such anecdotes represent yearning for an idealized past or genuine and lasting environmental decline? McNeill, a professor of history at Georgetown University and the author of *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World: An Environmental History* (1992), would choose the latter. In this ambitious and exhaustively researched book (the bibliography lists close to a thousand sources), he argues that the 20th century spawned environmental changes that, though unintended, were extraordinary in scope and intensity.

Erosion, smog, extinctions, shrinking tropical forests, ozone holes, birds suffocating in midair over Mexico City—McNeill has plenty to work with. Individual culprits stalk his landscape, including the inventor of the harpoon cannon and the Shakespeare fanatic who released 160 starlings in New York City. But the real villains, as he discusses in the last quarter of the book, are more complex: urbanization, migration, population growth, globalization, and shifts in preferred fuels and technologies, among others.

His account is not unrelentingly gloomy. He notes positive developments, such as smog abatement, forest regeneration, and the return of the sensitive salmon to formerly polluted waters. He acknowledges the upside of many environmental changes—eliminating coastal mangroves, for instance, benefits rice farming—and he generally refrains from character-

izing a change as bad unless it amounts to a disaster for all life forms. But his neutrality sometimes lapses, as when he relegates rival explanations to footnotes or uses *toxic* eight times in two pages. He may have found it impossible to do otherwise after concluding that the growth imperative responsible for so much environmental degradation is, like the European rabbit and the water hyacinth, all-consuming and all-destructive.

—Shepard Krech III

THE TRIPLE HELIX.

By Richard Lewontin. Harvard Univ.
Press. 136 pp. \$22.95

At least since Descartes described the visible world as “merely a machine in which there was nothing at all to consider except the shapes and motions of its parts,” metaphor has played a central role in scientific understanding. We think of our brains as computers, or we refer to the human genome as the master blueprint for the species. Lewontin, a professor of evolution and zoology at Harvard University, contends that metaphors can mislead as well as enlighten. While conceding that scientific explanations “necessarily involve the use of metaphorical language,” he argues that many common terms have outlived their usefulness, especially in the realm of evolution.

To begin with, he finds fault with use of the word *development* to describe how an organism changes over time. In photography, “the image is already immanent in the exposed film, and the process of development simply makes this latent image apparent.” Some biologists believe that organisms change in a similarly preordained fashion: Genes determine the outcome, while environment, like photographic developer, provides nothing more than “a set of enabling conditions that allow the genes to express themselves.” Scientists who discount the role of environment in this fashion, he contends, are guilty of “bad biology.”

Darwin’s notion of *adaptation* does account for the influence of environment, but Lewontin believes that it too constitutes “an impediment to a real understanding of evolutionary processes.” The term implies that the organism adapts to a fixed world—that the organism is the variable and the environment is the constant—whereas the two actually affect each other. Humans, for example, produce a “microclimate”: a layer of higher-den-

sity air, warm and moist, that surrounds the body and rises slowly upward. "This heat layer is the self-produced shell that constitutes the immediate space within which the organism is operating." The body thus helps create its own external environment.

In place of the flawed images that prevail, Lewontin proposes the metaphor of the triple helix—signifying gene, organism, and environment, all interrelated and interacting. A modest proposal, perhaps, but one that he

believes could make a marked difference in scientific inquiry: Progress "depends not on revolutionary new conceptualizations, but on the creation of new methodologies that make questions answerable in practice in a world of finite resources." In this deft blend of biology and literary theory, Lewontin makes a compelling case that scientific metaphors, like scientific theories themselves, must be subjected to rigorous, unremitting re-evaluation.

—Jennifer A. Dowdell

Arts & Letters

THE SPIRIT OF BRITAIN:

A Narrative History of the Arts.

By Roy Strong. Fromm International.

708 pp. \$55

When the BBC first approached Kenneth Clark with the idea of a television series about the history of art, it was the word *civilization* that aroused his enthusiasm. "I had no clear idea what it meant," he wrote later, "but I thought it was preferable to barbarism, and fancied that this was the moment to say so." That casual impulse gave birth to a cultural landmark.

Strong's survey is infused with a similar spirit of idiosyncrasy and personal discovery. He is even more out of step with the times than Clark was in the late 1960s. A monarchist, elitist, and practicing Christian, Strong cut a dandyish figure as director of the Victoria & Albert Museum and the National Portrait Gallery. After retirement, he accumulated gossip column inches by publishing his diaries, in which the scholarship boy from the lower-middle classes parades his fascination with high society in general and the Queen Mother in particular.

The Spirit of Britain arrives as the sister volume to Strong's *Story of Britain* (1996). The reference to Britain is more or less cosmetic, since he makes no secret of the fact that England

is the real subject of his story. As might be expected, he places conservatism and a love of tradition among the chief ingredients of the English character. On the other hand, he is realistic enough to acknowledge that this yearning for the past remains intense "even if that past is an imagined one."

His enthusiasm flags the nearer he comes to his own era. He makes only a glancing reference



Royal guards await Queen Victoria at the Great Exhibition, 1851

to the Beatles, and none at all to those home-grown phenomena, Ealing film comedies such as *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1950). By the time he arrives at the publicity-driven consumer culture of the 1980s, Strong's disillusionment is palpable. He wonders what resonance Milton will have in a country that can already be defined as post-Christian. For all his innate conservatism, though, Strong does not idealize every aspect of yesteryear. National greatness and artistic creativity do not always coincide, as he notes in his overview of the closing years of the 19th century.

Strong's prose sometimes falls short of its usual elegance, and he can falter when he ventures beyond the visual and decorative arts. He wrongly asserts that W. H. Auden emigrated to the United States in 1934. Not many admirers of that quintessentially English novelist, Anthony Trollope, would agree that *The Warden* (1855) is his masterpiece; *Barchester Towers* (1857) and half a dozen other titles seem much more likely candidates.

But Strong makes an opinionated tour guide—a rarity in these days of committee-speak. Individual chapters allotted to representative figures such as William of Wykeham, Horace Walpole, and Kenneth Clark himself illustrate the ebb and flow of values over the centuries. The lavish use of illustrations and the easy, conversational tone are in some ways reminiscent of Sir Ernst Gombrich's magisterial narrative *The Story of Art* (1950). Just as Gombrich's work was originally conceived as an introduction for younger readers, so Strong provides a robust overview in which text and image proceed hand in hand.

—Clive Davis

HOW TO READ AND WHY.

By Harold Bloom. Scribner. 283 pp.
\$25

Bloom is mad for Shakespeare and makes no secret of his passion, so he would probably not mind being called a Falstaff among critics. He is all messy emotion and mood swings—elation one moment at the powers of great literature, despair the next at the diminished ability of contemporary audiences to read it properly. For him, literary criticism should not be the bloodless theorizing that currently chills the air in classrooms. It should be pragmatic and personal, making what is implicit in a book “finely explicit.” Criticism should tease out the art and

the emotion in texts and explain what each has to do with the other.

In this book, Bloom, who holds professorships at both Yale University and New York University, takes his case directly to the general reader. Each section explores a particular genre—short fiction, poetry, plays, and novels—and uses specific works to follow through on the promise of the title. How should we read this material, and why should we bother? Through synopsis, exhortation, ingenuity, and autobiographical asides, Bloom answers the questions. (The asides, it must be said, are thoroughly intimidating: He memorized poetry for personal consolation at seven, read *Moby Dick* at nine, and has been haunted by a stanza from a Hart Crane poem since he was 10.)

The surprising thing about Bloom's answers, his how and why of reading, is how unsurprising they are—not that they're in the least wrong or objectionable, but that they're entirely traditional. Bloom advocates what teenagers were taught about literature as a matter of course 50 years ago in sensible high schools: We should read attentively and without prejudice or preconception. We should read to strengthen the self, to understand others, and to learn about the world. Of course, in this age of destabilizing theory, tradition has the force of radical defiance.

Alas, much of the book is synopsis, and synopses of unfamiliar stories, novels, and poems are about as interesting as the color slides from a relative's vacation. Worse, the summaries are often maladroit. The book is also far too repetitive, as if intended to be read as it appears to have been written, in fits and starts.

Bloom succeeds, though, in making connections and reading brilliantly across genres and centuries. He has exquisite taste and judgment. He carries whole libraries in his head, as well as a prodigious store of textually driven opinions. For the initiated, the book will be an opportunity to confirm or reconsider past judgments.

For the uninitiated, the book's principal virtue may be its table of contents, which argues neither how to read nor why, but plainly identifies what to read and whom. Bloom's favorite modern poets are Yeats, Lawrence, Stevens, and Hart Crane. Among the novelists he admires are Cervantes, Proust, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, James, Faulkner, and others of that long-established and unassailable stature (and Philip Roth and Cormac McCarthy in

our day). If a reader has time for a single author only, then Shakespeare's the one, hands down, for, in Bloom's view, he has taught us nothing less than how to be fully human.

The religion of solitary and committed reading, undertaken for aesthetic pleasure and personal reward, with faith in language and regard for the toiling author, is threatened

by the agnosticism of theory and the idol of visual literacy. Bloom is a high priest of the old order, and the threat, in his view, may well be mortal. If the temple comes down all about him, he may be too absorbed in a poem to notice. His devotion sets an example that will survive the lapses in this book.

—James Morris

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FROM THE CENTER

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan came by the Wilson Center for a visit earlier this year, and a few days later a slim package arrived in the mail from his Capitol Hill office. In a short note, the senator explained that he had been inspired by our bust of Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, the first chair of the Center's board, to dig from his files the papers surrounding what he called the drama of the Center's founding more than three decades ago—an event in which Humphrey and Moynihan played leading roles.

The establishment of the Wilson Center—an event that spanned the Johnson and Nixon administrations—was carried forward in an unusual spirit of bipartisanship. Lyndon Johnson somewhat irregularly appointed his vice president to chair the new institution's board in one of his final acts as president, and President Richard Nixon, only months earlier Humphrey's rival in a hotly contested election, generously endorsed his leadership soon after taking office. Nixon also appointed Moynihan (who served in both administrations) to the board, and the future senator went on to serve as vice chair for five years.

No mere figurehead, Humphrey took an active part in the institution's development. At the inaugural meeting of the board, he announced the ambitious goal of making the Center “an institution of learning that the 22nd century will regard as having influenced the 21st.” Without Humphrey's great stature and tremendous energy, Moynihan says, the Center might never have grown into the vital institution it has become.

More than 30 years, 2,500 resident scholars and fellows, and 800 published books later, the Center remains true to the vision of its founders and to the example of Woodrow Wilson. Our mission now, as then, is to bring together the thinkers and the doers, the scholars and the policymakers, in the confident hope that from their dialogue better understanding and better public policy will emerge.

The Center does not develop specific policy recommendations. As Moynihan

once said, “It is not a think tank! Not a think tank!” It was a distinction he made emphatically because, like the Center's other founders, he wanted it to be a place for open, serious, and informed exchanges among people holding a diverse mix of viewpoints rather than a platform for a particular ideology, political party, or set of concerns. It was to be a place where public issues were considered in their historical context and illuminated through interdisciplinary collaboration. It was to be a place, in short, that honored Wilson's conviction that the intellectual and the policymaker are “engaged in a common enterprise.”

Every week, the Center sponsors a wide variety of meetings and discussions that fulfill this special mission. In May, for instance, the Center brought together U.S. and foreign government officials, scholars, and journalists in a series of workshops to examine how the world's democracies can work together to advance and protect democracy around the globe. A seminar featuring Vice President Al Gore's national security adviser, Leon Feurth, along with other policymakers and energy industry and foundation representatives, explored the opportunities for cooperation between the United States and China to promote clean and efficient energy use in the world's most populous country. A two-day conference on Mexico probed the social, political, and economic challenges facing our southern neighbor at the turn of the millennium.

Of course, no one better represents the Center's founding ideals than Moynihan himself. In the finest Wilsonian tradition, he has been a brilliant scholar and extraordinary public servant—a four-term senator, U.S. ambassador to India and the United Nations; an authority on American government and a host of policy issues, author or editor of 18 books; and an intellectual maverick who defies easy characterization. Moynihan has, to paraphrase one of his own well-known formulations, blazed a path that defines public service up.

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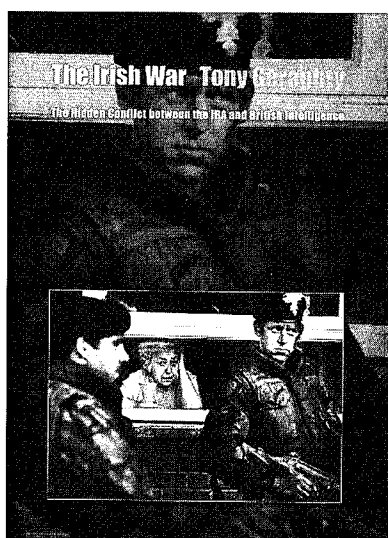
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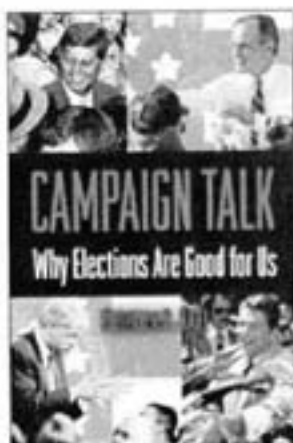
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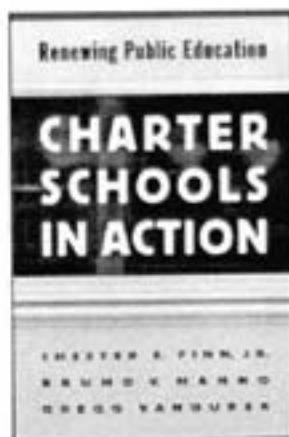
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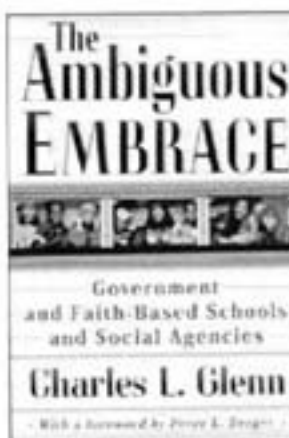
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