

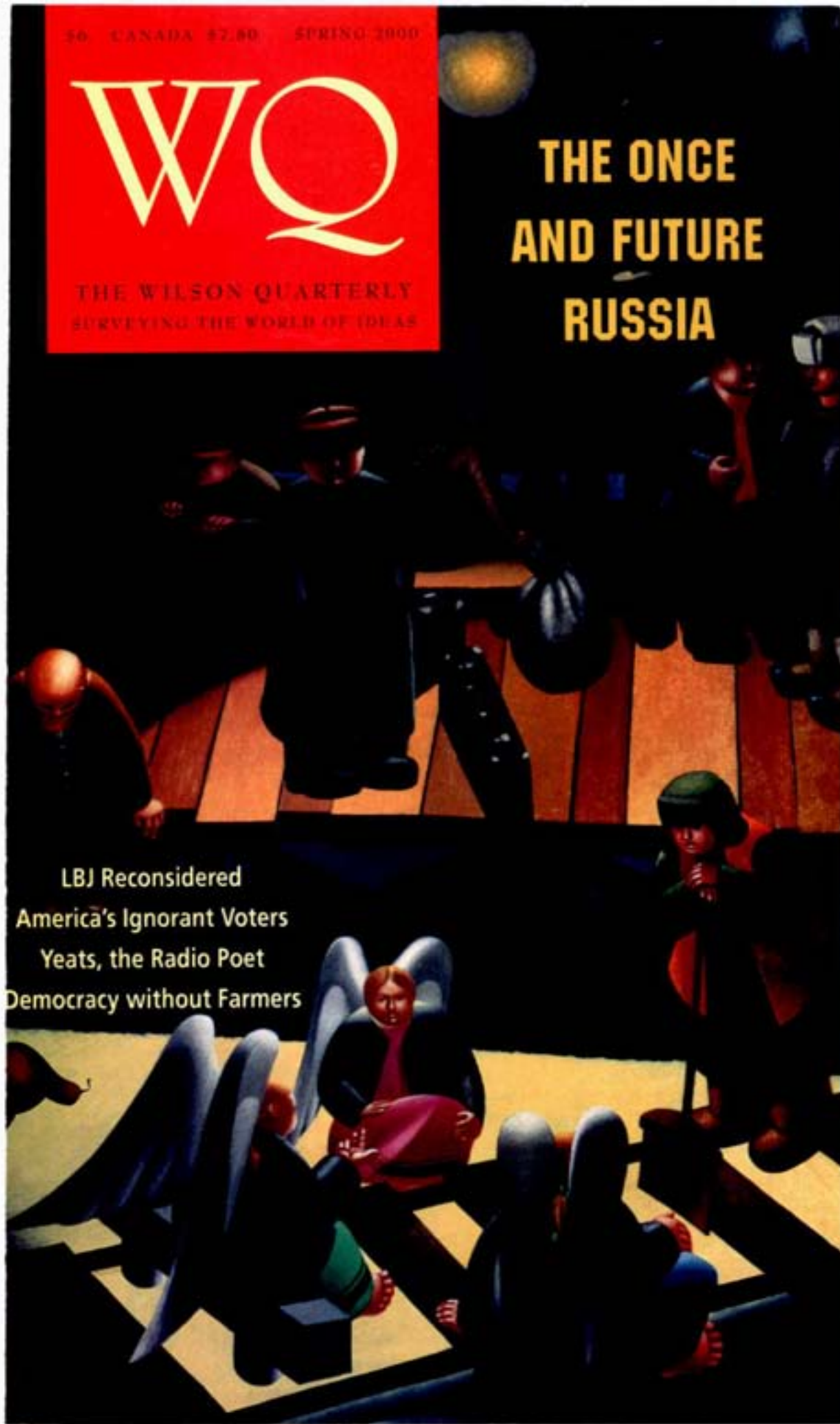
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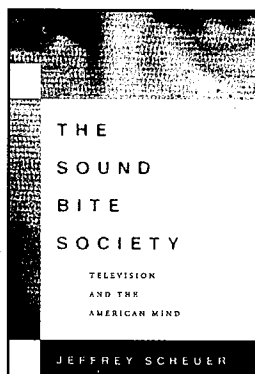
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

It's the rare scholar who can also call himself a farmer, and it's only somewhat less rare that a scholar brings his learning to bear on public questions. Victor Davis Hanson, the author of "Democracy without Farmers" (see p. 68), can lay claim to both distinctions. And he is a classicist to boot.

In a skein of passionate, stimulating books leading up to his latest, *The Land Was Everything: Letters from an American Farmer* (2000), Hanson has looked back to some neglected corners of ancient Greek civilization for instruction on subjects that are, or ought to be, matters of present-day concern. In *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (1995), which serves as a bookend to his latest volume, he argued that Greek democracy grew out of the cultural soil plowed by Greek farmers more than it did out of the Greek cities. In *The Soul of Battle: From Ancient Times to the Present Day, How Three Great Liberators Vanquished Tyrants* (1999), he showed how democratic armies both derive a special character from the societies that give them birth and invigorate those societies in the wake of war. There are, he insists, lessons to be learned for the way today's democracies wage war.

When he was asked recently why more academics don't speak to public questions, Hanson gave a characteristic answer. He recalled coming home as a student on holidays to the 180-acre family farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California, where he still lives, to find his family and coworkers largely indifferent to the university's abstractions. That was all fine, they implied, but they still needed help working the orchards and vineyards. So, too, he said, with the Greeks, who recognized no wall of separation between the life of thought and the life of action, sending their philosophers off to war, for example, as well as their shepherds and blacksmiths. In Hanson, at least, we have one thinker with feet planted firmly in both worlds.

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

American Exceptionalism

In Europe, the exceptionalism of the United States has never been in serious dispute ["Still the Exceptional Nation?" WQ, Winter '00]. Anti-American sentiment and a fascination with a unique political and economic system that promises the "pursuit of happiness" have just been two sides of the same coin. No doubt, the United States will remain *the* exceptional nation for a long time to come even though globalization and the end of communism will act as general equalizers over time.

I would like to add two additional comments on Seymour Martin Lipset's commendable essay. No doubt, the general tendency of Europeans to move toward the right after the Cold War has narrowed the gap between statist-leaning Europe and meritocratic and individualistic North America. But distinct differences remain. Take the frightening possession of hundreds of millions of firearms by private American citizens, and the rash of violent incidents in public schools. This is exceptional indeed. Or take the overwhelming acceptance of capital punishment in most of the United States. True, this exceptional country brought freedom and democracy to Germany and most of Europe after World War II and helped bring about the collapse of communism. But during the same period, hundreds of human beings have been executed in U.S. prisons, leaving this country ranked close to the Congo and Iran in executions in 1998, behind communist China. It is worth noting that for this reason the United States would not qualify for membership in the European Union.

My second comment concerns education. I have great difficulties accepting Lipset's dictum that "the United States has led the world in providing the kinds of general education needed to get ahead." Having taught students from both sides of the Atlantic, I have always been struck by the lack of *Basiswissen* (fundamental knowledge) displayed by U.S. students and by the absence in the American school system of appropriate vocational training. It may be true that in the United States the proportion of citi-

zens graduating from high school and enjoying college and postgraduate training is higher than everywhere else. But the United States has a system that, despite all its tax advantages and public and private subsidies, exacts a larger share of family income for college education than almost any other system on the planet. Thus, it is not surprising that the gap between poorly and highly educated students is higher in the United States than in almost all other developed countries.

Hanns-D. Jacobsen
Berlin, Germany

The Cultural Prestige of Rome

Michael Lind ["The Second Fall of Rome," WQ, Winter '00] is right to assert that, since the French Revolution, classical Rome has been given short shrift, but wrong to conclude that "it is in the realms of literature, art, and philosophy that Rome has the most to offer us today." His error is rooted in the presumptions of those against whom his attack is directed. When he alludes to ancient Greece, he writes in the manner of the Romantics—as if Athens had been its only city, ignoring not only Thebes, Argos, Corinth, Miletus, Syracuse, Massilia, and other cities, but classical Sparta as well. Again, like the Romantics, he presumes that Schiller was correct to call the Greeks naive and the Romans sentimental: He disagrees only in preferring the supposedly sophisticated to the putatively primitive.

Lind would do well to pay more attention to what the Romans themselves had to say with regard to their comparatively meager accomplishments in literature, art, and philosophy. Virgil spoke for his compatriots when he wrote, "Others will cast more tenderly in bronze/Their breathing figures, this I believe,/And draw from the marble the lifelike visage;/Plead with greater eloquence, gauge precisely/With instruments the paths of the heaven/And foretell the rising of the stars." The author of the *Aeneid* knew his place: Like Cicero before him and Seneca thereafter, he was an imitator of the Greeks. In antiquity, no one asserted Rome's

superiority over Athens in the sciences and the arts. No Roman building rivaled the Parthenon; no Roman playwright outpaced Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; no Roman philosopher could bear comparison with Plato and Aristotle.

Rome was like Sparta: its claim to fame lay in the political sphere. "Remember, Romans," Virgil wrote, "to rule earth's peoples/With authority—for your arts are these:/To impose the habits of peace,/To spare the conquered and defeat the proud." Its political accomplishments explain why Rome, like Sparta, was so admired at the time of our nation's founding. Now that we are a great power, we have even more to learn from studying Rome's rise and, of course, its fall.

Paul A. Rahe

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University of Tulsa
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I respectfully take issue with Michael Lind's erudite and error-ridden essay. He complains that the Romans have gotten a bum rap for being "second-rate imitators of the Greeks." The notion that the Romans had hand-me-down highbrow culture was not created by dismissive latter-day Romantics but by the ancient Romans themselves. The Romans borrowed their philosophy, literary forms, and sculpture from the Greeks, whom they conquered and enslaved, only to retain them as tutors in all things civilized.

Lind asserts that "it is in the realms of literature, art, and philosophy that Rome has the most to offer us today." But these, along with science and technology, are precisely the disciplines that the Romans copied from the Greeks, all the while acknowledging their enormous cultural debt to them. The term *Greco-Roman* at once reveals and conceals this debt. Cicero, the "philosopher-statesman" whom Lind lauds as "perhaps the most important historical model in the minds of early modern Europeans and American republicans," is a case in point. Cicero's philosophy, his rhetoric, and his literary conceits were all Greek. He learned them in Greek, and sometimes spoke of them and wrote of them in Greek. The reason for this is simple: As were most elite male Romans, he was schooled in the prestigious arts and letters of Greece.

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Lind has also overestimated the political accomplishments of Rome. He credits the Romans with the invention of a "strong chief magistrate, bicameral legislature, and a powerful senate." Perhaps. But these features of the Roman political system were never operative at the same time, and so the great benefit of their coexistence—the checking and balancing of complementary branches of government—was never realized in ancient Roman politics. No one "strong chief magistrate" existed until Julius Caesar became dictator for life in 44 B.C. It was a republican conspiracy that ended his career, and his life, on the Ides of March of that same year. But it was too little too late. Caesar's successor, Augustus, expanded brutal Roman domination abroad while crushing dissent and disabling due process at home. He emasculated the Senate, which deeply resented the erosion of its power. Senators hatched so many plots against Augustus that, not wanting to wind up like his predecessor, he purged the whole lot in 18 B.C. The emperor then bypassed the Senate and literally ran the empire from his home, using a large retinue of slaves and freedmen to



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manage his sprawling domain. The Republic was dead: slavery became indispensable in the highest echelons of the regime because slaves, as the professional sycophants of Augustus, ran the Empire.

So let us rejoice that Rome has fallen. Those who have tried to resurrect the Roman Empire in the past—Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler—are a scurrilous bunch bent on a scurrilous project. Aren't Václav Havel and Julius Nyerere more sterling realizations of the ideal of the modern philosopher-statesman? Why do we not prefer these modern republicans to the ancient Romans, whose lost republic and corrupt empire have bequeathed to our common cultural patrimony the fasces and the cross?

Allen Dwight Callahan

Associate Professor of New Testament

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Many classicists, myself included, have smarted under the privileging of ancient Greek culture over that of Rome, and the consequent neglect of Roman or Latin culture in contemporary society: I would estimate that until recently up to 75 percent of any survey course in classical literature or Western civilization was Greek.

The value of Roman literature and the injustice done to it first by the 19th-century Romantics, then by our post-Romantic rebellion against our father figures, is admirably described by Tom Habinek in *The Politics of Roman Literature* (1998). Readers of Virgil have always known that besides the beauty and complexity of its poetry, the *Aeneid* tempered its patriotic fervor (and what is wrong with patriotism?) with a truthful model of the problems of leadership and the founding of a new society. Lind will be glad to hear that now even the post-Virgilians—Senecan tragedy, Lucan, and Statius—are being translated and studied with sympathy for their baroque sensibilities by readers fortified by the lurid shock tactics of new cinema and theater.

No one would dispute the excitement and beauty of Homer or the greatness of the best Greek tragedy. But this need not entail favoring Greece over Rome. Part of the problem is the mistaken idealization of

Athenian democracy. Athens's mismanagement of its empire, its warfare, and its political life should be evident to anyone who reads Thucydides or Plato. But Lind is right that distaste for things Roman springs from distaste for aspects of our own past: imperialism, public rhetoric, and the old, established authorities.

As Lind points out, America has a great deal in common with imperial Rome. Like Rome in the first century of the common era, we have become multiracial and multicultural. Government and administration are being stretched to the utmost to meet the needs of unprecedented millions. And a materialistic, get-rich-quick generation no longer wants the burden of family or public service, derides public rhetoric, and pays no attention to the words of our politicians and educators. Not surprisingly, even the men who mouth those words don't seem to believe what they are saying. Real rhetoric as the Greeks and Romans and Founding Fathers practiced it was a discipline of argumentation and aesthetic control of language, animated by conviction. All we are left with now is abuse of the concept springing from chronic abuse of the art.

Even if we had nothing to learn from the precedent of imperial Roman history, we have everything to gain from reaching out to enjoy Roman literature—it is all there, from the early comedies to Ovid's and Apuleius' *Transformations*, unrivaled by any Greek work. Go and buy! Forgive the diatribe—it is another Roman skill.

Elaine Fantham
Giger Professor of Latin Emerita
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What Makes a Great President?

Michael Beschloss ["A Tale of Two Presidents," *WQ*, Winter '00] made a good choice in selecting Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy for comparison. As the first two presidents elected after the onset of the Cold War, they faced broadly similar historical challenges, yet they differed strikingly in life experience and in their approaches to presidential leadership.

In *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton* (2000), I argue that presidential leadership can be usefully analyzed by examining six broad qualities that bear on the public performance of chief executives.

These qualities provide handy criteria for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Ike and JFK, and for bringing out the lessons they provide for the future:

Cognitive style. Both men had impressive intelligence. As befits a military strategist, Eisenhower had a gift for reducing complex issues to their essentials and placing them in larger contexts, an ability that proved invaluable as he framed national security policy. Kennedy's thinking was tactical in nature. He was a speed-reader who absorbed large quantities of information and easily mastered the specifics of issues, but he was wary of theory and addressed emerging events on their own terms, rather than assimilate them into an overall framework.

Emotional intelligence. Some presidents have been masters of their own psyches, productively channeling their feelings into their leadership. Others have been in thrall to their emotions, allowing them to undermine their public performance. (Richard Nixon did this, acting against real and perceived enemies in a way that destroyed his presidency.) Neither Eisenhower nor Kennedy was at the mercy of his emotions, although JFK's compulsive womanizing might well have undermined his presidency had it not been cut short by assassination.

Political skill. In his time, Eisenhower was inaccurately perceived as a political innocent out of his depth in civilian office. He is now recognized as a political sophisticate who chose to exercise influence through intermediaries in order to maintain broad, bipartisan public support. Kennedy was a more conventional practitioner of the art of the possible. When it became evident that the Congress was dominated by a coalition of Republicans and conservative southern Democrats, Kennedy backed off an election-year pledge to take action against racial discrimination. But he was also prepared to play political hardball, as he did in 1962 when he used the federal government's antitrust powers to compel the steel industry to rescind a price increase.

Policy vision. Even the most politically skilled president can go astray if his goals are flawed, as were those of Lyndon Johnson in 1965 when he embarked on an open-ended military involvement in Vietnam without establishing clear goals and probable troop requirements. One of Eisenhower's great strengths was his policy vision. He agreed to run for the pres-

idency out of an interest in placing the nation's national security policies on a firm footing, balancing long-term military effectiveness with the need to maintain a strong economy. Because of his broad public support and prestige as a military leader, he was able to resist the demands of hawks in both parties for massive military expenditures and to hew to a national security program designed to prevail over the Soviet Union in the long haul. Despite the lofty phrases of Kennedy's public addresses, he was a quintessential pragmatist. Lacking an overall conception of how to deal with the Soviet threat, he inadvertently alarmed the men in the Kremlin by engaging in an arms buildup and indulging in high-flown rhetoric they viewed as bellicose.

Organizational capacity. No American chief executive has had a richer background in the organization of human endeavor than the architect of D-Day and the Allied victory in Europe. Eisenhower organized his National Security Council in a manner that maximized his exposure to accurate intelligence and varied advice. Kennedy scrapped his predecessor's NSC process without assessing its utility, taking it to be an unwise application of military staff procedures to the world of politics. Well before he had served 100 days, JFK signed off on the ill-fated attempt to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. He then improved his decision-making procedures, but as late as the final month of his life, his national security team authorized an ill-considered coup in South Vietnam that destabilized that regime, leaving Lyndon Johnson with a far more dangerous Southeast Asia than Kennedy had inherited from Eisenhower.

Communication with the public. Eisenhower and Kennedy claimed the highest levels of public support of the 10 chief executives who were the subjects of regular public approval polls. The popularity of the likeable Ike resulted from his wartime prestige, attractive persona, and steadiness of leadership, not his public addresses. Kennedy's popularity was a function of his rhetorical brilliance and his incisive and witty performances in his regular televised news conferences. Only Franklin Roosevelt and perhaps Ronald Reagan had greater gifts. But he was insufficiently attentive to the message conveyed by his speeches. The soaring rhetoric that played well at home sat poorly with Nikita Khrushchev, escalating the Cold War to a potentially lethal level in the Cuban Missile

Crisis of October 1962.

The point of such an exercise is not to "grade" chief executives, but to learn from them, creating a usable presidential past. An understanding of past presidents provides voters with benchmarks for assessing future aspirants to the Oval Office. It also provides a reservoir of institutional memory, making it less likely that new chief executives will repeat the errors of their predecessors, and more likely that they will profit from their successes.

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Michael Beschloss includes correct factual data, but unfortunately draws numerous inappropriate and indefensible conclusions from them. The idea that JFK handled the Cuban Missile Crisis better than DDE would have is ridiculous speculation, and without any foundation. It flies in the face of Eisenhower's competent management of invasions in North Africa, Sicily, and southern France, not to mention Normandy. Many historians argue that Khrushchev believed he could push JFK around because of Kennedy's inept handling of the Bay of Pigs invasion; the Soviet leader certainly would not have tried to push a military hero such as Eisenhower around. And, of course, it is not likely that Eisenhower would have gone ahead with the Bay of Pigs.

In his book *Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye* (written with Dave Powers), Kenneth O'Donnell states unequivocally that JFK had agreed with Senator Mike Mansfield (D.-Mont.) to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam after the 1964 election. Beschloss, on the other hand, says he is skeptical that JFK would have kept U.S. troops "in harm's way for 14 months to help himself through the next election." The assertion by O'Donnell, one of JFK's closest friends, flatly contradicts him.

As to JFK's effective management of small groups, such as Ex Comm—which handled the Cuban Missile Crisis—I would suggest that one consider Robert McNamara's recent remark that neither he nor JFK realized at the time how close they brought the world to nuclear holocaust.

James F. Fitzgerald
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The presidency is an office of many dimensions, and the different emphases each president puts on each dimension can tell a great deal about his administration. One dimension is presidential power, and many authors center on it, as Beschloss largely does.

But power for what? For Eisenhower, with whom I worked closely through most of his presidency, it is more useful to center on presidential responsibility—his view that the duties and authority of his office should be exercised on behalf of the well-being of the people he served. Eisenhower himself was wont to say, in dealing with the many-sided issues that came to his office, “Now let’s ask ourselves, what’s best for America?”

There was, I suggest, an Eisenhower method, carefully thought out by the president himself, that embodied cooperation and collective action in the service of a common purpose and the common good. Throughout his two terms, he maintained workable, constructive relations with the Congress. In security affairs, he guided his administration in looking ahead and thinking through basic policy goals for the “long pull,” in his words, avoiding fits and starts in response, for example, to the asserted (but nonexistent) “missile gap.” Many other examples could be cited of the ways he looked beyond a personal legacy—a term I never heard him use, either in formal meetings or in my own talks with him—to the country’s needs and interests.

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The Purpose of Big Government

R. Shep Melnick’s point that state and local governments are “closer to the people” [“An American Dilemma,” *WQ*, Autumn ’99] fails to address the crucial next question: Given that fact, what areas of policy responsibility should be left with, or devolved to, governments at those levels? No one suggests, for example, that we should have 50 different national defense policies. Some matters are obviously appropriate to assign to the national government.

Melnick is talking about domestic policy, of course. And he is quite right that Americans talk out of both sides of their mouths, complaining about too much government and insisting simultaneously that programs that

benefit them personally not be cut. Those with political power—not just people with lots of money but also people with concerns shared by tens of millions of others—do quite well in protecting themselves at all levels of government. Social Security is consequently a third rail for anyone who is seen as threatening it.

One place where Melnick should have taken greater care concerns the poor. They have been far less successful in protecting themselves against devolutionary action in Washington in recent years, and there are many states where majority rule spells big trouble for them. The only area where large-scale devolution occurred after the Republican revolution of 1994 was with regard to welfare. That was no accident.

Poverty is a case study (and not the only one) for the proposition that federalism in domestic policy requires a mix of national and local policy. If, for example, we do not have some basic national safety net and other requirements to protect poor children, there are going to be states that adopt policies that simply drive people off the welfare rolls without any concern for what happens to them and their children. This is happening, right now. We could have allowed the states greater flexibility in designing welfare policies without ripping up rudimentary federal standards that would have prevented the worst of what is now occurring in the states.

There are two key points missing from Melnick’s analysis. One, some issues deserve a national resolution. For example, raising the income of the working poor by a combination of the minimum wage and the earned income tax credit should be a matter of national policy, supplemented by state action. Two, even as to matters that should be left basically to the states with appropriate added funding from Washington, some are so fundamental that national action is in order to keep everyone within a principled framework. A basic safety net for children whose parents are not in a position to work is one of those.

Nevertheless, Melnick’s essay is helpful in raising anew questions we need to keep asking as times change.

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FINDINGS

The Name of the Peanut

Each autumn throughout the second half of the 20th century, an unlicensed psychotherapist named Lucy Van Pelt persuaded the hapless Charlie Brown to take a running kick at a football, which she then invariably yanked away, at the last possible moment, to his detriment. By this annual ritual we celebrated the tri-



umph of hope over experience—and of gravity over grace. So when Charles M. Schulz announced his retirement at the end of 1999, it felt like an era had come to an end. Schulz died in February, a few hours before the very last *Peanuts* hit the newsstands. But perhaps the finest tribute to the cartoonist was written at the peak of his career, three decades earlier, by medievalist and semiotician Umberto Eco.

“The World of Charlie Brown” first appeared in 1963 as the introduction to an Italian edition of *Peanuts*. (It is reprinted in a 1994 collection of Eco’s essays, *Apocalypse Postponed*.) “This much should be clear,” Eco declares, “if ‘poetry’ means the capacity of carrying tenderness, pity, wickedness to moments of extreme transparency, as if things passed through a light and there is no telling

any more what substance they are made of, then Schulz is a poet.”

And an avant-garde one: With *Peanuts*, all the terrible anxieties of adult life are squeezed into pintsize characters Eco calls “monsters.” Lucy is “treacherous, self-confident, an entrepreneur with assured profits, ready to peddle a security that is completely bogus but of unquestioned effect.”

Her brother Linus—sucking his thumb and clutching his security blanket—is “already burdened with every neurosis.” Charlie Brown is “a figure capable of great shifts of mood of a Shakespearean tone.” And Snoopy embodies the protean self at its most imaginative.

Yet a lyrical quality kept *Peanuts* from becoming mere satire:

“These monster-children,” Eco writes, “are capable suddenly of an innocence and a sincerity which call everything into question . . . we never know whether to despair or to heave a sigh of optimism.”

In 1990 Eco returned to *Peanuts* with comments that make a fitting epitaph: “The world of Charles Schulz belongs to the history of American culture, whether to the history of art or literature I don’t know, but it belongs there precisely because it is able to put these distinctions into doubt.”

Curfew Chimera

In their frenzied enactment of juvenile curfew ordinances over the past 10 years, U.S. cities have glided over a fairly obvious question: Do the laws actually work?

Although curfews have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, most investigative energy is devoted to constitutional issues. Of the few studies that do look into effectiveness, only four or five employ statistical analysis. The rest rely on anecdotes and opinions, but they have overshadowed the statistical studies—which uniformly suggest that curfews don't work.

Among the opinion-based studies is a 1997 survey conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. Most of the 55 cities surveyed, it admits, “did not conduct a formal evaluation, but instead provided anecdotal evidence of the curfew’s impact on crime rates.” Most of the literature on curfew effectiveness is similarly deficient: Many studies report that crime has fallen during curfew hours, but ignore the displacement of crime to noncurfew hours—a shift documented in nearly every statistical study. Others do not account for the fact that juvenile crime has declined in curfew and noncurfew cities alike. Yet despite all these lacunae, the studies conclude that curfews reduce crime.

Local policymakers and the news media have lapped up the good news. They would do well to consult statistical studies such as “Do Juvenile Curfew Laws Work? A Time-Series Analysis of the New Orleans Law,” in *Justice Quarterly* (Jan. 2000), and “An Analysis of Curfew Enforcement and Juvenile Crime in California,” in *Western Criminology Review* (Sept. 1999). Contrary to all expectations, the authors of “Do Juvenile Curfew Laws Work?”—Mike Reynolds, Ruth Seydlitz, and Pamela Jenkins—found that “victimizations, juvenile victimizations, and juvenile arrests during curfew hours did not decrease significantly . . . [and] some victimizations during non-curfew hours increased significantly.” Mike Males and Dan Macallair reached an equally negative conclusion in their *Western Criminology Review* article: “Curfew enforcement generally has no dis-

cernible effect on youth crime.” Other statistical studies bear out these scholars’ findings.

These studies have done nothing to dampen enthusiasm for curfews. The 1990s witnessed a boom in curfew legislation unrivaled since the 1890s. In 1990, less than half of the 200 largest cities in America had curfews. By last year, 80 percent did.

The Retro-Futuro City

Brasília has suffered for decades as a symbol of the failure of urban planning. Conceived in the 1950s by Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek as a means to unite Brazil and propel it into the modern age, the capital soon fell victim to criticism for its cold and desolate ambiance. But with this April’s 40th anniversary celebration, opinion seems to be warming.

Whether thanks to nostalgia or simply to renewed admiration for modernism’s futuristic forms, Brasília has been “rediscovered” and “is now perceived as a retro-futuro dreamland made all the more exotic and alluring for its remoteness,” says a writer in *Artforum* (Summer 1999). The city’s stark shapes, write Robert Polidori and Paul Goldberger in the *New Yorker* (Mar. 8, 1999) “are startlingly lyrical.” The buildings “exquisitely



marry modernist geometries to romantic yearnings” for social change.

In a New York exhibition called *2 Visions Brasília*, writes critic Tom McDonough in *Art in America* (Jan. 2000), photographers Todd Eberle and Robert Polidori revealed “what it means to look back upon Brasília with resolutely late 20th century eyes.” For years, the modernist form has been derided as cold and impersonal, yet Eberle finds beauty in its “curving stairs, smooth ramps, and shining surfaces.” Polidori’s photographs counter the old view of Brasília as “uninhabitable” by focusing on telltale signs of human wear and tear.

Artistic praise, however, is still tempered by practical criticism. The central zone of Brasília has a relatively low crime rate, good jobs, and a livelier social life than any critic ever expected—but most of the city’s inhabitants must live in the 16 less enchanting satellite cities. If Brasília has not fulfilled the modernist dream of forging an egalitarian utopia through architecture, it is at least proof, McDonough says, of “the citizens’ ability to create a humane, workable environment in even the most unlikely circumstances.”

The Speed of Thought

America’s magazines publish their circulation figures around the end of every year, an event that invariably inspires some neck craning by competitive editors, and now, in the age of the Internet, a bit of collar loosening as well. Magazines number in the tens of thousands, ranging from multimillion-selling consumer magazine colossi such as *Reader’s Digest* and *Cosmopolitan* to specialized trade publications such as the *American Nurseryman* to tiny academic journals (there are several devoted to the study of Ezra Pound) to

gems beyond category, such as *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

The general-interest magazines devoted to the world of ideas occupy a small and lightly traveled corner of the magazine universe. At the outer edge of this little constellation lie the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s*, with circulations of 462,000 and 223,000, respectively. Other monthlies include *Commentary* (27,000) and the *Washington Monthly* (21,000), while notable weeklies include the *Nation* (101,000), *National Review* (162,000), the *New Republic* (91,000), and the *Weekly Standard* (57,000).

Circulation does tend to increase with periodicity, which may explain why the liberal *American Prospect* (circulation 27,000) has moved during the last few years from quarterly to bimonthly and recently to biweekly publication. Another biweekly, the *New York Review of Books*, sells 118,000 copies per issue.

The ranks of the influential quarterlies are thinning. *Foreign Affairs* (circulation 116,000) has gone bimonthly and *Foreign Policy* (26,000) is soon to follow. The *American Scholar* (24,000) and the *National Interest* (8,000) remain quarterlies. (The *Wilson Quarterly* has a circulation of 59,000.) Academic quarterlies have very modest circulations. The *American Sociological Review* claims 12,000, *New Literary History*, an elite 1,700.

Influence matters more than circulation to magazines of ideas, and that precious commodity is much harder to measure. One of the more influential magazines of the postwar era, the *Public Interest*, is a neoconservative policy journal that never claimed more than about 16,000 readers, at its peak in the late 1970s.

What of the Internet’s impact? So far, it has been minimal, although a few on-line magazines such as *Slate* and *Salon* do traffic in ideas. As a “fast” medium that emphasizes novelty and quick takes, the Web may not be too hospitable to certain kinds of undertakings. New intellectual magazines, such as the *Green Bag* and *Hermenaut*, continue to be born on paper—as do New Economy chroniclers

such as *Wired* and *Red Herring*. There's a technology company that aptly boasts of doing "business at the speed of thought." Some kinds of thought, however, move at slower speeds than others.

... And of Reading

Can't keep up with the flood of words? Convinced that others are plowing through piles of printed matter at the speed of sound? Relax, writes Timothy Noah in *Slate* (www.slate.com). Most of us, he found (presumably after slogging through piles of printed matter), are plodders. "The fastest college-level reader will read, at best, twice as fast as the slowest college-level reader," he reports. The majority of college-level readers read about 300 words per minute.

All of those tales of amazing speed-readers are bunk, Ronald Carver, a professor of education and psychology at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, told Noah. Legend has it that John F. Kennedy read 1,200 words per minute, but it was probably more like 500 or 600—impressive enough, Carter says. *Slate* also offers an on-line speed-reading test. We humbly report that it seems to confirm Noah's argument about plodding.

If You Squint, It's a Picasso

A 28-painting forgery shook the art world last winter, serving as an unwelcome public reminder of the blossoming art forgery trade. The *Canyon Suite*, a collection of watercolors held by the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri, and supposedly painted by Georgia O'Keeffe between 1916 and 1918, was found to be painted on paper from the 1930s and '60s. It is still not known whether the watercolors were

deliberately forged or just mistakenly attributed. But the affair rattled dealers, museums, and collectors all over the world.

The scandal is not an isolated one—the *New York Times* has reported that "between 10 and 40 percent of pictures by significant artists for sale are bogus." Thomas Hoving, former director of New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art, has said that during his tenure a full 40 percent of the artworks considered for purchase



A John Myatt masterpiece, masquerading as Picasso's Girl with a Mandolin

were either phony or over-restored to the point of being fake. Just last year, John Myatt was sentenced to prison for forging approximately 200 paintings in the styles of nine modern masters including Alberto Giacometti and Pablo Picasso. The scam has been called one of the most "damaging art con[s] of the 20th century."

News of many scandals rarely travels beyond the art world: Dealers are less than eager to look closely at questionable works from which they stand to profit handsomely. Nor do museums enjoy calling their own reputation into question by admitting they were

scammed. As long as the United States enjoys its economic boom, the rewards for an artful sleight of hand will only get sweeter. The hush-hush leaves collectors to suffer the consequences of their ignorance. Unfortunately, few will escape as handily as R. Crosby Kemper, Jr.—the victim in the O’Keeffe affair. The gallery from which he purchased the fakes has agreed to refund his \$5 million.

Hamburger Heritage

Our vision of automobilized America is at last complete. Just released is the final book in a scholarly trilogy on the American highway landscape published by Johns Hopkins University Press, *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age* (1999). Written by John Jakle and Keith Sculle, a geographer and historian, respectively, it follows on the heels of their *Motel in America* (1996) and, with Jefferson Rogers, *The Gas Station in America* (1994).

Their argument is not new—the automobile transformed our eating habits and created entirely new categories of food—but their emphasis is. Jakle and Sculle focus on the “sense of place” engendered by the new roadside venues. “Each restaurant chain promotes for itself [a] distinctive personality. Customers come to know what to expect and are attracted (or, conversely, repelled) accordingly.” Fast-food chains, for example, do not encourage patrons to linger or to socialize with other customers—such behavior would be odd in a depersonalized and standardized atmosphere.



Other roadside restaurants such as Applebee’s, however, do cater to those who want to dawdle. Roadside restaurants as a whole contribute to a second sense of place—that of the highway itself. Being “on the road,” the authors point out, conjures a palpable image—one that would not be complete without a stream of neon lights lining both sides.

Most of all, Jakle and Sculle say, the roadside restaurant has created a shared culture. Americans of all ages feel nostalgic about the old drive-ins with rollerskating carhops and enormous hotdog-shaped buildings. Some day we’ll sigh for Happy Meals, too. Unexpectedly, the authors conclude, these impersonal and disposable restaurants have become part of the national heritage.

Coloring in History

The sky wasn’t blue 8,000 years ago, but don’t look to chemistry and meteorology for an explanation. Pick up John Ayto’s *Dictionary of Word Origins* (1990) to understand why, in a manner of speaking, the Neolithic sky was as yellow as the sun.

Most color words, explains Ayto, a lexicographer, have convoluted histories, but *blue* has an especially twisted one. Its ultimate ancestor, the Indo-European *bhlēwos*, meant yellow. Then *bhlēwos* was mixed with the Greek word for “white” (*phalós*), and with the Old Norse word *blá*, which described the color of bruised skin. After all that evolution, speakers of Old English only briefly embraced the resultant *blāw* before jumping to Old French’s *bleu*. From there, it was a baby step to *blue*.

No less bizarre is the path that led from a Dutch phrase meaning “small eyes,” *pinck oog*, to pink. After the idiom crossed the English Channel, it was applied to a plant of the

species *Dianthus* remarkable for its small, round blooms. Shortened to *pink* by the 16th century, the word continued to mean “small.” But over the years the flower’s pale red color attracted more admirers than its form, and two centuries later, *pink* described not the shape of the flower but its shade.

The birth of *magenta* is a more contemporary tale. Like every new industry, the manufacture of synthetic dye fostered its own vocabulary when it emerged in the mid-19th century. Each new color that graced the skirts of aristocracy needed a name; thus appeared *mauve*, *Imperial purple*, and *fuchsin*. It was a whim of English royalty—very much affected by the Italian bid for freedom from Austria in the 1859 Battle of Magenta—that made *magenta* out of *fuchsin*.

Cheap Thrills

“Binge” drinking on college campuses has the experts scratching for causes and cures. The College Alcohol Study, the work of three Harvard University researchers, offers a twofer: “When students are looking for social activities, few alternatives can compete with the low cost of alcohol.” The chart below is from the authors’ report in *Change* (Jan./Feb. 2000).

	Avg. Price
Beer from a keg	\$0.25
Beer from a can	\$0.37
Drink special at bars/clubs	\$0.75
Admission, all-you-can-drink party	\$1.50
Cup of coffee (off-campus)	\$1.09
Movie ticket	\$5.86
Concert	\$27.33

Treasures at Sea

Tipped off by a mention in the *New York Times*, we recently discovered a curious Web-based treasure trove at Offshoresecrets.com. As the name suggests, the site offers a full range of “Fast, Safe, Private, & Affordable Offshore Services.”

In addition to the more predictable offerings, such as “100% anonymous personal accounts” in such international banking capitals as Latvia, the Bahamas, the Kuiu Thlingit Nation, and Barbados, Offshoresecrets.com boasts a veritable smorgasbord of more exotic items. Career suffering because of that pesky college degree requirement? No problem! Working with the principled educators of St. Joseph College, you can speedily acquire such vital credentials as a bachelor of arts (\$250), a master’s (\$400), or a doctorate (\$600). Sorry, no medical degrees available. “Is there an ethical question involved?” asks Offshoresecrets.com. Only insofar as “no formal course or examination is required.”

Perhaps you’ve been looking for a gift for that special someone. Why not an attractively-styled title? Choose from sir, lord, lady, laird, earl, duchess . . . even knecht! Hitching your name to one of these titles, the site promises, will produce instant kow-towing from the service industry, access to those hard-to-get restaurant reservations, and free airline seat upgrades.

Offshoresecrets.com is run by a consortium of (offshore-based) entrepreneurs. Clearly they’ve done their homework, prescreening all services to make sure that these are “legitimate” offerings. They warn that the Internet is rife with “rip-off” artists. But why look elsewhere? Anything a person could possibly want—a passport, an “alternate” ID, or just a new credit card—seems readily available at an “affordable” price, and, as the site suggests, “if it’s not listed, just ask!” □

America's Ignorant Voters

This year's election is sure to bring more lamentations about voter apathy. No less striking is the appalling political ignorance of the American electorate.

by Michael Schudson

Every week, the *Tonight Show's* Jay Leno takes to the streets of Los Angeles to quiz innocent passersby with some simple questions: On what bay is San Francisco located? Who was president of the United States during World War II? The audience roars as Leno's hapless victims fumble for answers. Was it Lincoln? Carter?

No pollster, let alone a college or high school history teacher, would be surprised by the poor showing of Leno's sample citizens. In a national assessment test in the late 1980s, only a third of American 17-year-olds could correctly locate the Civil War in the period 1850–1900; more than a quarter placed it in the 18th century. Two-thirds knew that Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation, which seems a respectable showing, but what about the 14 percent who said that Lincoln wrote the Bill of Rights, the 10 percent who checked the Missouri Compromise, and the nine percent who awarded Lincoln royalties for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

Asking questions about contemporary affairs doesn't yield any more encouraging results. In a 1996 national public opinion poll, only 10 percent of American adults could identify William Rehnquist as the chief justice of the Supreme Court. In the same survey, conducted at the height of Newt Gingrich's celebrity as Speaker of the House, only 59 percent could identify the

job he held. Americans sometimes demonstrate deeper knowledge about a major issue before the nation, such as the Vietnam War, but most could not describe the thrust of the Clinton health care plan or tell whether the Reagan administration supported the Sandinistas or the contras during the conflict in Nicaragua (and only a third could place that country in Central America).

It can be misleading to make direct comparisons with other countries, but the general level of political awareness in leading liberal democracies overseas does seem to be much higher. While 58 percent of the Germans surveyed, 32 percent of the French, and 22 percent of the British were able to identify Boutros Boutros-Ghali as secretary general of the United Nations in 1994, only 13 percent of Americans could do so. Nearly all Germans polled could name Boris Yeltsin as Russia's leader, as could 63 percent of the British, 61 percent of the French, but only 50 percent of the Americans.

How can the United States claim to be a model democracy if its citizens know so little about political life? That question has aroused political reformers and preoccupied many political scientists since the early 20th century. It can't be answered without some historical perspective.

Today's mantra that the "informed citizen" is the foundation of effective democra-

cy was not a central part of the nation's founding vision. It is largely the creation of late-19th-century Mugwump and Progressive reformers, who recoiled from the spectacle of powerful political parties using government as a job bank for their friends and a cornucopia of contracts for their relatives. (In those days before the National Endowment for the Arts, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman all subsidized their writing by holding down federal patronage appointments.) Voter turnout in the late 19th century was extraordinarily high by today's standards, routinely over 70 percent in presidential elections, and there is no doubt that parades, free whiskey, free-floating money, patronage jobs, and the pleasures of fraternity all played a big part in the political enthusiasm of ordinary Americans.

The reformers saw this kind of politics as a betrayal of democratic ideals. A democratic public, they believed, must reason together. That ideal was threatened by mindless enthusiasm, the wily maneuvers of political machines, and the vulnerability of the new immigrant masses in the nation's big cities, woefully ignorant of Anglo-Saxon traditions, to manipulation by party hacks. E. L. Godkin, founding editor of the *Nation* and a leading reformer, argued that "there is no corner of our system in which the hastily made and ignorant foreign voter may not be found eating away the political structure, like a white ant, with a group of natives standing over him and encouraging him."

This was in 1893, by which point a whole set of reforms had been put in place. Civil service reform reduced patronage. Ballot reform irrevocably altered the act of voting itself. For most of the 19th century, parties distributed at the polls their own "tick-

ets," listing only their own candidates for office. A voter simply took a ticket from a party worker and deposited it in the ballot box, without needing to read it or mark it in any way. Voting was thus a public act of party affiliation. Beginning in 1888, however, and spreading across the country by 1896, this system was replaced with government-printed ballots that listed all the candidates from each eligible party. The voter marked the ballot in secret, as we do today, in an act that affirmed voting as an individual choice rather than a social act of party loyalty. Political parades and other public spectacles increasingly gave way to pamphlets in what reformers dubbed "educational" political campaigns. Leading newspapers, once little



A tradition of ignorance? Making sober political choices wasn't the top priority of these Kansas Territory voters in 1857.

more than organs of the political parties, began to declare their independence and to portray themselves as nonpartisan commercial institutions of public enlightenment and public-minded criticism. Public secondary education began to spread.

These and other reforms enshrined the informed citizen as the foundation of democracy, but at a tremendous cost: Voter turnout plummeted. In the presidential elec-

tion of 1920, it dropped to 49 percent, its lowest point in the 20th century—until it was matched in 1996. Ever since, political scientists and others have been plumbing the mystery created by the new model of an informed citizenry: How can so many, knowing so little, and voting in such small numbers, build a democracy that appears to be (relatively) successful?

There are several responses to that question. The first is that a certain amount of political ignorance is an inevitable byproduct of America's unique political environment. One reason Americans have so much difficulty grasping the political facts of life is that their political system is the world's most complex. Ask the next political science Ph.D. you meet to explain what government agencies at what level—federal, state, county, or city—take responsibility for the homeless. Or whom he or she voted for in the last election for municipal judge. The answers might make Jay Leno's victims seem less ridiculous. No European country has as many elections, as many elected offices, as complex a maze of overlapping governmental jurisdictions, as the American system. It is simply harder to "read" U.S. politics than the politics of most nations.

The hurdle of political comprehension is raised a notch higher by the ideological inconsistencies of American political parties. In Britain, a voter can confidently cast a vote without knowing a great deal about the particular candidates on the ballot. The Labor candidate generally can be counted on to follow the Labor line, the Conservative to follow the Tory line. An American voter casting a ballot for a Democrat or Republican has no such assurance. Citizens in other countries need only dog paddle to be in the political swim; in the United States they need the skills of a scuba diver.

If the complexity of U.S. political institutions helps explain American ignorance of domestic politics, geopolitical factors help explain American backwardness in foreign

affairs. There is a kind of ecology of political ignorance at work. The United States is far from Europe and borders only two other countries. With a vast domestic market, most of its producers have relatively few dealings with customers in other countries, globalization notwithstanding. Americans, lacking the parliamentary form of government that prevails in most other democracies, are also likely to find much of what they read or hear about the wider world politically opaque. And the simple fact of America's political and cultural superpower status naturally limits citizens' political awareness. Just as employees gossip more about the boss than the boss gossips about them, so Italians and Brazilians know more about the United States than Americans know about their countries.

Consider a thought experiment. Imagine what would happen if you transported those relatively well-informed Germans or Britons to the United States with their cultural heritage, schools, and news media intact. If you checked on them again about a generation later, after long exposure to the distinctive American political environment—its geographic isolation, superpower status, complex political system, and weak parties—would they have the political knowledge levels of Europeans or Americans? Most likely, I think, they would have developed typically American levels of political ignorance.

Lending support to this notion of an ecology of political knowledge is the stability of American political ignorance over time. Since the 1940s, when social scientists began measuring it, political ignorance has remained virtually unchanged. It is hard to gauge the extent of political knowledge before that time, but there is little to suggest that there is some lost golden age in U.S. history. The storied 1858 debates between Senator Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, for example, though undoubtedly a high point in the nation's public discourse, were also an anomaly. Public debates were rare in 19th-century political campaigns, and

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Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



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campaign rhetoric was generally overblown and aggressively partisan.

Modern measurements of Americans' historical and political knowledge go back at least to 1943, when the *New York Times* surveyed college freshmen and found "a striking ignorance of even the most elementary aspects of United States history." Reviewing nearly a half-century of data (1945–89) in *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (1996), political scientists Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter conclude that, on balance, there has been a slight gain in Americans' political knowledge, but one so modest that it makes more sense to speak of a remarkable stability. In 1945, for example, 43 percent of a national sample could name neither of their U.S. senators; in 1989, the figure was essentially unchanged at 45 percent. In 1952, 67 percent could name the vice president; in 1989, 74 percent could do so. In 1945, 92 percent of Gallup poll respondents knew that the term of the president is four years, compared with 96 percent in 1989. Whatever the explanations for dwindling voter turnout since 1960 may be, rising ignorance is not one of them.*

*There is no happy explanation for low voter turnout. "Voter fatigue" is not as silly an explanation as it may seem: Americans have more frequent elections for more offices than any other democracy. It is also true that the more-or-less steady drop in turnout starting in about 1960 coincided with the beginning of a broad expansion of nonelectoral politics that may have drained political energies away from the polling places: the civil rights movement, the antiwar demonstrations of the Vietnam years, the women's movement, and the emergence of the religious Right. The decline in turnout may signify in part that Americans are disengaged from public life, but it may also suggest that they judge electoral politics to be disengaged from public issues that deeply concern them.

As Delli Carpini and Keeter suggest, there are two ways to view their findings. The optimist's view is that political ignorance has grown no worse despite the spread of television and video games, the decline of political parties, and a variety of other negative developments. The pessimist asks why so little has improved despite the vast increase in formal education during those years. But the main conclusion remains: no notable change over as long a period as data are available.

Low as American levels of political knowledge may be, a generally tolerable, sometimes admirable, political democracy survives. How? One explanation is provided by a school of political science that goes under the banner of "political heuristics." Public opinion polls and paper-and-pencil tests of political knowledge, argue researchers such as Arthur Lupia, Samuel Popkin, Paul Sniderman, and Philip Tetlock, presume that citizens require more knowledge than they actually need in order to cast votes that accurately reflect their preferences. People can and do get by with relatively little political information. What Popkin calls "low-information rationality" is sufficient for citizens to vote intelligently.

This works in two ways. First, people can use cognitive cues, or "heuristics." Instead of learning each of a candidate's issue positions, the voter may simply rely on the candidate's party affiliation as a cue. This works better in Europe than in America, but it still works reasonably well. Endorsements are another useful shortcut. A thumbs-up for a candidate from the Christian Coalition or Ralph Nader or the National Association for

TUNING OUT THE NEWS?

In 1998 a Gallup poll asked respondents where they got their news and information. The results paint a portrait of a less-than-enlightened electorate. Other indicators are discouraging: daily newspaper circulation slid from 62 million in 1970 to 56 million in 1999.

	Every day	Several times/week	Occasionally	Never
Local newspapers	53%	15%	22%	10%
National newspapers	4	11	26	59
Nightly network news	55	19	19	7
CNN	21	16	33	29
C-SPAN	3	4	25	65
National Public Radio	15	12	25	47
Radio talk shows	12	9	21	58
Discussions with family or friends	27	26	41	6
On-line news	7	6	17	70
Weekly news magazines	15	6	27	52

Source: The Gallup Organization. (Not shown: those answering "no opinion.")

the Advancement of Colored People or the American Association of Retired Persons frequently provides enough information to enable one to cast a reasonable vote.

Second, as political scientist Milton Lodge points out, people often process information on the fly, without retaining details in memory. If you watch a debate on TV—and 46 million did watch the first presidential debate between President Bill Clinton and Robert Dole in 1996—you may learn enough about the candidates' ideas and personal styles to come to a judgment about each one. A month later, on election day, you may not be able to answer a pollster's detailed questions about where they stood on the issues, but you will remember which one you liked best—and that is enough information to let you vote intelligently.

The realism of the political heuristics school is an indispensable corrective to unwarranted bashing of the general public. Americans are not the political dolts they sometimes seem to be. Still, the political

heuristics approach has a potentially fatal flaw: It subtly substitutes *voting* for *citizenship*. Cognitive shortcuts have their place, but what if a citizen wants to persuade someone else to vote for his or her chosen candidate? What may be sufficient in the voting booth is inadequate in the wider world of the democratic process: discussion, deliberation, and persuasion. It is possible to vote and still be disenfranchised.

Yet another response to the riddle of voter ignorance takes its cue from the Founders and other 18th-century political thinkers who emphasized the importance of a morally virtuous citizenry. Effective democracy, in this view, depends more on the "democratic character" of citizens than on their aptitude for quiz show knowledge of political facts. Character, in this sense, is demonstrated all the time in everyday life, not in the voting booth every two years. From Amitai Etzioni, William Galston, and Michael Sandel on the liberal side of the political spectrum to William J. Bennett and James Q. Wilson on the conservative side, these writers emphasize the importance of what Alexis de Tocqueville called "habits of the heart." These theorists, along with politicians of every stripe, point to the importance of civil society as a foundation of democracy. They emphasize instilling moral virtue through families and civic participation through churches and other voluntary associations; they stress the necessity for civility and democratic behavior in daily life. They would not deny that it is important for citizens to be informed, but neither would they put information at the center of their vision of what makes democracy tick.

Brown University's Nancy Rosenblum, for example, lists two essential traits of democratic character. "Easy spontaneity" is the disposition to treat others identically, without deference, and with an easy grace. This capacity to act as if many social differences are of no account in public settings is one of the things that make democracy happen on the streets. This is

the disposition that foreign visitors have regularly labeled “American” for 200 years, at least since 1818, when the British reformer and journalist William Cobbett remarked upon Americans’ “universal civility.” Tocqueville observed in 1840 that strangers in America who meet “find neither danger nor advantage in telling each other freely what they think. Meeting by chance, they neither seek nor avoid each other. Their manner is therefore natural, frank, and open.”

Rosenblum’s second trait is “speaking up,” which she describes as “a willingness to respond at least minimally to ordinary injustice.” This does not involve anything so impressive as organizing a demonstration, but something more like objecting when an adult cuts ahead of a kid in a line at a movie theater, or politely rebuking a coworker who slurs a racial or religious group. It is hard to define “speaking up” precisely, but we all recognize it, without necessarily giving it the honor it deserves as an element of self-government.

We need not necessarily accept Rosenblum’s chosen pair of moral virtues. Indeed a Japanese or Swedish democrat might object that they look suspiciously like distinctively American traits rather than distinctively democratic ones. They almost evoke Huckleberry Finn. But turning our attention to democratic character reminds us that being well informed is just one of the requirements of democratic citizenship.

The Founding Fathers were certainly more concerned about instilling moral virtues than disseminating information about candidates and issues. Although they valued civic engagement more than their contemporaries in Europe did, and cared enough about promoting the wide circulation of ideas to establish a post office and adopt the First Amendment, they were ambivalent about, even suspicious of, a politically savvy populace. They did not urge voters to “know the issues”; at most they hoped that voters would choose wise and prudent legislators to consider issues on their behalf. On the one hand, they agreed that “the diffusion of knowledge is productive of virtue, and the best

security for our civil rights,” as a North Carolina congressman put it in 1792. On the other hand, as George Washington cautioned, “however necessary it may be to keep a watchful eye over public servants and public measures, yet there ought to be limits to it, for suspicions unfounded and jealousies too lively are irritating to honest feelings, and oftentimes are productive of more evil than good.”

If men were angels, well and good—but they were not, and few of the Founders were as extravagant as Benjamin Rush in his rather scary vision of an education that would “convert men into republican machines.” In theory, many shared Rush’s emphasis on education; in practice, the states made little provision for public schooling in the early years of the Republic. Where schools did develop, they were defended more as tutors of obedience and organs of national unity than as means to create a watchful citizenry. The Founders placed trust less in education than in a political system designed to insulate decision making in the legislatures from the direct influence of the emotional, fractious, and too easily swayed electorate.

All of these arguments—about America’s political environment, the value of political heuristics, and civil society—do not add up to a prescription for resignation or complacency about civic education. Nothing I have said suggests that the League of Women Voters should shut its doors or that newspaper editors should stop putting politics on page one. People may be able to vote intelligently with very little information—even well-educated people do exactly that on most of the ballot issues they face—but democratic citizenship means more than voting. It means discussing and debating the questions before the political community—and sometimes raising new questions. Without a framework of information in which to place them, it is hard to understand even the simple slogans and catchwords of the day. People with scant political knowledge, as research by political scientists Samuel Popkin and Michael Dimock suggests, have more difficulty than others in per-

ceiving differences between candidates and parties. Ignorance also tends to breed more ignorance; it inhibits people from venturing into situations that make them feel uncomfortable or inadequate, from the voting booth to the community forum to the town hall.

Second, it pays to examine more closely the ways in which people do get measurably more knowledgeable. One of the greatest changes Delli Carpini and Keeter found in their study, for example, was in the percentage of Americans who could identify the first 10 amendments to the Constitution as the Bill of Rights. In 1954, the year the U.S. Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of*

Why the change? I think the answer is clear: The civil rights movement, along with the rights-oriented Warren Court, helped bring rights to the forefront of the American political agenda and thus to public consciousness. Because they dominated the political agenda, rights became a familiar topic in the press and on TV dramas, sitcoms, and talk shows, also finding their way into school curricula and textbooks. Political change, this experience shows, can influence

This is not to say that only a social revolution can bring about such an improvement. A lot of revolutions are small, one person at a time, one classroom at a time. But it does mean that there is no magic bullet. Indeed, imparting political knowledge has only become more difficult as the dimensions of what is considered political have expanded into what were once nonpolitical domains (such as gender relations and tobacco use), as one historical narrative has become many, each of them contentious, and as the relatively simple framework of world politics (the Cold War) has disappeared.

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Wilson Center Events

“Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the 20th-Century World”

J. R. McNeill, Professor of History at Georgetown University, will read from and discuss his new book, in an event sponsored by the Environmental Change and Security Project, **April 17**

“The Road to Bosnia and Kosovo: The Role of the Great Powers in the Balkans”

Misha Glenny, British journalist and former Wilson Center Scholar, in a talk sponsored by the East European Studies Program, **April 18**

“Russian Writers and the Slippages of History”

Donald Fanger, Harry Levin Research Professor of Literature, Harvard University, sponsored by the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, **April 24**

“A Decade of American Support for Russian Democratization: Lessons and Reflections”

Allen Weinstein, President, Center for Democracy, sponsored by the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, **May 1**

“Mexico at the Millennium”

A conference jointly sponsored by Yale University and the Latin American Program, **May 4-5**

“U.S.-China Relations since the End of the Cold War”

A day-long conference sponsored by the Asia Program, **May 9**

“Brazil’s Environmental Policies and the Future of the Amazon”

A conference jointly sponsored by the Environmental Change and Security Project and the Latin American Program, **May 16**

“New Evidence on the Korean War”

A conference sponsored by the Cold War International History Project, **June 21**

This calendar is only a partial listing of Wilson Center events. For further information on these and other events, visit the Center’s web site at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org>. The Center is in the Ronald Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Although many events are open to the public, some meetings may require reservations. Contact Cynthia Ely at (202) 691-4188 to confirm time, place, and entry requirements. Please allow time on arrival at the Center for routine security procedures. A photo ID is required for entry.

Yeats's Wireless

William Butler Yeats took to the radio in the 1930s with poetry that he hoped would sound a public theme and stir the public interest.

by Colton Johnson

On February 2, 1937, William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) wrote to a half-dozen friends, calling himself “a fool,” “a bore,” “an ignoramus,” and, most improbably, “a humbled man.”

This rare moment of self-reproach came not from artistic failure or political defeat, but from his radio. He was sure he had utterly failed in an ambitious scheme to use the new technology to advance a long-standing hope of engaging public issues through poetry, directly and without the mediation of the printed page.

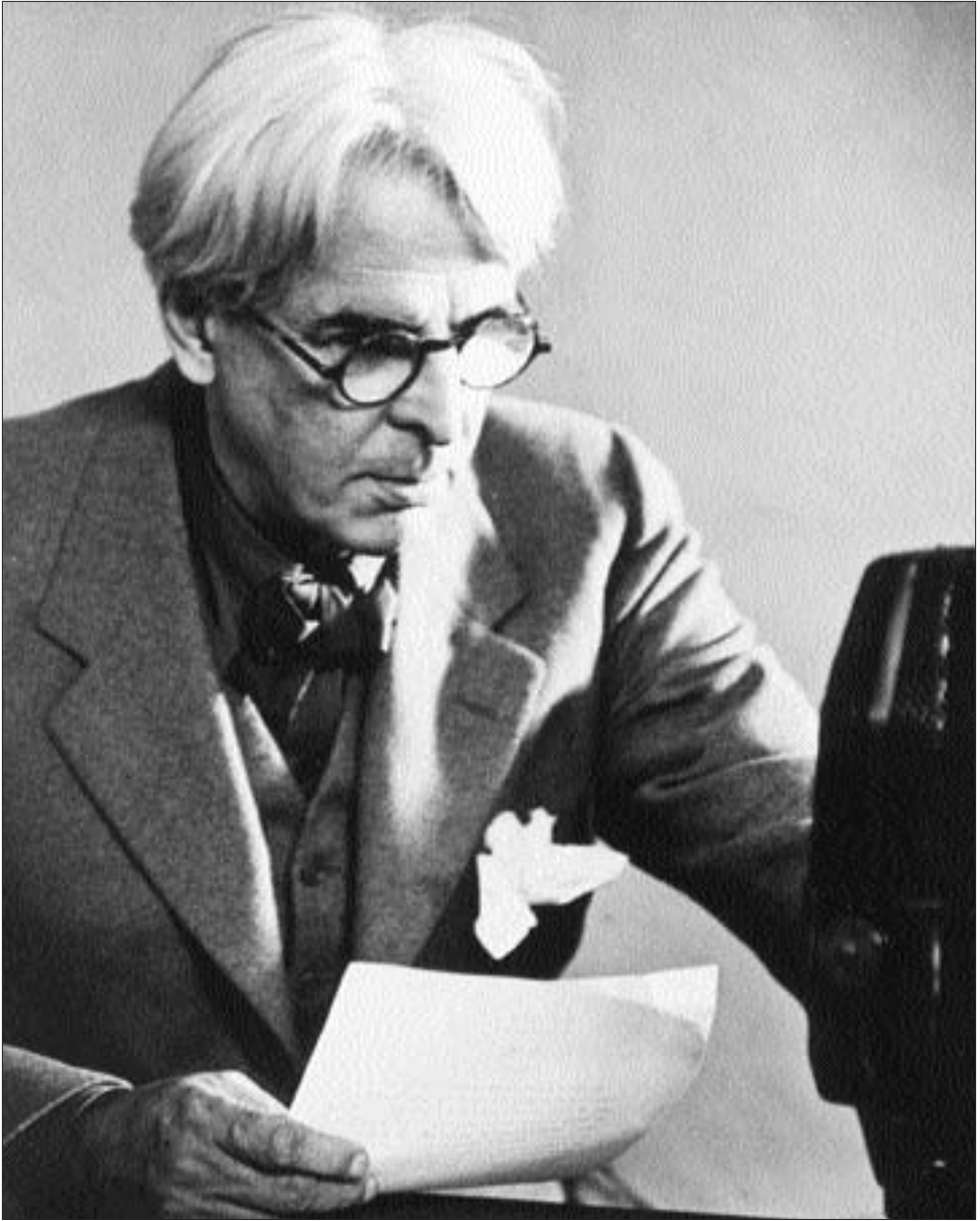
Arguably the greatest poet to write in English in the 20th century, Yeats the dramatist, senator, elitist, converser with the spirit world, father, loyal friend, meandering husband, social theorist, authoritarian, editor, lustful old man, and Nobel laureate increasingly kneaded his public and private lives—and his confusion about them—into his verse, prompting the American poet Archibald MacLeish to call him “the best of modern poets.” Accepting the declaration of the German writer Thomas Mann that “in our time the destiny of man presents its meanings in political terms,” MacLeish wrote in a 1938 essay that he found in Yeats’s later verse “the first English poetry in a century which has dared to re-enter the world. . . . It is the first poetry in generations which can cast a shadow in the sun of actual things. . . . Writing as Yeats writes, a man need not pretend an ignorance of the world, need not affect a strangeness from his time.”

Yeats’s experiments with radio between 1931 and 1939 extend this aspect of his

modernism. He played down the radio work to Ezra Pound as “a new technique which amuses me & keeps me writing,” and to his wife as a means to “pay for my legitimate London expenses,” but he devoted much time and energy to the “remarkable experience” of speaking “to a multitude, each member of it being alone,” sometimes even seeing in it “an historic movement.” In all, he participated in 11 radio broadcasts, and at least three more were planned when declining health made him concede in 1938, “My broadcasting is finished.”

Wireless voice transmission was barely a decade old and the BBC only in its ninth year when Yeats began his experiments. But poetry on the radio was not entirely new, and the medium’s potential for the literary artist was under broad examination. In 1930 John Masfield, the poet laureate of Britain, urged poets to recover their heritage through radio. Imagining ancient times, when poetry was central to the lives of every member of a relatively small and simple community in which “all ranks and classes of men met together,” Masfield decried the printing press as “a detriment to the poetical art” that “put away the poet from his public.” “It may be,” he concluded, “that broadcasting may make listening to poetry a pleasure again, tho’ this can only come about with difficulty and with a great deal of hard work.”

In America, Harriet Monroe, the founding editor of *Poetry*, a cradle of American modernism, was musing on the same ques-



Yeats at the BBC microphone in 1937. Poetry, he said, was “before all else good speech.”

tions. Although not herself “a radio fan,” she granted that “this radio subject” called for serious attention. Among her many worries—that only inferior poetry seemed to find its way to the studios, that poets might make poorer radio readers than trained professionals, that publishers seemed oddly uninterested in allowing poets’ works to be broadcast—she sounded a theme similar to Masfield’s: “The public cannot yet listen intelligently to poetry,

for they have had no practice in listening since the invention of printing.” Monroe lamented the “500 years poetry has been silent,” suggesting that “the radio is the poet’s one best chance of escape from that condition. Poetry is a vocal art; the radio will bring back its audience.”

Among the first poets in Britain or America to take to the radio, Yeats clearly started out with little theoretical

intent and even less knowledge of the medium. His poems had been aired on the BBC since at least 1926, but he had never heard them. “What it feels like to listen to a man speaking over the radio I do not know,” he told a journalist just after his first broadcasts, “for although I have heard music broadcast I have never listened to anyone speaking over the wireless.” His first 15-minute programs, aired from the Belfast studio of the BBC on September 8, 1931, consisted of an introduction to an upcoming radio performance by Dublin’s Abbey Theatre company of his translation of Sophocles’ *King Oedipus* and a reading of poems.

Yeats’s tone was familiar and instructive, and he speculated about the new medium: “You should try and call up not the little Abbey Theatre but an open-air Greek theatre with its high-pillared stage, and yourselves all sitting tier above tier upon marble seats in some great amphitheatre cut out of a hillside. If the wireless can be got to work, in the country house where I shall be staying, I shall be listening too, and as I have never heard a play broadcasted I do not know whether I shall succeed in calling into my imagination that ancient theatre.”

His translation of the play, he said, needed to be “simple enough and resonant enough to be instantaneously felt and understood . . . something that everybody in the house, scholar or potboy, would understand as easily as he understood a political speech or an article in a newspaper.”

In his second broadcast, Yeats introduced and read five of his poems as part of “An Irish Programme.” Afterward, he explained that speaking before a microphone—“a little oblong of paper like a visiting card on a pole”—was “a poor substitute for a crowded hall.” He wryly compared the experience to “addressing the Senate in Dublin. . . . You see, you are speaking to an audience which is only just not there.”

Yeats spoke in two later programs of poetry as putting “the natural words in the nat-

ural order”; it was “before all else good speech.” He returned to his struggle to reconcile the transient and political with his art in a comment on his poem “The Fisherman”:

I had founded Irish literary societies, an Irish theatre, I had become associated with the projects of others, I had met much unreasonable opposition. To overcome it I had to make my thoughts modern. Modern thought is not simple; I became argumentative, passionate, bitter; when I was very bitter I used to say to myself, “I do not write for these people who attack everything that I value, nor for those others who are lukewarm friends, I am writing for a man I have never seen.” I built up in my mind the picture of a man who lived in the country where I had lived, who fished in mountain streams where I had fished; I said to myself, “I do not know whether he is born yet, but born or unborn it is for him I write.” I made this poem about him.

In 1935, Yeats gave a formal talk on modern poetry. A version of his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, published a month later, the talk concluded with Yeats combining his thoughts about technique with a favorite observation by an early idol, the English poet and social reformer William Morris:

When I have read you a poem I have tried to read it rhythmically; I may be a bad reader; or read badly because I am out of sorts, or self-conscious; but there is no other method. A poem is an elaboration of the rhythms of common speech and their association with profound

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feeling. To read a poem like prose, that hearers unaccustomed to poetry may find it easy to understand, is to turn it into bad, florid prose. If anybody reads or recites poetry as if it were prose from some public platform, I ask you, speaking for poets, living, dead or unborn, to protest in whatever way occurs to your perhaps youthful minds; if they recite or read by wireless, I ask you to express your indignation by letter. William Morris, coming out of the hall where somebody had read or recited his *Sigurd the Volsung*, said: "It cost me a lot of damned hard work to get that thing into verse."

Shortly after the modern poetry broadcast, Yeats discussed extending the audience for poetry with George Barnes, the BBC's producer of talks. In agreeing to plan at least two programs, Yeats renewed his early enthusiasm both for popular poetry and for poetry performed with a distinct musical emphasis. In 1901, writing about a revival of ballads, he had contrasted the poetry of 19th-century middle-class poets as different as Burns and Browning with true "popular poetry" unbound by the printed page—spoken poetry understood by aristocrat and peasant alike: "Before the counting-house had created a new class and a new art without breeding and without ancestry, and set this art and this class between the hut and the castle, and between the hut and the cloister, the art of the people was as closely mingled with the art of the coteries as was the speech of the people . . . with the unchanging speech of the poets."

About the same time, praising the British actress Florence Farr's method of speaking while playing a psaltery, he had linked his dislike of "print and paper" to "something" he had always disliked about singing. "Although she sometimes spoke to a little tune," he said, "it was never singing, never any-

thing but speech. A singing note . . . would have spoiled everything; nor was it reciting, for she spoke to a notation as definite as that of a song, using the instrument, which murmured sweetly and faintly, under the spoken sounds."

In his collaboration with the BBC, Yeats tempered these dreamy archaisms with modern pragmatism. He busied himself with new plans in Dublin, where he could draw on the Abbey Theatre's talented company, but also where, he told Barnes, "I am not afraid of anybody, and most people are afraid of me. It is the reverse in London."

In Dublin, Yeats finished his "Casement poem," an attack on what he saw as British perfidy in the summary execution in 1916 of the Anglo-Irish martyr Roger Casement. A recent book had convinced Yeats that Casement's "black diaries," purported accounts of his homosexual activities, were British forgeries meant to suppress agitation for his reprieve.

The actor John Stephenson's reading of "Roger Casement" was to be the climax of the broadcast on February 1, 1937. The ballad named the two men Yeats held responsible for spreading the calumny against Casement in America—Sir Cecil Arthur Spring-Rice, the British ambassador to the United States at the time, and the English poet Alfred Noyes, who in 1916 had been teaching at Princeton University.

Roger Casement

(After reading "*The Forged Casement Diaries*" by Dr. Maloney)

I say that Roger Casement
Did what he had to do,
He died upon the gallows
But that is nothing new.

Afraid they might be beaten
Before the bench of Time
They turned a trick by forgery
And blackened his good name.

A perjurer stood ready
To prove their forgery true;
They gave it out to all the world
And that is something new;

For Spring-Rice had to whisper it
Being their Ambassador,
And then the speakers got it
And writers by the score.

Come Alfred Noyes, come all the troop
That cried it far and wide,
Come from the forger and his desk,
Desert the perjurer's side;

Come speak your bit in public
That some amends be made
To this most gallant gentleman
That is in quick-lime laid.

As the broadcast drew near, Yeats sent out a volley of alerts. He told a friend that if she had “any body from the Foreign Office or its neighbourhood to dinner, postpone dinner & both listen in & watch results. The last item is my Casement poem. The Foreign Office has forgotten its crime.” He informed another that the poem would be “sent out on the wireless from Athlone” and, in a baffling geopolitical leap, that “the ‘record’ of it will then be sent to Cairo, where the wireless is in Irish hands.” He spoke of hopes for a recording contract with “a certain big gramophone firm” and sent the poem to a Dublin newspaper, requesting “the utmost publicity on National grounds.”

Yeats evidently expected much to come together in the broadcast. But when it was over, everything seemed to have fallen apart. The next morning's flurry of notes described what he had heard when he tuned in his wireless: “Every human sound turned into the groans, roars, bellows of a wild [beast].” It was “a fiasco,” he ruefully informed his BBC producer. “Possibly all that I think noble and poignant in speech is impossible. Perhaps my old bundle of poet's tricks is useless. I got Stephenson

while singing . . . to clap his hands in time to the music after every verse and [the poet F. R.] Higgins added people in the wings clapping their hands. It was very stirring—on the wireless it was a schoolboy knocking with the end of a pen-knife or a spoon.”

A few days later, however, things looked better. Higgins convinced Yeats that he had “mismanaged” the new wireless set on which he had been listening and that a different arrangement of microphones would solve the other technical problems. The Abbey actors repeated the program at the Dublin radio station, and Yeats pronounced their recording a success.

His public's response to the reading and to the ballad's publication the following morning in the *Irish Press* was as important to Yeats as the technical revelations. Mrs. Yeats told him of a marked “deference” to her as she went about the Dublin shops, and Free State President Eamon De Valera's Republican newspaper proclaimed that “for generations to come,” the ballad would “pour scorn on the forgers and their backers.” Yeats was especially pleased when the antiquarian and revolutionary Count George Plunkett hailed it as “a ballad the people much needed.”

The first comment on the poem in the English press disappointed Yeats. It focused, he wrote, “on my bad rhymes and says that after so many years it is impossible to discuss the authenticity of the diaries. . . . Politics, as the game is played today, are so much foul lying.” He became, however, increasingly satisfied with the event, deciding that his ballads “though not supremely good are not ephemeral; the young will sing them now and after I am dead. In them I defend a noble-natured man. I do the old work of the poets but I defend no cause.” Alfred Noyes responded to Yeats's charge with what Yeats called “a noble letter” to the *Irish Press*, explaining his apparently slight involvement in the Casement affair and urging a full-



The British shelled Dublin's post office during the 1916 Easter Rising and villified Roger Casement, hanged for his role in the rebellion. A poem by Yeats castigated their treachery.

scale investigation of the matter, preferably headed by Yeats.

The case remained closed, but public poetry had stirred the people after all, and Yeats went forward with his radio plans. His subsequent broadcasts, more complex and less overtly political, originated from London. They introduced the reader V. C. Clinton-Baddeley and included musical interjections, patter, and "rough singing of rough songs" by "ordinary people who sing because we are in love or drunk, or because we don't want to think of anything in particular." In one broadcast, "In the Poet's Parlour," one or two other poets present find Yeats's selections too melancholy and interrupt him; they insist on taking over the remainder of the program, which also introduced as a reader Margot Ruddock, a young English actress and poet with whom Yeats had become infatuated.

Yeats wanted "a public theme" in his July 1937 broadcast, "My Own Poetry." Trying not to "stress the politics," he contrasted what he called "the

tragic real Ireland" with "the dream." The first section consisted of three political poems. "The Rose Tree" was a dialogue between two leaders of the Easter 1916 Rising, Patrick Pearse and James Connolly. "An Irish Airman foresees His Death" was Yeats's elegy for Robert Gregory, who joined the Royal Air Force during World War I and was shot down over Italy. Quoting Pearse's claim that "a national movement cannot be kept alive unless blood is shed in every generation," Yeats noted Gregory's abnegation, in his military service, of allegiance to Britain. "The Curse of Cromwell" completed the trio of poems. Yeats elucidated the enduring hatred in Ireland of the 17th-century English mastermind of Catholic suppression and Ulster separation who "came to Ireland as a kind of Lenin" and "destroyed a whole social order." The second half of the program, "the dream," included the poems "Running to Paradise" and "Sailing to Byzantium."

Yeats especially valued his work with Clinton-Baddeley, and the interplay

among readers, producer, and poet intensified. He discussed techniques for reading, chanting, and shaping the poetry programs with his collaborators eagerly and with uncommon openness. Clinton-Baddeley recalled telling Yeats in rehearsal that the opening of “Sailing to Byzantium” (“That is no country for old men. The young/In one another’s arms, birds in the trees . . .”) was “easier on the page than on the tongue.” When he came to the broadcast, Yeats handed him some new lines (“Old men should quit a country where the young/In one another’s arms, birds in the trees. . .”).

Time and the times, however, were conspiring against Yeats and his coworkers. They aired one last program on October 29, 1937. Two broadcasts planned for April 1938 were canceled, as was another (tentatively called “Poems of Love and War”) scheduled for July.

Yeats left Ireland for the last time late in 1938. In failing health, he went to the south of France. Amidst prodigious activity—finishing several poems and a play—he wrote in December to Clinton-Baddeley proposing a small book on music and the speaking of verse, but he responded with chilling finality to the indefatigable George Barnes’s request that he join Masfield, Walter de la Mare, and E. M. Forster in broadcasting “a Christmas or a New Year’s message” on the BBC, “whatever you would most like to say to the country as a whole.” Yeats responded: “I am sorry that I could not do what you wanted. But surely a man so intelligent as yourself understands that if I were to write whatever ‘I would most like to say to the country as a whole,’ or to my family as a whole, it would be altogether unprintable.”

Within months, Yeats was dead and the world was at war. Only one complete recording of his BBC broadcasts survived the bombing of London, along with the re-recording of the 1937 Abbey Theatre program, which had been returned from London to Dublin. Among the effects of

the war, broadcasting was changed forever. What emerged in the following decade, both in England and the United States, bore faint resemblance to the fledgling medium within which Yeats and his colleagues had contrived their experiments. The war validated radio’s importance as a medium for news and the immediate, as well as its value as a form of popular escape into largely irrelevant entertainment. Attempts at “poetic radio scripts” resulted largely in just the sort of leveling, jingoistic, and falsely “popular” works against which Yeats had railed, intermixed with the kind of obscuring “sound effects” that would doubtless have provoked one of his vituperative outbursts. What he might have made of the amalgamation of words, politics, and “rough singing of rough songs” that emerged in radio and recordings in the late 1950s and early 1960s can hardly be imagined.

It may be that another casualty of war was the public voice of the poet that is part of Yeats’s legacy—the opposing balance of the personal with the political, each side sharp and articulate and each confirming and confounding the other—which is keenly evident in the poem that stands, at his choice, at the conclusion of his collected lyrics:

Politics

“In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms.”

Thomas Mann

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics,
Yet here’s a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,
And there’s a politician
That has both read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war’s alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms. □

THE ONCE AND FUTURE RUSSIA

Who could have imagined a dozen years ago that the Soviet Union would vanish, or that an independent Russia would choose its second president at the polls? Yet Russia's March election has provoked international consternation and concern rather than celebration. The victor, Vladimir Putin, has a dark history and rhetoric to match. The nine years since the end of communist rule have brought welcome freedoms for Russia but much hardship and civic discord, as well as war. Our contributors assess the Yeltsin years and peer into the Russian future.



Shuvalovo Station (1978), by Vladimir Ovchinnikov

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The Two Worlds of Vladimir Putin

I. The KGB

by Amy Knight

I was introduced to Vladimir Putin's KGB in the summer of 1981. I was in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), the city where he was born and spent much of his career before his improbable rise to Russia's presidency. That summer I was visiting as a tourist more interested in the city's splendid architecture and museums than in bucking the system as I had as a student traveler in 1967. Fourteen years had not changed the rule: Forging acquaintances with local Russians was strictly out of bounds. Foreigners, especially Russian speakers like me, were still cordoned off from contacts with ordinary Russians by the efficient operations of Intourist and the infamous *dezhurnye*, the elderly ladies who were positioned on every hotel floor to monitor the comings and goings of guests. So it was very odd when an unusually friendly Russian man approached me as I sat in the lobby of my hotel, right under the watchful eyes of Intourist, and began earnestly telling me about the woes of Soviet life and expressing sympathy for American ideals. It took a while before I realized what was going on. I was the target of an entrapment effort. Shaken, I quickly broke off the conversation and hurried away.

My new "acquaintance" was doubtless an employee of the local branch of the KGB. Part of his job was to hang around hotels spying on visiting foreigners and trying to single out a few—as in my case, apparently—who could be more directly exploited. This was the kind of elevated activity Vladimir Putin did during the nine years he worked for the Leningrad KGB, from 1975 to 1984. (For all I know, the man in the Hotel Moskva's lobby may have been Putin, who has been aptly described as "professionally nondescript.") It is hard to imagine what people like Putin felt when they went through daily routines such as this, but I will never forget my own reaction. I felt like going up to my room and taking a long shower. I had come face to face with an organization I knew chiefly in the abstract from reading the samizdat writings of Soviet dissidents whose lives had been destroyed by just such mundane KGB functionaries. What came to mind



“Red on the Inside,” the Russian newsweeky Itogi screamed in January. The image of Vladimir Putin is a composite photo.

was Hannah Arendt’s phrase about the Nazi regime—the banality of evil.

Now, with the political ascendancy of Vladimir Putin, that banal evil has reached the summit of power in the Kremlin—a situation that should cause more concern to U.S. policymakers than it apparently does. At home, journalists and political pundits scour the past of American presidential contenders to see if they have smoked marijuana, dodged the draft, or committed adultery, but the background of

the new Russian leader is, policymakers tell us, irrelevant. The important thing is that Putin is “someone we can do business with.” It is not hard to understand the rationale behind this approach. But if you judge Putin by his past, it does not bode well for the future of Russian democracy or for Russia’s relations with the West.

Contrary to the myth generated by the Kremlin and perpetuated by the Western news media, many authoritative sources agree that Putin was never a spy of the sort so romantically depicted by John le Carré—a sophisticated, suave cynic who hobnobs in Western diplomatic circles abroad, sipping cognac in elegant, book-lined rooms. If such a person existed, he might conceivably have realized that the Soviet system was a sham and warmed to the democratic ways of the West. (The Kremlin exploited a similar myth when former KGB head Yuri Andropov came to power in 1982, suggesting that he was a jazz-loving Western-style sophisticate.) But the spymaster group was an old-boy elite to which Putin, the son of a factory worker, had no entrée. When Putin was hired by the KGB after finishing law school in Leningrad in 1975—a training ground for police and administrators, not foreign intelligence officers—he was sent to its Leningrad branch rather than a more desirable foreign post.

According to former KGB spy Oleg Kalugin, who was banished to Leningrad in 1980 by disapproving superiors, the local office was a backwater. As he recalled in his 1994 memoir, “Our 3,000-person KGB office in Leningrad continued to harass dissidents and ordinary citizens, as well as to hunt futilely for spies. But I can truly say that nearly all of what we did was useless. . . . In the twenty years before my arrival in Leningrad, the local KGB hadn’t caught one spy, despite the expenditure of millions of rubles and tens of thousands of man-hours.” As a low-level cog in this machine of repression and deceit, Putin, as Kalugin has since put it, was a “nobody.”

After a year of study at the KGB’s Red Banner Institute of Intelligence in Moscow, Putin finally won a stint abroad in 1985. But he was sent to Soviet-controlled East Germany, not the West, and, contrary to many press reports that now suggest he was engaged in high-level espionage, he had the same sort of job he had in Leningrad. Working in close cooperation with the Stasi, Putin spied on German and Soviet citizens and recruited informers. Not very lofty work, by any stretch of the imagination.

Putin, who speaks fluent German, appears to have been heavily influenced by his five-year immersion in Stasi culture. In *The File: A Personal History* (1997), journalist Timothy Garton Ash estimates that by 1988, when Putin was in East Germany, the Stasi had more than 90,000 employees and some 170,000 collaborators. In other words, at least one out of every 50 adult East Germans was directly connected with the secret police. The East German police state, Garton Ash observes, was “less brutal than the Third Reich, to be sure, far less damaging to its neighbors, and not genocidal, but more quietly all-pervasive in its domestic control.”

Garton Ash sees a strong parallel between the Stasi mentality and that of the Nazis. Both appealed to “secondary virtues” such as discipline, hard work, and loyalty, while completely ignoring the “systemic wrong” of the totalitarian state they served. Putin’s words since his rise to prominence certainly fit the pattern Garton Ash describes. The new president speaks of reviving the “moral fiber” of the Russian people and of “exterminating” the Chechens in the same breath. He emphasizes the need for honest leadership, yet he also extols the accomplishments of the KGB—which was not only morally corrupt, we now know, but riddled with more ordinary corruption as well.

When the collapse of communism in East Germany in 1989 brought his career there to an end, Putin returned home to Leningrad. He formally retired from the KGB in 1991, going to work for the city’s mayor, Anatoly Sobchak. Some say that he continued spying for the security services. Eventually, Boris Yeltsin’s cronies in St. Petersburg, part of a far-flung clan of often corrupt oligarchs, tapped him for service in the president’s administration in Moscow. The rest of Putin’s prepresidential résumé is straightforward. In

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They called it victory: The Russian flag rises over the Chechen capital of Grozny in March.

1998, Yeltsin, under fire for the rampant corruption in his regime and for the bungled first war in Chechnya of 1994–96, named Putin chief of Russia’s domestic security agency, the Federal Security Service (FSB). When the Russian parliament was about to impeach Yeltsin on a variety of charges, he gave Putin the additional job of heading the president’s Security Council, which oversees the entire security and defense apparatus. Putin pulled out all the stops for Yeltsin, bullying the parliament with a threatening speech and using an embarrassing videotape to discredit the Russian prosecutor-general, who was bent on the prosecution of a Yeltsin crony. Putin’s good works were rewarded last year when Yeltsin named him prime minister and then made him acting president when he stepped down on December 31. He was elected president in March without ever having held elective office.

How could the Russian people accept as their leader a dyed-in-the-wool KGB apparatchik with unexceptional credentials? Frightened by the specter of Chechen terrorism and fed up with Yeltsin’s dysfunctional “democracy,”

Russians have embraced Putin because he pressed hard in the war against Chechnya and built an image as a tough, aggressive, anti-Western superpatriot. Human rights activist Sergei Kovalev aptly summed up the current attitude of his fellow Russians in a recent article in the *New York Review of Books*: “We don’t want to return to communism, but we’re fed up with your democracy, your freedom, your human rights. What we want is order.”

Putin did not come to power alone. He is part of a cohort of professionals from the Russian security services who have used the support of Yeltsin and corrupt oligarchs such as business tycoon Boris Berezovsky and former Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais to infiltrate the Kremlin. Early in his presidency, Yeltsin began courting the security services and building up their powers because he needed them, with their investigative and surveillance capabilities and their elite troop units, for support in his political battles. Before long, Yeltsin was surrounded by former KGB officials, and they came to play a prominent role in determining both domestic and foreign policy. It is hardly a coincidence that the last three Russian prime ministers hailed from the KGB and its successor organizations. If Putin had not been the designated successor to Yeltsin, it would have been someone very much like him—an iron-fisted, tough-talking former KGB officer who promised to restore law and order by cracking down on criminals. (Not members of the Yeltsin clan, of course, just the Chechens and others, such as journalists, who embarrass the Kremlin.)

Have Russians forgotten the heavy price they paid for “law and order” and national pride in the heyday of the KGB: no meaningful elections, no freedom of the press, and no ability to travel freely or exercise religious beliefs? To be sure, Russia has not yet turned back the clock to the Soviet period, but the signs of regression are everywhere: the brutal onslaught against the Chechens, the harassment and arrest of journalists who are critical of the government, and the growing state control over the news media. This should surprise no one. Why expect people who spent most of their careers callously abusing human rights suddenly to stop, especially in the chaotic and ruthless world of Russian politics?

As Aleksandr Nikitin, the outspoken environmentalist who was arrested on charges of treason in 1996 for exposing the Russian Navy’s harmful nuclear dumping practices, observes: “There is no such thing as an ex-KGB employee, just as there is no such thing as an ex-German shepherd.” Nikitin, whose arrest and prosecution were orchestrated by Putin’s long-time Leningrad colleague, Viktor Cherkesov, was unexpectedly acquitted at the end of December. The man who persecuted him for more than two years, however, is now second in command of the FSB.

The greatest risk for Russia’s future will come if and when ordinary Russians become disenchanted with Putin. Then he and his allies may decide that courting public opinion is simply more trouble than it’s worth

and fall back on the familiar methods of the security services. Putin has already placed a number of former KGB colleagues in high positions. In addition to Cherkosov, for example, the new chief of the FSB, Nikolai Patrushev, went to law school with Putin and served with him in the Leningrad KGB. The head of the president's Security Council, Sergei Ivanov, graduated with Putin from the KGB's Red Banner Institute.

Given Russia's increasingly belligerent anti-Westernism, the United States and other Western governments can do little in the short run to influence events in Russia directly. But by acknowledging the implications of having another former KGB apparatchik as Russia's president, U.S. policymakers would at least avoid giving an impression of naiveté that would encourage the Kremlin to be even less inhibited about flouting world opinion than it already is. The fact that almost a decade after the collapse of the Soviet system in 1991 someone like Putin could rise to the top of the political leadership in Russia is a grim reminder that the legacies of police states die hard. □

II. Leningrad

by Blair A. Ruble

More than three months after Boris Yeltsin startled the world by resigning in favor of Vladimir Putin, Western analysts are still groping for insights into the new Russian president. They debate the significance of his KGB past and his role in St. Petersburg's democratic movement during the 1990s. They wonder what the Russian war in Chechnya tells us about the heart and mind of the man who prosecuted it while serving as Yeltsin's prime minister. In truth, we are not likely to learn enough about the inscrutable Mr. Putin to predict what he will do as Russia's president. Yet one important and neglected piece in the puzzle of his character undoubtedly resides in St. Petersburg, where he was born and spent many of his politically formative years.

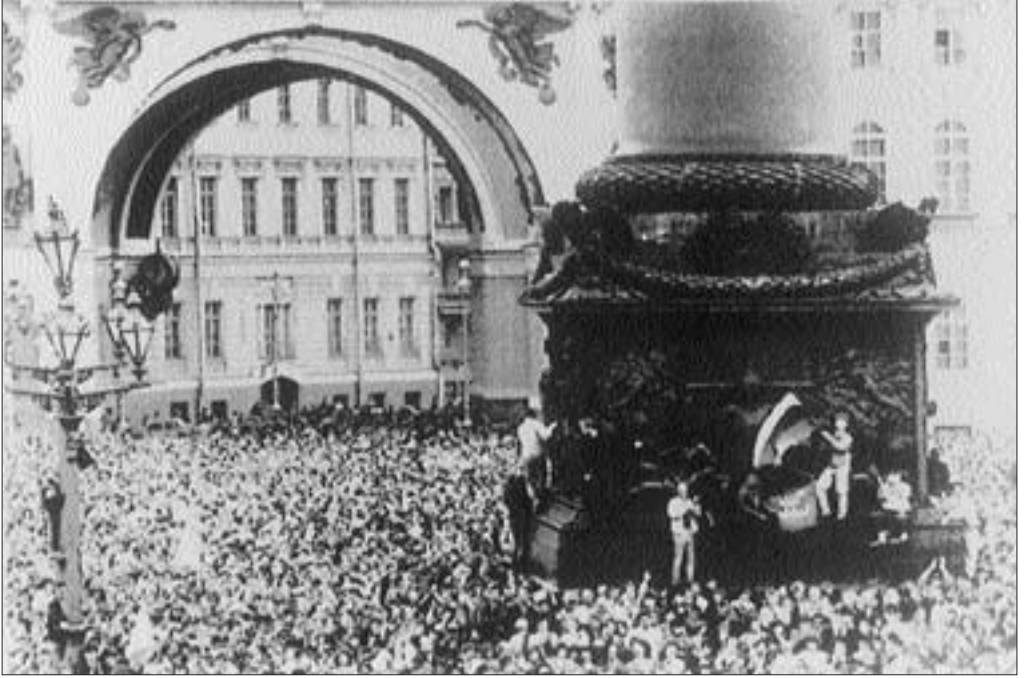
During those years, two distinct realities coexisted within the city's official boundaries. The first, and by far the weaker, was that of the historic city center and the pre-revolutionary values it embodied. This community was known in unofficial shorthand as "Peter." Around it in the years after World War II grew a new Soviet industrial city, representing all the values of the Soviet Union. This sprawling urban center was rightly known in local parlance by the city's official name, "Leningrad."

“Peter” grew out of the city’s proud tradition as Russia’s imperial capital, the center of its high culture and intellectual life, and its “window on the West.” Founded by Peter the Great in 1703—who gave it straight streets and borrowed neoclassical architecture in an attempt to impose European rationality on an addled Russian landscape—it grew to be Europe’s fifth largest city by the eve of World War I. After the fall of the Romanovs, the city entered a period of wrenching transformations. The Russian Civil War cost it more than half its population, and it lost its name (which had changed to Petrograd in 1914 and then in 1924 to Leningrad) and its status as the capital city. In the 1930s came Stalin’s purges and an influx of peasants fleeing his unfathomably brutal collectivization of agriculture; Hitler’s 900-day siege of 1941–44 cost the city more dead than all of its wars together have cost the United States. During the late 1940s, the few members of the local intelligentsia and political elite who survived suffered another round of purges. By the time Putin was born, in 1952 (shortly before Stalin’s death), the city of Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky was no more.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the city’s Communist leaders created a distinctive Leningrad model of development, emphasizing defense and other specialized industries, including shipbuilding, machinery, and precision instruments. The city’s economy rested on the increasing integration of a vaunted technical and scientific academic community with leading local industries and the national security apparatus—an especially vigorous presence in Leningrad. The Leningrad model included cultural policies that were even more authoritarian than the Soviet norm. The new economic and cultural policies sharply divided the city’s intellectual elite, creating, in effect, two cities. On one side stood the writers, artists, performers, and humanistic scholars who identified with a mythical “Peter” that stood in latent opposition to Soviet power—their more outspoken colleagues having been dispatched to the gulag. On the other stood what the Soviets called the technical intelligentsia—designers, engineers, architects, and the like—who served the Soviet Union’s leading regional military-industrial complex. This was Vladimir Putin’s city.

Putin graduated from the Leningrad State University Juridical Faculty during the mid-1970s. I was a visiting graduate student at the time, in Leningrad to do research for my doctoral dissertation, and although I don’t recall meeting Putin, I well remember the asphyxiating atmosphere of the place. The drear was relieved, ironically, only on Soviet holidays, when some of the faculty members (officers in the

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Where's Vladimir Putin? An extraordinary crowd gathered at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg to protest the hardliners' abortive August 1991 coup against Mikhail Gorbachev.

KGB, one student whispered to me) showed up in colorful dress uniforms. Leningrad State, like all Soviet-era law schools, was a prime training ground for the KGB and other security agencies.

The local Communist Party and security agencies were among the Soviet Union's most aggressive enemies of dissent. When I arrived, the law school was in the midst of a crackdown on professors with unorthodox views or Jewish names—the two categories were considered virtually synonymous. Local hostility was forcing many members of the city's once large Jewish population into exile and liberal scholars were being driven underground. Clumsy Communist politicians, resentful of the city's heritage of liberalism and high culture, were hard at work turning their once proud metropolis into a provincial industrial town. Leningrad party chieftain Grigorii Romanov earned a reputation for boorishness even among Brezhnev-era Politburo and Central Committee members, hardly a crowd noted for high standards of refinement. It was in this city at this time that Mikhail Baryshnikov decided to flee to the West, and a young Vladimir Putin decided to cast his lot with the KGB.

Since the demise of communism, a resurgent “Peter” has overshadowed the city's “Leningrad” heritage, assuming a prominent role in post-Soviet Russia's faltering democracy. Their conflict, hidden during the Soviet years, was brought into the open by Mikhail Gorbachev's liberalizing policies during the late 1980s. Fittingly, it was through battles over the preservation of historic build-

ings that “Peter” first found a legitimate forum for advancing the war against “Leningrad.” Raucous street demonstrations erupted in March 1987 to protest the city’s graceless restoration of the once grand Astoria Hotel and its more déclassé neighbor, the Angleterra. It was from the Astoria bar that John Reed witnessed the 10 days that shook the world in 1917, while at the Angleterra the poet Sergei Essenin, in despair over the emerging face of the Bolshevik regime he had once embraced, took his own life in 1925, scratching a final verse in his own blood. For the first time, local citizens found the courage to publicly reject the economic visions formulated for their city by Soviet planners.

This was the beginning of the city’s rise to prominence in pro-democratic Russia. In the historic Supreme Soviet elections of 1989, Leningrad voters turned every senior local Communist Party leader out of office, effectively breaking the party’s back in much of the Soviet Union. When a Communist coup threatened Russia’s new government in August 1991, Boris Yeltsin’s defiant display of bulldog tenacity riveted the world’s attention on Moscow. But in Petersburg, a genuinely revolutionary moment occurred as one-third of the entire local population crowded into the historic square in front of the Hermitage Museum to oppose the coup. Local voters have remained Russia’s most liberal electorate, right down through the parliamentary elections of December 1999.

Yet “Leningrad” continues to lurk just beneath the surface of Petersburgian democracy, much as “Peter” hid in Leningrad’s shadows during the Soviet decades. Vladimir Putin appears to embody all of the contradictions between the two. After service in the KGB that took him to East Germany and Leningrad, Putin threw in his lot with the reformers in the 1990s. He was St. Petersburg’s deputy mayor from 1991 until 1996, working closely with the city’s high-toned reform mayor Anatoly Sobchak (who had been one of Putin’s law school professors). In 1998, after two years in the Yeltsin government, Putin was named head of the Federal Security Service, the successor to the KGB. In August 1999, Yeltsin named him prime minister.

Sobchak’s Petersburg circle produced an impressive number of Russian leaders, from Yeltsin’s promarket “gray cardinal,” Anatoly Chubais, to national privatization honchos Sergei Belayev and Alfred Kokh. These and other prominent St. Petersburg politicians—including the assassinated democratic politicians Mikhail Manevich and Galina Starovoitova—had all rejected “Leningrad” during the Soviet era. The depth of their commitment to free markets and free elections varied, but at some level all shared the status of outsiders, talented professionals who had felt unjustly ignored merely because they lived in the Soviet Union’s second city. To some of them, at least, the democratic movement of the late 1980s offered an opportunity for rapid upward mobility while also having the virtue of being virtuous.

This singular blend of cynical calculation and idealism is one of the distinctive qualities of the politicians the city has bred.

The city continues to struggle with the legacy of the Leningrad model of development. The approach emphasized the centralization of decision making, rationalization of the links between research and development and industrial production, and the streamlining of lines of command in order to force existing institutions to operate more efficiently. The tanks coming off the assembly lines at Leningrad's Kirov Factory, the nuclear power stations built by Elektrosila, the high-grade plastics being turned out by Plastpolimer, and the precision optics produced at LOMO deluded Leningraders into thinking that their economy was world class.

The 1990s revealed the folly of Leningrad's economic and political strategies. The city's Soviet inheritance has been a deadweight, sinking nearly every effort to drag it into the global economy. In pegging the city's fortunes so closely to the Soviet military-industrial complex, its leaders failed to confront its underlying economic handicaps: a peripheral geographic location, a harsh climate, a lack of natural resources, and the absence of an economically active hinterland. Despite numerous behind-the-scenes proposals to remake the city as a high-tech center, Leningrad's Soviet planners never made the sorts of adjustments that would have converted a hierarchically managed industrial-age metropolis into a flexible, horizontally organized postindustrial leader. Instead, they squeezed enough out of the existing system to create the illusion of success.

Leningrad never confronted the central issue facing Russia today: how to generate and sustain economic creativity and growth. That will require the establishment of legal and credit structures that encourage small business and entrepreneurship. It means encouraging bottom-up initiatives rather than rule by top-down decree. It means, in effect, calling upon "Peter" to help make the future work.

There may be something of "Peter" in Russia's new president, but there is undoubtedly a good deal of "Leningrad" in him as well. Putin seems to favor using the strong hand of government overseers to prod the existing Russian economy to function more effectively. It is true that authoritative government will be needed if Russia is to succeed, but that is not what Putin seems to mean. In a statement released only days before he succeeded Yeltsin as acting president last December, Putin tipped his hat to the values of democracy and capitalism even as he observed that "the public looks forward to the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state to a degree which is necessary, proceeding from the traditions and present state of the country." These words are as full of contradiction as the city that bred their author. Putin's efforts as Russia's president may bring some improvements, but in assessing them it will be worth recalling the Leningrad legacy of surface achievement at the expense of more profound long-term gains. □

Yeltsin's Legacy

by Michael McFaul

Days after staring down the August 1991 coup attempt, Russian President Boris Yeltsin boasted a 90 percent approval rating at home, adorned the cover of every international weekly in the world, and was christened a democratic hero by world leaders from Washington to Tokyo. When he suddenly resigned as president on December 31, 1999, Yeltsin enjoyed an eight percent approval rating at home (with a margin of error of plus or minus four percent). He probably had only two or three international calls to make. With the exception of Bill Clinton and a few others, Yeltsin had almost no friends in high places left. Even the Western media all but ignored the passing of this onetime hero. When Clinton appeared that morning to comment on Yeltsin's retirement, most American television networks chose instead to air the fireworks display in Beijing.

Many would argue that Yeltsin's pathetic passing from power correctly reflected his performance as Russia's first democratically elected president. In part, it did. In his resignation speech, Yeltsin himself apologized to the people of Russia for his mistakes, a rare act for any politician but especially out of character for this fighter. For many in Russia (and abroad), the apology was too little, too late. As he left office, a war was under way in Chechnya, the state had just manipulated a parliamentary election, and rampant corruption had stymied economic reform. Still, for many others, Yeltsin's parting plea for redemption sparked nostalgia for a fallen hero. And Yeltsin certainly deserves credit for monumental achievements. On his watch, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was destroyed, the largest empire on earth was peacefully dismantled, and electoral democracy was introduced into a country with a thousand-year history of autocratic rule.

As the emblematic figure and presiding force during the tumultuous last decade of the 20th century in Russia, Yeltsin invites and eludes a ringing assessment. Was he a heroic revolutionary, or an erratic reformer? An astute politician and a committed democrat, or a populist improviser with little interest in the hard work of coalition building? Was he a daring economic reformer, or a blundering tool of the oligarchs? And finally, from the vantage of the new millennium, does he emerge as a larger-than-life leader who rose to unprecedented challenges, or as a figure overwhelmed by the enormity of change?

The answer, not surprisingly, is that Yeltsin was all of the above. Initially, the revolution made Yeltsin great, but eventually the revolution



Facing down the hardliners in August 1991, Yeltsin enjoyed his finest hour.

also undermined Yeltsin's greatness. At first glance, his is the classic story of the man made for heroic times whose talents proved the wrong ones during a time of transition and rebuilding. Indeed, Yeltsin in many ways embodied his country's dilemma: Ready to throw off its chains, Russia was far from prepared for what was to follow. But Yeltsin's is also an ironic saga of missed opportunities, which is surely why he inspired such high hopes and left behind so much disappointment. Yeltsin owed his rise to masterful political maneuvering within the crumbling Soviet order and to his bold sense of timing in declaring Russia's independence in 1990. Yet his own experience notably failed to serve as his guide once he was in power. Yeltsin's major missteps as president lay in failing to seize the moment to foster further political reform and to clarify the federal order of Russia. He skirted the question of secession, and let party and governmental confusion spread, all in the name of focusing on economic reform. Yet those mistakes guaranteed that the goal of a new economic order receded even further out of reach.

Three decades ago, few would have predicted that Yeltsin would one day become a revolutionary. Where Mandela, Havel, and Walesa devoted their adult lives to challenging autocratic regimes, Yeltsin spent much of his political career trying to make dictatorship work. Mandela, Havel, and Walesa all paid a price

for their political views. Yeltsin won promotion within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for his. To be sure, Yeltsin had a reputation within the party as a populist crusader who worked hard to fulfill five-year plans, improve the economic well-being of his people, and fight corruption. Still, he was not a dissident. During the three decades he spent steadily rising within the Soviet Communist Party to become first secretary in Sverdlovsk Oblast, he did not advocate democratic reforms, market principles, or Soviet dissolution. He embraced these ideas only after his fall from grace within the Communist Party.

That fall occurred soon after Yeltsin's arrival in Moscow in 1985. Shortly after assuming leadership of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev invited Yeltsin to relocate to Moscow and join his reform team. Six months later, Gorbachev asked Yeltsin to become first secretary of the Moscow Communist Party, one of the highest jobs in the Soviet system, because he believed that Yeltsin shared his commitment to making socialism work. In that position, Yeltsin seized upon Gorbachev's reform agenda, pushing especially for renewed vigilance against corruption within the party. Yeltsin's tirades against party privilege, coupled with his populist proclivities (he used to ride the metro and buses to work) earned him immediate support among the masses in Moscow. Yeltsin became increasingly critical of Gorbachev's go-slow attitude toward fighting corruption, which Gorbachev did not appreciate. In 1987, he finally sacked Yeltsin, demoting him to deputy chairman of the Ministry of Construction.

In the pre-perestroika system, Yeltsin's demotion would have signaled the end of his political career. Stunned by his ouster, Yeltsin himself thought as much and began to drink even more heavily than usual. But these were not ordinary times. They were revolutionary times in which, under Gorbachev, the rules of the game were changing, and ironically enough, in ways that resuscitated Yeltsin's political prospects. After tinkering unsuccessfully with minor economic reforms, Gorbachev concluded that the conservative Communist Party nomenklatura was blocking his more ambitious plans for economic restructuring. To dislodge the dinosaurs, Gorbachev introduced democratic reforms, including a semicompetitive electoral system for selecting members of the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies.

These elections, held in the spring of 1989, were only partially free and competitive. Still, they gave Yeltsin the chance to resurrect

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his political career, and he took full advantage of it. Running in Moscow, Yeltsin conducted an essentially anti-establishment campaign, calling the party's leadership corrupt, and vowing to roll back the privileges of the party's ruling elite. The rebel won in a landslide.

At this stage in his new career, Yeltsin was a populist running against the grain of the Soviet regime. If what he stood against was clear, what he stood for was less obvious. At the time, many considered him to be a Russian nationalist.

Others cast him as an autocratic demagogue, less cultured, less liberal, and less predictable than his chief rival, Gorbachev. Western leaders in particular looked askance at this rabble rouser, fearing he might disrupt the "orderly" reforms being executed by their favorite Communist Party general secretary, Gorbachev.

Yeltsin could have become all these nasty things. Indeed, his flirtation with militant nationalist groups earlier in the 1980s suggests that his political ideas weren't firmly formed when he suddenly became the focal point of the anti-Soviet opposition in 1989. During the 1989 Russian parliamentary campaign, Yeltsin and his aides made their first contact with Russia's grassroots democratic leaders of the so-called informal (*neformal'nye*) movement—thanks to the initiative of those leaders, not Yeltsin. By the late 1980s, informal social associations had sprouted throughout the Soviet Union in response to Gorbachev's political liberalization. Their aims at the outset were modest—convening to speak foreign languages, gathering to rehabilitate Russian cultural traditions. But these non-Communist public organizations soon embraced overt political objectives, not least getting their own leaders elected to the Soviet parliament. Their strategy was to ride Yeltsin's coattails to



A dropping ruble is only one symptom of Russia's economic decay. The economy shrank by nearly 50 percent between 1989 and 1999.

power, and to that end candidates from the informal movement such as Sergei Stankevich sought out Yeltsin to win his endorsement. They succeeded, drawing Yeltsin into a democratic political culture he had not known previously.

Both Yeltsin and Stankevich ran on protest platforms, but the staffs supporting them came from very different strata of Soviet society. The supporters of Stankevich and the other informal movement candidates were young, highly educated, liberal-minded activists who had little or no experience with the Communist Party. Many, in fact, were ardent opponents of the party and the Soviet system more generally. Yeltsin's entourage was a mix of former members of the ruling elite—like Yeltsin himself—and populist, grassroots leaders of voter clubs, primarily from working-class neighborhoods in Moscow. Though also new to politics, these Yeltsin supporters were older, less educated, and less ideological than those around Stankevich and candidates like him. At this stage, all they shared was a common ideology of opposition, a shared hatred of the Soviet Communist Party.

Yeltsin and his scruffy new allies did not sweep into power after the 1989 election. On the contrary, they won only a small number of seats in the new Soviet parliament and quickly became marginalized in this institution dominated by Gorbachev. Frustrated by their lack of power and by Gorbachev's unwillingness to cooperate, Yeltsin and his allies made a tactical decision to abandon Soviet-level politics and focus their efforts instead on the upcoming elections for the Russian Congress of People's Deputies and, even more locally, on city council elections throughout Russia. It was a fateful decision, with dire consequences for the future of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin spearheaded the charge. His aim was to seize control of political institutions from below as a means to undermine Gorbachev's power from above. The Russian Congress and the Moscow City Council—institutions never before important to Soviet politics—would eventually whittle away the legitimacy and authority of Kremlin power.

Thanks to voters restless with Gorbachev's pace of reform, Russia's anti-Communist forces captured nearly a third of the seats in the Russian Congress in the 1990 elections. With additional votes from Russian nationalists, Yeltsin then won election as chairman of the legislative body. The anti-Communists had seized control of their first state institution. In one of their first acts as the newly elected representatives of the Russian people, the Russian Congress declared Russia an independent state in the summer of 1990. Yeltsin called on the Russian people to consider the Russian Congress, rather than the Soviet Congress, the highest political organ in the land.

Yet the Russian Congress and the Russian state were located within the Soviet Union. The Kremlin, not the White House (the home of the Russian Congress), still controlled all the most important levers of power. A protracted struggle for sovereignty between the Soviet state

and the Russian government ensued. In a replay of Russian history circa 1917, Russia once again experienced dual power during 1990–91. From January to August 1991, the balance of power shifted back and forth between radicals and reactionaries several times. Large demonstrations throughout Russia to protest the Soviet military invasion of the Baltic republics that January reinvigorated the democratic movement. But Soviet conservative forces soon won political victories, introducing major changes in the composition of the Soviet government. Of the original perestroika reformers in the highest echelons of the Communist Party in the late 1980s, only Gorbachev remained. A referendum in March 1991 looked like another triumph for Gorbachev and his new conservative allies, when a solid majority of Russians (and Soviet voters in participating republics) voted to preserve the Soviet Union. But they also voted in favor of a proposal, astutely added to the ballot by Yeltsin, to introduce the elective office of president of Russia. Once again, he had an opening. In June, Yeltsin won a landslide victory to become Russia's first elected president, a vote that returned momentum to the anti-Communist forces.

Soviet conservatives attempted to strike back. After prolonged negotiations, Yeltsin and most of the other republican leaders were prepared to join Gorbachev in signing a new Union Treaty, an event scheduled to take place on August 20. Soviet conservatives saw this treaty as the first step toward total disintegration of the Soviet Union, and preempted its signing by seizing power. While Gorbachev was on vacation, the State Committee for the State of Emergency (GKChP in Russian) announced on August 19 that it had assumed responsibility for governing the country. The GKChP, drawing heavily on nationalist rhetoric, justified its actions as a reaction against “extremist forces” and “political adventurers” who aimed to destroy the Soviet state and economy. Had these forces prevailed, it is not unreasonable to presume that the Soviet Union, in some form, would still exist today.

But they did not prevail, because Yeltsin and his allies stopped them. Immediately after learning of the coup attempt, Yeltsin raced to the White House and began to organize a resistance effort. As the elected president of Russia, he called on Russian citizens—civilian and military alike—to obey his decrees and not those of the GKChP. In a classic revolutionary situation of dual sovereignty, Soviet tank commanders had to decide whether to follow orders from the Soviet regime, which were coming through their radio headsets, or the orders from the Russian president, which they were receiving by hand on leaflets. At the end of the day, enough armed men had obeyed Yeltsin's leaflets to thwart the coup attempt. By the third day, the coup plotters had lost their resolve, and began to negotiate an end to their rule.

What looked like a triumph of democratic sentiment was only in part that. Yeltsin's success in orchestrating this peaceful collapse is all

Russia's Moral Rearmament

"Looking at the present condition of my country. . . I cannot but wonder at the short time in which morals in Russia have everywhere become corrupt." Prince M. M. Shcherbatov, an aristocrat during the reign of Catherine the Great, made this observation in a 1786 treatise, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*. But his assessment might just as well have been voiced today by any number of journalists writing about Russia's current predicament.

Money laundering, corruption, filthy electoral campaigns—these are the catch phrases in Western media coverage of things Russian. According to critics, business and politics in Russia are driven by greed and seething with criminal activity. After succeeding Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin himself announced that "the revival of people's morals" would be the cornerstone of his program.

In the decades following the death of Peter the Great in 1725, Russia wrestled with a similar moral crisis brought about by the introduction of new economic, social, and political standards. Peter the Great, like Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, was the product of a conservative and cumbersome administrative culture that he first modified and later destroyed. Indeed, it is tempting to draw up a modest list of cognates between Peter on the one hand and a melding of Mikhail and Boris on the other—from Harvard University economist Jeffrey Sachs, the modern counterpart to Peter's adviser, German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz, to Peter's famed Westernization during the early 18th century.

The Western-style customs and standards Peter introduced along with his "technology transfer" from Europe directly affected only the privileged. Succeeding generations of elites, in a process at once gradual and fitful, moved away from being subjects of a Westernization initially imposed from above—commanded by a formidable and terrifying monarch who cut off the sleeves of the boyars' kaftans with his own shears, forced the recalcitrant nobles among them to build houses on the swamp that was only beginning to take shape as St. Petersburg, and required aristocratic men and women to wear Western dress and mingle at social gatherings. Many members of the elite were eventually transmogrified into eager recipients of Western-style luxuries and adornments. Prince Shcherbatov thought their passion for Western "voluptuousness" had led to moral collapse. But by the time of Alexander Pushkin, early in the second quarter of the 19th century, many of these nobles had evolved into educated and worldly gentlemen and ladies imbued with the very spirit of Western refinement. The moral crisis that so alarmed Prince Shcherbatov had passed.

In Russia today, Vladimir Putin is right in his insistence on the need for moral regeneration. According to what precepts does he imagine such a revival ought to take place? Surely not the homely, stolid, and prudish conventional morality characteristic of so many hardworking drones of the high Brezhnev period, nor the inner-directed, conscience-driven teachings of that paragon of bourgeois virtue, Benjamin Franklin.

It may be that a campaign to change popular morals will take the form of vaguely Christian pontifications, hand in hand with punitive anticorruption measures, since Putin, like Boris Yeltsin before him, has allied himself closely with the Russian Orthodox Church and its obscurantist patriarch, Aleksy II. Indeed, Putin says he was secretly baptized as a baby and is an observant Christian.

More than 70 percent of Russians are Orthodox Christians. Catholics, Protestants, and Jews each account for less than one percent of the population, and estimates of the size of the Muslim segment vary widely. Baptist and Pentecostal evangelicals are among the fastest growing religious groups in the country. If the promised revival of morals takes the form only of theopolitical utterances represent-

ing one of the many faith traditions currently very much alive in the Russian Federation, then the prospect of moral renewal from above remains troubling. In Russia's long and turbulent history, many rulers have attempted to meddle with popular morals. Emperor Nicholas I's 1826 edict established a particularly pernicious form of morality-based censorship, and he personally supervised the editing and rewriting of poetry he deemed impious or unseemly, all in the name of saving the souls of his unwitting subjects. In the autocratic



Peter the Great

political culture of old Russia, with which Stalin self-consciously allied himself (that is why he took such a personal interest in Sergei Eisenstein's cinematic masterpiece of the 1940s, *Ivan the Terrible*), the monarch assumed staggering responsibility but also reserved the unique right to bestow privilege as he saw fit. Both the caprice and the totality of the ruler's authority found expression in Moussorgsky's famous "Song of the Flea," in which a king bestows upon a favorite flea a velvet kaffan, and also "complete freedom."

Putin seems neither capricious nor (as yet) autocratic. He realizes that any genuine moral change needs to come from the people themselves. In an open letter to Russian voters at the end of February, he spoke about the need for a core set of moral values: "For a Russian citizen, what is important are the moral principles which he first acquires in the family and which form the very core of patriotism. This is the main thing. Without it, it is impossible to agree on anything; without it, Russia would have had to forget about national dignity, even about national sovereignty. This is our starting point."

But Putin also shares with the Romanov emperors a passion for the military. He used war (and genocide) to achieve nonmilitary goals such as social unity and civil accord. The war in Chechnya and the demolition of its capital, Grozny, were purportedly launched to fight terrorism. It seems natural for Putin to turn to the military in his campaign to revive popular morals. Not long ago, he reintroduced into Russian schools the teaching of "military preparedness," which in the Soviet era was a salient feature of a "military-patriotic upbringing."

Patriotism, respect for the armed forces, and a government-sponsored Orthodox Church—these are the three likely sources of Vladimir Putin's program to combat "the corruption of morals in Russia" today and in the months to come. They have a solid grounding in Russia's past, and might indeed provide a kind of stability that the country needs. A Russian moral revival is not necessarily good news for the West.

—Nina Tumarkin

>NINA TUMARKIN is a professor of history at Wellesley College and the author of *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (1983) and *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (1995). Copyright © 2000 by Nina Tumarkin.

the more remarkable in that he accomplished it in the face of a surprising lack of widespread support. To be sure, the democratic movements in Moscow and St. Petersburg mobilized tens of thousands on the streets, yet only a very small minority of Russians actively resisted the coup attempt. Yeltsin's call for a nationwide strike on the second day of the coup was largely ignored, while the rest of Russia and the most of the other Soviet republics stood on the sidelines, awaiting a winner.

Yeltsin deserves great credit for making it seem inevitable that he would be that winner, for it was not. The outcome of the August 1991 putsch attempt fundamentally changed the course of Soviet and Russian history. For the first time since the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, Soviet authorities had moved to quell social opposition in Russia and failed. The moment was euphoric. For many Russian citizens, no time is remembered with greater fondness than the first days after the failed coup. Even Gorbachev belatedly recognized that after the August events, there "occurred a cardinal break with the totalitarian system and a decisive move in favor of the democratic forces." Western reactions were even more ecstatic; a typical headline declared "Serfdom's End: a thousand years of autocracy are reversed." Yeltsin, the unquestioned leader of this resistance, was at the height of his glory.

He and his revolutionary allies immediately took advantage of their windfall political power to arrest coup plotters, storm Communist Party headquarters, seize KGB files, and tear down the statue of Felix Dzerzhinskii, the founder of the modern-day KGB. The pace of change within the Soviet Union accelerated rapidly. Yeltsin and the Russian Congress of People's Deputies in effect seized power themselves. They pressured the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies to dissolve, disbanded the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, assumed control of several Soviet ministries, and compelled Gorbachev to acquiesce to these changes. Most dramatically, Yeltsin met with the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus in early December to dissolve the Soviet Union. On December 31, 1991, the Soviet empire disappeared. Buried with this empire were Soviet autarky, the Soviet command economy, and the Soviet totalitarian state. Staring down the August 1991 coup may have been Yeltsin's bravest moment. Dissolving the Soviet Union may have been his most important achievement.

But, as in all revolutions, destruction of the old regime proved easier than construction of a new order. Now that the Soviet past was closed, what would Russia's future look like? What kind of political regime, economic system, or society could or should fill the void? Even the borders of the state were unclear. The tasks confronting Yeltsin and his allies in the fall of 1991 were enormous. The economy was in shambles. There were shortages of basic goods in every city. Inflation soared, trade stopped, and production plummeted. Many predicted massive starvation during the winter. Meanwhile, the centrifugal forces that helped pull the Soviet Union apart had spread to

some of the republics within Russia's borders. Months before the Soviet Union dissolved, Chechnya had already declared its independence. At the same time, the political system was in disarray. Yeltsin enjoyed a honeymoon period of overwhelming support after his August 1991 performance. Yet the rules of the game for sharing power between the executive and legislative branches remained ambiguous. Yeltsin, after all, had only been elected president of Russia the previous June. As part of the deal struck to permit this election, the constitutional amendments delineating his power were scheduled for approval in December, and thus were not in place when Yeltsin suddenly became head of state in the newly independent Russia.

The Russian state did not yet even exist. In the autumn of 1991, Russia's "independence" was an abstract concept, not an empirical reality. It must be remembered that in August 1991 Russia had no sovereign borders, no sovereign currency, no sovereign army, and weak, ill-defined state institutions. Even after the December agreement to dissolve the Soviet Union and create the Commonwealth of Independent States, Russia's territorial location was still contentious, while Russians' psychological acceptance of a Russia without Ukraine, Belarus, or Crimea still had not occurred. Throughout the former Soviet Union, some 30 million ethnic Russians became expatriates overnight at the same time that ethnic minorities within the Russian Federation pushed for their own independence.

In tackling the triple transition of political change, economic reform, and empire dissolution, Yeltsin and his allies were on their own to an unparalleled degree. In many transitions to democracy in Latin America, Southern Europe, and East-Central Europe, old democratic institutions, suspended under authoritarian rule, were reactivated, a process that is much more efficient than creating new institutions from scratch. Russian leaders had nothing to resurrect. Similarly, even the most radical economic reform programs undertaken in the West—including Roosevelt's New Deal—took place in countries that had experience with markets, private property, and the rule of the law. After 70 years of communism, none of the economic institutions of capitalism existed in Russia. Even the memory of such institutions had been extinguished among the Russian citizenry after a century of life under a command economy.

Yet Yeltsin and Russia's revolutionaries did not enjoy a tabula rasa in designing new market and democratic institutions either. They had to tackle the problems of empire, economic reform, and political change with many of the practices and institutions of the Soviet system still in place. The shadow of the past extended far into the post-Soviet era because Russia's revolutionaries ultimately refrained from using violence to achieve their goals of political, economic, and state transformation. Even the Communist Party, after a temporary ban, was allowed to reappear on the Russian political scene.

Nor did the revolutionaries really know what they wanted to do. Democracy and capitalism were buzzwords of Yeltsin's ideology of opposition, not concepts he had grappled with over years and years of struggle behind the scenes. The informal movement had only begun to develop overtly political ideas in the last year before the dissolution of the Soviet Union; it had not generated blueprints for a post-Communist society in Russia, for few within this movement believed that change would occur as fast as it did. Democratic Russia, the umbrella organization for Russia's grassroots democratic movement, held its founding congress in October 1990, only 10 months before the coup attempt. In contrast, Solidarity had been in opposition for a decade before taking power in Poland. The African National Congress in South Africa spent most of the century preparing for power.

Finally, Yeltsin also had to deal with the ambiguous balance of power between political actors who favored reform and those who opposed it. There was no consensus in Russia about the need for market and democratic reform. Russia's elite and society were divided and polarized, a very different situation from the comparative cohesion in several Eastern European countries. In August 1991, political forces in favor of preserving the old Soviet political and economic order were weak and disorganized, but they soon recovered and regrouped within the Russian Congress of People's Deputies, in regional governments, and on the streets to demonstrate their power. On the other side of the barricade, those in favor of reform looked invincible immediately after the August 1991 coup. But this anti-Communist coalition quickly fell apart after the Soviet Union collapsed. A common enemy had united them. When that enemy disappeared, so did their alliance.

The changes under way on every front plainly overwhelmed Yeltsin, who left Moscow in October and hid out in Crimea for three weeks, allegedly in a drunken stupor. On his return, he made a series of critical decisions that shaped the course of Russian political and economic reform for the rest of the decade. But he also refrained from making some important decisions, which arguably had an even more profound influence on Russia's first years of independence. Yeltsin's most consequential omission was one that his own recent rise might have warned him against. He had watched as Gorbachev's miscues regarding political reform had undermined his economic reforms. Yet Yeltsin proceeded to miss an opportune moment to give the anti-Communist coalition, on which he and his programs depended, a chance to solidify and develop.

In the afterglow of the coup, Yeltsin could have, of course, used his power to establish an authoritarian state, as many a revolutionary leader faced with a radical transition has done. He could have disbanded all political institutions not subordinate to the president's office, suspended individual political liberties, and deployed coercive police units to enforce executive policies. His opponents expected him to do so. Even

some of his allies urged him to do so, arguing that it was the only way to introduce radical economic reform. Or Yeltsin could have taken steps to consolidate a democratic polity. He could have disbanded old Soviet government institutions, including first and foremost the Russian Congress of People's Deputies, and replaced them with more democratic structures. After all, the system of soviets put in place by the Bolsheviks was never designed to govern. He also could have adopted a new constitution codifying the division of power among executive, legislative, and judiciary as well as federal and regional bodies. And he could have called new elections to stimulate the development of a multiparty system. In this crucial transition period, he also could have joined Democratic Russia or created a new party of his own as a step toward creating a national reformist party.

Yeltsin, however, pursued neither strategy. He did not attempt to create a dictatorship, but he also did little to consolidate a democratic regime. Most important, he resisted calls for new national elections, and actually postponed regional elections scheduled for December 1991. He also did not form a political party. Finally, he delayed the adoption of a new constitution, even though his own constitutional commission had completed a first draft as early as October 1990, codifying the relationship between both the president and the Russian Congress and the federal and regional governments.

Instead, Yeltsin decided that economic reform and Russian independence took priority, and made his boldest moves on those fronts. He hired a small group of neoliberal economists headed by Yegor Gaidar to oversee the introduction of radical reforms. Beginning with the freeing of most prices on January 1, 1992, Gaidar and his team initiated the most ambitious economic reform program ever attempted in modern history. His goal was to liberalize prices and trade, achieve economic stabilization, and privatize property, all within a minimum amount of time, earning his plan the unfortunate label of “shock therapy.”

Yeltsin did not understand the plan, but initially embraced it as the only path to creating a “normal” market economy in Russia. And as Gaidar explained, “you cannot do everything at the same time.” Yeltsin and his new government believed they could sequence reforms. First, they wanted to fill the vacuum of state power by codifying the new borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States, then begin economic reform, and finally reconstruct a democratic polity. Yeltsin and his advisers believed that they had achieved major political reforms before August 1991. Free elections, an independent press, and the triumph over the coup attempt made it appear that democracy was secure; now the development of capitalism needed their attention. Western governments and assistance organizations also encouraged this course, devoting nearly 90 percent of their foreign aid budgets to economic reform.

In retrospect, Yeltsin's failure to focus on political reform during 1991–92 was his greatest mistake as Russia's first president, haunting his administration for the rest of the decade. By postponing elections, party formation, and work on the constitution, he fueled ambiguity, stalemate, and conflict between Moscow and the regions as well as between the president and the Congress. Both confrontations ended in armed clashes. Political instability, in turn, impeded the very market reforms Yeltsin had set his sights on.

Conflict between the executive and legislative branches of the federal government came first. The Russian Congress of People's Deputies was an odd foe for Boris Yeltsin. He had risen to power within it, and thwarted the coup from within its building. In November 1991, the Congress had voted overwhelmingly to give him extraordinary powers to deal with economic reform, and a month later the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Congress ratified his agreement to dissolve the Soviet Union. To be sure, Communist deputies controlled roughly 40 percent of the seats in the Congress, yet Yeltsin had nonetheless prevailed against his opponents throughout the heady early months of revolution. There was nothing that should have prevented him, once he became president of Russia, from reaching agreement with this Congress about the rules that would govern their interaction with each other, especially with a newly minted constitution already on hand. Indeed, after the putsch attempt, political relations were initially smooth, with most deputies supporting Yeltsin.

But after price liberalization and the beginning of radical economic reform in January 1992, the Congress began a campaign to reassert its superiority over the president. Disagreements about economic reform spawned a constitutional crisis between the parliament and the president. With no formal institutions to structure relations between the president and the Congress, polarization crystallized yet again, with both sides claiming to represent Russia's highest sovereign authority. Preparing for the 10th Congress of People's Deputies during the summer of 1993, deputies drafted constitutional amendments that would have liquidated Russia's presidential office altogether.

Yeltsin preempted their plans by dissolving the Congress in September 1993. The Congress, in turn, declared Yeltsin's decree illegal and recognized Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi as the new interim president. In a replay of the 1991 drama, Russia suddenly had two heads of states and two governments claiming sovereign authority over each other. Tragically, this standoff only ended after the military conquest of one side by the other. Rutskoi and his allies initiated the violent phase of this contest when they seized control of the mayor's building and then stormed Ostankino, the national television building. Yeltsin responded with a tank assault on the White

House, without question one of the lowest points in his political career. Political inaction in the autumn of 1991 had led to military action in the fall of 1993.

The same constitutional vacuum that fueled conflict between Yeltsin and the Congress allowed federal conflicts to fester. Eventually, one of them—Chechnya—exploded into a full-scale war. Federal problems arose before the executive-legislative standoff. Right after the August 1991 coup attempt, Chechnya declared its independence. In March of the following year, Tatarstan held a successful referendum for full independence. The first of several federal treaties was signed then, but negotiations over a new federal arrangement embedded within a constitution dragged on without resolution into the summer of 1993, prompting several other republics as well as oblasts (smaller territorial units) to make their own declarations of independence complete with their own flags, customs agents, and threats to mint new currencies.

For two years after independence, Yeltsin failed to focus on these federal dilemmas. Consumed with market reform and then distracted by the power struggle with the Congress, he chose not to devote time or resources to reconstructing the Russian federal order. In particular, he ignored Chechnya, which acted increasingly as an independent political entity, if still economically dependent on Moscow. After the October 1993 standoff, Yeltsin did put before the people a new constitution, ratified that December, which formally spelled out a solution to Russia's federal ambiguities.



The price of putting economic reform first? The White House burns after Yeltsin's 1993 attack.

The new constitution specified that all constituent elements were to enjoy equal rights vis-à-vis the center. Absent from the document, however, was any mention of a mechanism for secession.

The formal rules of a new constitution did not resolve the conflicts between the center and the regions. Negotiation over the distribution of power between the central and subnational governments has continued, and it will continue as long as Russia maintains a federal structure. Nonetheless, all subnational governments except one—Chechnya—did acquiesce to minimal maintenance of a federal order. Eventually, in December 1994, Yeltsin decided to use force to deal with this single exception. The results were disastrous. Almost two years later, after a loss of 100,000 lives, Russian soldiers went home in defeat. Yeltsin's envoy, Aleksandr Lebed, negotiated an end to the war in the summer of 1996, but did not resolve Chechnya's sovereign status. Not surprisingly, war began again, in the summer of 1999. The failure to deal effectively with the problem of Chechnya will haunt Yeltsin's legacy forever.

So, perhaps, will the dramatic—and ironic—final fallout from Yeltsin's irresolution in the fall of 1991: Economic reform, the very cause for which he had neglected political reform, was derailed. As soon as Gaidar's Big Bang program began to meet public resistance—as everyone expected that it would and should—Yeltsin began having doubts about his choice. Having foolishly promised an economic turnaround within a matter of months, he lost his resolve when the miracle did not occur. Sustaining support for Gaidar's reforms was complicated by conflict between the president and the parliament. Who ultimately had responsibility for selecting the government or charting the course of economic reform? The constitution in place at the time did not provide a definitive answer. Yeltsin felt compelled to negotiate with the Congress over the composition of his government, diluting the Gaidar team with enterprise managers—the so-called red directors—whose aim was not real reform but the preservation of the incredible moneymaking opportunities that partial reform afforded them and their allies. By December 1992, these Soviet-era managers were back in control of the Russian government under the leadership of Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Thus, shock reform in Russia failed in part because it was never attempted. Instead, Yeltsin allowed Chernomyrdin and his government to creep along with partial reforms—reforms that included big budget deficits, insider privatization, and partial price and trade liberalization, which in turn combined to create amazing opportunities for corruption and spawned a decade of oligarchic capitalism. In this economy, capital has been concentrated in only a few sectors. For most of the 1990s, dynamic economic activity was located in trade and services, banking, and the export of raw materials, particularly oil and gas. Production of manufactured goods of

any sort decreased, first dramatically during 1990–91 and then steadily throughout the decade. Small-enterprise development, after a boom in the late Gorbachev era, has decreased gradually as a share of gross national product.

Most disturbingly, big business is closely tied to the state. Through the financing of state transfers, privatization, and the loans-for-shares program, Russian bankers have made fortunes as a result of political connections, not market moves. The intimate relationship between the state and the so-called private sector has served to sustain rent-seeking, not profit-seeking, behavior. The August 1998 financial collapse dealt a major blow to these tycoons and may, in the long run, provide new opportunities for the development of small profit-seekers at the expense of these large rent-seekers. But even those optimistic about this reversal believe the process will take several years, if not decades.

Yeltsin's nondecisions during 1991–92 also have meant a mixed record on the consolidation of democracy. That Russia today is an electoral democracy is Yeltsin's doing. Political leaders come to power through the ballot box and not through the Communist Party appointment process. They do not take office by force. Most elites in Russia and the vast majority of the Russian population now recognize elections as the only legitimate means to power. Leaders and parties that espouse authoritarian practices—whether fascists or neocommunists—have moved to the margins of Russia's political stage. Given Russia's thousand-year history of autocratic rule, the emergence of electoral democracy must be recognized as a revolutionary achievement of the last decade.

Yet Russia is not a liberal democracy. The political system lacks many of the supporting institutions that ensure the health of democracy. Russia's party system, civil society, and rule of law are weak and underdeveloped. Wealthy businessmen and executives, at the national and regional level, have too much power. Crime and corruption, forces that corrode democracy, are rampant. Over the last several years, Russia's news media, while still independent of the government and pluralistic, have become increasingly dependent on oligarchic business empires. In a society where basic public goods are lacking and the economy at best sputters along, democratic institutions and habits have had trouble taking root.

Yeltsin deserves partial blame. Had he pushed for adoption of a new constitution in the fall of 1991, the balance of power between executives and legislators would have been more equally distributed. By failing to call elections at that time, Yeltsin robbed Russia's democratic parties of their ripe opportunity for emergence and expansion. Instead, he convened the first post-Communist Russian election in December 1993. By that time, most parties created during the heyday of democratic mobilization in 1990–91 had disappeared. Liberal parties especially were hurt by the postponement of

elections, because many voters associated the painful economic decline from 1991 to 1993 with these parties' leaders and their policies. An underdeveloped party system and weak legislative institutions have hampered the growth of civil society.

What if Yeltsin had pushed for ratification of a new constitution in the fall of 1991, held new elections, and then had his new party compete in this vote? Would the military confrontation in October 1993 have been avoided? Would the Chechen wars never have happened? Would economic reform be further along today? Of course, we will never know. In comparing the case of Russia with other, more successful transitions from communism, we do know that the countries that moved the fastest to adopt democracy are the same ones that have avoided internal conflicts and wars, and have enjoyed the fastest material progress. Big-bang democracy helps to produce big-bang economic growth.

Yet Russia is not Poland or Czechoslovakia. Yeltsin faced revolution on an unmatched scale. He had to tackle the end of empire, the specter of Russian federal dissolution, the construction of a new polity, and the introduction of market principles all at once. And Russia's "democrats," unlike the democrats in Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia, did not have overwhelming support within the elite or among the population at large when they suddenly came to power in the fall of 1991. Russian leaders might have been able to manage the array of changes facing them had they all agreed on a common strategy. But they did not agree. This guaranteed a troubled transition.

The revolution is not complete, but it also has not been reversed. The Soviet Union is gone and will never be resurrected. Communism will never return to Russia. Russia has not gone to war with Ukraine, Latvia, or Kazakhstan to defend Russians living there and is less likely to do so today than when Yeltsin took office. Though neofascists and neocommunists have threatened with periodic electoral splashes, neither succeeded in coming to power in the 1990s, nor do they seem likely to do so in the near future. The Russian Communist Party has lagged behind its counterparts in Eastern Europe, unable to recapture the Kremlin. Individual freedoms in Russia have never been greater.

By resisting the temptation of dictatorship, Yeltsin established an important democratic precedent that will raise the costs for future authoritarian aspirants. Defying the predictions of his critics, he did not cancel elections in 1996, he did not suspend the constitution after the August 1998 financial crisis, and he did not stay in power by any means necessary. On the contrary, he won reelection in 1996, abided by the constitution, and even invited communists into his government in the fall of 1998. And then he stepped down willingly, peacefully, and constitutionally. If dissolving the Soviet Union was Yeltsin's most important destructive deed, his surrender of power through democratic means may be his most important constructive act. □

The Future That Never Was

by Alexei Pimenov

Russia has always done the unexpected. The Soviet system emerged suddenly after 1917. When it seemed fragile, it thrived. When it seemed invincible, it collapsed. After the demise of communism in 1991, Russia was supposed to go to the opposite extreme. Communism would give way to Western-style capitalism and parliamentarianism; dogmatic party apparatchiks would be replaced by open-minded liberal intellectuals. An epoch of liberal democracy would begin, just as a person cured of a disease becomes healthy.

Instead, surprising changes have come from surprising directions. It was not the Communists but the democrats who launched a shamelessly chauvinistic campaign against Chechens in Russia and then last autumn unleashed the war in Chechnya. The Westernizer Anatoly Chubais and the fascist Aleksandr Prokhanov used the same vocabulary of militant nationalism in an effort to rally the Russian elite. And their “new deal” worked. With their patriotic demagoguery, they easily eclipsed their pro-Communist opponents. Have the actors forgotten their parts, or are they enacting a different play altogether?

Westerners trying to understand events in Russia are like the Japanese readers who encountered the first translation of Alexandre Dumas’s *Three Musketeers* in the mid-19th century. Unfamiliar with European culture, the Japanese read Dumas’s adventure tale—with a queen who gives her beautiful diamond pendants to a foreign prime minister—as a political pamphlet attacking government corruption. Westerners run similar risks in trying to read contemporary Russian politics.

The Russian political system today, while different from the Soviet system, still has little in common with the Western democracies. The parties in Russia’s new “multiparty system” are not built on political or ideological principles. Politicians adopt their opponents’ slogans and even programs, altering their approach to the nation’s fundamental problems in an instant. Alliances form and dissolve depending on political circumstances. The most powerful parties and coalitions grow out of corporate-bureaucratic relationships. Viktor Chernomyrdin’s Our Home–Russia movement attracted

enthusiastic support from Russia's bureaucrats when he was prime minister, but when Chernomyrdin left office in 1998, his political influence evaporated. Yet a party that does have a significant ideological foundation will become no more than a political sect if it lacks such a foothold in the Russian power structure. This has been the fate of Yabloko, the party that represents Russia's small liberal intelligentsia.

The Russian Communists play an extremely important role in this political show. Constantly demonized by opponents, and expressing the most reactionary tendencies (extreme nationalism in particular), they represent the interests of the least successful segments of the former Communist elite. They are numerous but badly organized in the struggle for the presidency. But the office is not essential for them. Indeed, the Communist Party seems satisfied with its current status, assembling resources that can be placed behind other political forces in return for concessions.

As for the two most powerful political coalitions—Unity (the party of the current government) and its defeated rival, Fatherland–All Russia, the Yuri Luzhkov–Yevgeny Primakov coalition—no important ideological distinctions separate them. Both coalitions hold similar doctrines and employ similar political vocabularies. Both are very heterogeneous, mingling democrats, liberals, statist, nationalists, and others.

But party politics is only the tip of the iceberg. The real conflict in Russia, occurring beneath the surface, is a struggle among different financial and industrial oligarchs. The oligarchs use and sometimes manipulate the parties and movements. It is no exaggeration to say that they determine what happens on the Russian political scene. There are perhaps a dozen major oligarchies, each encompassing a variety of different enterprises and employing thousands, even millions, of employees (though all remain, officially, employees of the state). The oligarchs occupying the top rungs of these amalgamations are the true successors to the former Communist Party elite—and, indeed, some of them once belonged to the Communist nomenklatura.

The new system differs from classical Soviet totalitarianism in many respects, yet it has more in common with the old system than it does with Western capitalism. The fundamental difference from the West is structural. In Russian big business, no real boundaries separate private ownership from state ownership, because no real boundaries separate business power from administrative power. In the United States this would be seen as corruption. It exists in Russia for a very simple reason:

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Portrait of Gorbachev (1990), by Valery and Natasha Cherkashin

In the transition from communism, bureaucrats became capitalists while remaining bureaucrats, even as they were released from any form of hierarchical control. This blending of political and corporate power can be found everywhere, irrespective of political labels. The national airline is controlled by members of former President Boris Yeltsin's inner circle; former Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais controls Unified Energy Systems of Russia; Moscow's Mayor Yuri Luzhkov controls a financial-industrial group called Systema.

Decrying Russia's "wild capitalism," many critics today blame the 1992 "shock therapy" implemented by Yeltsin's "young reformers" for the failures and excesses of the economy. The Russian economy *is* wild in many respects. But capitalist? It differs in fundamental ways from the market economies of the United States and Western Europe. With its closely interwoven political and corporate leaderships, the Russian pattern can more plausibly be compared with the pre-1945 zaibatsu system of imperial Japan or the "crony capitalism" of the modern Philippines.

To understand the new Russian system, one must go back to its roots in the totalitarian Soviet past. The Soviet system admitted no distinctions among the social, economic, and political realms. The nomenklatura that ran the state machinery

constituted the entire ruling class. The only way to achieve high social and economic status was to achieve a high rank in the Soviet state hierarchy. It was a system, in other words, with many *archaic* elements and social patterns built in. It used the archaic method of state slavery (the Gulag), for example, to solve the extremely modern problem of industrializing agrarian Russia.

The terror practiced by the state was not only a way to deal with political opponents, it was the main tool for maintaining social discipline. In this respect, the Soviet system had much in common with the Nazi regime as well as with archaic chiefdoms and kingdoms. Thus, in the Soviet Union under Stalin, as in 19th-century Buganda, the elites oversaw mass killings of innocent people, accusing their victims of absolutely impossible crimes, or not even bothering to accuse them of anything.

Ideology determined every facet of Soviet social life. But the ideology was syncretic. The Communist elite used different ideological constructions at different times, like an actor changing masks. Communist leaders could announce astonishing political and ideological changes that seemed to contradict the most important principles of their political faith, as Stalin did in forging an alliance with Nazi Germany in 1939, without suffering any serious ideological qualms.

The collapse of a state built upon archaic foundations does not necessarily mean the disappearance of the system. The history of such archaic societies, particularly Asiatic ones, from the Middle East to India, offers many examples of empires and societies that disintegrated and were later restored, perhaps around another center and by different people but according to the same basic scheme.

Today's "new" Russia can be seen as a new set of answers to some very old questions. Every society in which there is no separation between the ruling class and the state machinery faces two questions: How is the stability of the elite to be maintained? How is social status to be passed on to the next generation?

Under Stalin, the hierarchical order was maintained by terror. Everybody, irrespective of rank, could become a victim of the secret police. The system remained highly centralized, and party officials were rotated to new posts every three or four years. The privileged had few opportunities to ensure the status of their children. Taking power in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev ended both the terror and the constant reshuffling. The local party secretaries—the leaders of the Soviet Union's hundreds of republics, oblasts, and regions—gained still more independent authority after 1964, under Leonid Brezhnev. The party hierarchy swelled in size and, in effect, different nomenklaturas emerged, as elites in the party, the military, industry, the scientific establishment, and other sectors pursued their different interests.

The decisive transformation of the *nomenklatura* occurred under Mikhail Gorbachev. He gave this new turn its first expression at the Central Committee plenum in December 1987. “Our socialist property of the common people has become an ownership without owner,” he declared. This was absurd—and not entirely clear even in the original Russian—but it turned out to be extremely important politically. Amid endless theoretical debates about the social and economic shape of the Soviet future, something of much greater significance happened: the gradual division of the “socialist property of the common people” among different ministries and organizations.

This unofficial bureaucratic “privatization” was never openly declared, and only later did it become clear what had happened. Gorbachev had proposed that state-owned business enterprises become self-governing. The most important result, however, was that the bureaucratic-industrial elites became independent. This period saw the creation of huge enterprises—such as Gazprom in energy, ANT in military goods (which proved a failure), and Logovaz in autos. Officially, the assets remained state property, but practically speaking they were not controlled by any central authority. Revenues increasingly went to those who ran the enterprises rather than to the central party bureaucracy.

This transformation was accompanied by remarkable changes in the life of the bureaucracy. In the past, party officials were expected to be discreet about their privileges. But the larger and more emancipated elite of the *perestroika* era did not feel compelled to keep its wealth under wraps. Flaunting their money and power, Russia’s new rich provoked a strong popular reaction. Attacks on bureaucratic privilege became the common theme of democrats and many nationalists. Local authorities in the ethnic republics took up a similar cry against the tyranny and privileges of the central ministries, which eventually developed into the key element of their secessionist efforts.

The hardliners’ attempted putsch of August 1991 might have ended very differently if this unofficial privatization of 1987 had not occurred. The conservative Communists leading the putsch against Gorbachev represented the parts of the political elite that had lost out after 1987 and stood to lose even more. For obvious reasons, the more successful groups did not take their side. What began as an effort to turn back the clock thus ended that December in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the ascension of Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

It has become commonplace to interpret Yeltsin’s long rise as a triumph of the democratic movement. But if Yeltsin had been nothing more than a representative of the intelligentsia’s democratic movement, he would not have been able to climb the ladder to Russia’s presidency in the June 1991 election, much less to successfully lead the opposition to the putsch in Moscow that August.

Yeltsin's original decision to join the democrats did have important consequences. Remaining a representative of the party elite yet also possessing the charisma of a victim after Gorbachev cast him out of the party's top ranks in 1987, he used his unique influence to channel popular anger in a democratic–anti-Communist direction rather than a populist-chauvinistic one. Yeltsin's decision, however, was a great surprise. Not only did he lack any earlier ties to the liberal intelligentsia, but one of the most controversial moments of his career had been a highly publicized appearance only a few years earlier before Pamyat, an extreme nationalist and anti-Semitic group.

But Yeltsin recognized that despite the popularity of democratic rhetoric, the democratic forces alone were not strong enough to bring him to power in 1991. At that moment, the former party boss demonstrated again a surprising capacity for exact political calculations and maneuvers. He formed an alliance with the bureaucracy of the Russian Federation.

The bureaucrats desperately needed someone like Yeltsin. In the great grab for assets, ironically, they were losing out badly. To understand why, one must take an excursion into Russian and Soviet history. Before the Bolshevik Revolution, Russian national identity was rooted both in familiar notions of ethnic identity and blood and in a peculiarly Russian sense of universalism—what Dostoevski called “world openness”—that grew out of the Russian Orthodox Church. Under this somewhat contradictory principle, identity grew not out of ethnic origin but confessional belonging.

The new Soviet identity that took shape after the revolution of 1917 was essentially a new form of traditional Russian identity. Universalism remained, but it changed from a Christian universalism to a Marxist one. Chauvinistic attention to “blood” remained as well. The Soviet Union was proudly “internationalist,” but every citizen's passport nevertheless specified his or her ethnic origin in what was called the “fifth column.” And ethnicity was determined not by cultural choice but by the origin of one's parents.

Russia itself held a peculiar status in the Soviet system. On the one hand, Russia was unmistakably its dominant element. For example, while each of the ethnic republics had its own Communist party with its own party secretary, each also had a “second secretary,” almost always an ethnic Russian, sent directly from Moscow to control the first. On the other hand, Russia was expected to embody Soviet universalism. So while each republic had its institutions, notably its own Communist party, Russia itself had few. There was no Russian Communist Party, nor even a Russian Academy of Sciences.

Under Gorbachev, all of these contradictions began to be discussed openly. The central idea of perestroika was a return to “real” Leninist socialism. This appeal to communist ideology was sounded



"New Russians" enjoy the good life. One estimate suggests that 10 percent of Russians have greatly benefited from economic and political change, while 40 percent have greatly suffered.

too late to be effective. But the idea of revival was powerful. It is not surprising that in a multiethnic country it assumed the form of a national, or ethnic, revival. The more people were drawn into the democratic process, the more the slogans of perestroika were transformed into a program for restoring each republic's own ethnic-national golden age.

The only exception was Russia. At first, the idea of Russian ethnic revival was used by the conservative bureaucratic opponents of perestroika rather than by its supporters. Yeltsin changed this situation in a moment. To the struggle against bureaucratic privilege he added a second appeal to mobilize the Russian nomenklatura: sovereignty for the Russian Federation. It was an enormously successful move because the bureaucracy of the Russian Federation had grown deeply dissatisfied with the results of Gorbachev's unofficial privatization. Why? Because the largely decorative character of Russian republican institutions prevented them from following the example of the central bureaucracy and those of the Soviet Union's republics.

That is where the clue to Yeltsin's surprising success can be found. The liberal ideas of the democratic intelligentsia became the third component of this quickly created combination. The results were extremely effective. Yeltsin's opponents tried to play the same game, hastily organizing the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Their attempt was not only belated but politically absurd. By violating the old taboo against openly demonstrating the

overwhelmingly Russian character of Communist rule, they triggered the immediate collapse of the Soviet Communist Party.

By 1992, when Yegor Gaidar and other young reformers, aided by Western advisers such as Jeffrey Sachs, launched the first official privatization, the underlying rules of the game had changed in ways that were not yet widely perceived. The “Chicago boys” won favor in the Yeltsin administration not because they prevailed over their opponents in grand theoretical debates between economic gurus, but for a quite prosaic reason: The nomenklatura found a lot to its liking in the reformers’ plans to free Russian big business from centralized control.

The young reformers themselves played a very important role, not by making crucial decisions but rather by serving as political decoration that made the new Russian elite more attractive to the Western democracies. Soviet history is full of such “useful idiots.” As many in the West pinned their hopes on the market-oriented reformers, the real and far more important conflict continued behind the scenes, as it does to this day. As a saying in Russia puts it, it is a conflict between those who have been grabbing and those who have not been grabbing enough.

A Russian general once conceded that many clashes in the war in Chechnya were little more than mock battles, with the outcome determined by mutual consent of the two sides. Russian politics can be seen in much the same way, as a sequence of bargains struck by opponents who then quietly become partners.

Their bargains are driven by several imperatives. One is the growing economic stratification of the population. Ordinary Russians chafe at the gaudy prosperity of the “New Russians,” whose wealth is widely seen as illicit and immoral. At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Union has deprived Russian statehood of its larger universalist purposes, creating fertile soil for ethnic chauvinism. Twenty-five million Russians now live outside Russia’s borders, in the former Soviet republics. They loom in the Russian imagination much as the 10 million Germans detached from Germany did in the German mind during the years after World War I.

Russia’s ruling clique has continued to follow the traditional strategy of changing programs and using the slogans of others. To distract ordinary Russians from the real social conflict, the new elite needs to create a convincing enemy. First it was the Russian Communist Party. Then, when the extreme nationalist supporters of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy scored unexpected victories in the State Duma elections of 1993, winning nearly a quarter of the vote, the Yeltsin clique created a new enemy. It promptly borrowed the ideas of its opponents, unleashing the first war in Chechnya in late 1994.

As Yeltsin slipped into physical and political decline in the fol-

lowing years, the new elite became increasingly torn by internal conflicts over the division of state property. The emergence of Yuri Luzhkov as a leader of the opposition and the creation of the Luzhkov-Primakov coalition gave political form to this oligarchic rivalry. But Yeltsin's "party of order" staked everything on creating a new dictatorship in order to secure its power and prevent any new redivision of state property. It used "continuity" as a slogan and the secret service as a main means.

Once again, the Russian elite is playing an old game to solve domestic problems. Waging a second war in Chechnya is the best way to mobilize support among a population that has nothing in common with the oligarchs—and to prevent the hungry, oppressed army from attacking the Kremlin. Vladimir Putin's measures as acting president, including the militarization (or re-militarization) of the economy and the restoration of military education in the schools, speak for themselves. The ruling clique needs to be at war. At the same time, it no longer needs to cast the Communists as the enemy. Indeed it needs the Communists' support and has courted them in the Duma more openly than before. Yeltsin was probably pushed out precisely because he was an obstacle to this new coalition.

Do all of these dark trends presage a return to the totalitarian past? Because of the oligarchic nature of the current elite, any new dictatorship in Russia will differ from the Soviet system. But three features of the past remain. First, there are no real boundaries between ownership and state power. Second, terrorist means will be used to resolve fundamental social problems. And third, as shown by Putin's ability to pay honor in almost the same breath to the dissident Andrei Sahkarov and the KGB chief Yuri Andropov, the tradition of changing ideologies like masks is very much alive.

A period of dangerous instability is beginning in Russia. A nationalist and anti-Islamic campaign is a dubious way to unite a multiethnic country. In order to consolidate Russian society Moscow also needs the support of the local authorities, which, little by little, are becoming the only real power beyond Moscow. But the price for this support is always the same: more independence. Paradoxically, further disintegration will be the only long-term result of this effort to consolidate.

We have arrived at the end of a long and skillful political masquerade. Now we see the real face of the Russian political elite. In making sense of what is happening in Russia, it is important above all to be realistic, rejecting romantic interpretations of the country's reforms and recognizing the archaic nature of many of its political institutions and practices. As the great Russian poet Aleksandr Blok said in his despair over the false promise of change nearly a century ago, "We must not be lulled by the calendar." □

Democracy without Farmers

The family farm in America has all but vanished, and with it we are losing centuries of social and civic wisdom imparted by the agrarian life.

by Victor Davis Hanson

The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature rewarded by ample subsistence. This is an American.

—J. Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur,
Letters from an American Farmer

Farmers see things as others do not. Their age-old knowledge is more than the practical experience that comes from the art of growing food or the independence of rural living. It involves a radically different—often tragic—view of human nature itself that slowly grows through the difficult struggle to work and survive from the land. Destroyed by hail that most others ignore, praying for a rain that few will notice, increasingly foreclosed upon in a national sea of cash, smug in their ability to nourish thousands but bewildered that they cannot feed their family, apart from town but dependent on those who are not, still confused over how and why plants usually produce harvests but sometimes do not, the last generation of American farmers have become foreign to their compatriots, who were once as they.



A farmer in Coryell County, Texas, September 1931. Photograph by George W. Ackerman

The farmers' understanding of man and society in our present age is critical to the survival of democracy as we once knew it.

Democracy at its inception, ancient and American, has always been the outgrowth of an agrarian society; but its old bones now have new and different flesh. Consensual government can continue in the vastly transformed conditions of great wealth, urbanism, and rapidly changing technology never foreseen by its originators; but whether democracy can still instill virtue among its citizens will be answered by the age that is upon us, which for the first time in the history of the civilization will see a democracy without farmers.

More than 200 years ago, J. Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur (1735–1813) published *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), a collection of 12 essays on American culture and rural life. Crèvecoeur's letters are generally regarded as the beginning of American literature, inasmuch as they are the first formal expressions of what it was to be "American." The opening to homesteaders of new frontier lands across the eastern seaboard, the immigration and assimilation of a wide variety of Europeans, and the turmoil of the American Revolution convinced Crèvecoeur that he was witnessing at the end of the 18th century the birth of a unique nation and a singular man. In his view, freeholding yeomanry lay at the heart of this great experi-

ment in creating a middling, rambunctious, democratic citizenry that could not be fooled, enticed, or enslaved. In America, the European

now feels himself a man because he is treated as such; the laws of his own country had overlooked him in his insignificance; the laws of this cover him with their mantle. Judge what an alteration there must arise in the mind and the thoughts of this man. He begins to forget his former servitude and dependence; his heart involuntarily swells and grows; this first swell inspires him with those new thoughts that constitute an American. What love can he entertain for a country where his existence was a burden to him? If he is a generous, good man, the love of this new adoptive parent will sink deep into his heart.

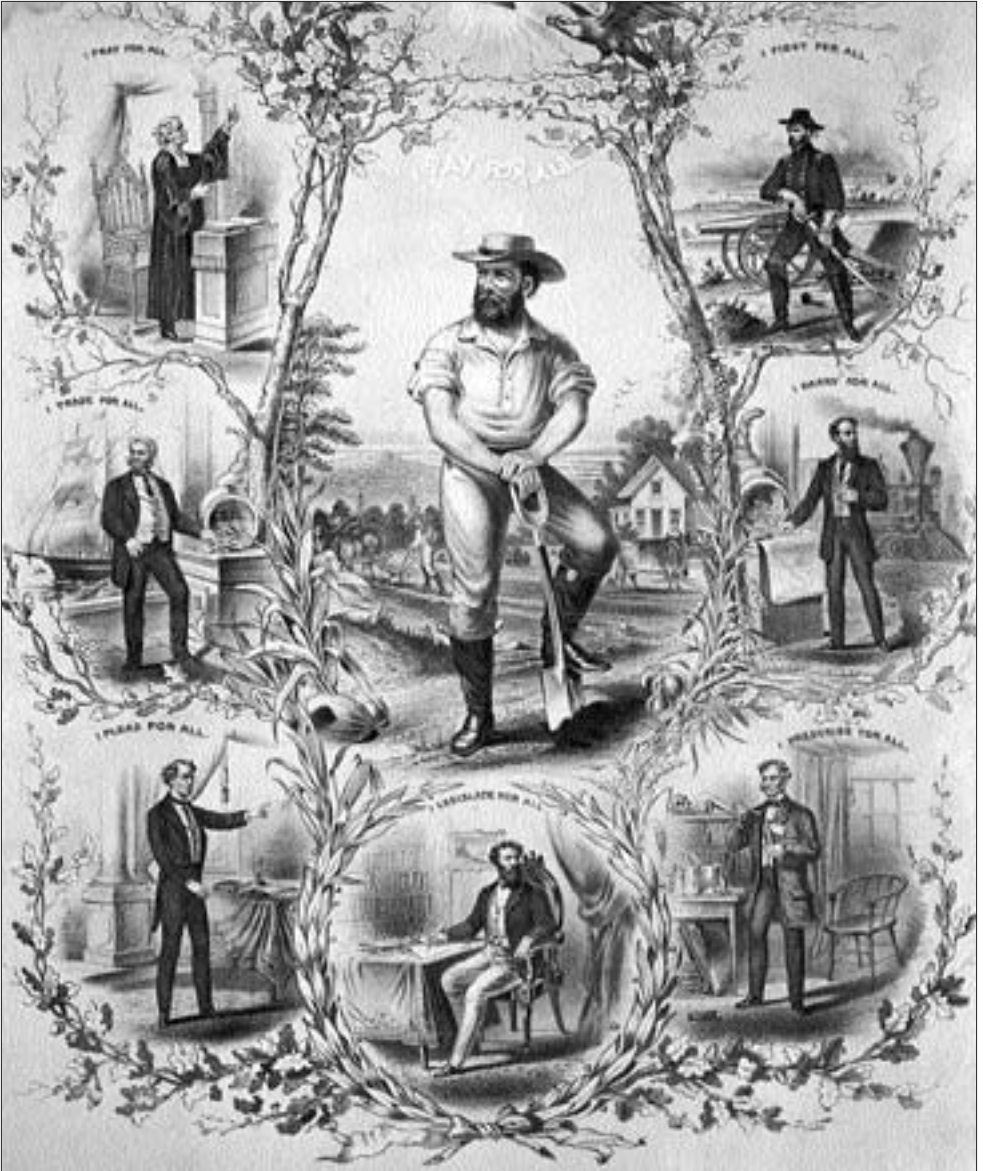
Part formal essays, part autobiographical memoir, part fictive sketches (on everything from the island of Nantucket to slavery to the American humming bird), the letters of Crèvecoeur are rambling, confused, and at times almost unreadable. But they brilliantly use the landscape of contemporary 18th-century agriculture to demonstrate how the natural bounty of America and the availability of vast expanses of farmland molded the European religious and political heritage into something far more dynamic—something never before seen or even imagined.

Crèvecoeur was a materialist. Where people live, what they do, and how they work determine how they think and who they are. He believed that the farmland of North America was everything, its rich abundance critical to fashioning a new culture. Crèvecoeur's American man, then, was surely different from any in Europe, because he had room and resources that could be freely exploited. The American was a wholly untraditional creature whose successful existence proved that free and "insignificant" men fleeing Europe could create a novel culture from an unforgiving nature.

This "new" man was, of course, a curmudgeon who would be very hard to deprive of his newfound liberty. Only with difficulty would he be coerced or uprooted, and he would not be fooled by the trend and jargon of the town. He was as rough and unromantic among his urban peers as he was in his mute fields—in other words, a new, hard-nosed, no-nonsense American.

Crèvecoeur wrote his *Letters* in the belief that the emergence of yeomen and free landowners in America meant the genesis of a new egalitarian American culture. Muscular labor, now autonomous and in the service of the individual, would create a self-confident, viable, and pragmatic citizen in place of the passive serf and ignorant day laborer of past nonegalitarian regimes of the European monarchies. Yet this new

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An 1869 lithograph highlights the universal influence of the farmer on American life.

farmer-citizen was also at odds with the trader and near-savage who left nothing in his wake, who was made brutish by North America's wild rather than tamed by it. Crèvecoeur's American agriculturists alone—who had created cultural order (homesteads, cultivated fields, bridges, small towns) out of natural chaos—had hit upon that rare middle ground: freeholding yeomen neither rich nor poor, wild nor pampered, brutes nor sophisticates, day laborers nor absentee lords. American democrats were not to be coffeehouse intellectuals or an envious and volatile mob eager for someone else's property and capital.

Crèvecoeur's powers of abstract observation and analysis derived from his own unique background. He was classically trained at a

Jesuit college in France, and his Latin phrases frequently remain untranslated in the *Letters*. He traveled widely, held a variety of jobs, and emigrated to the northern English colonies in 1759 by way of Britain and Canada. He was married and raised three children on his New York farm until the tumult of the Revolutionary War forced him to flee America. Crèvecoeur farmed for less than a decade before his return to Europe, where he entered the diplomatic service and became a literary figure in his own right in revolutionary France. Though he was a genuine farmer, agriculture was but a parenthesis in his life, which was, ironically, spent largely in Europe writing about farming in America. His *Letters*, then—as generations of critics have pointed out—suffer from the paradox of an ex-farmer writing about what he will not or cannot any longer do.

Still, the *Letters* were an immediate success among Crèvecoeur's contemporaries for two reasons: the largely European audience was curious about the creation of this new social paradigm in America, and it wanted to know the natural esoterica of a frontier and rural lifestyle pretty much unknown in Europe. The ostensibly fictional account is actually a firsthand look at life in rural New England and details the creation and management of a working farm.

But the book's real interest, past and present, arose from its literary exploration of a more important topic: What is an American, and is he really so new? What is the relationship between the cultivated landscape of America and the nature of its citizenry? What has American agrarianism done to improve upon the Western paradigm as practiced in Europe, and could the muscular and uncouth govern themselves without the guardianship of the academic and refined?

More than two centuries later, American citizens know less about farming than did Crèvecoeur's Europeans. This is a great tragedy, perhaps *the* tragedy of the last half-century. Americans have completely forgotten the original relationship between farming and democracy, which Crèvecoeur sought so carefully to explain. As a consequence, few Americans can define in the abstract what they were or who they are. Few of us work with our hands or become dirty from the soil, unless we are puttering in our gardens; those who do so for work more often wish that they did not. The labor of muscle, unless directed to the narcissistic obsession with the healthy body, is deemed unfortunate, whereas the work of the tongue alone is prized. That the two might be combined, and thus become greater than either, is ignored or forgotten. To Crèvecoeur, the dichotomy of the effete intellectual and brutish thug—so common in Europe—was resolved by the emergence in between of the independent American farmer who avoided through his autonomy, craft, and labor the pitfalls of both. And so it is: to walk into a room of farmers is to see some of the most rough-looking yet highly thoughtful citizens in America.

Just as Crèvecoeur held that the formation of freeholding yeomen created the American republican spirit, so now the decline of family farming in our own generation is symptomatic of the demise of his notion of what an American was. Just as Crèvecoeur saw unlimited land, small towns, multiethnicity, the growth of a middle class, self-reliance, and a common culture as essential to the creation of America and its democracy, so today the decline of family farming, the end of the egalitarian principle of farm ownership, the growth of urbanism, the assurance of material entitlement, and the virtual disappearance of a rural middle class ensure the demise of Crèvecoeur's American.

Crèvecoeur was neither naive nor entirely a utopian romantic: freedom, egalitarianism, and democracy were possible because man in America had little leisure and less affluence, and found success or failure largely in his own efforts. Surfeit for the human species was as great a danger as poverty, sloth the more terrible peril than exhaustion. Education and contemplation without action—the near religious faith of today's intellectual class—meant not impotence, but moral vacuity itself. It was not merely democracy that was important, but the type of people who created democracy.

To Crèvecoeur, like Aristotle, man was tame only to the degree that he was occupied, independent only as long as he owned property. Only through agriculture was the citizen in constant observation of how terrible loomed the animal and human world about him: man realizes the dangers of his own natural savagery only through his attempt at physical mastery of the world.

Many men and women who undergo this experience provide a check on those who do not. Such farmers question authority and yet follow the law; they are suspicious of the faddishly nontraditional, yet remain highly eccentric themselves; they vote and work for civic projects and group cohesion, and yet tend to be happiest when left alone, these who historically have been democracy's greatest supporters by not quite being convinced of the ultimate wisdom of democracy.

In contrast, Crèvecoeur's trappers and traders who live as natural men on the edge of the frontier are not romantic individualists, but more often beasts—without permanent residence, without responsibilities to others, without desire to clean and separate themselves from the foul world they must inhabit and have surrendered to. They and the refined urban merchant both dwell in antithesis to the farmer, who both conquers and lives with nature, who practices both a solitary and a communal existence, who is and is not one with the government at large. From that personal, strife-filled experience of working the soil, the yeoman-citizen alone, this muscled reader of books, this hardened lover of beauty, transfers his code of steward-



The Hailstorm (1940), by Thomas Hart Benton

ship, reasoned exploitation, and independence to the wider society of his peers. That the balance and stability of agrarianism in themselves explain the health of a culture seems preposterous to us in the postindustrial age. But to Crèvecoeur, the connection was self-evident to the point of being unquestioned.

In the great American debate over ecology, development, and the use and abuse of nature, we have forgotten the central role of agriculture, which is more than just to keep us alive one more day. Farming alone reminds us of the now-lost balance between wilderness and pollution and inculcates in our youth the thought that true erudition is not the mastery of the specialist's esoterica but broad learning, checked and tried daily through the pragmatics of the arm and back. The more abstract, liberal, and utopian your cant, the more difficult it is to live what you profess. The farmer of a free society uniquely solved the age-old Western dilemma between reason and faith, the balance between the Enlightenment and medieval minds, by using his reason and intellect to husband and direct the mystical world of plants, even as he accepted the limits of reason by experiencing every day a process that was ultimately unfathomable. The land taught us that, and so it was the nursery, not merely the breadbasket, of our nation.

We are not starving in this country and need not worry about our food supply, even under corporate conglomerations to come. But we are parched and hungry in our quandary over how to be good citi-

zens—whom the Greeks, the logical forefathers of modern democracy, said were ultimately the only real harvest of the soil.


Our new American is responsible for little property other than his mortgaged house and car; his neighbors and friends, indeed, his very community, are more ephemeral than they are traditional and rooted. Although not an aristocrat, he is esteemed by his peers to the degree that he is polished and secure and avoided once he is at odds with comfortable consensus. He depends on someone else for everything from his food to his safety. Lapses in his language and manners can end his livelihood; obsequiousness, rather than independence, is more likely to feed his family. Yes, America is more democratic and free, and perhaps a kinder and gentler nation than in the past; but political and economic advance came at a price. For a time we have become more humane collectively and in the abstract, but somehow far worse individually and in person.

We American agrarians of the latter 20th century fought a war for land that we did not even know we were in. Yet we apparently have lost it nonetheless. Family farmers as a species were mostly unknown fatalities in the new wave and final manifestation of market capitalism and entitlement democracy, the final stage of Western culture that is beyond good and evil. Ever more unchecked democracy and capitalism—because they alone succeed at achieving what they are designed for, and since there is no alternative to either—are now nearly global. In the next century, both practices will ensure to the billions of the world material prosperity, entertainment, and leisure undreamed of by any generation in the planet's history. Surely billions will prosper as princes where millions once lived as the dispossessed in squalor, disease, and filth. Even the exploiters of capital cannot siphon the sheer abundance of lucre from the mob.

Yet this remarkable success has brought us to the end of history as we have known it. The age-old Platonic antithesis between what we can do and what we should do has been settled in favor of the former. There is no political, no religious, no cultural idea left that stands in the way of bringing more things to more people at any cost, to dismantling every cultural, religious, and social impediment to self-expression and indulgence.

In the absence of an agrarian creed, no intellectual has stepped forward to craft a higher culture for the people that is beyond materialism and consumerism. No abstract thinker dares to advocate the love of soil, a legacy of hard work, loyalty to family, town, and country, or even fealty to a common culture. No one suggests an erudition that is harmonious with, rather than antithetical to, muscular labor. These are the glues that hold—and should hold—a people together, that make their day-to-day drudgery mean more than the gratification of desire. Say that, and one would be dubbed a crank,

misfit, and worse—corny, naive, and silly for sure. And why not? Everything that we hold dear—our mass entertainment and advertising, cars, leisure, music, material wealth, easy jet transportation, health, and consumer democracy with its moral relativism, academic bromides, and cheap caring—are ours precisely and only because we have evolved away from the agrarian ideal and a vibrant countryside. The end of family farming gave us more food—you must confess it, agrarian romantics—more time, more money, and less shame. Indeed, maybe even more equality as well.

 Our new age is akin to the period between A.D. 98 and 180, the era of the so-called Five Good Emperors in Rome, whose monotony and materialism Edward Gibbon called the most tranquil period of human existence. Ours now is. “No other way of life remains,” wrote the contemporary Greek toady Aelius Aristides of a similar past epoch:

There is one pattern of society, embracing all. . . . Were there ever so many cities, inland and maritime? Were they ever so thoroughly modernized. . . . Seashore and interior are filled with cities, some founded and others enlarged. . . . The whole world, as on a holiday, has changed its old costume . . . and gone in for finery and for all amusements without restraint. All other animosities between cities have ceased, but a single rivalry obsesses every one of them—to show off a maximum of elegance and luxury.

Not just yeomanry, but even race, language, custom, and locale are falling before the onslaught of instant communications, advertising, unfettered speech, and material dynamism—before the idea that leisure and escape from muscular labor are the agreed-on prize. For the first time in civilization, real material overabundance, and at least the veneer of egalitarianism that it spawns, are upon us. The \$10 sneakers of the illegal alien look and feel hardly different from the \$200 designer brands of the corporate lawyer; the tap water of the welfare mom can be as clean as that of the exploiting blueblood; the video brings entertainment—any entertainment—as quickly, cheaply, and frequently to the illiterate as to the opera buff. Ease of consumption unites us more than race, gender, and class divide us. In short, for the first time in the history of civilization, the true age of democracy is at hand, encompassing not only the ideal of political equality but a real material kinship and shared vulgarity at last. There are no longer the age-old skeptics from the countryside to come into town and remind us that it is all but dross.

The agrarian life, which is neither materialist nor fair, is the most visible casualty of what we have become in this age of Pax Sumptuosa. And we all have on occasion become willing casualties in this Faustian tradeoff. It is baffling still to see one’s children emerge exhausted from a

day's hoeing of vineyard weeds with enough energy left to head right for their video game consoles. We poor farmers do not understand the present because we believe in ethical restraint on the economy. Yet at the same time, as American consumers we, too, want and expect what this efficient and amoral economy has to offer.

For most of my early adult life I was called a failure for farming; now I am dubbed a success for having failed at farming. Thus I can offer some insight into the consequences of the cultural demise of agrarianism through my own inability to live an exclusively agrarian life: I can write well of what I do not like, because in some sense I have just about become exactly what I do not like.

The alternate Western—and agrarian—tradition of autarcheia, autonomy, localism, and shame, which was always at war with our urban genius for materialism, uniformity, and entitlement, now more or less has lost out as it has always lost out—just as the polis has always given way to the kingdom, republic to empire, culture to civilization in this endless cycle so inherent to our history. These voluntary checks on acquisition and consumption, on efficiency and bounty itself, put too much respon-

sibility on us. The middling agrarian, whose age-old role was to preserve society from the dominion of the gifted but brutal renegade—Plato's solitary superman who would live by natural law alone—now gives way to the contemporary man of desires. He is full of reason of



The Halleys are part of a trend among American farmers. They left their family farm in Bisbee, North Dakota, and moved to a new home in Fargo rather than continue to lose money year after year.

sorts, but without spirit, and uses his knowledge mostly to seek complacency amid his bounty. This contemporary clerk, teacher, salesman, and bureaucrat is everything the farmer is not: mobile, material, careful, and timid; at peace with security, sameness, petty reputation, and complacency; glad for an endless existence of leisure and affluence without the interruption of strife or discord; nose always to the scent of cash and pleasure. He wants liberty, but too often liberty for indulgence alone, and then is surprised that when such commensurate license is extended to the less fortunate, they shoot and inject rather than show a taste for industry. Agrarianism was such a brief interlude between savagery and decadence; it was such a hard teacher of the human condition.

The old conception of an entire family—grandparents, parents, and children—living from nothing other than the fruits of their labor, raising (not surviving by selling) produce; passing on a successful livelihood to sons and granddaughters; conveying ideas of independence, shame, and skepticism; and criticizing both the bookish and weak, the robust and the ignorant, will disappear. Indeed, it already has. Was the agrarian tradition of Western culture, the sum total of millions of mostly unknown existences and personal tragedies, of lost crops and ruined lives, all for this? Was the agrarian character of Thomas Jefferson's America to evolve only to give us the abundance, convenience, and freedom that we might become what we are? Was that what the family farming of Crèvecoeur's age was for? Was Crèvecoeur's yeoman to lead us to what we now are at the new millennium?

Other good souls still bravely resist. Their attempts to recreate rural farming communities, to share in neighborly agrarian enterprises, and to forge farm communalism indeed will be noble and needed enterprises. Yet something will bother us about many of them. We will in secret confess that they are a bit scholastic. They are without the challenge and disaster of the past. This alternate agriculture of the organic gardener and suburban homesteader will be contrived by those whose daily survival and capital are really found elsewhere, rather than in the spontaneous enterprises of working farmers.

In the postagrarian era to come, we who were not part of the classical age will do all in our power to restore it—a doomed endeavor, whatever our noble intent. Many agrarian idealists and restorationists will seek solace in pockets of vitality such as the much-praised Amish, who can withstand the tide and hold to their way thanks only to a fiery and uncompromising God—and a surrounding unagrarian society that indirectly subsidizes them. They prove that the horse and plow, dinner at five, and asleep at nine are yet possible if one will just suffer enough. But in the end, even the most diehard farming reformers will not wish to be as the Amish

are—and they will not know how to be like the Amish without being the Amish.

Their praiseworthy experience will emulate but not continue the agrarian idea, which grew out of a centuries-long tradition of families tied to particular farms of about the same size. At the end of agrarianism, when (as with autos or steel) there are but a score of megafarms, we will find the demise of real conservatism. When all the dour populists are gone, we will see that the market is not so conservative in its excess and the liberal not so tolerant in his utopian agenda for his peers. The second most bothersome Americans are globalist profiteers who justify every exploitation imaginable as the inevitable wages of their market-as-deity. Perhaps the most offensive are the very serious and usually affluent left-wing utopians, who foam and grimace from a distance in their elite white enclaves as they explain how we all must be forced to do this and that, here and now, to save some rare amphibian, a certain inert gas, someone's anonymous arteries or lungs, or an inner-city child's dreams—or else.

With the loss of this country's agrarian and conservative profile also goes a tradition of using agrarian life to critique contemporary culture, a tradition of farming as moral touchstone of some 2,500 years' duration in the West, beginning with Hesiod, Xenophon, and Aristotle and ending with us. Agrarian wisdom—man using and fighting against nature to produce food that ensured that his family stayed on the land and his community remained safe—was never fair or nicely presented. Family farmers prefer to be at loggerheads with society, yet they are neither autocrats nor disillusioned Nietzschean demigods sneering at the growing mediocrity of the inferior in their midst.

As their doomed and near-extinct status illustrates, yeomen are rather different from the rest of us. These Ajax-like men and women oppose us but mean us no harm; they are more suicidal than homicidal. They bother us with their “judgments” and “absolutes” and “unnecessary” and “hurtful” assessments that derive from meeting and conquering real challenges. But they also bother us in order to save, not to destroy, us, by giving a paradigm of a different, older way that once was in all of us. They want us to slow down, not to implode, to find equilibrium between brutality and delicacy, as they themselves have with their orchards and vines. They want us to try something out ourselves before advocating it for others.

Family farming is gone, yet democracy and Western civilization remain, the creations of agrarianism. We Americans, now so rich, free, and at peace, can survive, thrive even, under the material conditions of the 21st century. But we will never be anything like what we were. The hardest task in America now is not to fall into defeatism—even if it means verging on idealism. And perhaps we might still learn from what we are losing. □

The American presidency—America itself—has never been the same since Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908–73) assumed the office in November 1963. Thirty-seven years later, the national agenda is still significantly defined by issues he put there with the Great Society, civil rights legislation, and Vietnam. Even his critics agree that Johnson was one of our most complex and fascinating presidents. Here, historian Lewis L. Gould details the emerging revisionist view of his presidency, and two top LBJ aides recall the White House years.

The Revised LBJ

by Lewis L. Gould

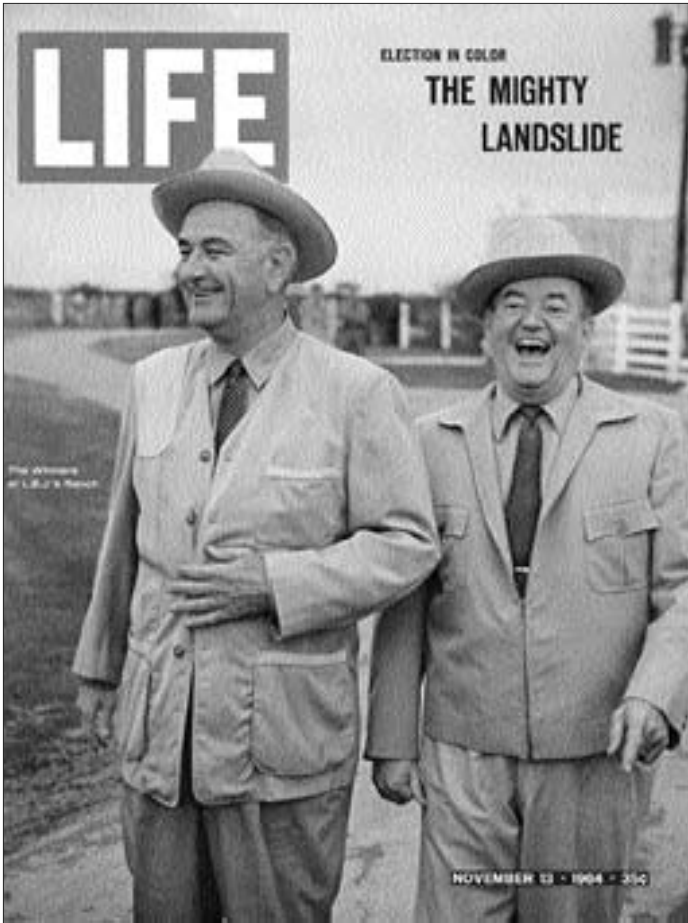
Last December, George McGovern suggested in the *New York Times* that, apart from Woodrow Wilson and the two Roosevelts, Lyndon Johnson was “the greatest president since Abraham Lincoln.” It was a startling change of heart for the former senator from South Dakota, once a fervent opponent of LBJ’s Vietnam policies and the Democratic Party’s antiwar presidential nominee in 1972. McGovern’s reappraisal followed on the heels of another surprising outburst of revisionism by a longtime LBJ critic. At the Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, Harvard University economist (and Kennedy intimate) John Kenneth Galbraith declared, “Next only to [Franklin D.] Roosevelt, and in some respects more so, Lyndon Johnson was the most effective advocate of humane social change in the United States in this century.” While not seeking to minimize the tragedy of the Vietnam War, Galbraith lamented that its overwhelming legacy had relegated Johnson’s Great Society to “the historical backwater.”

After 30 years in presidential purgatory, LBJ and his historical fortunes are in

ascendancy. Vice President Al Gore has listed Johnson among the presidents he most admires. *Boston Globe* columnist David Shribman calls LBJ “the hottest political figure in the nation right now.” In the academy and the political arena alike, there is renewed interest in the large visions that drove Lyndon Johnson and a fresh desire to modify the historical picture of his presidency.

Johnson left the White House in January 1969 a repudiated chief executive, his reputation seemingly in permanent eclipse. The disaster of Vietnam, the failure of the War on Poverty, and, later, the decline of the Democratic Party all appeared to flow from his mistakes as president. He was widely condemned for deceiving the American people about Vietnam. His Great Society became the prime target of critics of big government. The martyred John F. Kennedy’s stock stayed high, but in public opinion polls Johnson fell to the bottom rank among postwar presidents.

Johnson’s reputation probably bottomed out in the early 1980s with the onset of journalist Robert Caro’s extended biographi-



LBJ enjoyed the halcyon days after the 1964 election at his Texas ranch.

cal—and polemical—assessment of his life and times. Excerpted amid great fanfare in national magazines, the first two volumes, *The Path to Power* (1982) and *Means of Ascent* (1990), painted a highly unflattering picture of Johnson's rise from congressional aide to New Deal congressman to U.S. senator. Caro portrayed LBJ as "unencumbered by even the slightest excess weight of ideology, of philosophy, of principles, of beliefs." He was a man of "utter ruthlessness and a seemingly bottomless capacity for deceit, deception, and betrayal."

But Caro's flawed portrait of the young LBJ—and particularly his use of the racist and reactionary former Texas governor, Coke Stevenson, as a virtuous foil to the villainous young Johnson—redounded in some ways to the president's favor. It stimulated other Johnson researchers to craft a more balanced, nuanced portrait of the man,

bringing forth Paul Conkin's *Big Daddy from the Pedernales: Lyndon Johnson* (1987), Robert Dallek's *Lone Star Rising* (1991) and *Flawed Giant* (1998), and Irwin and Debi Unger's *LBJ: A Life* (1999). Dallek, for example, calls LBJ's presidency "a story of great achievements and terrible failure, of lasting gains and unforgettable losses." Johnson, Dallek continues, "faithfully reflects the country's greatness and limitations."

One essential element of the scholarly reappraisal of LBJ has been decades in the making. Despite his well-deserved reputation for secretiveness and his hatred of leaks, Johnson decided on a policy of openness for the records of his administration when

he set up his presidential library. The Nixons tried for years in court to cordon off large parts of the historical record, and the Kennedys have been slow in opening their files. But the decision to lay many of the facts of Johnson's presidency in plain view has served his historical image well. It has given scholars new insights into the inner workings of his presidency and stimulated fresh thinking about Johnson and his era.*

The 1993 decision to release the audiotapes of Johnson White House conversations

*Much of the new scholarship appears in historical journals. L. Patrick Hughes's "To Meet Fire with Fire: Lyndon Johnson, Tom Miller, and Home-Front Politics" in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (April 1997) is representative of the more balanced appraisals of LBJ's formative years. Many scholarly articles are collected in the three volumes of *The Johnson Years* (1981–1994), edited by University of Texas historian Robert Divine.

gave another lift to LBJ's standing among scholars and researchers. Historian Michael Beschloss's *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963–1964* (1997) revealed the style and character of a complex president in action. Beschloss called the recordings "a vital new means of understanding Lyndon Johnson, who, as we have known from a rich offering of journalism, memoir, history, and biography, was such a different person in private from in public."

Whatever the propriety of recording presidential conversations in the first place, the essential Johnson, master of "The Treatment," was now on full display in hours and hours of conversations with congressional leaders, government officials, and others. LBJ's voice—cajoling, threatening, persuading, and imploring—reintroduced an inescapably human note into the historical record. While his famous character flaws emerge in abundance from the tapes, it is more difficult to demonize a man who seems so alive in the room with listeners. The tapes also give nuance and shading to historical events—Johnson's commitment to passage of the civil rights laws, his doubts about Vietnam—that work to Johnson's benefit.

None of this might have made much difference if the course of history itself had not cast LBJ's record in a new light. After the West's victory in the Cold War, Vietnam no longer seemed a symbol of American overconfidence in fighting communism. The war had proved to be neither a harbinger of nuclear confrontation nor, in the clearer moral light at the end of the Cold War, damning evidence of American moral equivalence with the Cold War enemy. (A recent book that takes a fuller look at LBJ's foreign affairs legacy is *The Foreign Policies of Lyndon Johnson: Beyond Vietnam* [1999], edited by H. W. Brands.) The stunning victory over Iraq in the Persian Gulf War of 1990–91, meanwhile, has taken some of the edge off the humiliation of the American defeat in Vietnam.

Historians continue to indict Johnson's

Vietnam policies. The conventional view—that Vietnam was "Lyndon Johnson's War," a product of his commitment to the premises of containment and his unwillingness to see Vietnam go the way of China—still commands adherents. Frank Logevall, in his recent book *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (1999), makes the case that Kennedy and Johnson, along with their foreign policy advisers, were not reluctant to escalate American involvement during 1963–65 but did so deliberately, and also turned away peace offers. But some of the newest scholarship shifts the emphasis away from Johnson (albeit without lessening criticism of his leadership), pointing to relentless pressures exerted by the U.S. military and intelligence communities for wider American intervention. John Kenneth Galbraith cited a new book presenting some of this evidence, David Kaiser's *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (2000), in arguing for a fresh look at Johnson's legacy. Other scholarship provides needed perspective on LBJ's performance as commander in chief by highlighting the continuity of errors and failures from the administrations of Eisenhower to Nixon.

History has also brought renewed appreciation of Johnson's courageous approach to America's continuing racial divide. In 1992, when President George Bush seemed slow to react to the violence that erupted in Los Angeles—a clear echo of the long, hot summers of the 1960s—many commentators went back to LBJ's pivotal 1965 civil rights address at Howard University: "It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity," Johnson said. "All our citizens must have the ability to walk through these gates."

No president had spoken words like that—and backed them with action—in a quarter of a century. The *Boston Globe's* David Shribman recently seized on Johnson's largeness of vision to explain the current reconsideration of LBJ: At a time when the presidency seems small,

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Democrats, “and perhaps the nation,” are yearning for “a president with big dreams, big plans and a big sense of self-confidence.”

Johnson, moreover, was able to deliver, enacting not only the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but the Medicare bill, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Immigration Act, and the Economic Opportunity Act. (*Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society* [1998], by John A. Andrew III, offers a balanced appraisal of Johnson’s domestic record.) He was far more effective with Congress than either fellow southern Democrat Jimmy Carter or titular southerner George Bush.

Only one post-LBJ president has come close to matching Johnson’s ambition, and his failures have played a significant role in raising LBJ’s standing. In Bill Clinton the nation found a southern politician whose appetites exceeded Johnson’s—and then some. The Lewinsky scandal and Clinton’s impeachment made Johnson’s personal peccadilloes, from summoning staff members to confer while he was seated on the john to careening around the LBJ ranch in his limousine with a beer in hand, seem almost quaint in their relative innocence and discretion. The Texas twang and Hill Country manner that made Johnson seem boorish and vulgar now seem at least to have the virtue of not being slick. Far more important, of course, the 36th president looks like a much larger *political* leader when measured against the 42nd. Where Johnson risked a great deal to pursue great purposes such as the War on Poverty, the Great Society, and civil rights, knowingly jeopardizing not only his own political welfare but the future of his party, Clinton and his adviser Dick Morris used their political capital for small causes and petty political advantage.



Johnson revisionism, however, has inherent limits. The Vietnam War can be put in perspective, but it will not go away. As the Democratic Party looks back nostalgically to the Johnson years, it should also remember that LBJ’s failings as a party politician produced many of the institutional weaknesses and difficulties that have plagued it since the 1960s. At a time when

Republicans were building a broader electoral base by reaching out to small donors, for example, Johnson relied on big campaign contributors, letting the electoral grassroots of the Democrats wither. The party was also hurt by the oddly devout insistence of this most political man that a president must remain above purely partisan politics.

Yet Johnson will continue to fascinate scholars. Wherever the biographer or scholar looks to understand major developments in the United States during the 20th century—from civil rights to the emergence of the Sunbelt, from the world role of the United States to the shape of the political parties—there is Lyndon Johnson, posed squarely in the midst of four significant decades. Whenever one becomes convinced that Johnson was truly a great man and a significant president, a reminder of his pettiness and lack of grace provides a rude shock. But when one is sure that he was no more than a caricature of everything boorish and tawdry in a Texas male, there is a reminder of his noble stands on civil rights and the disadvantaged, and then he seems the great president he so desperately wanted to be. LBJ never believed that historians would give him a fair shake, but he might have been pleased to know that he has achieved the status of an enigma, all but certain to be the subject of endless speculation and revision. □

Two of Lyndon Johnson's closest aides, Harry McPherson and Jack Valenti, answered questions from an invited audience at a Wilson Center Director's Forum last fall. They were introduced by the Center's Director, Lee H. Hamilton.

Achilles in the White House

A discussion with Harry McPherson and Jack Valenti

Lee Hamilton: I'm going to take the privilege of asking the first question. I'd just like to know how it was to work for Lyndon Johnson. I knew Johnson very casually. He came to campaign for me in 1966, when I was running for reelection early in my career as a congressman. He came to the post office in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Not one of the major events of his administration, but it was a very important event for me. What was it like to work for Lyndon Johnson, one of the legendary figures of American history?

Jack Valenti: Working for Lyndon Johnson was like living on the end of a runway. He was the most formidable political leader I have ever known. I wrote a book about Lyndon Johnson called *A Very Human President*, published by W. W. Norton. I wanted to call the book "Achilles in the White House." I thought, of all the creations in literature, both fictional and mythical, the one who most mesmerizes me is Achilles, the leading figure in *The Iliad*. His anger and his pride, his commanding

presence, fill that story, even when he's off-stage. It was his high energy and his leadership qualities that sometimes led him to an excess of flawed action.

Johnson more closely resembles Achilles than any other political figure I know. Almost anything you can say about Johnson had a tinge of truth in it, good or bad. He was vengeful and bullying. He was kind and thoughtful. He was petty and sometimes duplicitous. But he was also visionary, energetic, a man whose goal it was to be the greatest American president, doing the greatest amount of good for the American nation. He got caught up in a war whose commitments he could not break, whose tenacity he simply did not perceive, and whose end, with all of his efforts, he could not achieve. I would sum him up with the words of the novelist Ralph Ellison, who, two nights before Johnson left office, said to him, "Mr. President, because of Vietnam, you're going to have to settle just for being the greatest American president we've ever had on behalf of the under-



White House aide Jack Valenti had the president's ear for a private conversation in 1965.

educated young, the poor and the old, the sick and the black. But, Mr. President, that's not a bad epitaph."

Harry McPherson: I have been thinking about Johnson a lot because I've been reading presidential historian Michael Beschloss's book *Taking Charge*, and listening occasionally to the Johnson tapes on C-SPAN radio. In the tapes, one can hear LBJ at his best and at his most tedious, because, despite the fact that he was everything Jack said on the side of high powered and fully engaged, sometimes he could be boring as hell. You'd just want to get away from him, because he just talked and talked. He was usually ventilating. Poor Jack, in his year and a half at the White House, probably had to take more of it than I did. You can hear that on these tapes. You also hear a lot of other things.

The tapes that have been released so far come from the first year of Johnson's presidency, a year when I think it is not unfair to say that Lyndon Johnson earned the everlasting thanks of the American people

for the character of his response to suddenly being thrown into the presidency in the wake of an assassination, in Johnson's home state, of a very popular man. Imagine the weight, the burden, the danger that rested on Lyndon Johnson, starting November 22, 1963, and for the next year, and then look at what he did. The best image for this that I've been able to come up with is of a man suddenly thrown into the pilot house of a boat that is in a storm and is just spinning around, with the wheel out of control. The captain is dead. And the man thrust into this terrible situation grabs the wheel and brings that vessel back into the course it should be on—to the everlasting relief of its crew. That's what Johnson did. Even if you hated Johnson, as Barry Goldwater and his allies did in that race in 1964, even if you held him in what Speaker of the House John McCormack once called "minimum high regard," as some people did, you had to say about that performance that it was quite extraordinary.

What you hear on these tapes, and what really brings Johnson back to me, is



On November 22, 1963, Federal District Judge Sarah T. Hughes administered the oath of office to Lyndon Johnson aboard Air Force One at Love Field in Dallas.

a tirelessly insistent person. Lyndon Johnson never had a conversation with anybody that was purposeless. He was intending to get something out of everyone he talked to. You'd just have this feeling of this constant pushing on people, whether it's the staff or a senator or Jacqueline Kennedy. There is something that he was conveying with Mrs. Kennedy. It's a tremendous need to convey affection and to let her know that anything she wants is hers to command. You'd have to say that one of his purposes was to earn her support, so that she would tell those around her that Lyndon Johnson was being good about things.

On one of the tapes, Johnson is trying to pass the antipoverty bill. The vote is coming up in the House in a couple of days. He's got a lot of guys who are giv-

ing him grief. He calls Secretary of Defense Bob McNamara.

"Bob! I'm having a really hard time with some of these people on this poverty bill. One of them is a fellow from Abilene, Texas. It's a very *Christian* town [I've never heard that word used in quite that way!], but it has a really mean fellow for a congressman, Omar Burleson. You've got some training planes there in a little base."

McNamara says, "Uh-huh."

Johnson says, "Well, you do. You've got some training planes there. Now, I want you to get the word to this fellow Burleson that you're thinking about moving those planes out of there."

McNamara says, "Okay."

Johnson says, "Then you've got a base over in Shreveport, Barksdale. You've got

> HARRY MCPHERSON, a former member of the Wilson Center's Board of Trustees, is chairman of the law firm Verner Liipfert Bernhard McPherson & Hand. JACK VALENTI is chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America. They spoke at a Director's Forum held at the Wilson Center on September 23, 1999. This is an edited version of their remarks.

a lot of B-52s over there. If there's anybody meaner than Omar Burleson, it's a fellow named Joe Waggoner. Oh, he's mean! And they're really hurting me on this poverty bill. Now you get the word to him that you're going to have to move those B-52s up to Kansas. When they call you about these this afternoon, you tell them that they better talk to the president about it, because he sure is worried about that poverty bill."

You could tell that McNamara was dumbfounded. McNamara, like most of us, thought of politicians as people who give you something, if you vote with them. *Senator, you give me the vote on that and we're going to think very well of putting that base in there.* Here was somebody saying, *If that SOB doesn't give me a vote, if he gives me trouble on this poverty bill, we're going to take his air force away from him.*

That was classic LBJ. The tapes are worth hearing. Sometimes you want to turn them off and listen to the opera, but they are pretty good opera in themselves.

Question: LBJ was such a strong personality, I wonder whether either of you have discovered over the years that you adopted any of his habits, or tactics, or techniques?

Valenti: The answer is yes, which is sometimes a source of consternation, dismay, and frustration to the people who work around me. What LBJ did (as my wife put it) was, he stretched you. He made you leap beyond the perimeters of what you thought were the outer boundaries of your ability. You found yourself capable of doing things that you never thought you could achieve before. He was merciless in cross-examining you, if you took issue with him, because he always wanted to know whether you were posturing, or plying him with blandishments, or whether you really had something to say. While he never said, "That's good, I'm going to follow your advice," sometimes you would find, if you stood up under that merciless, inex-

haustible cross-examination, maybe a day or two later, you'd find him saying or doing what you had urged him to do, or not to do.

A second thing is that Johnson did not believe in accomplishing 99 percent of a job. He wanted 105 and 110 percent. And he didn't want excuses.

The third thing was details. He asked endless questions. If you were going to go see Senator William Fulbright, or you were going over to talk to Vice President Hubert Humphrey about something, or Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen, he would question you in exceeding depth about what you were going to ask—questions you had never thought of before.

The result of all of that is that I know I'm an ogre to people with whom I work, because I've found myself, without even realizing it, doing my LBJ bit. But it has allowed me to enjoy some minor triumphs and to avoid some gratuitous blunders.

Johnson had something that I think most public figures don't have. He had conviction. A man or woman without conviction is going to be right only by accident. Conviction means that you do not take "no" for an answer. You plunge into rapid waters, where others have drowned, but that tide will take you in a direction that you want to go. Therefore, you do it. You may drown. But on the other hand, if you survive the falls at the end, you will have done something noble and perhaps in the long-range interests of this country.

McPherson: I think of two things that I've tried to learn from him. One was to think a little beyond the next hour. Johnson was the smartest man I ever knew, not necessarily the wisest, but the smartest. He had an amazing ability to see out beyond the next couple of steps. He anticipated failure by people. When people told him they would do things, he anticipated they probably wouldn't. So he figured something else he had to have out there when they failed. He was



Harry McPherson, right, at work in the Oval Office with LBJ, “the smartest man I ever knew.”

constantly thinking ahead. That was one of his great powers.

The second thing I got from Johnson is a question I have asked of many people in my law firm over the years. I once went in to Johnson, just full of myself because I had really understood some particularly recondite problem. I said, “Mr. President, if you do this, you’re going to fall off the cliff over here.” I explained why. “And if you go that way, it’s even worse. And even if you go down the center. . . .” I was very proud of myself for having analyzed these three, very unattractive choices. When I finished, I just sat there, expecting to get an “A” on my paper. Johnson looked at me, not maliciously, and said: “Therefore?”

Therefore? That’s very important to ask, particularly, I find, of young lawyers just out of law school, because they just love to get into the cases and show a client how he’s in a box and there’s no way for him to get where he wants to get. I don’t know how many of you have heard people say about lawyers, They

just tell you what you can’t do; they don’t tell you how to get there. Lyndon Johnson’s “Therefore?” was a good question for me to put to them.

Question: I wonder if you could describe dealing with the shock of the Kennedy assassination during the early days of the Johnson administration.

Valenti: I was present at the unhappy creation. My advertising agency, Weekley & Valenti, by command of Lyndon Johnson, was handling the press on the ill-starred visit of the president and the vice president to Texas. Johnson had called me in early October and said, “I think this is a bad move by the president”—not because he thought it would be harmful, but because the Democratic Party in Texas at that time was in terrible discord. The governor, John Connally, and the senior senator, Ralph Yarborough, hated each other. They raised hatred to a new artistic level. Johnson just thought it was a bad time to be there. So I was with him in San

Antonio and Houston. Flew to Fort Worth, spent the night. On to Dallas. Then we were going to climax, November 22nd, in Austin, with a huge fundraising dinner.

When we landed in Dallas, I got in the motorcade, about six cars back. When we came around Dealey Plaza, I didn't hear the shot, but the car in front went from 10 miles an hour to 80, like A. J. Foyt was driving. I said, "I think the president is probably late for his speech at the Dallas Trade Mart." I told the driver to go over there as expeditiously as possible. We got to the Dallas Trade Mart and there were about 2,500 people, but no president. Then we knew that something was desperately wrong. A Secret Service man told me that the president had been shot, the governor had been shot. He got a deputy sheriff's car and herded me and Liz Carpenter [a Johnson aide], Pamela Turnure, who was Mrs. Kennedy's press secretary, and Evelyn Lincoln, the president's secretary, and took us to Parkland Hospital. There I'm wandering around outside a stainless steel door in the basement, that I was later told was the emergency operating room, where the dead, lifeless body of the 35th president was lying.

Cliff Carter [Johnson's chief political agent] came up to me and said, "The vice president wants to see you right now." There was just a beat of hesitation. Then he said, "The president is dead, you know." I started sobbing. He said, "Get hold of yourself. We've got to get to the vice president." We went to a room where Johnson had been sequestered. It was empty when I arrived there, except for one Secret Service man, whom we all knew, named Lem Johns. He said, "I'm to take you to Air Force One, Mr. Valenti. The vice president wants you."

We got into a police car. Air Force One, which was a 707 in those days, had been removed to a remote corner of the field. There were now two cordons of heavily armed and menacing-looking men guarding that plane. Even with a

Secret Service man, I had a problem getting on that airplane. When I got on, Johnson was sitting in the center of the plane, which was the presidential office. The forward of the plane was about 30 seats for press and staff. Aft of that office was the presidential bedroom. Then the galley, where the Secret Service men were. Johnson beckoned to me and said, "I want you on my staff. You're going to fly back with me on Air Force One." I had no idea what being "on his staff" meant. He didn't give me an alternative. His "therefore" was: "You're going to serve and you're going to fly back." So my life, as I had known it previously, disappeared. My life and the nation's underwent cataclysmic change.

What I saw was what Harry said about '64. I saw a man putting under harness all of his volatile passions and exhibiting to all who saw him a coolness and a calmness and a poise that, to the rest of us, near hysterical, was almost bewilderingly magic.

He made two quick decisions. As Harry said, he looked ahead. He played politics like a grand chess master—six to seven moves down the board. He made two quick decisions in those minutes, an hour after he became president. Everyone in Washington wanted him to fly out now, get in the air. But his first decision was, "I'm not leaving this airport till the body of John Kennedy comes aboard." If he had left, he knew, the headlines would be, "So eager to be president, he left behind the president in Dallas."

The second decision was even more astonishing. He said, "I'm going to be sworn in on this airplane. I've asked Judge Sarah Hughes to come aboard to swear me in." I didn't know it, nor did anybody else, but what he wanted was to have a picture taken of that swearing-in, with his arm upraised, with Mrs. Kennedy on his left, his wife on his right—to show that the president is dead, long live the president, that the Kennedy legacy lives on. Because when he landed, that picture was going to be

developed and then flashed all over the world. It was shown endlessly on every television station that very day.

When we got back, we landed at Andrews Air Force Base, and then went by chopper from Andrews to the White House. Took seven minutes by air to get there. I had never visited the White House, not even as a tourist. Never been inside it. Here I am, going to get a special tour with the 36th president of the United States as my guide. We got through the diplomatic reception room and then through the west basement. He did not use the Oval Office for three days. Did not use it. He operated out of his vice presidential office on the third floor of the Executive Office Building.

That night, when he finally decided to leave, about 10 o'clock, he said, "Come on with me. Spend the night with me. As a matter of fact, until your family gets up here, you can live with me." And I did. I lived at his house for 11 days before he moved into the White House. Then I lived on the third floor of the mansion for a month. If any of you are ever on *Jeopardy*, and somebody asks you who are the only two special assistants to a president who have actually resided at the mansion, you can say "Harry Hopkins with Roosevelt, and Jack Valenti with Johnson."

Bill Moyers [deputy director of the Peace Corps and then special assistant to Johnson] and Cliff Carter also spent that night. We went into Johnson's bedroom about 11 o'clock at night. He had now been president for about 10 hours. He got into his pajamas and sat on this vast bed. Mrs. Johnson and their daughters were sleeping in other rooms. I sat to the left of him on the bed, Moyers on the right, and Carter on the right side of the bed. We were up with him until about four in the morning, watching television, as commentators all over the world were inspecting this unruly cowboy who was now the leader of the free world.

In those four to five hours, as Harry says, he talked—not wanting us to give

him any advice, but just wanting a sounding board. That night, musing, he sketched out what later became the Great Society. I had no idea (as Harry would testify) what this really meant at the time. He said, "I'm going to pass Kennedy's civil rights bill. Goddamn, it's been hung up in the Senate too long. I'm not going to change one word. I'm going to pass it. Then I'm going to pass Harry Truman's health insurance bill." That became Medicare. Then he said, "I'm going to make it plain that everybody in this country is going to be able to vote." He didn't say, "I'm going to have a voting rights act," but he said, "I'm going to make sure everybody is going to vote. Then I'm going to have an education bill that's going to let kids in this country get all the education they can take, and the federal government is going to help them."

Now, mind you, this guy has been president for 10 hours, and he sketched out for us what became the Great Society, attacking social ills in this country across the widest range. He realized that, because of the encrusted public attitudes and the stratified social structure, you couldn't attack one issue here and one there; it had to be across the broad expanse of the society, using every available weapon, and hitting them on every front, in order to achieve a breakthrough.

I say, with Harry, that the finest hours of Lyndon Johnson were in the first week of his presidency. Five days after that night in the White House, he went to a joint session of Congress and said, "John Kennedy said, 'Let us begin,' and I say, let us continue," wrapping himself in the Kennedy legacy as an armor plate. Then he began this ceaseless march, in serried ranks, across the political environment. It was an incredible performance—a man throwing himself into the most difficult job in the world, without warning, and yet, in a way, all of his 24 years in the Congress and his three years as vice president had prepared him in a way that no other single

man has ever been prepared to be president.

Question: Most people would agree that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was probably one of President Johnson's greatest achievements and legacies. But that was not a sure thing at the time, even though there was a wave of sympathy for getting things done after Kennedy's assassination. One of the people who was turned around finally was Everett Dirksen, who had served alongside him in the Senate and was the minority leader. I wonder to what extent President Johnson's personal political style and his relationships with members of the Congress made a difference in turning things around on the Civil Rights Act.

McPherson: I think Jack knows more about this than I do, because he was

there, and I didn't get there till '65. But I have read a lot about it and I had the civil rights brief in the White House when I got there finally. The answer is: a lot. Johnson used every connection and every friendship he had. He was the guide for Hubert Humphrey, particularly in telling Hubert that he had to make Everett Dirksen a hero, and telling Everett that he could be just like Lincoln: You're both from Illinois. Here's an opportunity for you to be a great man.

This period of civil rights legislating had begun in 1957, when Johnson was majority leader. He put through the first civil rights bill in 80 years, since the post-Civil War days. It was a very modest bill. In fact, so modest that I'm not sure anybody got to register to vote because of that bill. But it was a civil rights bill and it had a civil rights commission in it and it had various federal injunctions against



LBJ signed the Voting Rights Act at the Capitol on August 6, 1965. Present at the ceremony were civil rights leaders, including Ralph Abernathy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Clarence Mitchell.

behavior that was discriminatory. Then he did it again in 1960. These were tiny steps.

Along in '63, Kennedy offered this big bill, which was going nowhere. A lot was happening in the country. Lyndon Johnson is justly praised for being the manager from the White House of the civil rights legislation of '64 and then, in '65, the Voting Rights Act. But he was taking advantage, brilliantly, of a tidal wave of public passion (not too strong a word) out in the country, a determination that we do something about discrimination practiced by states and cities against African Americans. This was the time of the buses that went down to the South with freedom riders. This was the time of the sit-ins, when young blacks were sitting at lunch counters and getting beaten up.

Martin Luther King played a very interesting role in this time. I once wrote that King was, in an almost religious sense, the suffering servant of this movement. Every time something awful happened to Martin Luther King, the United States did something, in a legislative way, a statutory way, to advance the cause of civil rights. King and his people were hosed down in Birmingham and had dogs let go on them, and King, of course, was imprisoned in 1960. One of the responses of the nation to that was the '64 act. King was beaten at the bridge in Selma in 1965. And the big response was the passage of the Voting Rights Act. King was assassinated in 1968, and the country responded with the Fair Housing Act. So each time the streets were doing a lot to create the conditions for the passage of legislation. Johnson was a legislator who embraced that.

One of the unforgettable moments for me in 1965 was when I had just come to the White House. I got to go up to the Capitol when Johnson went up to make the voting rights speech to a joint session. This was right after Selma and all that. I found myself sitting on the floor of the House, a White House staff member sitting among a number of congressmen,

including a couple of hard-bitten southern conservatives, when Lyndon Johnson said, "The word in America is 'We shall overcome,' and I tell you, we shall overcome." Those were the words of the civil rights hymn and the words of Martin Luther King—King was sitting up in the balcony—[and] the entire joint session of the Congress stood, except for about 30 southerners, one of whom was sitting right next to me. As the southerner Lyndon Johnson said, "And we shall overcome," this man said, "Goddamn!" I'll never forget that: *Here was a traitor, here was a southerner saying the civil rights words.*

Johnson used everything he could to pass that bill, including the sacrifice of his own political sense. One part of Johnson's political sense told him that the nation had to have this, and that he had to have it. As a southerner, he had to show the nation that he was an American, not just a southerner and a Texan. One way to do that was to get the civil rights legislation through. He also knew that the Democratic Party could not fail, despite its southern roots, to respond to that momentum, that demand out in the country. The other part of him [was reflected when Bill Moyers] came in on the evening of the passage of the Voting Rights Act. This act finally did it. This act finally gave Negro Americans the muscle, the instrument they could use to assure that they would vote. Johnson, having had a wonderful day signing the bill, everybody around him praising him, was sitting, Bill says, with his head in his hands at his desk. Bill said, "Mr. President, it's the greatest day of your presidency." Johnson said, "Yes, and it's the day we gave the South to the Republican Party for the rest of our lifetimes."

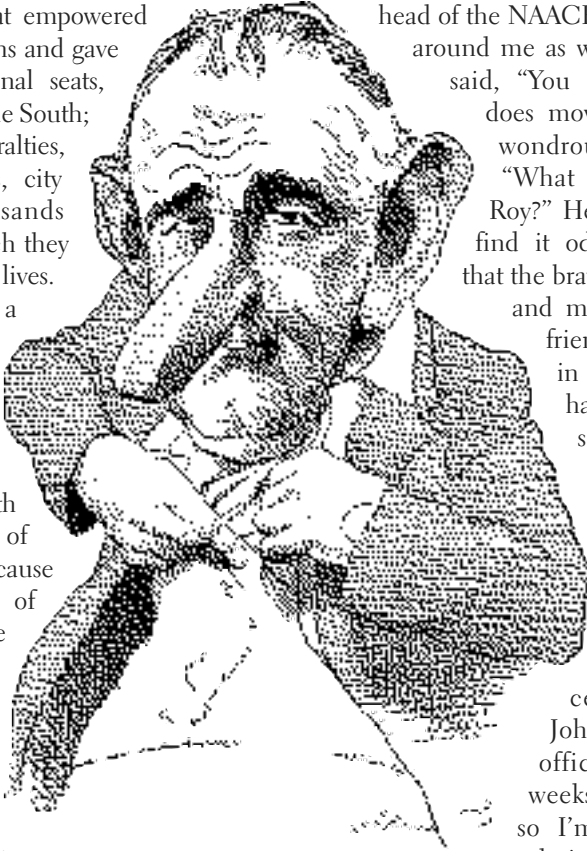
You look at Congress today and you see that, until recently, the Speaker was from Georgia, the majority leader was from Texas, the majority whip was from Texas—all these, southern Republicans. And look at the grip that southern Republicans have. Trent Lott running the Senate. That flowed

from the act that empowered African Americans and gave them congressional seats, House seats, in the South; gave them mayoralties, county councils, city councils—thousands of places in which they could affect their lives.

It really made a new life for them, gave them power, and also changed the politics of the South and, arguably, of the Congress because the response of much of the white South was to abandon the Democratic party.

Valenti: I want to come in with some intimate glimpses into Johnson on this. Let me go further than Harry. Without Lyndon Johnson, none of these civil rights acts would have passed. He deployed us on the field. I was assigned southern congressmen because I talk like them. I would say, “Mr. Congressman, if you vote for this civil rights bill, the president will never forget. If you vote against him, he will always remember.” We played hardball.

Right after the voting rights bill was passed, we asked all the great black leaders to come in to the Cabinet Room. They came in—A. Philip Randolph, Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Height, who’s still working, Bayard Rustin, and Clarence Mitchell. There was an air of religious jubilation in the place—everybody feeling a kind of epiphany that had taken over the country. *Free at last, thank God Almighty, free at last!* As we left the room, Roy Wilkins, who I think is probably the greatest civil rights leader that ever lived, bar none, who was



head of the NAACP, wrapped his arm around me as we walked out and said, “You know, Jack, God does move in strange and wondrous ways.” I said, “What do you mean, Roy?” He said, “Don’t you find it odd and wonderful that the bravest, most effective and most compassionate friend that the Negro in America has ever had turns out to be a southern president?”

My final story is about where Lyndon Johnson got that rejoinder to Bill Moyers. In December of 1963, Johnson had been in office only three weeks. I’m living there, so I’m with him, day and night—which I don’t recommend, because it’s a 20-hour day. On a Sunday morning, he said, “Call Dick Russell and ask him to come over.” Richard Brevard Russell was the senior senator from Georgia and probably the single most illustrious, prestigious man in the Senate. If he had not been head of the segregationist forces in the Senate, he would have been president of the United States, and a great president. You have to go back to 1952, when the post of Democratic leader in the Senate fell open. Ernest McFarland was beaten in Arizona and all the senators said, “Dick Russell, you be our leader.” He said, “No, Lyndon Johnson should be our leader.” Johnson was 44 years old, in the fourth year of his first term in the Senate, and he became leader and the greatest parliamentary commander the Senate has ever known. So Russell made him leader.

When Russell arrives—he’s about my size, gleaming bald head, penetrating blue eyes—Johnson, who is six-feet-four,



Georgia Senator Richard B. Russell gets “The Treatment” from LBJ. Pass civil rights laws, said Russell, and “you’ll lose the South forever.”

grabs him and embraces him. They sit down on the couch overlooking the Rose Garden in the West Wing, Johnson in a wingback chair, their knees touching. I’m sitting to the right of Russell.

The president says to him, “Dick, I love you and I owe you. I wouldn’t have been leader without you. I wouldn’t have been vice president, and I wouldn’t have been president. So everything I am, I owe to you, and that’s why I wanted to tell you face to face, because I love you: don’t get in my way on this civil rights bill, Dick, or I’m going to run you down.”

And Russell said, in the soft accents of his rolling Georgia countryside, “Well, Mr. President, you very well may do that. But if you do, I promise, you’ll not

only lose the election, but you’ll lose the South forever.”

In all the years I knew Lyndon Johnson after that, I was never prouder of him than when he answered Russell. He put his arm on him in an affectionate way and said, “Dick, you may be right. But if that’s the price I’ve got to pay, I’m going to gladly pay it.”

To me, that sums up what leadership is about: wisdom and courage and a great carelessness of self—putting to hazard your political future to do what you think is right by the people you have, by solemn oath, sworn to serve.

Question: I want to pick up on the quotation from Ralph Ellison that Mr. Valenti mentioned. I suspect that Ellison, like many of us in the ’60s, saw the Great Society not as the solution to these

problems, but really as only the first step to more legislation in all these areas. Of course, the next steps never happened. In fact, the very legislation of the Great Society was often used as a weapon against further progress. “We tried this in the ’60s and it failed.” Johnson foresaw that the Republican Party would take the South as a result of his civil rights measures; perhaps he even foresaw the subsequent backlash against the Great Society. Did this great strategist see the tragedy of his own success?

McPherson: I would question the assumption that there has been such a backlash. When you look at what the Johnson administration achieved in the Great Society, and look at what still

exists, it's virtually all there. It is inconceivable for us older Americans that Medicare should be undone. There is no backlash against Medicare. There may be problems with its administration, here and there, but nobody is going to undo that. Nor will they undo the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Nor the consumer legislation. Nor the environmental legislation.

Civil rights was the hot button. We sure did fail in our efforts to rebuild the core of cities. We had a Model Cities program and it failed. It didn't have the money, didn't have the knowledge of how to do it. But let's take the African American segment of the population and look at where they are in economic terms, educational terms, social terms, and so on, compared with where they were in the early '60s. There has been an enormous benefit in the number of people who have been able to get out of poverty and into upper-income work. There has been a baffling growth in poverty among single parents, which has continued and multiplied.

Probably the most devastating social fact of the past 30 years has been the growth of single parenthood in the cities. When Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then Assistant Secretary of Labor, came to see me in 1965 with the Moynihan Report, which showed that an upturn in employment was not being matched by a downturn in single parenthood, the percentage of African American single-parent children (i.e., children being born to an unwed mother) was about 18 percent; whereas now, in many cities, it's 90. That has been perfectly devastating. That, plus crack cocaine, has made the central part of cities impregnable to programs of any kind that we've tried so far. Not just Lyndon Johnson's programs, but Richard Nixon's programs and anybody else's.

There was a fatigue with government effort. One of the ironies of the Johnson administration is that it cleaned the cupboard of legislation. It cleaned out the agenda of aggressive government social

effort that had been building up since the 1930s, which had been part of Harry Truman's campaign in 1948, and which Democrats had wanted to pass for a long time. It finally got passed in 1964 and '65. Ever since then, Democrats have been looking around for something to do that would capture the public's excitement, that would cause people to march in the streets and say, "We've got to have this!" It's hard to think of what you've got to have.

This puts me in mind of something that I said once to a Maryland congressman, a wonderful man, Steny Hoyer. It was right after several people had been killed in the Washington area. A woman was hanging curtains in her home in a public housing project and was shot by mistake. The next day, another woman and a child were shot by accident—drug wars. I told Steny Hoyer: "If I lived in your district and that were happening, I would just camp out in your congressional office and say, 'I'm not leaving until you get the National Guard in here and the drug enforcement people, until we do something about this. We can't live this way as Americans.'"

We do have awful urban problems. You're right, they're not fixed. I don't think the country knows how to fix them. But I don't think people have turned their backs on the Great Society. Even Ronald Reagan did not dismantle the Great Society. He may have starved parts of it, but he didn't break it up.

Question: Michael Beschloss's book *Taking Charge* has some fascinating transcripts of conversations between Lyndon Johnson and Richard Russell during the earliest days of the Johnson presidency. Talking about Vietnam, these two guys, who were the biggest hawks around, sound like Fulbright and Senator Mike Mansfield did, four or five years later. Given the clarity with which they saw the Vietnam question in 1963 and early '64, why in the world didn't they act on it that way then, instead of waiting until it consumed them?

McPherson: There's about an eight-page conversation between Johnson and Russell in the Beschloss book—I've read it five times—that makes you want to yell, *Listen to what you're saying and act!* But if you read to the end of it, both of them agreed that there was no political way to act on their sense of foreboding. They both say, there's no way out of this, politically. They didn't mean just for the Democratic Party; they meant for the nation and the Congress, given the way the tide had been flowing for all the years since the Cold War began.

Valenti: Let me certify what I'm about to say. I attended every Vietnam meeting, from the first day of the Johnson administration until June 1966. I made copious notes. They are in the LBJ Library. First, people forget that on the day Johnson became president, we had 1,600 soldiers in Vietnam. They were there. The question that nobody ever asks, in any discussion that I've ever had with scholars and students and just plain people, is: If there had not been an American soldier in Vietnam, would Johnson have sent them? That's one of those "what-if" questions you can't answer. But I've thought about that a long time.

Johnson's sole objective was to get out of Vietnam. Now, therefore, the question is: how? How to do it without bringing down the wrath of the country? At that time, every newspaper in the United States was for our being there. Bobby Kennedy had gone to Saigon in 1962 just 10 months before and said, "We will not desert you. We will stay with you. We will not allow this aggression to continue." In September of 1963, President Kennedy was on David Brinkley's TV news show. Brinkley said, "Do you believe in the domino theory?" Kennedy said, "I most certainly do, which is why we're going to stay in Vietnam and deter this aggression."

Now, in that context, Johnson could not have simply (as we say in Texas) "hailed ass" and pulled out before any-

body ever understood we were going to lose that war—because in '63 nobody thought that.

So Johnson's main objective, from day one, was: "I gotta get out." The military says, "If we can do a little here and a little there"—and then we begin to bomb in 1965, because Pleiku was attacked, and we had to answer, so the first bombing began. The hope was that we could cause the North Vietnamese to go to the negotiating table. We could sit down with them and "reason together" and then get out of there. But we could not bring the North Vietnamese to the table.

If there were blunders in this whole thing, they were first, that we misunderstood and misapplied our knowledge of the tenacity of the North Vietnamese. Charles DeGaulle told Kennedy in 1962, "Get out of there! Don't ever go in there, because these people will fight for a generation or two generations."

Second, we never prepared the American people for a retreat without bringing down the wrath of the Goldwater people, calling Johnson a coward, a poltroon, the first American president to lose a war. We're throwing the whole country into disarray. So we went in in incremental ways—a little more, a little more, interdict here, get them there, and maybe, in time, we could negotiate.

This is a subject we could take eight days on, and we'd still only scratch the surface. But keep in mind Johnson's sole motivation: get out of there. I remember, after these meetings, he'd go back to the Oval Office and say, "Oh, my God! If I could just sit down with Ho Chi Minh, I could work this out and get our butts out of there!" Money was being taken away from his Great Society and going into Vietnam. He hated it! But we all know how history goes.

I'll end with a little quotation from William Hazlitt, who said, "Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are and what they ought to be." □

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

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Tocqueville in the 21st Century

A Survey of Recent Articles

While Karl Marx has fallen sharply on the intellectual stock exchange in recent years, Alexis de Tocqueville has dramatically risen. To mark the 10th anniversary of the *Journal of Democracy* (Jan. 2000), the editors invited 23 thinkers to address themes from Tocqueville's classic *Democracy in America* (1835–40), in light of the tumultuous century just past.

Tocqueville did not foresee communist totalitarianism, observes historian Martin Malia, author of *The Soviet Tragedy* (1994), but he did worry about what he called “democratic despotism.” He often noted, says Malia, that “liberty . . . is prized only by the few able to prosper in the competition it engenders; equality, by contrast, is prized by the multitude, which possesses no other quality to lend its isolated members dignity. Thus the ‘never dying, ever kindling hatred which sets a democratic people against the smallest privileges is peculiarly favorable to the concentration of all political rights in the hands of the representative of the state.’”

Tocqueville attributed this vulnerability to despotism, asserts Hahm Chaibong, a political scientist at Seoul's Yonsei University, to democratic individualism, which loosens traditional family ties and, in Tocqueville's words, “saps the virtues of public life.” But America's “free institutions” saved it.

“Throughout his great work,” says Jean Bethke Elshtain, author of *Democracy on Trial* (1995), “Tocqueville insists that one cannot keep the lid on egalitarianism indefinitely. . . . He surely knew that, at some point, pressure would be brought to bear against the notion that equality of the sexes is not only fully compatible with but best sustained by distinctive and separate spheres of

operation for men and women.” In 1830s America, she says, the French visitor “saw women not only taking part in the general democratic hustle and bustle but often acting as its chief architects. The domestic flowed over into the civic, as women became authorities both within the family and . . . within their communities.”

Were Tocqueville to return today, Elshtain says, he would be “troubled, though probably unsurprised, to see women taking up the cry of democratic equality in order to go in quest of the same things men pursue—namely, economic opportunity, a kind of relentless striving, a desire for ‘more.’” He would worry that with everybody engaged in such largely individualistic pursuits, no one was left to inculcate democratic values in the young and sustain the vital institutions that form and encourage ethical and civic virtues. Many parents today, she notes, complain they do not have time for family and community, and “fear that they are losing their children to an increasingly individualistic, materialistic, and violent culture. They have glimpsed the future, and it looks a lot like the bleak world of ‘democratic despotism’ limned so brilliantly by Tocqueville.”

In recent years, many neo-Tocquevilleans have emphasized the important role that voluntary associations play in making democracy possible. Largely ignored, however, observes Seymour Martin Lipset, a Wilson Center Senior Scholar and a professor of public policy at George Mason University, has been “the fact that he gave priority to political associations (the most important of which are parties) because of

their role in stimulating other associational activity.” William A. Galston, director of the University of Maryland’s Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, agrees, pointing out that if Tocqueville is correct, “it is a mistake to believe that civil society can remain strong if citizens withdraw from active engagement in political associations. Over time, the devitalization of the public sphere is likely to yield a privatized hyper-individualism that enervates the civil sphere as well.” While it’s true that “excessive political centralization and administrative intrusion weaken civil society,” Galston says, the idea that “civil society expands as participatory democratic politics contracts is deeply misguided.”

In Tocqueville’s eyes, America was at the forefront of a “great democratic revolution” that had been unfolding for at least 700 years and was destined to bring to Europe “an almost complete equality of condition,” like that in the New World. What was driving this revolution? “Tocqueville’s explicit answer . . . is the hand of God,” says Francis Fukuyama, author of *The Great Disruption* (1999), and among the more proximate causes, Christianity was particularly important. “Tocqueville makes repeated references throughout *Democracy in America* to Christianity as the source of the belief in human equality and to the sociological impact that the Christian church had on the spread of democracy over the centuries.”

“Like [Edmund] Burke before him, and partly like [Max] Weber after him, Tocqueville thought that religion provided the ultimate support for an ethic of deferred gratification in a free society,” writes João Carlos Espada, a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Lisbon’s Institute for Social Sciences. But there was a problem, Tocqueville believed. The work ethic based on deferred gratification produces material prosperity—which gradually undermines the religious belief that justifies deferred gratification. Tocqueville knew that in an age of skepticism, religious belief was eroding, Espada says, but “he strongly opposed any sort of state enforcement of religion.” Instead, he urged that governments instill a “‘love of the future’” by showing citizens that their long-

term prosperity and that of their offspring depend on deferred gratification. In this way, he hoped, people would be “‘gradually and unconsciously brought nearer to religious convictions.’”

As society becomes democratized, Tocqueville believed, men become more equal, and more the same, notes Clifford Orwin, a political scientist at the University of Toronto. That leads them to “readily identify with one another, and with one another’s misfortunes,” and to aid their fellows, “at least in cases involving no great inconvenience to themselves.” Tocqueville saw no contradiction between individualism and compassion, Orwin says. “As men become more equal and alike, they also become more isolated and more preoccupied with their own affairs. Compassion is the sole force that naturally tends to unite human beings whom almost everything else in democracy conspires to dissociate.” Americans in Tocqueville’s day “practiced organized compassion through their voluntary associations”; today, “compassion” is made “virtually synonymous with the welfare state,” and thus is depersonalized and diluted. Those who grumble about the “nanny state” today, says Orwin, “can claim Tocqueville’s blessing.”

Since Tocqueville’s day, Orwin notes, democracies have emerged on non-Western terrain, in societies that “are not rooted in Christianity or in a tradition of respect for the individual.” These democracies “can be strikingly uncompassionate,” he says, noting that compassion is not among the virtues touted in Confucian societies.

But democracy has come to stay in South Korea, Taiwan, and elsewhere, asserts Hahm. “‘Confucian democracy’ and ‘Confucian capitalism’ are oxymorons designed to highlight East Asians’ continuing unease with individualism. Yet they are also designed to emphasize that the debates over cultural identity are taking place within, not against, the context of democracy and capitalism.” As democracy spreads to “the rest of the world,” far beyond that part of it so acutely observed by Tocqueville more than a century and a half ago, Hahm expects that “the debate over individualism and democracy will only intensify.”

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Do Negative Ads Really Hurt?

"The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment" by Richard R. Lau et al.; "Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation" by Kim Fridkin Kahn and Patrick J. Kenney; "Negative Campaign Advertising: Demobilizer or Mobilizer?" by Martin P. Wattenberg and Craig Leonard Brians; and "Replicating Experiments Using Aggregate and Survey Data: The Case of Negative Advertising and Turnout" by Stephen D. Ansolabehere et al., in *American Political Science Review* (Dec. 1999), 1527 New Hampshire Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

"Negative" political ads are both ubiquitous and in bad odor these days. They may "work" for the candidates, critics say, but they alienate potential voters and prompt many to stay home on Election Day. A 1994 study by Stephen Ansolabehere, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and three other political scientists lent this contention some support. But now other scholars are calling into question the harshly negative view of negative advertising.

Lau, a political scientist at Rutgers University, and three colleagues did a "meta-analytical" synthesis of the statistical findings from 52 previous studies of negative political ads. Though it's true that people do not like such ads (75 percent said in a 1994 poll that they were "turned off" by them), Lau and his colleagues found no evidence that people dislike them "significantly more than other political ads or, for that matter, than ads in general." Nor did these political scientists find "consistent, let alone strong, evidence" that negative ads generally "work" for their sponsoring candidates (though they may, of course, in a particular case). Finally, Lau and his colleagues found no "significant support" for the notion that negative ads are souring citizens on politics or voting. "Participatory democracy may be on the wane in the United States, but . . . negative political advertising has relatively little to do with it."

In their 1994 study, Ansolabehere and his colleagues concluded, on the basis of some controlled experiments with 1,655 subjects, that negative ads did indeed reduce voter turnout, and found confirmation in an analysis of the 1992 U.S. Senate races. But their study is "deeply flawed," assert political scientists Wattenberg, of the University of

California, Irvine, and Brians, of Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va. They detected "numerous problems" with the data in the Ansolabehere analysis of the Senate contests. Also, surveys in 1992 showed that people who recalled negative campaign ads had a *higher* turnout rate. In response, Ansolabehere and his colleagues contend that "recall of advertising is an unreliable indicator of actual exposure," insist that the discrepancies between their data and the official figures were unimportant, and stand



by their main thesis: "Negative advertising demobilizes voters."

But there's negative—and then there's *negative*, argue Kahn and Kenney, political scientists at Arizona State University. Voters distinguish between legitimate criticism, presented in a tempered way, and mudslinging. Partisans and others strongly interested in politics go to the polls regardless of the tone of campaigns. Independents and people with little interest in politics are more affected by it: Useful "negative" criticism in a campaign makes them more likely to vote, say Kahn and Kenney, but "unsubstantiated and unjustified attacks" make them "more likely to stay home" in disgust.

The Embarrassing Second Amendment

“Showdown” by Chris Mooney, in *Lingua Franca* (Feb. 2000), 22 W. 38th St., New York, N.Y. 10018.

Against their own liberal political inclinations, some legal scholars have reluctantly concluded that in its claim that the Second Amendment protects individual Americans’ right to bear arms, the National Rifle Association is not far off target.

“A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State,” the amendment famously states, “the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” To University of Texas law professor Sanford Levinson, a liberal Democrat who backs many gun control measures, the “embarrassing” Second Amendment (as the title of his seminal 1989 *Yale Law Journal* article put it) empowers individual citizens to own guns to defend themselves and, if necessary, counter government tyranny. This individual right to bear arms, adds Joyce Lee Malcolm, a historian at Bentley College in Massachusetts, traces back to the 1689 English Bill of Rights.

In recent years, legal scholars—including Laurence Tribe, the prominent liberal Harvard University professor of constitutional law—“have turned en masse” to this “individual rights” reading, making it the so-called Standard Model interpretation of the

amendment, reports Mooney, a freelance writer based in New Orleans. Alluding to this scholarship, a federal district court judge in Texas last year “delivered an unprecedented ruling in defense of the individual’s right to bear arms,” says Mooney. If the ruling survives an appeals court’s decision this spring, the case may well go to the Supreme Court.

But some American historians now contend that the Standard Model interpretation—which regards “militia” as standing, not for a select group like the modern National Guard, but rather for “the whole people”—is at odds with history. Saul Cornell, of Ohio State University, questions whether any consensus existed in postrevolutionary America on the right to bear arms. In Pennsylvania, he notes, a stringent loyalty oath effectively disarmed up to 40 percent of the citizenry. Michael Bellesiles, of Emory University, maintains that only a small percentage of Americans then even owned firearms—only about 14 percent of white, Protestant men in New England and Pennsylvania, according to 11,000 probate records filed between 1765 and 1850.

The Truly Progressive

Melanie Phillips, a columnist for the London *Sunday Times*, is a staunch liberal who keeps getting attacked as a right-wing apologist. She defends herself in the *New Statesman* (Feb. 14, 2000).

The idea that all pre-existing traditions or values are, by definition, unprogressive baggage is as philistine as it is risible. Values dismissed as conservative are actually universal: attachment, commitment to individuals and institutions, ties of duty, trust and fidelity, the distinction between constructive and destructive behavior. Without these things, freedom cannot flourish nor society exist. The paradox is that only by conserving such values can progress occur. Small, incremental steps are the best way of bringing about beneficial change. Radicalism or revolution are likely to implode and leave us worse off than before.

In other words, we have to rescue progress from the progressives. We need a liberal, not a libertarian, social order with deeper values than contract, and with other criteria for progress than material advances. Moral restraint is the glue that provides social cohesion. Liberty is not achieved but threatened by the relativistic pursuit of autonomy and rights.

The Second Amendment, like the others, must be read in conjunction with the body of the Constitution, argues historian Garry Wills, of Northwestern University—and Article III “defines taking up arms against the United States as treason.” He and Cornell endorse a thesis advanced by T. Carl Bogus, a professor at Roger Williams University School of Law in Rhode Island: that the Second Amendment was largely intended to give the slave-owning southern states tacit assurance that the new government would never try to disarm the South’s militias.

“Legal scholars who support the individual-rights view are not exactly quaking in their boots” at the challenge from Wills, Cornell, and the rest, observes Mooney. But if the Standard Model should prevail in the courts, does that mean gun control is doomed? Not necessarily, say Tribe and Yale University law professor Akhil Reed Amar, who favor both. “Almost no right known to the Constitution is absolute and unlimited. . . . The right to bear arms is certainly subject to reasonable regulation in the interest of public safety.”

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Wading into Colombia's War

A Survey of Recent Articles

While President Bill Clinton and other Americans focused on the savagery in the Balkans last year, a more immediate threat—the guerrilla war in Colombia—went largely unnoticed. Yet that war, notes *National Journal* (Jan. 15, 2000) correspondent James Kitfield, “has led to nearly as many internally displaced civilians (roughly 800,000) as Slobodan Milosevic’s ethnic cleansing,” and is endangering the stability of the Andes region, including oil-rich Venezuela.

“Colombia’s unrest is spreading to neighboring countries, which are grappling with their own serious crises,” reports Linda Robinson, Latin America bureau chief for U.S. News & World Report, writing in *World Policy Journal* (Winter 1999–2000). “The northern zone of South America is starting to look like a tier of turmoil that could rival the Central American mess of the 1980s, and . . . significant U.S. interests are at stake—not just drugs but trade, investment, oil, and the Panama Canal. The much-vaunted hemispheric community of democracies may well begin to unravel here, to be replaced in a few short years by failed states where anarchy or rogue groups rule.”

As U.S. involvement in Colombia deepens,

with Clinton seeking some \$1.6 billion in military and other aid to President Andrés Pastrana Arango’s government, the administration maintains that it is still merely fighting drug trafficking. But that is a politically convenient fiction, observes Michael Shifter, a Senior Fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, writing in *Current History* (Feb. 2000). Since the



A cocaine lab burns in the background as members of a Colombian anti-drug unit fly over jungle about 250 miles north of Bogotá.

main leftist guerrilla force, the 15,000-strong Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, derives several hundred million dollars a year from the drug trade (getting it through extortion or in return for protection), “counternarcotics” cannot be neatly separated from “counterinsurgency.” Colombia produces

about 80 percent of the world's cocaine. But Washington, Shifter says, is more worried now about "the spreading violence and deteriorating security conditions."

After winning the Colombian presidency in 1998 on a promise to bring peace, Pastrana early last year withdrew all government troops from a Switzerland-sized swath of southern territory controlled by the FARC. Despite that overture, notes Kitfield, the insurgent force launched its largest offensive ever in July, seizing 15 villages and coming within 30 miles of the capital, Bogotá. In November came another FARC offensive, against 13 more towns.

"Colombia is one of the most violent countries in the world," observe Gabriel Marcella, who teaches strategy at the Army War College, and Donald Schulz, a political scientist at Cleveland State University, writing in *Strategic Review* (Winter 2000). In 1998, Colombia had 1,678 kidnappings. The homicide rate—77 per 100,000 inhabitants between 1987 and 1992—was the highest in the world. Right-wing militias, which are also active, are blamed for most of the political killings in recent years. According to the government, 1,863 people died in 402 massacres last year.

As if the violence were not enough, Colombia's 40 million people have also endured the worst economic conditions in seven decades. The unemployment rate stands at 20 percent, the currency lost 30 percent of its value last year, and real gross domestic product shrank five percent. Colombians are fleeing in droves, chiefly to the United States. An estimated 300,000 may leave this year.

The violence has spread beyond Colombia's borders, Robinson notes in *World Policy Journal*. "Colombian guerrillas and drug traffickers regularly use the neighboring territories

of Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama for safe haven, resupply and gun running, and those countries' nationals have been killed and kidnapped in the cross fire while their governments have mainly looked the other way."

The Colombian government's war with the FARC has been going on for decades, Robinson points out in the *New Republic* (Sept. 6, 1999). It grew out of "the bloody civil war called La Violencia that took 200,000 lives between 1948 and 1958. The combatants were partisans of the Liberal and Conservative parties, whose leaders eventually forged a pact that allowed them to alternate power. Manuel Marulanda and a small band of Liberals thought this constituted a sellout, founded the FARC, and kept fighting." At 69, Marulanda today remains at least the nominal head of FARC, notes Andrés Cala, a Colombian journalist based in Costa Rica, writing in *Current History* (Feb. 2000).

Pastrana's government, after prodding from Washington, last year unveiled a \$7.5 billion "Plan Colombia" to address the country's major problems. Roughly half of expenditures would go to modernizing the military forces. The largest component of the proposed \$1.6 billion U.S. contribution would consist of 63 helicopters for the armed forces and police.

In helping to fashion a 5,000-man Colombian military force that will be fighting the guerrillas, the United States is putting itself "squarely into the counterinsurgency fight, whether it wants to admit it or not," Robinson says. Washington should expect American casualties, and a long struggle. The Clinton administration's "lack of candor," she believes, is only making "the forging of a solid consensus behind U.S. action" more difficult.

The Globalization Fantasy

"Globalization and American Power" by Kenneth N. Waltz, in *The National Interest* (Spring 2000), 1112
16th St., N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Globalization—it's here, it's real, and it's wonderful, according to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman and other fans. The "electronic herd" of foreign investors, moving capital in and out of countries, all but compels them to embrace the American way, market capitalism and liberal democracy, lest they be left behind.

Nations these days are more economically interdependent, economics trumps politics, peace's prospects are improved, and world government is just around the corner. . . . Waltz, a political scientist at Columbia University, says it's time for a reality check.

The extent of globalization is much exagger-

ated, he points out. Much of the globe, in fact, has been left out: “most of Africa and Latin America, Russia, all of the Middle East (except Israel), and large parts of Asia.” Moreover, economic interdependence among nations today, as measured by exports as a percentage of gross domestic product, is about what it was in 1910. “What is true of trade also holds for capital flows, again as a percentage of GDP.” The United States and other nations with big economies still do most business at home, and virtually all multinational corporations are “firmly anchored in their home bases.”

The American way is in vogue today, but it would be rash “to conclude from a decade’s experience that the one best model has at last appeared,” he says, when in decades past, others, such as “the Japanese brand of neomercantilism,” have been similarly admired.

“International politics remains international” rather than global, Waltz says. The sovereign state with fixed borders has proved to have no rivals when it comes to keeping domestic

peace and promoting prosperity. “The most important events in international politics are explained by differences in the capabilities of states, not by economic forces operating across states or transcending them,” Waltz says. Politics usually trumps economics. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were each economically integrated, yet both disintegrated. Moreover, he observes, “national *politics*, not international markets, account for many international *economic* developments.” The European Union is the result of governmental decisions; so is the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Much of what looks like globalization is merely the exercise of American power, Waltz contends. Countries abandoned by the “electronic herd,” for example, often seek a U.S.-organized bailout through the International Monetary Fund, widely seen as “the enforcement arm of the U.S. Treasury.” Once Britain sustained the rules and institutions of the international economy; today, it is the United States. Tomorrow, it will be somebody else.

Defending Land Mines

“Landmines: Why the Korea Exception Should Be the Rule” by John F. Troxell, in *Parameters* (Spring 2000), U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave., Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5238.

Citing the need to defend South Korea from attack by North Korea, the United States has refused to sign the 1997 Ottawa Treaty banning land mines. But President Bill Clinton has said the United States will sign it by 2006 if effective alternatives to landmines can be found. Troxell, director of national security studies at the U.S. Army War College, fears that the United States may sacrifice a valuable military tool.

The Ottawa Treaty came about as the result of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which focused worldwide attention on the toll the devices were taking on innocent civilians. A 1995 State Department report estimated that more than 100 million land mines in more than 60 countries were causing 26,000 casualties a year, and that some 2.5 million new mines were being planted each year. Today, many fewer new mines are being put in place, and they are outnumbered by the ones being removed. Washington has spent more than \$375 million since 1993 to remove mines in other countries, “with the goal,” Troxell says, “of eliminating the threat . . . to civilians worldwide by 2010.”

“Dumb” antipersonnel mines, which remain in the ground indefinitely, ready to go off, “are the principal cause of the humanitarian crisis,” he notes. But the Ottawa Treaty would ban *all* land mines, including “smart” ones that self-destruct within hours or days and are usually used to protect antitank mines (also self-destructing). With no effective alternatives, he says, both “dumb” and “smart” mines should remain in the U.S. arsenal.

“Landmines are vital battlefield tools to channel enemy forces into a specific area, or to defend flanks, restricted terrain, or border zones,” he says. In the Korean case, “long-duration active mines along the [demilitarized zone] help deter the third largest army in the world” from attacking.

But mines’ military usefulness is not confined to the Korean Peninsula, Troxell argues. They serve as “a combat multiplier” for all U.S. land forces, especially those that are outnumbered when first deployed. Troxell points out that 16 four-star generals and admirals told Congress that in 1997. “While there are legitimate humanitarian

concerns related to the indiscriminate and undisciplined use of these weapons,” Troxesll says, “there are equally valid concerns relat-

ing to the effectiveness and security of U.S. forces and their ability to accomplish assigned missions throughout the world.”

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Europe’s Jobless Blues

“Inequality and Unemployment in Europe: The American Cure” by James K. Galbraith, Pedro Conceição, and Pedro Ferreira, in *New Left Review* (Sept.–Oct. 1999), 6 Meard St., London W1V 3HR, England.

Most economists blame Europe’s stubbornly high unemployment rates on rigid wage laws and generous welfare states that discourage workers from looking hard for jobs. They point to the example of the United States, with fewer government protections, more income inequality—and a four percent unemployment rate when the new year began. France’s jobless rate, in contrast, was 10.6 percent; Italy’s, 11.1 percent; and Spain’s, 15 percent. Galbraith, a professor of public affairs and government at the University of Texas at Austin, and his colleagues, both doctoral students, have a different explanation for Europe’s plight: insufficient welfare-state generosity. Surprisingly, these analysts, too, look to the United States for inspiration.

“Today, national unemployment rates are systematically *lower* in the richer and more equal countries of Europe where wages are high and social welfare systems are strong,” they write. In Sweden, for instance, the jobless rate was only about five percent last December.

A quarter-century ago, unemployment rates in Europe were quite low everywhere. “In the high-income countries, full employment, social democracy and the welfare state prevailed,” the authors observe. In low-income countries, such as Spain and Portugal, which “were substantially peasant societies, often with comparatively recent fascist governments,” there were “few industrial jobs and few cushions for those who might seek but not obtain them. . . . People stayed on the farm.” This has changed. Europe today is “an integrated continental economy.” “Inter-regional inequalities” are creating long unemployment lines in the poorer countries. Lacking generous social supports, many people are fleeing the countryside. “Better the dole and the grimy

suburb than life in the village or on the farm,” note Galbraith and his colleagues.

Europe’s high-income countries also have “low-productivity, dead-end, uninteresting jobs, from which people might be seeking to escape,” the authors point out. But when all social benefits are included, many of those jobs are well compensated. These countries “provide high minimum wages, buyers for farm produce, jobs in vast public bureaucracies, free health care and higher education. As a result, low-productivity people stay put in their low-productivity jobs . . . growing artichokes in Brittany, crofting in Norway, or raising pigs in the high passes of the Swiss Alps.” They usually do not go after “high-productivity” jobs, say the authors, because the higher pay is not high enough, all things considered, “to make the trouble of earning it [seem] worth their while. This is the secret, it appears, of fuller employment in richer countries.”

Europe’s poorer countries cannot make the needed changes on their own, Galbraith and his colleagues say. Now a *continental* economy, Europe needs a *continental* full-employment policy, “involving [income] transfers not to governments but mainly to individuals and at a common continental standard. . . . [Europe needs] a truly *European* welfare state, with a continental retirement program, ‘topping up’ of low wages and a euro-valued minimum wage.”

“The *comparatively successful* social democracy of the United States” offers a model, the authors aver. It has not only low unemployment but, by their measures, *less* inequality than Europe *as a whole* does. Americans have liberal access to credit, a national social security system, and, since 1994, a rapidly expanding earned income tax credit that erases or vastly reduces the income

taxes of the working poor. They also are spared regressive European-style value-added taxes. “Americans take the low-wage jobs,” say

Galbraith and his colleagues, “because the [wage] gaps are not in fact that high, and because the after-tax gaps are even lower.”

Microfinance, Macrohype

“The Microfinance Promise” by Jonathan Morduch, in *Journal of Economic Literature* (Dec. 1999), American Economic Assn., 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

Around the world, particularly in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Bolivia, “microfinance” institutions have sprung up in recent decades to make small, usually collateral-free loans to the poor, enabling them to go into business for themselves. They become textile distributors, street vendors, and furniture makers. Some eight to 10 million households have taken such loans, and there is hopeful talk by the World Bank and others of expanding the total to 100 million by 2005. Advocates tout microfinance as a way of alleviating poverty without permanent subsidies or massive government programs. They claim it is a “win-win” solution, in which both the lending institutions and the poor clients benefit. Morduch, a lecturer at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, urges a more cautious view.

“Alleviating poverty through banking is an old idea with a checkered past,” he notes. From the early 1950s through the 1980s, many countries put reducing poverty through the provision of subsidized credit at the center of their development strategies. In nearly all cases, Morduch observes, the result was disastrous. “Loan repayment rates often dropped well below 50 percent; costs of subsidies ballooned; and much credit was diverted to the politically powerful away from the intended recipients.”

Mindful of this past, microfinance advocates claim there is a new determination that the programs become financially viable without ongoing subsidies. “Programs typically begin by lending just small amounts and then increasing loan size upon satisfactory repayment,” Morduch says, and repayment must start almost immediately. Microfinance advocates also stress the significance of innovations

such as “group-lending” contracts. Pioneered by Bangladesh’s Grameen Bank, these contracts effectively make a borrower’s neighbors cosigners for the loan, thus creating pressures for repayment, even without collateral.

But “the boldest claims [for microfinance] do not withstand close scrutiny,” writes Morduch. “High repayment rates have seldom translated into profits as advertised. Most programs continue to be subsidized directly through grants and indirectly through soft terms on loans from donors. Moreover, the programs that are breaking even financially are not those celebrated for serving the poorest clients.”

Even the Grameen Bank—which now has



Grassroots finance: Bangladesh women settle accounts with the Grameen Bank, which backed their small-business ventures.

more than two million poor borrowers, 95 percent of them women, getting loans that total \$30–40 million per month—“would have trouble making ends meet without ongoing subsidies,” Morduch says. Though the Bangladesh bank reported “repayment rates above 98 percent and steady profits,” it used some nonstandard accounting definitions, was slow to write off loan losses, and treated grants from donors as income. Had it not done that, he calculates, the bank’s reported \$1.5 million

in profits between 1985 and 1996 would have been \$34 million in losses. But so what? he says. "Even if the bank is not the economic miracle that many have claimed, it is not obvious that its failure to reach financial self-sufficiency is in itself a problem," so long as the donors remain committed and the social benefits outweigh the costs.

Microfinance may well have a role to play in alleviating poverty, Morduch concludes, but, even in the best of circumstances, that role will be limited: helping to "fund self-employment activities that most often supplement income for borrowers." Making "a real dent in poverty rates," he suggests, will require increased economic growth and more new jobs.

SOCIETY

When Life Begins

"Abortion and Brain Waves" by Gregg Easterbrook, in *The New Republic* (Jan. 31, 2000), 1220 19th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

When the Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, medical knowledge about the fetus was surprisingly limited. But that has changed in recent years, and what researchers have learned, argues Easterbrook, a senior editor at the *New Republic*, has important implications that neither pro-life nor pro-choice absolutists are likely to welcome.

The pro-life view, of course, is that life begins when sperm meets egg, producing what scientists call a *zygote*. (Until 1869, however, the Catholic Church held that life began 40 days after conception.) But in the scientific perspective today, "what happens early in the womb looks increasingly like cold-hearted chemistry," Easterbrook says, "with the natural termination of potential life far more common than previously assumed." Only about half of all zygotes implant in the uterine wall and become embryos. "Of those embryos that do trigger pregnancy, only around 65 percent lead to live births, even with the best prenatal care. The rest are lost to natural miscarriage. All told, only about one-third of sperm-egg unions result in babies, even when abortion is not a factor."

It may be possible, writes Easterbrook, "that God ordains, for reasons we cannot know, that vast numbers of souls be created at conception and then naturally denied the chance to become babies. But science's new understanding of the tenuous link between conception and birth makes a strong case that what happens early in pregnancy is not yet life in the constitutional sense."

At the same time, however, "it has become increasingly clear that by the third trimester

many fetuses are able to live outside the mother, passing a basic test of personhood. Now research is beginning to show that by the beginning of the third trimester the fetus has sensations and brain activity and exhibits other signs of formed humanity." The legal and moral implications "are enormous," Easterbrook observes. "After all, society increasingly uses cessation of brain activity to define when life ends. Why not use the onset of brain activity to define when life begins?"

In *Roe*, the Supreme Court said states could prohibit abortion in the third trimester, except when necessary "to preserve the life or health of the mother." This standard was considered "largely theoretical," Easterbrook says, because doctors then generally could not perform safe late-term abortions. In later rulings, the high court brushed aside *Roe*'s third-trimester protections, opting instead for the vague standard of fetal "viability." That has made "almost any late-term abortion permissible," he notes. An estimated 750 late-term abortions occur each year—less than one percent of all abortions in the United States. Most abortions (89 percent) occur in the first trimester.

With the Supreme Court now preparing to make another abortion ruling, Easterbrook favors dropping the "hopelessly confusing" viability standard for "a bright line drawn at the start of the third trimester, when complex fetal brain activity begins." That would neither undermine *Roe*'s abortion rights (since no complex fetal brain activity occurs before then) nor "enter into law poignant but unprovable spiritual assumptions about the spark of life."

The Moral University

Perhaps the most difficult task facing the university today is fulfilling its obligation “to advance, transmit, and invigorate moral knowledge,” says W. Robert Connor, director of the National Humanities Center, writing in *Ideas* (1999: No. 1).

If moral knowledge exists, then surely it is subject to rational evaluation and, like any other knowledge, can be transmitted from one person, or one generation, to another. If moral action in some degree depends on moral knowledge, then it is indeed a pearl of great price and universities should honor it and hold it up for all to admire.

If, on the other hand, all actions are genetically determined, socially conditioned, or the result of whim or random choice or divine inspiration—as we say in the academy, they are epiphenomena—moral knowledge is irrelevant. Claims to have such knowledge would be best left to anthropologists or historians of culture, who can illuminate why people sometimes believe in and value such knowledge. Under these circumstances, it becomes a mere curiosity, and in such a case certainly no university should waste its resources attempting to transmit some body of alleged “moral knowledge” from generation to generation.

Unfortunately, many of our colleagues would, I suspect, take precisely that position. In doing so, however, they depart from a long tradition of Anglo-American higher education and leave students and the rest of us adrift in a time of deep perplexity.

Race and Remembrance

“Presenting Slavery: The Perils of Telling America’s Racial Story” by James Oliver Horton, in *The Public Historian* (Fall 1999), Dept. of History, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93106–9410.

Educating the public about slavery is no easy matter, writes Horton, a professor of American studies and history at George Washington University. Not only do most Americans know little about the history of the institution, but, as interpreters and guides at historic parks, houses, and other such sites have discovered, the subject makes many, both white and black, very uncomfortable.

“Traditionally, northern public schools taught almost nothing about slavery, and southern schools taught even less,” Horton notes. “When slavery was discussed, it was generally only as a problem that surfaced during the sectional struggle just prior to the Civil War.” Not surprisingly, Americans today, he says, generally “believe that slavery was a southern phenomenon, date it from the antebellum period, and do not think of it as central to the American story.” They don’t realize that slavery in British North America was a century and a half old at the time of the American Revolution, and “a significant economic and social institution in every one of the 13 colonies.” And [as recent debates about the Confederate flag have shown]

“many Americans do not wish to discuss slavery at all,” particularly in connection with the Confederacy and the Civil War.

Nevertheless, the subject comes up. At Arlington House, the pre-Civil War home of the Lee-Custis family, now a National Park Service historic site near Washington, D.C., “white visitors often bristle at the mention of [Robert E.] Lee as the owner of slaves,” Horton says, while “black visitors expected to be told about the atrocities of slavery.” Yet many black visitors found the subject too painful after it was introduced a few years ago, and visitors generally were uneasy discussing it, especially in interracial groups.

At Colonial Williamsburg, the restored capital of colonial Virginia, a mock slave auction was held in 1994 to reenact an event that was part of the annual commemoration of King George III’s ascension to the English throne. “At the end of the extremely moving reenactment of a family being broken apart through the sale, the crowd of visitors grew silent, and many wept,” Horton reports. Some visitors objected to the “‘racist show.’” Civil rights groups charged that the reenact-

ment “glorif[ied] the horrors and humiliation of the evil of slavery.” Yet some critics were won over, Horton reports, and academic historians generally approved of the careful reenactment, at least so long as it did not turn into “entertainment.”

“Slavery is so uncomfortable a subject, both for interpreters and visitors,” Horton

writes, “that some have understandably asked, ‘why confront it at all?’” Why not, as a black woman demanded at a recent lecture he gave, “‘put slavery behind us’”? Because, Horton answers, Americans cannot address present-day concerns about race “while ignoring the institution that has been so central to American race relations.”

Message to the Future

“Capsule History” by Lester A. Reingold, in *American Heritage* (Nov. 1999), Forbes Building, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

For centuries, humans have carefully stashed artifacts in cornerstones and other secure spots. In the seventh century B.C., for example, King Esarhaddon of Assyria deposited relics and inscriptions of baked clay in the foundations of his monuments. But the time capsule is a distinctly modern and distinctly American invention, explains Reingold, a writer in Washington, D.C.

One key characteristic of the time capsule is a set opening date. The first capsule with this stipulation was an attraction at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The “Century Safe” contained photographs, autographs of dignitaries, and a book on temperance. Instructions were left that it be unearthed for the bicentennial celebration of 1976. Three years after the centennial, fol-

lowing the ambitious mission of “preserving the record of an entire civilization.” The Westinghouse capsule was a sleek seven-and-a-half-foot torpedo that held, among other things, a slide rule, a Lilly Daché woman’s hat, a Bible, and various messages to the “Futurians.” Albert Einstein concluded his decidedly mixed overview of the world’s condition in the mid-20th century by saying, “I trust that posterity will read these statements with a feeling of proud and justified superiority.” If anybody is around to open the capsule on the appointed day, a little less than 5,000 years from now, they probably will.

Science writer Dava Sobel speculates that in America, a world power with a relatively short history, there is a special taste for time capsules. “After all, when you encapsulate the essence of



Among the Westinghouse time capsule’s treasures: a Bible and a Lilly Daché woman’s hat.

lowing a reunion of Civil War veterans, General John J. McNulta filled a glass bottle with mementos of the event, including a cigar donated by Ulysses S. Grant; following his request a century later, three of McNulta’s great-grandsons smoked it.

The time capsule was truly born when public relations executive G. Edward Pendray, the overseer of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company exhibit at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, coined the term that year. Capsule enthusiasts of the 1930s, says Reingold, added the final element of the modern time capsule:

an era and declare that the container can’t be opened for millennia—you’ve made instant history out of your present.” The newest innovations in time capsules come in the form of interstellar NASA probes filled with plaques and phonograph records, and capsules that are to be seeded under the surface of Antarctica and the moon.

Many time capsules fail in their mission, falling victim to natural elements, tampering, and misplacement. But in a sense, says Reingold, they still fulfill their most important purpose. Time capsules act as an engine for self-awareness and the imagination.

Although they won't be of much help to "Futurians," who will still need to "root around in our leavings" to understand our civilization, time capsules "convey an appre-

ciation of preservation and life's continuum," Reingold observes. They are "intended less as messages from ourselves to the future, than as messages from ourselves to ourselves."

What Makes a Rapist?

"Why Men Rape" by Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer, in *The Sciences* (Jan.–Feb. 2000), New York Academy of Sciences, Two E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

What makes the rapist different from other men is not his sexual desire but his lust for power over women, an unnatural urge born of a sick society in which females are regarded with fear and contempt. That's what many feminists and social scientists believe these days, but it's dangerously misleading, say Thornhill, an evolutionary biologist at the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque, and Palmer, an evolutionary anthropologist at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Rape, they argue, "is, in its very essence, a sexual act [which] has evolved over millennia of human history."

The two authors disagree about rape's precise evolutionary function. Thornhill believes that rape has evolved as "one more way [for males] to gain access to females" in order to pass on their genes, a sexual strategy for males who lack "looks, wealth or status" or see low costs in coercive copulation. Palmer believes "that rape evolved not as a reproductive strategy in itself but merely as a side effect of other adaptations, such as the strong male sex drive and the male desire to mate with a variety of women."

But whether adaptation or byproduct, both agree that "rape has evolutionary—and thus

genetic—origins," and that this explains some "otherwise puzzling facts." Among them: that most rape victims are of childbearing age, and that rapists seldom use more force than needed to subdue or control their victims. "The rapist's reproductive success would be hampered, after all, if he killed his victim or inflicted so much harm that the potential pregnancy was compromised," the authors say. Moreover, while some partisans in the rape debate deny it, rape does occur in the animal world (among scorpionfly species, for instance).

That rape is "a natural, biological phenomenon," Thornhill and Palmer emphasize, does not mean that it is justified or inevitable. But to be effective, preventive measures must take into account rape's evolutionary roots. Young men should be taught "to restrain their sexual behavior." Young women should be told the truth: "that sexual attractiveness does . . . influence rapists," that provocative dress "can put them at risk," and that they should be careful about being alone with men. "As scientists who would like to see rape eradicated," say the authors, "we sincerely hope that truth will prevail" over the "politically constructed" notions about rape now in vogue.

PRESS & MEDIA

Hurrah for Big Media!

"Big Is Beautiful" by Jack Shafer, in *Slate* (Jan. 13, 2000), www.slate.msn.com.

When Time Warner (old media) and America Online (new) announced their merger this year, the usual suspects once again complained that media conglomeration is *bad, bad, bad*. "It is a business thing," critic Robert A. McChesney said. "Good journalism is bad business and bad journalism is, regrettably, at times good business." Hogwash, says Shafer, deputy editor of the on-line magazine *Slate*.

"The McChesneyite critique of big media," he says, "misses the long-term trend that started with Gutenberg and is accelerating with the Internet: As information processing becomes cheaper, so does pluralism and decentralization, which comes at the expense of entrenched powers—government, the church, the guild, nobility, and the magazines and TV stations that Big Media God

Henry Luce founded. Do McChesney and company think we were better off in 1970, when there were three TV news networks, than we are today, when there are six or eight? Better off before the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* became national newspapers? Before FM radio and cable?”

In his 1999 book, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, McChesney, who is a professor of communications at the University of Illinois, asserted that just nine major companies controlled much of the world's media. But Shafer, citing a *Columbia Journalism Review* list, maintains that there are nearly three dozen big media companies in the United States alone.

As for the idea that “good journalism is bad business,” Shafer points to the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Post* as examples of editorial quality combined with financial success, and observes that “as *USA Today* has become a better paper, it has become more viable as a business.”

Shafer (who notes that he draws his paycheck from *Slate*'s parent, Microsoft, which also co-owns MSNBC with General Electric) says that McChesney and his fellow critics of big media look back to a golden age that never was, and romanticize small independent newspapers. “For every *Emporia Gazette* edited by a William Allen White, there's a *Manchester Union Leader* piloted by a William Loeb,” he says. And small, independently owned newspapers “routinely pull punches when covering local car dealers, real estate, and industry, to whom they are in deep hock.”

Despite their many shortcomings, only big media have “the means to consistently hold big business and big government accountable,” Shafer observes. In the 1980s, when Exxon, upset at the *Wall Street Journal*'s coverage, threatened to pull its advertising, the paper stood firm and the threat proved hollow. “How would the *Podunk Banner* have fared against a similar threat from the area Chevrolet dealer?”

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Rise of Neopaganism

A Survey of Recent Articles

Are Americans drifting away from organized religions to embrace a more amorphous spirituality in New Age, environmentalist, or other guise?

That's the trend in most advanced industrial societies today, say political scientist Ronald Inglehart and sociologist Wayne E. Baker, both of the University of Michigan. Church attendance in recent decades has declined in 18 advanced nations, in some cases quite dramatically, they write in *American Sociological Review* (Feb. 2000). In Spain, for instance, the proportion of regular churchgoers shrank from 53 percent in 1981 to 38 percent in the mid-1990s, and in Australia from 40 percent to 25 percent. The “exceptional” United States—which maintains a relatively high church attendance—was no exception here, Inglehart and Baker say, though the falloff was far more modest: from 60 percent to 55 percent.

“Although rising existential security does seem to make religious faith less central,” write

the authors, “the converse is also true. . . . The collapse of communism has given rise to pervasive insecurity and a return to religious beliefs” in Russia and other ex-communist countries. In 1990, a slight majority of Russians described themselves as religious; five years later, nearly two-thirds did. However, regular church attendance, a meager six percent during 1990–91, increased only to eight percent in 1995. (In fervently Catholic Poland, meanwhile, regular church attendance *declined* 11 points during the 1990s, down to 74 percent in 1996.)

Despite the empty pews in most advanced industrial democracies, observe the authors, “the subjective importance of religious beliefs [among their inhabitants] is only declining slightly if at all.” When western Germans, for instance, were asked in 1997 to rate God's importance in their lives on a scale of one-to-10, 16 percent gave it the highest score of 10—the same per-

centage as in 1981. Americans exhibited a similar steadiness, but the percentage giving God's importance a "10" (in both 1981 and 1995) was much higher: 50 percent.

Yet when they affirm belief in God, do Americans all have the traditional Judeo-Christian idea of a personal God in mind? "One of the most widely circulated and unquestioned poll statistics in American society today is the extremely high percentage of Americans who believe in God," notes political scientist George Bishop, of the University of Cincinnati, writing in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fall 1999). Over the last half-century, this oft-quoted figure of 95 percent or higher has hardly changed at all in the Gallup or similar polls. But those simple yes-or-no surveys, he points out, fail to reveal any trends either in the certitude of Americans' belief or in their conception of God. Indeed, Gallup since 1976 has added the phrase "or a universal spirit" to its standard question about belief in God, making it even easier for respondents who reject the traditional Judeo-Christian idea to answer in the affirmative.

More complicated (and less widely publicized) surveys by Gallup and other organizations paint a different picture, Bishop points out. Gallup surveys in 1981 and 1990, for instance, indicate that about two-thirds of Americans believe in "a personal God," while about one-fourth believe in "some sort of spirit or life force." National Opinion Research Center (NORC) surveys show a decline in the percentage of Americans who are absolutely certain of God's existence, from 77 percent in 1964 to 63 percent in 1981—a figure that has remained about the same since. The NORC surveys (which have more gradations in belief and disbelief than the Gallup ones) show that the percentage rejecting the idea of a personal God but believing in "a higher power of some kind" has doubled—from five percent in 1964 to 10 percent in 1998.

"Spiritual concerns will probably always be part of the human outlook," Inglehart and Baker aver. "The established churches today may be on the wrong wavelength for most people in post-industrial societies, but new theologies, such as the theology of environmentalism, or New Age beliefs, are emerging."

Never on Sunday?

"The Sunday Mails" by David P. Currie, in *The Green Bag* (Summer 1999), P.O. Box 14222, Cleveland, Ohio 44114.

Congress is being asked to enforce "the law of God," thundered an indignant Senator Richard M. Johnson (D-Ky.). The measure before Congress is nothing more than "the entering wedge of a scheme to make this Government a religious instead of a social and political institution." Not an unfamiliar argument—except that Senator Johnson was speaking in 1829. At issue was the seemingly trivial matter of Sunday mail delivery and whether to discontinue it.

Yet in this passionate debate nearly 200 years ago, writes Currie, a professor of law at the University of Chicago, one can see "the whole modern understanding of the establishment clause" of the Constitution, in which it is decreed that "Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The Founders themselves had seemed



This postman, circa 1900, still worked on Sunday.

uncertain of the clause's meaning. Did it ban only the establishment of a national church, or did it go further? President Thomas Jefferson (1801–09) consistently refused congressional pleas to declare official days of prayer. President James Madison (1809–17) did issue such declarations but privately opposed them after he left office.

Sunday postal delivery was largely taken for granted until 1814, when Representative Samuel Farrow of South Carolina tried to convince the House of Representatives to stop the “unnecessary, inadmissible and wicked” practice. Postmaster General Return Meigs replied that the post office must operate daily, especially in wartime. The House voted nearly two to one against Farrow.

But it was in the 1829 debate, Currie says, that the full outline of the modern argument can be seen. Although a committee chaired by Johnson agreed that one day in seven was acceptable for a “respite

from the ordinary vocations of life,” it argued that “the proper object of government is to protect all persons in the employment of their religious as well as civil rights; and not to determine for any whether they shall esteem one day above another, or esteem all days alike holy.” The Constitution “wisely withheld from our Government the power of defining the divine law,” in order to minimize religious conflict, the committee continued. “It is a right reserved to each citizen.” At the same time, Johnson’s committee recognized a modern version of the “free exercise” provision, noting that post office employees were not required to work on either the Jewish or the Christian Sabbath.

Johnson and his allies prevailed. It was not until 1912 that regular Sunday mail delivery ceased. But the events of 1829, Currie concludes, show that “the notion that the establishment clause does more than prevent erection of a national church is no modern heresy.”

Why Nobody Reads Philosophy

Bryan Magee, author of *Confessions of a Philosopher* (1997), explains in *Prospect* (Feb. 2000) why philosophical writing shouldn’t be, but often is, opaque.

Many philosophers will never write clearly. They are incapable of it, because they are afraid of clarity. They fear that if what they write is clear, then people will think it obvious. And they want to be thought of as masters of the difficult. . . .

It is essential to distinguish between difficulty and unclarity. When philosophers like Plato, Hume and Schopenhauer write about problems of the utmost difficulty, in clear prose, their clarity does not make the problems appear simple, or easy to solve: on the contrary, it exposes difficulty fully to the understanding. To suppose that if a problem is tortuously difficult it needs therefore to be addressed in prose which is tortuously difficult is to make a logical error—one parodied by Dr. Johnson in his remark: “Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat.” Of course prose can be unclear for several reasons. One common reason is that the writer is himself confused. Another is that he has been lazy, and has not thought his problems through before sitting down to write. Yet another is that, out of impatience, he has published what he ought to have regarded as his penultimate draft—Hume, in his autobiography, cites this as a particularly common mistake—one he thinks he may have made himself. It is also, in effect, the mistake made by Kant with his Critiques, in that case because he was afraid he would die before finishing them. But the point is that none of these reasons are grounds for admiration. All are regrettable. The fact that something is obscure should never, never, never increase our respect for it. We may respect it nevertheless, in spite of its obscurity, but obscurity is always a minus, never a plus.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

The Transformation of Bioethics

A Survey of Recent Articles

An upstart young discipline born some 30 years ago, idealistically determined to grapple with the moral dilemmas posed by modern medicine and to give patients more say, bioethics seems to be flourishing today.

It's a required subject in medical schools, a mandatory feature in hospitals, a frequent attraction in the media; degrees and certificates are awarded in it; centers, departments, and government commissions, as well as professional organizations and journals, are devoted to it. Attending physicians in hospitals can now ask bioethics "consultants" to help critically ill patients or their families decide whether life-sustaining medical treatments should be withheld or withdrawn.

Yet for all this activity and apparent success, some observers wonder if bioethics hasn't lost the promise of its youth and perhaps even its way. They disagree, however, on just what that promise was and what the proper path should be.

In an issue of *Daedalus* (Fall 1999) on "Bioethics and Beyond," philosopher Daniel Callahan, a pioneering bioethicist who co-founded the Hastings Center, in Garrison, New York, in 1969, confesses that he is unhappy with "the general direction" the field has taken. From the start, he explains in *Daedalus* and in another essay in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* (Mar. 1999), two powerful currents were at work in bioethics. Reacting to abuses of human research subjects and doctors' characteristic paternalism toward patients, an "autonomy" movement sought to promote "individual rights and choice." A "cultural" movement, drawing on theology, nonanalytic philosophy, and social science, sought "the social and cultural meaning of the biomedical developments." To Callahan's disappointment, the "autonomy" current—favored by lawyers and analytic philosophers, and very much in tune with American liberal individualism—has proven much the stronger.

But bioethics has not become all that early enthusiasts for "autonomy" dreamed, either.

It developed "as a critical enterprise, a response to felt inhumanities in our system of health care and biomedical research." But bioethics not only "questioned authority"—it has shored it up, observes Charles E. Rosenberg, a historian of science and medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, also writing in *Daedalus*. "As a condition of its acceptance, bioethics has taken up residence in the belly of the medical whale," there "serv[ing] ironically to moderate, and thus manage and perpetuate, a system often in conflict with [medicine's] idealized identity."

Many bioethicists today have been "rediscovering the virtues of paternalism," contends Ronald Bailey, science correspondent for *Reason* (Aug.–Sept. 1999). Instead of "doctor-knows-best," there is "bioethicist-knows-best." They "want to determine what patients need to know and what treatments they should get," he says. He cites a 1996 case in which doctors, following bioethicists' advice, initially refused to tell a patient what the results of her genetic test for breast cancer were.

"The fact that bioethicists [in the late 1960s and 1970s] spoke of what they were doing as restoring power to patients obscured the power they needed to [arrogate to] themselves to accomplish this task," notes Charles L. Bosk, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Bioethics. But that fact, he adds in *Daedalus*, also obscured the limited extent to which patients may have "actually desired this decision-making power now conferred upon them."

Wanted or not, autonomy is "the driving force" behind "principlism" in practice, Callahan says. The leading theory in bioethics today, principlism, he explains, stresses "the principles of respect for persons (generally understood as respect for autonomy), nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice. . . . In practice, the principle of beneficence gets the least play, probably because, to be taken seriously, it requires an

effort to understand what really advances the good of individuals and society”—which would conflict with “the liberal individualism of the left and the libertarianism of (some of) the right.”

But bioethics “is not simply a field of philosophy,” observes Alexander Morgan Capron, codirector of the Pacific Center for Health Policy and Ethics at the University of Southern California. It is “a practical discipline,” he writes in *Daedalus*, which “has been driven” by highly publicized medical controversies such as the Karen Ann Quinlan case of the 1970s, by infamous medical abuses (such as the Tuskegee syphilis study), and by dramatic medical advances.

Yet at its origins, bioethics did move more in the higher realms of philosophy and theology. According to Warren Thomas Reich, a bioethicist at Georgetown University’s Kennedy Institute of Ethics, writing in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* (Mar. 1999), much of the energy infused into

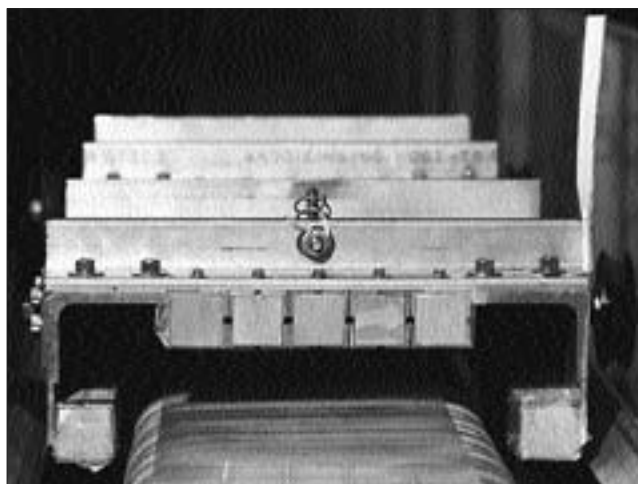
bioethics three decades ago came from theologians who had been involved in “the then-increasingly futile church debates” on contraception, sterilization, and abortion.

Bioethics today is determinedly secular in outlook, notes Renée C. Fox, a Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Bioethics, writing in *Daedalus*. “Questions of a religious nature—concerning human origins, identity, and destiny, the meaning of suffering, and the mysteries of life and death,” she says, generally are “screened out” as inherently insoluble problems best left to the private beliefs of individuals, or else are “translated” into acceptably secular language. In this “resolute secularism,” bioethics, in Callahan’s view, “is out of step with much of American culture, even though it picks up (all too much) the individualism of that culture.” Bioethics, he believes, needs to expand its viewpoint and “dig more deeply into the way biomedical progress” can affect the meaning of human life.

Maglev’s New Promise

“Maglev: A New Approach” by Richard F. Post, in *Scientific American* (Jan. 2000), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017–1111.

For decades, it’s been said that the maglev, or magnetically levitated train, would soon be arriving to whisk people off on silky-smooth rides at 300 miles per hour or more.



A test cart levitates above the track, with Halbach arrays of magnetic bars visible under the cart and suspended from its sides.

It hasn’t happened. The maglevs demonstrated in Germany and Japan have been too complicated and expensive—and not fail-safe. No full-scale commercially operating maglev system has been built. But now from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California comes a new approach that Post, a senior scientist there, says may finally bring the maglev into the station.

In a maglev system, magnetic fields levitate the train while electricity or some other sort of power drives it forward. The Japanese system used superconducting coils to produce the magnetic fields (as two American scientists first proposed in the late 1960s). But because such coils must be kept very

cool, costly cryogenic equipment is required on the train cars. "The German maglev uses conventional electromagnets rather than superconducting ones, but the system is inherently unstable because it is based on magnetic attraction rather than repulsion," Post says. In both systems, a malfunction "could lead to a sudden loss of levitation while the train is moving." Minimizing that hazard means increased "cost and complexity."

The Livermore approach uses permanent room-temperature magnets, powerful kin to the familiar refrigerator magnet and once thought inadequate to the levitational task. "On the underside of each train car," explains Post, "is a flat, rectangular array of magnetic bars called a Halbach array" (after its inventor). With the bars in that special pattern, the magnetic-field lines combine to produce a very strong field below them.

The other critical element in the "Inductrack" (as the new maglev system is called) is track "embedded with closely packed coils of insulated wire." When the train cars move forward, the magnets arrayed beneath them induce currents in the track's coils, which in

turn generate an electromagnetic field that repels the Halbach arrays, lifting the train. "As long as the train is moving . . . a bit faster than walking speed," the arrays "will be levitated a few centimeters above the track's surface." Side-mounted Halbach arrays provide lateral stability. Because the levitating force increases as the magnets get closer to the coils (if the train is carrying a heavier load, for instance, or rounding a bend), this maglev system is "inherently stable," Post says.

What would happen if the drive power suddenly failed? "The train cars would remain levitated," Post says, "while slowing down to a very low speed, at which point the cars would come to rest on their auxiliary wheels."

A 1997 study concluded that an Inductrack system would be cheaper than the German maglev, and "proved that the concept is workable," Post says. And it may work for more than high-speed rail: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration thinks the Inductrack approach could prove helpful in getting rockets off the ground.

Nuclear Power Lives!

"The Need for Nuclear Power" by Richard Rhodes and Denis Beller, in *Foreign Affairs* (Jan.-Feb. 2000), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Nuclear power, which seems to generate more fear than electricity, is yesterday's energy source, its critics contend. On the contrary, it's very much alive and on the verge of coming into its own, argue Rhodes, author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (1986), and Beller, a nuclear engineer who works at the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Though the number of U.S. nuclear power plants has fallen from 111 in 1990 to 104, today's plants generate more electricity. Still the world's biggest producer of nuclear energy, the United States gets 20 percent of its electricity from reactors.

Nuclear power's role is even larger in other nations, such as Sweden (42 percent) and France (79 percent). "With 434 operating reactors worldwide, nuclear power is meeting the annual electrical needs of more than a billion people," Rhodes and Beller point out.

But two billion people—one-third of the world's population—currently have no access to electricity. As global energy demand grows, the authors say, so will the role of nuclear power. The British Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering recently predicted that worldwide energy consumption will at least double in the next half-century, posing an awesome environmental challenge: how to limit surface and air pollution and global warming.

The "worst environmental offender" (leaving aside petroleum, the leading energy source, used mainly for transportation), say Rhodes and Beller, is coal, which supplies about a fourth of the world's energy today. In the United States alone, according to recent Harvard University studies, pollutants from burning coal cause about 15,000 premature deaths a year. Besides toxic particles and nox-

ious gases (such as sulfur oxide and carbon monoxide) that contribute to acid rain and global warming, burning coal releases mildly radioactive elements, including uranium. Were U.S. coal plants subjected to the same safeguards and restrictions on radioactive emissions as nuclear utilities are, Rhodes and Beller say, “coal electricity would no longer be cheaper.”

Renewable energy sources also result in “significant, if usually unacknowledged” harm to the environment, the authors say. Making photovoltaic cells for solar collection, for example, produces highly toxic waste metals and solvents. A 1,000-megawatt-electric solar electric plant, over a 30-year lifetime, would generate 6,850 metric tons of hazardous waste from metals processing alone.

“Natural gas has many virtues as a fuel compared [with] coal or oil, and its [22 percent] share of the world’s energy will assuredly grow,” write the authors. But supply is limited, and it pollutes the air.

“The great advantage of nuclear power,” Rhodes and Beller aver, “is its ability to wrest enormous energy from a small volume of fuel.” One metric ton of nuclear fuel produces as much energy as two to three million metric tons of fossil fuel—and with less danger to the environment. Unlike fossil fuel plants, nuclear power plants release no noxious gases or other pollutants into the environment.

As for the radioactive nuclear waste, Rhodes and Beller say that the risk from *low-level* radioactive waste is negligible, while the relatively small volume of *high-level* radioactive waste “can be meticulously sequestered behind multiple barriers.”

Unlike coal’s toxic waste, which stays toxic, Rhodes and Beller write, the radioactive nuclear waste “decays steadily, losing 99 percent of its toxicity after 600 years—well within the range of human experience with custody and maintenance, as evidenced by structures such as the Roman Pantheon and Notre Dame Cathedral.”

ARTS & LETTERS

The Culture Totem

“What We Talk about When We Talk about Culture” by Matthew Greenfield, in *Raritan* (Fall 1999), Rutgers Univ., 31 Mine St., New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

For many in the tribe of literary critics, cultural studies is now the rage. The very word *culture* has taken on high totemic status, with “an almost magical power to confer authority and assuage anxiety,” notes Greenfield, an English instructor at Bowdoin College, in Brunswick, Maine. “Merely to pronounce the word expands the territory of literary criticism,” at the same time warding off doubts about the field’s basic worth. It lets English professors venture into far-flung areas to take up subjects such as the “intertextuality” of rock ‘n’ roll or the history of images of physical disability. Universities, academic disciplines, and even campus bookstores have been busily rearranging themselves to show proper obeisance. Meanwhile, contends Greenfield, culture’s intellectual day may be passing.

The concept of culture invariably shifts the focus away from “the agency and inten-

tion of individuals and toward the mapping of larger structures,” he notes. Borrowing the concept from anthropology, literary critics often employ a “simplified, distorted, or undertheorized version” of it, with the vagueness quite possibly only enhancing its “tremendous authority” in the field. Literary critics see *culture* as collective “games,” as collective “performances,” or, most commonly, as like a “text”—and therefore susceptible to literary interpretation.

But as critics shift their focus away from individual writers, toward “larger cultural systems,” they run into difficulties, Greenfield says. One is how to explain historical change, in Marxist or other terms, when the cultural theories presume a “culture” with a coherent function or structure that is static or at least resistant to change.

Second, he says, the concept of culture is at odds with literary critics’ current convic-

tion that “the borders drawn around” nations and other communities are “ideological fictions.” To speak of “‘early modern English culture,’” for instance, Greenfield says, is to treat “a political phantasm as if it were a fact,” and to slight the various “groups, classes, and regions” on which the nationalist fiction is imposed.

“The third objection to the culture concept,” writes Greenfield, “is that it leads investigation toward abstract generalizations and away from the insights, choices, and idiosyncrasies of individuals.” It’s not enough to describe cultural “tool kits,” he maintains. Critics must tell “how the tools are used by individuals.”

Ironically, as literary critics have turned to anthropology for ideas and (as they hope) the prestige of science, many anthropologists,

Greenfield observes, have been moving away from science and remaking their discipline “in the image of literary criticism—as an interpretive practice.”

Prominent anthropologists, he says, now suggest that the concept of culture “may have outlived its usefulness.” Many, conscious of how imperialist powers and other outside forces have influenced the supposedly isolated, coherent, and stable “cultures,” have begun, he says, “to accuse themselves of a blindness to politics that amounts to a complicity” with European colonialism.

Although elsewhere in academe, the prestige of “culture” seems still on the rise, this is deceptive, Greenfield suggests. More and more literary critics will find out, as the anthropologists have, that the concept “no longer does the work that [they] want it to.”

In Deepest Beethoven

“The Sublime Beethoven” by Dmitri Tymoczko, in *Boston Review* (Dec. 1999–Jan. 2000), E53-407, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) moved music far beyond the beautiful, into “the sphere of the Sublime,” declared composer Richard Wagner on the 100th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth. But what precisely makes his music sublime? asks Tymoczko, a doctoral student in music composition at the University of California, Berkeley.

“Is it that we are simply overwhelmed by Beethoven’s musicianship, the way that we are dazzled by Michael Jordan’s athleticism? Or is it the music’s passionate emotional content, the way it seems to access our darkest or most powerful feelings? . . . Is it the way Beethoven crosses boundaries, daring to do things—repeating a single melodic figure a dozen or more times, or writing 20-minute sonata movements—that, we imagined, no right-minded composer would ever think of doing? Or is it more a matter of content: the way the audacity seems to be *spiritually* motivated. . . ?”

As “a catch-all term for Beethoven’s ferocity,” *sublimity* can refer to all of the above, Tymoczko says. However, Wagner



Beethoven at the piano

and, a half-century before him, music critic E. T. A. Hoffmann had in mind something much more specific when they described Beethoven's music as sublime: namely, both certain musical features (e.g., the extreme length and insistent dissonances of the compositions) and "the spiritual effect that the music is supposed to produce in listeners." But the Wagner-Hoffmann view, Tymoczko contends, is little more than a watered-down version of an aesthetic principle propounded in the previous century by the philosopher Immanuel Kant.

Favoring "a kind of artistic self-abnegation," says Tymoczko, Kant suggested "that the arts might present the sublime *negatively*, by expressing their own inadequacy. . . . By portraying human limitations, and [implying] that there is some-

thing beyond them, these works inspire a kind of religious awe."

In Beethoven's works, Tymoczko finds "a number of curious passages where [his] music seems to question itself, as if challenging the demands placed upon it." The composer was prone, especially in his later works, to write music that was difficult, if not impossible, to play. But in the *Tempest* Sonata, op. 1, no. 2, he wrote music "in conflict with itself," dramatically emphasizing, at one point, the inability of his five-octave piano to reach the B-flat required, and producing "a jarringly beautiful sequence of dissonant seventh chords." At such brief, paradoxical moments, Tymoczko believes, Beethoven seems to reveal "something like a Kantian sense of art's ultimate inadequacy"--and his music reaches the truly sublime.

Mencken's Masterwork

"Babylonian Frolics: H. L. Mencken and *The American Language*" by Raymond Nelson, in *American Literary History* (Winter 1999), Oxford Univ. Press, 2001 Evans Rd., Cary, N.C. 27513-2009.

"A gaudy piece of buncombe, rather neatly done." So H. L. Mencken once described his monumental tome *The American Language* (1919). Written as America was drawn into, then engaged in, the Great War against his beloved Germany, the work was a declaration of America's linguistic independence from England. It also was "the first attempt since Noah Webster's at an overview of the national language," writes Nelson, a professor of American literature and literary history at the University of Virginia.

American and British English, argued Mencken (1880-1956), were on the verge of becoming separate languages, thanks mainly to the vigorous, vulgar expressions that America's "yokelry" kept turning out. By Mencken's account, Nelson says, the American vocabulary had begun to evolve in colonial times, "when the awakening language brought to the New World by English settlers and adventurers was redefined by the first Americanisms and expanded by loanwords from Indian, French, Dutch, Spanish, and African residents. Mencken then traces the lexicon through alternate cycles of growth and stasis," concluding in the 20th century's early

decades, "with vulgar impulses once again unleashed," to produce such welcome neologisms as *joy-ride*, *high-brow*, and *sob-sister*.

In Mencken's history of the development of American English, Nelson writes, there is ceaseless comic conflict between the demotic schoolboy, "doomed to the quality of the vulgate to which he is born," and the eternal schoolmarm, who, thanks to her own birth and upbringing, "is cursed to recite her rules and declensions through thousands of drowsy afternoons, never to any discernible effect." Mencken scorned the yokels as well as the schoolmarm, but he identified "linguistic energy with American loutish ingenuity while assigning linguistic form to the British and their ill-fitting Latin grammars." The hardly profound implication was: energy good, form bad. Not for Mencken, says Nelson, the more subtle "dialectical interplay of description and prescription, usage and sanction."

The American Language, first published in an edition of only 1,500 copies, played little role in the literary and cultural upheavals of the 1920s, Nelson says. But it did have an impact on academics and students of lan-

guage. "The truth is," Mencken wrote to a friend, "that the academic idiots are all taking it very seriously, greatly to my joy."

He thrice revised and expanded the work, in editions published in 1921, '23, and '36 (and also produced two massive supplements in 1945 and '48). *The American Language* in its 1936 edition was widely hailed as Mencken's masterwork, and it was a great popular success.

The Sage of Baltimore's influence on linguistics "has been primarily literary and inspirational," Nelson observes. Mencken was essentially an artist, not a rigorous thinker.

Yet his masterwork has "the ambition as well as the messiness and inconsistency of many classic American books," Nelson points out. And on *its* future, he believes, heavily rests Mencken's own.

OTHER NATIONS

Africa's New Slave Trade

"My Career Redeeming Slaves" by John Eibner, in *Middle East Quarterly* (Dec. 1999), 1500 Walnut St., Ste. 1050, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102-3523; and "The False Promise of Slave Redemption" by Richard Minitier, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (July 1999), 77 N. Washington St., Boston, Mass. 02114.

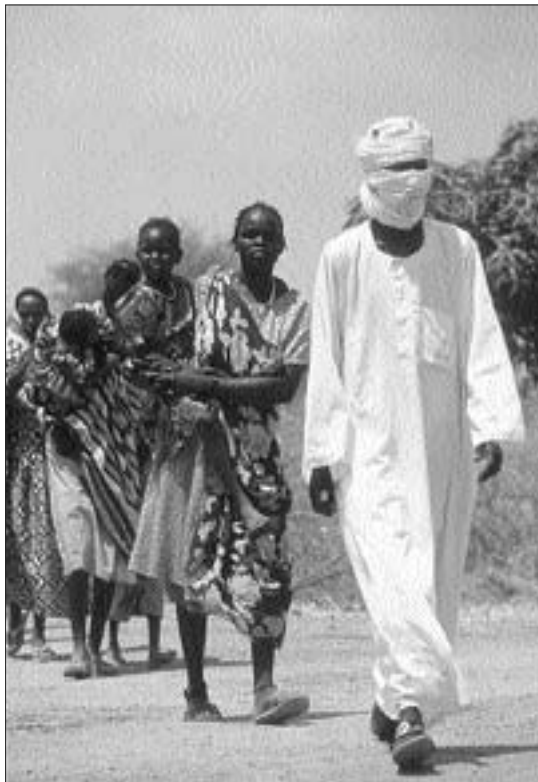
Slavery survives today in Mauritania (see WQ, Winter '98, p. 140) and Sudan, Africa's largest country. Indeed, chattel slavery, which had been suppressed in Sudan by the British, has been "experiencing a great revival" there, writes Eibner, an official with the Zurich-based Christian Solidarity International (CSI).

Islamic fundamentalists "gain[ed] the upper-hand in Khartoum" in the mid-1980s, he says, and set about subduing mostly Christian and animist southern Sudan. Slavery returned, as armed Baqqara Arab tribesmen raided the villages of black Dinkas, killing men and enslaving many women and children. After the radical National Islamic Front seized full power in Khartoum in 1989, Eibner says, slavery became "an instrument of a state-sponsored jihad." Today, he estimates, there are about 100,000 chattel slaves in Sudan—while many other Sudanese are in "concentration camps . . . and in militant Qur'anic schools, where boys train to become *mujahidun* (warriors of jihad)."

What is to be done? In late 1995, Eibner's organization began "redeeming" Sudanese slaves, that is, buying their freedom through Muslim Arab intermediaries who usually pose as slave owners. By last October, CSI, paying \$50 or more per slave, had freed 15,447

to return to their homes. But the slave raids in Sudan continue.

CSI has run into criticism, not only from Khartoum (which denies there is any slavery in Sudan and charges CSI with kidnapping), but from the United Nations Children's



Western Christians are rescuing enslaved Dinkas like these from bondage—but is the price too high?

Fund (UNICEF), which has called buying slaves “absolutely intolerable.” Minitier, a Washington-based writer, argues that the practice, though well intended, is counter-productive: “Slave redeemers enrich every element of the trade: raiders, owners, and traders. . . . In effect the redeemers are keeping prices high and creating a powerful incentive for raids.”

Antislavery activist Michael Horowitz, director of the Hudson Institute’s Project for International Religious Liberty, told Minitier that slave redemption “may not be the answer to the problem, but it is the answer to

many mothers’ prayers.” Minitier, however, believes that “public policy requires a focus on the larger interest. With good reason, the U.S. government does not negotiate with terrorists or pay ransom to kidnappers. . . . Fighting slavery is not a task for sentimentalists.” One effective measure that could be taken, in his view, if outside governments had the will and Sudanese rebels the tools, would be to cut the rail link between Khartoum and the regime’s southern stronghold of Wau. Without the train, Minitier says, slave raiders could not move large numbers of slaves north.

Welfare-to-Work in Canada

“When Financial Incentives Encourage Work: The Canadian Self-Sufficiency Project” by Charles Michalopoulos, Philip K. Robins, David E. Card, and Gordon Berlin, in *Focus* (Fall 1999), 1180
Observatory Dr., 3412 Social Science Bldg., Univ. of Wisconsin at Madison, Madison, Wis. 53706.

Eight years ago, amid criticism that its generous welfare and unemployment insurance programs were encouraging people to avoid work, Canada launched an experiment called the Self-Sufficiency Project in two provinces to see if temporary earnings supplements would entice welfare recipients into finding jobs.

The early evidence from studies by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is very encouraging, according to Michalopoulos and Berlin, of the SRDC’s U.S. partner, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, and economists Robins, of the University of Miami, and Card, of the University of California, Berkeley.

Between 1992 and 1995, almost 2,900 single parents (mothers, for the most part, with little education) who had been Income Assistance (IA) recipients for at least a year were offered supplements if they left welfare and worked full-time. The supplement equaled half the difference between the person’s wages and \$31,080 (U.S.) in British Columbia or \$25,200 in New Brunswick—levels set to make full-time work pay better than welfare. The supplements would stop after three years.

Nearly two-thirds of the single mothers refused the offer. “I don’t have education or skills where I’m able to get a nice job,” one

said. Nevertheless, the authors report, full-time employment increased significantly—to an average of 29 percent in the fifth quarter after the trial began, compared with only 14 percent in a control group of comparable welfare recipients.

To test whether earnings supplements would have the unintended consequence of extending recipients’ stay on the welfare rolls, more than 1,600 British Columbia single parents new to welfare during 1994–95 were told they would be eligible for the supplements after one year on IA. These mothers were likely to be less disadvantaged than the long-term recipients, and it turned out that very few of them prolonged their stay to get the supplements. After a year, 60 percent were still on welfare—only four points higher than the percentage for a control group of comparable welfare recipients with no prospect of eligibility. Two and a half years later, moreover, it appeared that the supplements were working as intended: More than 40 percent of the eligible group were employed full-time, compared with less than 29 percent of the control group. “Most remarkably,” say the authors, “at the end of the period, the cost of supplement payments was more than offset by reduced IA payments and increased tax revenues.”

It’s too early to pass final judgment on the Self-Sufficiency Project; that will depend on

what happens after the supplements run out. But the authors are hopeful. So far, the gains in “fulltime employment and earnings and [the]

reductions in poverty . . . are among the largest ever seen in a social experiment designed to encourage welfare recipients to work.”

Beijing Cool

Among Chinese opinion-leaders today, there’s a surprising new vogue, reports Liu Junning of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in *Cato Policy Report* (Nov.–Dec. 1999).

Liberalism is enjoying a rebirth in China’s intellectual circles. . . . Even the prime minister of China has [Friedrich] Hayek’s works on his bookshelf. . . .

The old ideology has failed, and the attendant “right to rule” has lost almost all of its “true believers.” Some observers may wonder how liberalism will be able to sprout and grow in Red China. The answer lies in the market economy or, as Adam Smith called it, “the system of natural liberty.”

Market mechanisms in China promote not only greater economic freedom but other freedoms as well, such as freedom of speech. Ever since the Chinese government stopped giving subsidies to most newspapers, magazines, and TV stations after the introduction of market-oriented reforms, the media have been publishing things to keep the interest of their readers. Since more and more people in China are interested in liberal ideas, the editors have been very enthusiastic in meeting the demand, despite harassment and threats of censorship. Some of them started to stop censoring themselves—not just for economic survival but also because many of them are becoming genuinely attracted to liberalism. Now it is the editors who are pushing the intellectuals. In China the only effective way to stop the trend of liberalization is for the government to resume media subsidies, which it now lacks the means to do.

The political culture of China is shifting in a liberal direction. Gone are the days when you could be proud to be a leftist. Now intellectuals prefer to be identified with liberalism. In today’s China almost all of the opinion leaders and celebrities in leading fields are liberals.

Latin Democracy’s Struggle

“Is Latin America Doomed to Failure?” by Peter Hakim, in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1999–2000), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The January coup in Ecuador was only the latest indication that Latin America is not living up to the high hopes entertained by democrats and free-market enthusiasts a decade ago. “Across the continent, democracy and markets remain on trial,” writes Hakim, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based organization.

There had been good reason for the high hopes, he notes. Between 1978 and 1990, some 15 Latin American countries turned away from dictatorship and began holding elections. And in the late 1980s and early 1990s, nearly all governments in the region came to adopt free-market economic policies.

The average rate of inflation soon plummeted, from more than 450 percent to hardly more than 10 percent today. “Almost overnight, Latin America joined the world economy.”

But meaningful economic growth, Hakim notes, has proved elusive, with the annual rate averaging less than three percent during the 1990s. That was better than the 1.9 percent average of the 1980s, but a far cry from the six percent of the 1960s and ’70s. Of 20 Latin American countries, only three—Argentina, Chile, and Peru—averaged five percent or higher annual growth during the 1990s, though three others—the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Panama—came close.

Mediocre economic performance is only part of the problem, Hakim says. Few of the democratic governments “are governing well.” In most countries, basic democratic institutions—courts, legislatures, political parties, even the presidency—are weak, and in some cases, “barely work at all.” Education is neglected: Only one in three Latin American children attends secondary school. Virtually every city “is far more violent and dangerous than it was a dozen years ago,” Hakim says. The region’s homicide rate—300 murders per one million people—is twice the world average. In Guatemala, Colombia, and El Salvador, the murder rates exceed 1,000 per million.

Tired of all this, “ordinary citizens are losing faith in democracy,” Hakim writes. In Latinobarómetro surveys conducted in South America and Mexico in 1997 and 1998, more than 60 percent expressed dissatisfaction with democracy, and nearly one in three indicated that they favored or did not oppose authoritarian rule. Peruvians and Venezuelans already have turned to more authoritarian leadership.

The Latin American picture is not all bleak, Hakim notes. Chile in the last decade

has achieved six percent annual growth, slashed the poverty rate, and improved government services, and its democratic institutions “are growing stronger and more effective.” Argentina [which last October elected a nominal socialist, Fernando de la Ruá of the centrist Radical Party, president] also “has made impressive economic and political advances since democratic rule was restored in 1983,” Hakim says. Uruguay and Costa Rica have strong democratic heritages. Mexico’s economic prospects are good, though its political ones are hindered by its inexperience with democracy, deep political divisions, and extensive drug traffic, criminal violence, and corruption. Brazil, with almost one-third of Latin America’s population and economic activity, “is the wild card,” Hakim says, with much depending on “the political skills and luck” of President Fernando Cardoso and his advisers.

Hakim is moderately hopeful. He expects that most of Latin America “will avoid disaster. . . . Most of the region’s political leaders and financial managers are betting on democratic politics and market economics and are struggling to make them work.”

A Swedish Imperfection

“Gender Equality in ‘the Most Equal Country in the World’? Money and Marriage in Sweden” by
Charlott Nyman, in *The Sociological Review* (Nov. 1999), Keele Univ., Keele, Staffordshire,
ST5 5BG, England.

In Sweden, where equality between the sexes is the official ideal, husband and wife are obliged by law to “share” their incomes, with each having a legal right to the same standard of living as the other. Yet after interviews with 10 married couples, Nyman, a doctoral student in sociology at Umeo University, in northern Sweden, is persuaded that even in what is supposedly “the most equal country in the world,” perfect equality remains elusive.

The couples, each with dual incomes and a seven-year-old child, lived in an unidentified white-collar town. All the husbands and wives initially insisted in interviews that they not only believed in equal economic sharing but practiced it.

Yet in all 10 families, Nyman found, “the woman had primary responsibility” for buy-

ing groceries, clothes for the children, and other everyday items for the home, while the men usually handled such “bigger” matters as bank loans and kept track of long-term investments and savings. Because the women had the daily burden of making ends meet, says Nyman, they often wound up drawing on their personal budgets to meet unanticipated family needs, worrying more than their husbands about the family having enough money, and spending less on themselves than their husbands did.

Though the women “seemed to subordinate their own needs to those of other family members,” Nyman notes, they saw their behavior not as “sacrifice” but as “an expression of love.” Comments Nyman: Even in Sweden, “old traditions, attitudes, and behaviors die hard.”

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

“Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education.”

Princeton University Press, 41 William St., Princeton, N.J. 08540-5237. 288 pp. \$27.95

Authors: *Chester E. Finn, Jr., Bruno V. Manno, and Gregg Vanourek*

A dozen years ago, “charter school” was just a phrase on the lips of the late Albert Shanker, the long-time head of the American Federation of Teachers. Today—despite, ironically, the opposition of teachers’ unions—that phrase has taken on a new reality, with more than 1,500 charter schools operating in 27 states and the District of Columbia. (By contrast, there are some 86,000 conventional public schools.) Finn, a Fellow at the Manhattan Institute and former assistant U.S. secretary of education, and his colleagues visited about 100 charter schools to assess their progress.

The concept is simple enough: A charter school is a public school that is exempt from most state and local regulations, and is accountable for “results” to a sponsoring public body, usually a state or local school board. Staff and students are recruited rather than assigned. “Almost anyone,” the authors note, can launch and run a charter school, from parent or teacher groups to community organizations. The typical charter runs for five years. It may not be renewed if goals aren’t met and can be revoked for legal or regulatory violations. By autumn 1998, 32 charter schools had shut down. Arizona, with 271 charter schools in operation, now leads the field, followed by California (158), Michigan (138), and Texas (114).

It’s too early to draw general conclusions, Finn and his colleagues note, but “of the sparse outcomes data we have today, most are positive.” A 1998 University of Minnesota study of 32 schools in eight states found that 21 had “improved achievement,” while the rest did not provide enough data to permit any conclusion. Though a 1999 study in Minnesota found that the proportions of charter pupils meeting graduation requirements for math and reading were far below statewide levels, Minnesota officials pointed out that half the charter pupils came from

economically disadvantaged backgrounds, twice the statewide proportion.

The authors saw a glimpse of the future at the Academy of the Pacific Rim, which debuted in Boston in 1997 with 100 sixth and seventh graders, mostly poor and minority. In its mission statement, the school (whose founders include several prominent Asian Americans) promises to educate “urban students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds . . . by combining the best of the East—high standards, discipline and character education—with the best of the West—a commitment to individualism, creativity, and diversity.”

Students take five hour-long core academic courses each day, and the school year lasts 210 days (compared with the usual 180). Though discipline is strict, the authors note, the school “treats parents as full partners in fostering character and good conduct.” Parents also must sign a contract promising to supervise their children’s work and take part in school activities. In the academy’s first year, sixth graders gained an average of 1.7 years in math and 0.7 years in English, and seventh graders, 1.7 years in math and 1.8 years in English.

While charter schools are to be judged by “results,” critics charge that there’s no consensus on how to measure them objectively. Finn and his colleagues concede that “promising accountability systems . . . are still few and far between,” and that some charter operators have exerted political pressure to keep standards down or avoid sanctions. But the solution, they believe, is not the kind of top-down regulation used in conventional schools, but transparency and community vigilance. It “will be no secret” if test scores are sagging or the curriculum is “weird,” they say, and the resulting pressure will force the school to change its ways or go out of business.

"Mexico Transforming."

Pacific Council on International Policy, Los Angeles, Calif. 90089-0035. 44 pp.

Free. Available on-line at <http://www.pcip.org/pub/>

Mexico is a changed land these days, its politics less authoritarian, its media more independent, its economy more open. But in part because of these advances, crime has become widespread, and pervasive corruption more evident. If these and other "deep social problems" are not subdued, Mexico's woes will only multiply, warns a bi-national, 58-member study group sponsored by the Pacific Council on International Policy.

Francisco Labastida, the victor in the first-ever primary of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), is likely to win the presidential election this July. But the political parties now compete on "a level playing field." The two major opposition parties currently control the lower house of the Mexican Congress, which no longer acts as a rubber stamp. President Ernesto Zedillo has inaugurated a "less interventionist" presidency, but critics charge him with weakness and abdicating responsibility. The PRI "is more divided" than in the past.

"As power becomes increasingly decentralized, the presidency has gradually lost control over key levers of government, including the police," the study group says. A crime wave has swept over many major cities. Mexico City now has more than two million reported crimes a year—and 98 percent "result in no action by the authorities."

The drug trade brings more than \$7 billion a year into Mexico, which sends north up to 70 percent of U.S.-bound cocaine from South America. In 1995 Mexico had an estimated 900 armed criminal bands, more than half of them made up of current or former law enforcement agents. "Street crime, kidnappings, and killings by organized gangs of former policemen, protected by corrupt officials, leave Mexicans of all classes feeling helpless and outraged," notes the study group. Mexico's military increasingly has been asked to combat drugs and crime. "Mexico is on the move," the study group concludes, "but its destination, indeed its destiny, remains open."

"The True Size of Government."

Brookings Institution Press, 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-2188.

223 pp. \$44.95; paper, \$18.95 Author: Paul C. Light

Is the era of big government over? It all depends on the meaning of *government*.

In 1996, when President Bill Clinton famously waved goodbye to the era of a supersized federal work force, there were about 1.9 million federal civil servants and 1.5 million men and women in uniform—a total of 3.4 million, which was about 900,000 fewer than in 1984. But remove the downsized Defense Department from the calculations, and the federal work force shows an *increase* of 60,000 over that period. Add in 145,000 new jobs at the independent U.S. Postal Service, and the increase is more than 200,000.

But that's not the half of it, or even close, says Light, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Consider all those folks who worked (in 1996) under federal contracts (5.6 million), federal grants (2.4

million), or federal mandates to state and local governments (4.6 million). Light tallies 12.7 million people in this "shadow of government." Though the contracts-and-grants "shadow" shrank by 950,000 jobs between 1984 and 1996, he says, contraction of the military accounts for all of the change. If the Defense Department is taken out of the picture, then the "shadow" grows by 610,000.

"The federal government may be turning back the clock on the number of civil servants," Light says, "but it continues to need a sizable shadow." And when the two are considered together, "the illusion of smallness" disappears. Instead of trying to perpetuate it, Light suggests, the president and Congress should take up the question of how many of the 16-plus million "federal 'producers'" should be kept "in-house."

WILSON CENTER DIGEST

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

"Emerging Issues in Environmental Policy."

A conference, Sept. 30, 1999, cosponsored by the Wilson Center's Division of United States Studies and the Governance Institute.

Though the immediate environmental outlook for the rest of the world is far less rosy, in the United States and other developed Western nations, environmental conditions are almost certain to keep getting better, predicts Paul Portney, president of the Washington-based think tank Resources for the Future and a principal speaker at this conference.

Since Earth Day 1970, "air quality has improved phenomenally" in most metropolitan areas, and many major rivers, such as the Potomac and the Hudson, have been made safe for fishing and other activities. In the coming decades, Portney believes, natural gas increasingly will supplant coal and oil for the generation of electricity and other uses, and cars will be weaned off gasoline, eventually turning to hydrogen fuel cells.

But now the U.S. environmental agenda has begun to shift to more contentious issues, says Mary Graham, a Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. The use of toxins and common chemicals, and pollution from farms and gas stations, dry cleaners, and other small businesses, are among the emerging issues. In the absence of technological "fixes," she suggests, the government will have to compel farmers, small business owners, motorists, homeowners, and private landowners to cease damaging the environment, even if that harms agricultural productivity, business profits, individual mobility, or property values. Graham anticipates clashes ahead "that will dwarf the battles of the last 30 years."

Looking at land-use issues, George Frampton, chair of the White House's Council on Environmental Quality, observes that environmentalists seeking to protect America's forests have radically expanded their horizons in recent decades. Once focused on national and state forest lands, they are now concerned with private

forests, which have "tremendous public benefits, and how [they] are managed has become very important in the national interest. . . . We're even interested in the species of trees that are on private forest [lands]."

Zoning, land-use policy, and city planning arose long ago from a recognition of the "public values inherent in how [private] property is used." Frampton looks to "new kinds of voluntary agreements," such as "Habitat Conservation Plans," in which a private landowner agrees to protect a swath of habitat for a threatened species in return for an official guarantee of no regulatory "surprises" for the ensuing decade or more.

In the realm of environmental regulation, Portney expects to see more use of economic incentive approaches, such as taxes on pollution, along with detailed public reports on the pollutants released by individual firms. With the Internet, notes William Pease, a senior scientist at the Environmental Defense Fund, citizen groups such as his own can turn a powerful spotlight on private firms' actions.

Environmental regulation will increasingly fall to regional, state, or even local governments, in Portney's view. Setting uniform national standards for air and water quality makes sense, he contends, but lower levels of government may be better able to regulate such things as solid and hazardous wastes and drinking water. Still other problems, such as climate change, require international action.

In the developing countries, environmental quality probably "will get worse before it gets better," Portney notes. The "principal challenge," he concludes, "is to find ways to help" them foster economic growth, which eventually will let them make the sort of environmental progress the United States has made.

"Rogue States and U.S. Foreign Policy."

Wilson Center Press. Distributed by Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, P.O. Box 50370, Baltimore, Md. 21211.

290 pp. \$49.95, hardcover; \$18.95 paper. Author: *Robert S. Litwak*

In Washington, many people speak of taming the post-Cold War world's "rogue" or "outlaw" states: Iraq, Iran, Cuba, Libya, and North Korea. Litwak, director of the Wilson Center's Division of International Studies, contends that creating this international rogues' gallery, as it were, is a serious mistake.

"Demonizing" these states may be useful in building political support for a hard-line policy of containment and isolation, he says, but it leads to inflexibility. Under such an approach, it becomes politically difficult to shift the policy toward "engagement" as circumstances change. For example, when the Clinton administration opted for "limited engagement," together with containment, to try to quell North Korea's nuclear ambitions in 1994, congressional critics accused it of "appeasement."

Rogue states have been defined as those that seek weapons of mass destruction, resort to terrorism, and threaten Western interests in such important regions as Northeast Asia and the

Persian Gulf. But the standards are applied selectively, Litwak points out. Cuba, on the one hand, "meets none of the criteria, but is included . . . for largely domestic political reasons." Syria, on the other hand, is kept off the list, despite "its continued support for terrorism and pursuit of [weapons of mass destruction]," because the Clinton administration hopes President Hafiz al-Assad will aid the Middle East "peace process."

The "rogue state" approach fits the traditional American tendency "to view international relations as a moral struggle between forces of good and evil," Litwak says. But it results in pressure for "a one-size-fits-all strategy." The hard-line policy may not be the best in the circumstances, may be hard to change, and may (as has happened in recent years with regard to Cuba, Iran, and Libya) put the United States at odds with some of its closest allies. Shut down the rogues' gallery, Litwak urges, and deal with the states on a case-by-case basis.

"Congress and the People: Deliberative Democracy on Trial."

Wilson Center Press. Distributed by Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, P.O. Box 50370, Baltimore, Md. 21211.

308 pp. \$34.95. Author: *Donald R. Wolfensberger*

Is the day of direct democracy about to dawn in America? Will electronically empowered cybercitizens supplant the elected representatives in Congress and write the nation's laws? Some enthusiasts for "teledemocracy" and the like say so, but Wolfensberger, director of the Wilson Center's Congress Project and a former House staffer, doubts it. For one thing, it would require a constitutional amendment—and hence, the approval not only of three-fourths of the states but of both houses of Congress, which "jealously guard their constitutional lawmaking prerogatives." For another, the public probably wouldn't find teledemocracy to its liking. As Oscar Wilde said of socialism: "It sounds like a good idea, but it takes too many evenings."

Wolfensberger examines the history of Congress, from its origins through the impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton. He is particularly worried, however, about "'virtual' direct democracy—representatives simply serv-

ing as funnels for public whims and passions," without engaging in the deliberation that James Madison envisioned would "'refine and enlarge the public views.'" The "culture" of Congress has shifted in recent years to one of "perpetual campaigning through confrontation," he says, and "very little deliberation currently takes place." Representatives keep close tabs on their constituents's desires, and "the public, at least through its agents in a multitude of interest groups," keeps close tabs on them.

There is no going back to an age when members of Congress were more insulated, Wolfensberger says. But lawmakers today could try to regain public trust by engaging citizens early on, in various forums, in discussions of a few selected major policy issues. In the end, though, he says, there simply must be more deliberation in Congress itself—and particularly in its committees, "where the real work of Congress is done."

CURRENT BOOKS

Consumer Contagions

THE TIPPING POINT:

How Little Things Make a Big Difference.

By Malcolm Gladwell.

Little, Brown. 288 pp. \$24.95

by Nathan Glazer

In the *New Yorker* in 1996, Malcolm Gladwell published “The Tipping Point,” an article about the surprising drop in New York City’s crime rate. The article attracted a good deal of attention and inspired this book, which he calls “the history of an idea.”

The idea of the tipping point originated in discussions of racial change in the early 1970s. In schools where the number of black students is increasing slowly and steadily, for example, there may come a point at which the percentage of black students abruptly begins increasing much more rapidly as white students leave. So too in neighborhoods, a slow or moderate increase in the number of black families seems at some point to trigger a much more rapid change. In both cases, the aim of achieving a stable mix of black and white is thwarted. Classrooms and neighborhoods seem to move from segregation to segregation, white to black, with a frustratingly brief period of integration in between. The phenomenon has inspired considerable research, some of it rather naively trying to determine whether some magic percentage triggers the rapid escalation of change.

Gladwell, after briefly describing the origin of the term, does not deal with racial integration. Instead, he tries to use the tipping point to explain a variety of rapid changes. He begins with the case of Hush Puppies, a brand of relatively cheap shoes that were once popular, lost their appeal, then suddenly regained it when they became hip in the clubs and bars of downtown Manhattan. From being found only occasionally in out-of-the-way, unfashionable stores, Hush

Puppies became widely available big sellers. “How,” Gladwell asks, “does a \$30 pair of shoes go from a handful of downtown Manhattan hipsters and designers to every mall in America in the space of two years?” He follows this with a second introductory case, that of the decline of crime in a New York City neighborhood.

What links these two cases, according to the author, is the tipping point, a concept he



finds best formulated in epidemiology. Can the Hush Puppies fad and the New York City crime drop be explained in the same way as the spread of flu in a community? That is Gladwell’s claim, and he leads us through an entertaining collection of stories and studies in developing it. Many of his encounters are with social scientists who study such matters as the spread of rumors. Some are with people who help popularize new ideas, whom he calls Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen. They are people who know a lot of people, or who are interested in knowing about new things, or who speak with confidence and credibility. Not many of them are necessary

to start a trend. All this is very much in the *New Yorker* vein—we meet interesting people who seem much better connected than you or I, and who may well be able to start fads.

But is this to be explained by the tipping point, however we interpret it? When we speak of a tipping point in the effort to achieve stable racial integration, our problem is bounded. Difficult as it is to find the percentage that uniformly triggers the rapid escalation of change, we know what we are talking about. We know too the various motives and influences that drive the change: People are afraid that the quality of education will decline, or that their children will feel endangered, or that the value of their property will drop. But when it comes to Hush Puppies—or, to take another case about which we are told a great deal in this book, the children's TV programs *Sesame Street* and *Blue's Clues*—we seem to be talking of a much more familiar and widespread phenomenon: magazines, programs, books, fashions that start small and take off. Is it the case that when a TV program reaches only x number of viewers it will struggle and possibly fail, but when it reaches x plus y it will soar? In that event, something like a tipping point would be operating, but that is not what Gladwell describes in most of his cases.

Some of his notions work well enough for selling and merchandising but seem ill suited to large social issues. Consider the crime drop. In what sense is this a consequence of Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen? To what extent does his “Law of the Few”—it takes only a few people to set an innovation going—apply? In the Hush Puppies case, these figures spread the idea through example by wearing the shoes. What is the equivalent in the case of the crime drop? Yes, approaches to policing have played a dominant role in the crime drop (though some think the huge increase in incarceration and the prosperity of the past half-dozen years have played as large a role). Those who advocated these approaches—including criminal justice scholars George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson with their “broken windows” thesis, and then-chief of police William Bratton with his computerized

crime statistics to guide police deployment in Boston and New York—played key roles. But they were advocating ideas and procedures to deal with a serious social problem. That is different from selling Hush Puppies—so different I fail to see the connection.

It is also hard to see how the principles of epidemiology apply to the crime rate. The curve of rising or falling crime may resemble the curve of a spreading or controlled disease, but all kinds of unrelated phenomena surprise us with similar curves. The explanations are radically different. A disease may be checked by an antidote, or it may exhaust itself by reaching all those susceptible, or immunity may spread in the population, or a quarantine may work. The crime rate falls because of surrounding social conditions, or because the supply of criminals has been reduced by imprisonment, or because penalties have become more certain or harsher and dissuade persons from criminal acts, or because policing has become more effective. If we are concerned about checking crime, we must attend to these factors rather than the similarity of curves of incidence.

After his entertaining and in part enlightening and educational foray through all kinds of phenomena, one wonders what Gladwell has added to the idea of the tipping point in its original realm, race. What do Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen have to do with transformations in the racial composition of schools and neighborhoods? Very little. What is crucial in these cases is individual and family self-interest, whether well or badly understood, drawing on key motives that influence our actions. Whites may not be threatened by a few blacks, or blacks of the same income and class—though that, too, will vary, and a single black homeowner in a neighborhood may trigger very unpleasant reactions. Misguided policy may contribute too. In a nation where 20 percent of the population moves every year, it does not take long for a school or a neighborhood to be transformed. How these transformations occur is a complicated story, and I don't see how Gladwell's concept of the tipping point helps us deal with it.

> NATHAN GLAZER is professor emeritus of sociology at Harvard University. His books include *Beyond the Melting Pot* (with Daniel Patrick Moynihan) (1963), *The Limits of Social Policy* (1988), and *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (1997).

Jealousy's Purpose

THE DANGEROUS PASSION:
Why Jealousy Is as Necessary as Love and Sex.

By David M. Buss.
Free Press. 260 pp. \$25

by Lee Alan Dugatkin

I never get a peaceful plane trip," a psychologist colleague of mine lamented. "Once people hear what I do, they proceed to tell me their theories of human behavior. Chemists must have relaxing plane rides—no one has his own theory of stereoscopic chemistry, but everyone thinks he is an expert in psychology." I imagine this observation is doubly true for some branches of psychology. Who, for instance, doesn't have ideas about why we fall in and out of love? That's one reason David Buss's *The Dangerous Passion* is bound to ruffle feathers. Like other evolutionary psychologists, Buss believes that science can unravel many of love's mysteries.

Evolutionary psychology holds that human impulses and behaviors—everything from why we cooperate or cheat to why we find others attractive—are best understood as the products of natural selection. Using the theory, several new books seek to explain what sparks love, passion, sexuality, and all that is associated with them, including Bobbi Low's *Why Sex Matters* and Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer's *A Natural History of Rape*.

Buss, a professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, and the author of *The Evolution of Desire* (1994),

focuses on jealousy. "Jealousy did not arise from capitalism, patriarchy, culture, socialization, media, character defects or neurosis," he contends. Rather, it is "an adaptive emotion, forged over millions of years," one inexorably connected with long-term love.

To chart the boundaries of jealousy, Buss surveyed hundreds of men and women in the United States, the Netherlands,

Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Zimbabwe. He asked which scenario they would find more distressing: learning that one's partner is involved in a passionate sexual relationship with some-

one of the opposite sex, or that the partner is involved in a deep emotional relationship. In line with previous research and common experience, most men in the survey chose sexual infidelity, and most women chose emotional infidelity.

Evolutionary psychologists explain the disparity this way: A woman can be certain that a child she bears carries her genes, but paternity is iffy. For a man, it is always possible that the partner is having someone else's baby. Investing resources in such a child is an evolutionary dead-end for him, so he is particularly jealous about matters of sex. And he knows that the sexual competition is fierce: In surveys, three-quarters



of men say they would have sex with an attractive member of the opposite sex who propositioned them on the street (a scenario that appeals to zero percent of women). Males' fear of being cuckolded has even made it into our legal code. Until 1974, if a man killed his wife and her lover after catching them in the act, he was not guilty of any crime under Texas law.

Women's jealousy, by contrast, tends to revolve around emotional issues. Buss and other evolutionary psychologists argue that women are almost always involved in raising children, and they want to ensure that the male will provide resources sufficient for the children to thrive. A one-night stand probably will not divert his resources, but an affair encompassing a strong emotional commitment may do so. Hence, females are particularly attuned to emotional infidelity, which may ultimately affect the well-being of their offspring.

Along with his own poll, Buss cites other opinion surveys that ask how people would feel or behave in particular situations. While it is refreshing to see data, and not just the imaginative theorizing that is so prevalent in this realm, one must view these surveys with caution. For one thing, the respondents are often university students who receive academic credit for participating, and their attitudes may not match the general population's. Even where a survey reaches a more diverse group, as with Buss's own study, people's answers to hypothetical questions may not reflect how they would actually behave. That is especially the case when some of the scenarios border on soft porn. (With some judicious editing, Buss could have advanced his arguments without quite so many tawdry details.)

Not all of the author's notions rest on data. He provides, for instance, an evolutionary explanation for the fact that people often falsely suspect a partner of infidelity based on a new tie, new perfume, or other flimsy evidence.

Groundless suspicion, he notes, may land you on the couch for a night; groundless complacency may cost you your partner. Natural selection favors making an error in the less costly direction, hence the false positives.

Buss also notes that infidelity is easily explained for the male—the more sexual partners he has, the greater his reproductive potential—but not for the female, who can get pregnant only every nine months. So why do women have affairs, risking abandonment and sometimes violence? Buss suggests some combination of five factors, each of which will probably offend some portion of his readership: A woman may seek the superior genes associated with men who have affairs; she may hope to produce a sexually alluring son; she may want to establish a partnership with a male higher on the social hierarchy than her current partner; she may seek a “back-up” mate should something happen to her partner; or she may hope for sexual gratification. Here again, the theories are provocative and plausible, but, as Buss acknowledges, the data are weak or nonexistent.

In his view, jealousy—unlike some adaptive behaviors rooted in the hunter-gatherer era—remains a positive force in the modern age. “Properly used,” he writes, “jealousy can enrich relationships, spark passion, and amplify commitment. . . . The total absence of jealousy, rather than its presence, is a more ominous sign for romantic partners. It portends emotional bankruptcy.” He urges therapists to recognize jealousy as potentially healthy and important rather than seeing it as a “negative emotion” that invariably portends a relationship in distress. Like much of this fascinating book, it is a prescription guaranteed to tantalize some readers and infuriate others.

> LEE ALAN DUGATKIN is a professor of biology at the University of Louisville. He is the author of *Cheating Monkeys and Citizen Bees: The Nature of Cooperation in Humans and Animals* (1999).

History

CARDANO'S COSMOS: *The Worlds and Works of a Renaissance Astrologer.*

By Anthony Grafton. Harvard Univ.
Press. 284 pp. \$35

Today, Girolamo Cardano (1501–76) is known, if at all, as a physician, mathematician, and natural philosopher. Grafton, however, concentrates on Cardano the astrologer. Like a growing number of scholars, Grafton, a Princeton University historian and the author of *The Footnote* (1997), argues that astrology in the Renaissance was a rational science, not some quasi-mystical, irrational manifestation of the “dark side,” and certainly nothing akin to the facile fortunetelling in today’s newspapers. Through Cardano’s voluminous writings on nature, the stars, and (above all) himself, Grafton establishes his subject’s astrology at the heart of all of those activities we consider central to the Renaissance: politics, print culture, the recovery of antiquity, the marketplace, and the practice of collecting wonders and curiosities.

Cardano hit upon the popular device of publishing an ever-expanding collection of “celebrity” horoscopes (or, as Grafton more properly terms them, genitures), together with gossip commentaries explaining how the stars were affecting their subjects’ lives. The collection earned Cardano a Nuremberg publisher (the same Petreius who brought out Copernicus) and thereby a share of the lucrative northern European, Lutheran market for astrological literature. Astrology also gave Cardano entrée into the corridors of power and brought him into contact with luminaries in France and England, including John Dee and the young King Edward, for whom he cast an extravagant horoscope.

A not-always-successful student of the Renaissance art of self-promotion, Cardano made enemies, too. He explained his proclivity “to say exactly what will offend my listeners” as a product not simply of heavenly influences, but also of the astrologer’s professional duty to tell the truth. And, with some cagey exceptions, this truth-telling extended to Cardano’s minute published dissections of himself, including the star-laced autobiography he wrote in the months before his death, while under house arrest imposed by the Inquisition.

“In an age conversant with Latin,” writes Grafton, “his curious and uncanny autobiography attracted many readers until late in the 19th century.” Historian Jacob Burkhardt, in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), cited Cardano’s memoir as an example of the self-reflection that made the Italian Renaissance the birthplace of modernity.

Grafton’s methodology, a combination of old-fashioned intellectual history and the newer discipline of the history of books and readers (what he calls the perspectives of “the parachutist and the truffle-hunter”), makes this book more than just an examination of Cardano. Through wonderfully vivid prose, the reader enters Cardano’s cosmos—a place no more unreasonable or contradictory, the author points out, than a world in which scholars “use computers to write and fax machines to submit the conference papers in which they unmask all of modern science as a social product.”

—Laura Ackerman Smoller

TRIALS OF INTIMACY: *Love and Loss in the Beecher-Tilton Scandal.*

By Richard Wightman Fox.
Univ. of Chicago Press. 419 pp. \$30

In making emotional sense out of one of the most perplexing events of late Victorian America, Fox has succeeded where many have failed. For seven months in 1875, America was riveted by a civil trial in Brooklyn in which one of the country’s most famous and beloved ministers, the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher (brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe), defended himself against adultery charges brought by his onetime best friend and parishioner, Theodore Tilton. The trial ended with a hung jury, but many commentators since have imagined that they could resolve what the jurors could not. Fox, a professor of history at the University of Southern California, wisely forgoes that quest and takes us in new directions.

Without quite meaning to do so, Beecher, Tilton, and Tilton’s saintly appearing and highly religious wife, Elizabeth, were pioneering new forms of intimacy, pushing at the conventional boundaries both of marital love and intense friendship. Beecher and his much

younger disciple Tilton initially shared an exhilarating soul love, a type of male bond neither unknown nor unacceptable to their sentimental age. But when Tilton's enthusiasm for religion waned, Beecher transferred his powerful affections to Elizabeth, who welcomed the older man's attentions. Rapturous but nonsexual love between the sexes was uncharted and dangerous territory in the 1870s, and the two evidently struggled with the difference between a permissible spiritual affinity and impermissible worldly desires.

Jealousy on multiple levels finally brought matters to a head, but, fearing publicity, the three managed to reach a private understanding about their complicated relationships. Eventually, public exposure forced Tilton's hand, and he sought to assuage his wounded honor through the old-fashioned remedy of a lawsuit. In court, Beecher and Mrs. Tilton denied a sexual relationship. Then, three years later, she emerged from a self-imposed silence for one brief moment to confess to adultery.

Fox organizes his book around the concept of narrative and storytelling. He notes that the players' accounts shifted over time, and he does not attempt to choose one version as the simple truth. Perhaps the most striking feature of the book is that Fox tells the tale backwards, underscoring his theme that narratives are constructs. After a pictorial prologue recapitulates the main outlines of the scandal, the text opens with the deaths of the three protagonists, then moves back in time, from late-life retellings, through Mrs. Tilton's confession in 1878, to

the civil trial of 1875, to the church investigation that exonerated Beecher. A remarkable chapter toward the end reprints some 30 love letters exchanged between the Tiltons in the late 1860s, on the eve of the crisis. By excavating the competing stories in reverse chronological order, Fox permits a much deeper reading of these letters, which provide an amazing window into a different culture of love from our own. All in all, *Trials of Intimacy* is an absorbing if demanding read and an extraordinary achievement.

—Patricia Cline Cohen

LOST REVOLUTIONS:

The South in the 1950s.

By Pete Daniel. Univ. of North Carolina Press. 392 pp. \$45 hardcover, \$19.95 paper

A LIFE IS MORE THAN A MOMENT:

The Desegregation of Little Rock's Central High.

Text and photos by Will Counts. Introduction by Will Campbell. Essays by Ernest Dumas and Robert S. McCord. Indiana Univ. Press. 96 pp. \$29.95

On September 25, 1957, federal troops armed with rifles and bayonets escorted nine black students into Little Rock's Central High School. White resistance to school desegregation, which had mounted in the three years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, suffered its first defeat. The Eisenhower administration, however reluctantly, was enforcing federal law.

Two months later, the entire student body of Wake Forest College, a Baptist-supported institution in Raleigh, North Carolina, marched out of chapel services to protest the school's ban on dancing. At a local snack shop, the students spent an hour "protest dancing" to "Wake Up Little Susie" and other hits of the day. Later, some students bunny-hopped across campus while others burned in effigy the church official responsible for the dance ban.

The South of the 1950s combined the civil rights struggle, teenage rebellion, and all the other forces that were transforming the nation. It was a place of rigid racial divisions and oppression, of white supremacy and antiblack violence. But it was also a place where black and white cultures intermingled and cross-fertilized, from the countryside to the city, pro-



ducing an explosion of musical talent and creativity that became known as rock 'n' roll. The music in turn was part of a larger youth rebellion, expressed in language, clothing, dance, and attitudes, that blurred racial lines and thereby threatened the traditional structures of social control.

In *Lost Revolutions*, Daniel, a curator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, brilliantly depicts the people who shaped southern life in the 1950s: the civil rights leaders such as Alice Wright Spearman, an organizer of South Carolina's interracial movement; Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, and the other founders of rock 'n' roll; the reckless and powerful bureaucrats of agribusiness; the free-spirited stock car racers whose passions would later become enshrined in highly commercialized NASCAR races. Daniel sketches gay life in the South too, as well as the pioneering all-women Memphis radio station WHER. A chapter on the crisis at Central High offers a new reading of what he describes as the "strategic realignment of segregationist forces" that

united white ministers, women, and high school students under the banner of massive resistance.

A Life Is More than a Moment shows just how deep and unyielding the racial divide was. A young photographer for the *Arkansas Democrat* at the time (he is now professor emeritus of journalism at Indiana University), Counts was there with his 35-millimeter camera when the black students entered Central High. The courage written on the faces of the Little Rock Nine, surrounded by enraged whites and grim National Guardsmen, stands out in the annals of the civil rights movement. The white Arkansans in the photos were not alone in their attitudes; Orval Faubus, the state's pro-segregation governor, made Gallup's list of the 10 most admired Americans in 1958. With his exquisite pictures, Counts captures a key moment in the struggle that ultimately cracked the walls of segregation and, through federal legislation, brought revolutionary change that the South alone could not have completed.

—Patricia Sullivan

Arts & Letters

HENRY JAMES:

A Life in Letters.

Edited by Philip Horne. Viking. 668 pp. \$35

In composing a biography largely from Henry James's correspondence, Horne is experimenting with a discredited form—the Victorian life and letters of an eminent person. In those tomes, the subject generally got the first and the last word, with the biographer acting as a discreet valet, making sure the old gentleman's linen was clean and brushing him up for public inspection. In the modern biographies that have displaced them, by contrast, the interpreter seizes control of the text, quotes much less from letters, and often feels compelled to expose the subject's flaws.

This revival and revision of the Victorian model allows James (1843–1916) to dominate, but it also permits Horne, who teaches English literature at University College, London, to enlarge on and sometimes contest the writer's account through headnotes. We read James's life as though he had written it in the vivid private language reserved for his inner circle, but

with subtitles that grant us access and also correct misunderstandings. Horne's deep knowledge of James and his world illuminates the life without seeming to interpret it. "Edited by" suggests that he is not the real author of the volume.

And yet Horne's subtitle, "A Life in Letters," can be construed another way—as an account of James's professional career. His is not the first edition of James's letters, nor is it the fullest. James's biographer Leon Edel produced a four-volume *Letters* (1974–84) that included 1,100 of them. More specialized collections have since appeared, such as the wonderful exchanges between James and Edith Wharton, and those between Henry and his brother William. Even so, half of the roughly 300 letters in Horne's book have never been published before. Thousands of James letters survive, so that interpreters can create an image of their own choosing through selection.

The James that emerges from Horne's choices is primarily (though not exclusively) an ambitious, disciplined professional writer,

advancing his career, vigorously negotiating with editors, publishers, and literary agents. He aims both to secure his long-term reputation as a serious novelist and to generate the income to devote himself to such work. It is a constant struggle. What he hopes to write (long, complex, often disturbing fiction) is, after his early successes, at odds with what the market wants (shorter, simpler, reassuring novels and stories), and many of the newly published letters record this impasse.

Far from suggesting a confident writer with no reason to worry about money or fame, this volume depicts a tenacious, at times desperate attempt to win the promised rewards. James is convinced that his works will crumble into dust. He would have been amazed that almost every published word he wrote remains in print on the brink of the 21st century, and that the large, discriminating audience he despaired of finding is reading them. And though he feared biographers (see his story “The Aspern Papers,” with its “publishing scoundrel” looking for secreted letters), he might have been grateful that one of them has chosen to concentrate on his struggles to make his name rather than on the intensely private world he hid even from his intimates. For readers with similar priorities, Horne’s book is an ideal introduction.

—Alex Zwerdling

***THE GREAT AMERICAN THING:
Modern Art and National Identity,
1915–1935.***

By Wanda M. Corn. Univ. of California Press. 470 pp. \$50

Its smooth white surface evoked ancient Greece, and its sleek curves echoed Constantin Brancusi’s modernism, yet R. Mutt’s *Fountain* was barred from the 1917 exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York. Why? It was a urinal, and therefore offensive to the artists and patrons organizing the show under the tutelage of the French Dadaist Marcel Duchamp. The punch line, of course, is that Duchamp himself had pseudonymously submitted *Fountain* in order to expose the provincialism of his “progressive and modern” American colleagues.

Or so the tale is told by most art historians. To them, *Fountain* inspired the conceptual art that today scorns beautiful objects in favor of provocative public gestures. To Corn, an art



Radiator Building—Night, New York (1927),
by Georgia O’Keeffe

historian at Stanford University, the story is not so simple. In her fascinating study of modernism’s first American phase (during and after World War I), she argues that Duchamp, along with other *transatlantiques* accustomed to the filth and stink of the Paris pissoir, truly admired American plumbing and saw its gleaming, efficient products as beautiful objects in their own right.

In recent decades art history has split into two modes of inquiry: the formal analysis of the connoisseur and the contextual approach of the cultural theorist. By combining the two, Corn uncovers a rich and often contradictory mix of motives for each object she scrutinizes, from Duchamp’s “readymades” to Joseph Stella’s hallucinatory painting of the Brooklyn Bridge to Georgia O’Keeffe’s stark still lifes of cattle skulls. Corn argues that American modernism really began in the 1910s and 1920s, not in the 1940s, as urged by postwar critics such as Clement Greenberg. The probing, often playful dialogue between European visitors and emigrés (Duchamp, Joseph Stella, Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia) and home-grown artists (O’Keeffe, Gerald Murphy, John Marin, Charles Demuth, Charles Sheeler) set

the terms for a century-long debate over what it means to make art in America.

Corn dissects the antagonism between Alfred Stieglitz (and his followers), who embraced a romantic “soil and spirit” idea of art, and the “machine age” aesthetic imported by Europeans influenced by futurism, cubism, and Dada. To the latter, America was not a vast country with a complex history but rather an edgy, jazzy place (they rarely ventured outside New York City) whose skyscrapers, bridges, and bright lights were icons of modernity. The author takes amused pleasure in the enthusiasms of the Europeans; especially acute is her account of how the wealthy, Yale-educated expatriate Murphy, with his precise, hard-edged renderings of commercial products such as safety razors, fountain pens, and watches, fulfilled “French expectations of how a modern American was supposed to paint and act.”

Ultimately, though, her sympathy lies with those Americans—Demuth, O’Keeffe, and Sheeler—who learned from the Europeans but also got out from under their expectations to create a way of seeing that was both modernist and deeply rooted in the American experience. “It is more difficult in America to work,” Demuth wrote in 1921, then added, “perhaps that will add a quality.” This book comes as close as any to capturing that elusive quality.

—Martha Bayles

BRUCE CHATWIN:

A Biography.

By Nicholas Shakespeare. Doubleday.
618 pp. \$35

As he neared death at age 48, British novelist Bruce Chatwin (1940–1989) blamed his illness on, variously, a visit to a bat cave, a rotten thousand-year-old egg he had eaten in China, and a fungus previously reported only in a handful of Asian peasants and “a killer whale cast up on the shores of Arabia.” Chatwin was really dying of AIDS, but mythologizing lay at the heart of his life as well as his five novels.

Now Shakespeare, a novelist, reveals the man behind the myths. Although Chatwin burned piles of papers during his illness, the biographer still had plenty to work with. Chatwin’s widow offered access to family papers and to restricted material at Oxford University. Shakespeare also gathered interview tapes, letters and diaries, and recollections from nearly everyone who crossed paths with Chatwin.

The result is a comprehensive portrait of a man so multifaceted that art critic Robert Hughes called him not a person but a scrum. By the time Chatwin published his first novel, *In Patagonia* (1977), he was only in his thirties and had already been a renowned art expert at Sotheby’s, a journalist, and an archaeologist whose pet theory was that settling down engenders human aggression.

His literary output was equally unclassifiable. Noting that Chatwin “made life difficult for booksellers, but vastly more interesting to readers,” Shakespeare calls his work “the most glamorous example of a genre in which so-called ‘travel writing’ began to embrace a wider range: autobiography, philosophy, history, *belles lettres*, romantic fiction.” *The Songlines* (1987), the bestseller about a journey across the Australian outback, was even up for a prestigious travel-writing award until the author reminded the judges it was a novel.

As Shakespeare explains, Chatwin’s life was full of paradoxes. He carried on a not-so-secret life as a gay man even as he shared a deep bond with a wife of almost unearthly patience. He was a middle-class boy from Birmingham who grew up to have an address book in which Jackie Onassis’s phone number appeared just before an oryx herder’s. While idealizing nomads’ ability to travel light, he spent a lifetime collecting beautiful objects. He traveled the world despite a bad case of hypochondria, toting a rucksack filled with pills. He was an impossibly handsome charmer but a difficult—and frequent—houseguest who never offered to do the dishes. Unlike *With Chatwin: Portrait of a Writer* (1997), editor Susannah Clapp’s slim memoir, this first-rate biography shows Chatwin in all his complexity.

—Rebecca A. Clay

BLOOMSBURY AND FRANCE:

Art and Friends.

By Mary Ann Caws and Sarah Bird Wright. Oxford Univ. Press. 430 pp. \$35

Generations of artists have escaped the pressure of conformity and the conventional pieties of their time by going abroad, even if only across the English Channel. The resulting encounters have often brought unexpected growth, cross-pollination, and a bountiful alchemy in the exile’s later work. E. M. Forster found freedom in Italy and India, Paul Bowles his true voice in Tangier. From Ernest Hem-

ingway to James Baldwin, the sharpest observers of American life went to Paris (always Paris) to find the distance they needed.

Caws, a professor at the City University of New York, and Wright, an independent scholar, contend that such alchemy goes a long way toward explaining the high-modernist carryings-on of the English clique known as Bloomsbury. The members of the Bloomsbury group frequently visited France to relax, to paint, to visit friends. The Bloomsbury artists, particularly Roger Fry, Duncan Grant, and Vanessa Bell, spent years in a succession of rented Provençal villas, painting fishing boats and still lifes and writing enthusiastic letters home about the quality of the light. A few of the writers—notably Dorothy Strachey Bussy, Lytton Strachey's sister, who translated André Gide's work into English—contributed significantly to the flow of French literary ideas to England.

But all this is very far from demonstrating that France exerted a formative influence on any of Bloomsbury's truly major figures—

Virginia Woolf, say—or that, as the book jacket claims, “without France there would have been no Bloomsbury.” The text falls far short of such arguments, instead providing a compendium of Bloomsbury travel trivia, an album for aficionados who want to hear not what the artists and writers discussed at Pontigny but rather that Lytton Strachey when there “suffered terribly from the absence of his usual egg at breakfast.” The authors report every detail of the Woolfs' cross-Channel trips, including the fact that, while driving south on March 26, 1928, Virginia “had to replace her woolen jersey with a silk one because of the increasing heat.”

This is not the stuff of which significant cross-cultural influence is made. Whatever the role of the French connection in the English avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s—and hints dropped here and there suggest that it was, indeed, more than trivial—it is not to be unearthed from this catalogue of Bloomsbury's ultimately run-of-the-mill Francophilia.

—Amy Schwartz

Religion & Philosophy

THE HEART IS A LITTLE TO THE LEFT:

Essays on Public Morality.

By William Sloane Coffin.

Dartmouth/New England. 95 pp. \$15.95

HERE I STAND:

My Struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love and Equality.

By John Shelby Spong. Harper. 464 pp.

\$25

FAITH WORKS:

Lessons from the Life of an Activist Preacher.

By Jim Wallis. Random House. 400 pp.

\$23.95

If the Protestant Right is too much with us, where is the Protestant Left? These three books may help us see.

William Sloane Coffin is the ghost of Christian Liberalism Past. Chaplain of Yale University during the Vietnam years, then senior minister of Riverside Church in New York City, he stands for engagement in the

world. Like liberal Protestant leaders since the early 19th century, he brings the Christian voice to the public table in a genial, reformist, and nonproselytizing way. In this slight collection of college talks, Coffin comes out foursquare for love, multiculturalism, and helping the poor, and against national self-righteousness, homophobia, and war. There's not much help here for those looking to sort out the moral conundrums of our time. The discussion of war raises hope that he will wrestle with the challenge of dealing with Iraqis, Serbs, and other contemporary aggressors, but Coffin, president emeritus of the nuclear freeze campaign, smoothly veers off onto the comfortable terrain of anti-nuclearism.

No less self-assured is the ghost of Christian Liberalism Present—John Shelby Spong, the just-retired *évêque terrible* of the Episcopal Church, Diocese of Newark. Spong has made himself notorious by using academic biblical criticism to assail traditional Christian orthodoxy. Along the way, he has championed a liberal ecclesiastical agenda, beginning with

issues of race, poverty, and anti-Semitism, and on through women's ordination and the ordination of noncelibate gays and lesbians. He long ago acquired the habit of writing books; this is his 17th.

Unlike Coffin, Spong has devoted himself to fighting the good fight within his church. *Here I Stand* gives an inside account of various political struggles in Spong's early parishes, his diocese, and the Episcopal House of Bishops; he does not hesitate to blast his reactionary opponents and scold his pusillanimous allies by name. There is material here for a latter-day Trollope, but Spong possesses neither the literary gift nor the sense of humor to pull it off. St. Peter may read him a lesson on humility before letting him through the Pearly Gates.

Spong's war for the soul of Episcopalianism may strike some as too churchly by half, but he has a sharp footnote for ecclesiastics who would devote themselves to issuing pious public pronouncements on issues such as Third World debt: "Church leaders possess little political or economic power to bear on this subject. So talk is cheap, costing the leaders nothing."

Which brings us to Jim Wallis, the ghost of Christian Liberalism Future—maybe. Wallis is Exhibit A in the small display cabinet of contemporary liberal evangelicals. Preacher, activist, editor of *Sojourners* magazine, he lives and works in a poor neighborhood of Washington, D.C., and for years has labored to spread the word of religiously motivated social action for the poor.

His time may be now, and he knows it. Thanks to the "charitable choice" provision of the 1996 welfare reform act—which encourages government funding of religious organizations providing services to welfare recipients—politicians and policy mavens have become enamored of "faith-based" approaches to the nation's social problems. And with this timely though preachy book, Wallis is johnny-on-the-spot.

He makes clear that he opposed the welfare reform act and worries that taking Caesar's coin will rob faith-based social service providers of their prophetic voices. He does not claim to have all the answers. But you can feel his excitement at the prospect of assembling a coalition of hands-on social activists that bridges the divide between the liberal and evangelical churches.

Whether this signals a new Protestant Left is very much an open question. The answer will depend on the willingness of liberal church leaders to rethink their views on the separation of church and state, of conservative church leaders to rethink their views on the evils of government, and of people in the pews to rethink their commitment to the gospel of wealth.

—Mark Silk

**DIVERSITY AND DISTRUST:
*Civic Education in a Multicultural
Democracy.***

By Stephen Macedo. Harvard Univ.
Press. 343 pp. \$45

Macedo believes that America's recent emphasis on diversity, especially in education policy and the law, does not go far enough toward promoting the shared beliefs and virtues needed to sustain a liberal democratic order. He proposes instead "civic liberalism," a "tough-minded" liberalism with "spine." A professor of political science at Princeton University, Macedo has written a blunt, provocative book that significantly clarifies important issues but is unlikely to foster the thoroughgoing civic agreement he seeks.

Liberal democracy, Macedo insists, is not and cannot be a neutral arena, equally hospitable to all ways of life. Rather, it must employ its formative powers to produce citizens deeply committed to liberal democratic principles and institutions. In particular, liberal public education must challenge the particularist views of parents and insular communities in the name of forming good liberal citizens. At the same time, civic liberalism must avoid becoming what Macedo calls "civic totalitarianism," the kind of comprehensive vision of a democratic order (John Dewey's, for example) that runs roughshod over all particular attachments in the name of science, progress, or national unity.

In the abstract, it is hard to disagree with Macedo's case. Like every other form of political regime, liberal democracy rests on certain moral propositions. The artful arrangement of public institutions—divided powers, checks and balances, federalism—is necessary but not sufficient. Liberal democratic citizens must also have a core of shared beliefs and traits of character. Not all ways of life will be equally conducive to liberal democracy, and some

pose such grave challenges that they must be directly confronted. Respect for the free exercise of religion, for example, does not encompass human sacrifice.

In moving from the general to the particular, the difficulties with Macedo's thesis emerge. To begin with, "liberal democracy" names a family of conceptions, not a single uncontested view. For example, Macedo regards participation in public life as an end in itself; other liberals disagree. So certain kinds of liberals could embrace schools that Macedo deems defective.

Second, liberals can agree on the ends of education while disagreeing on the means. Macedo describes the common school "ideal" as an institution that contains society's diversity in a context of tolerance and mutual respect. Unfortunately, relatively few public schools qualify. In many urban areas, in fact, the Catholic schools are more "common" than the public schools. Macedo offers almost no evidence that students attending sectarian schools emerge less tolerant or as inferior citizens overall.

Third, it is possible for liberals to disagree about the priority that should be attached to different components of their creed. While Macedo regards the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 as a "disaster," for example, other liberals saw it as safeguarding

the central place that religious freedom occupies in liberal morality and constitutionalism.

Finally, many liberals believe that liberalism's public principles need not govern the totality of one's private life. Despite his critique of civic totalitarianism, Macedo's brand of liberalism comes close to effacing the public-private distinction. He speaks repeatedly of civic liberalism's "transformative aims," by which he means (among other things) reshaping civil associations and even religious institutions to be consonant with liberal public principles. At one point he says that "liberal citizens should be committed to honoring the public demands of liberal justice in all departments of their lives," from which it would seem to follow that American Catholics are obligated to apply public laws against gender discrimination to the recruitment of their priests.

When public norms and religious commitments come into conflict, which should prevail? Macedo's brand of liberalism accords "supreme importance" to maintaining political institutions. Other, no less authentic understandings see freedom of religious expression as a liberal end to which liberal institutions are simply means. No verbal formula can dissolve the tension between basic liberties and the requirements of the institutions that protect them.

—William A. Galston

Science & Technology

OF TWO MINDS: *The Growing Disorder in American Psychiatry.*

By T. M. Luhrmann. Knopf. 352 pp.
\$26.95

In *Structural Anthropology* (1963), Claude Levi-Strauss retells the story, collected by Franz Boas, of the sorcerer Quesalid, a Kwakiutl Indian of Vancouver, Canada. Quesalid is a skeptic who studies with shamans in order to expose their tricks. Their darkest secret involves a tuft of down which the shaman hides in his cheek and, at the crucial moment, spits out, covered with blood—false evidence of illness sucked from an afflicted body. But Quesalid finds himself trapped: As an apprentice shaman, he cures patients with such success that he cannot cast off his calling. His attitude

changes. He comes to value conscientiousness and forget his initial doubts. The signs of the true shaman, he declares, are that "he does not allow those who are made well to pay him" and that he never laughs.

Each year, I assign this passage to beginning psychiatry trainees. It speaks not only to their cynicism, but to their growing sense of competence as they enter a fellowship whose methods are vulnerable to attack and yet demonstrably effective.

Of Two Minds examines how psychiatric residents become acculturated in this fellowship. Luhrmann, an anthropology professor at the University of California, San Diego, calls her method ethnography, but she writes like a journalist who has dived into psychiatric training. The result is a reasoned and reasonable

report on the current state of psychiatry and its struggle with Cartesian dualism—mind and brain.

Luhmann shares the viewpoint of her subjects: Mental illness exists, and it responds to both medication and the talking cure. Despite their contradictions, she finds, these two methods can be combined to good effect. She recognizes and appreciates wisdom and experience in senior clinicians. To her, psychiatry is a vital and fascinating field—“unquenchably compelling because it forever changes the way you understand human experience”—unjustly inhibited by excessive managed care. The book’s provocative subtitle notwithstanding, she mostly admires what she sees in American psychiatry.

Luhmann is a good storyteller, convincing in her accounts of professors, students, and patients. She ignores, however, a substantial literature on the training of physicians. We never learn how becoming a psychiatrist here and now contrasts with entry into other professional cultures, or with entry into psychiatry in other countries or (except in passing) other eras.

But she gets the portrait right; at least I see the profession as she does: honorable, demanding, flawed in the manner of all human enterprises. And at a time when the profession is under siege, accuracy is virtue enough.

—Peter D. Kramer

RAILWAYS AND THE VICTORIAN IMAGINATION.

By Michael Freeman. Yale Univ. Press. 264 pp. \$39.95

In 1990, century-old paintings by the once-celebrated English sporting artist George Earl reappeared on the market. *Going North* and *Going South*, showing wealthy Londoners thronging the King’s Cross and Perth railway stations at the beginning and the end of the season in Scotland, had followed the sad but common downward trajectory of Victorian society art: they were discovered in the disco lounge of a Liverpool pub.

In universities, railroads likewise have an equivocal reputation. For most academics outside the field of economic

history, they are too important and too accessible to be theoretically interesting. Even economic historians have misgivings. In the 1960s, Robert Fogel argued that other transportation technologies, especially canals, could have promoted growth equally effectively. In cultural studies, one major book appears each decade or so, such as Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s *The Railway Journey* (1979) and Jeffrey Richards and John M. McKenzie’s *The Railway Station* (1986).

Freeman’s book is the best blend of solid scholarship and sumptuous production yet. An Oxford University geographer, he portrays the railroad as one of the most radical and rapidly introduced discontinuities in the everyday life of the United Kingdom. The very establishment of a line was socially disruptive. Each road needed its own act of Parliament authorizing the surveying and forced sale of private property to the new company—a minor social revolution that initially mobilized landowners and tenants against the invaders. Cartoonists depicted railroads as voracious monsters swallowing the countryside (in contrast to the modern view of the train as the environmentally preferable alternative to the automobile). Some early surveyors had to work surreptitiously, using darkened lanterns at night, and one company hired a prizefighter to carry its surveying instruments.

Trauma soon yielded to fascination as landscapes little changed since the Middle Ages were transformed. Artists and poets found that railroads could blight nature, but they could also accentuate the picturesque. Lines afforded panoramic views of monuments such as Durham Cathedral. Viaducts added graceful rhythmic punctuation to landscapes, while tunnels evoked the darker side of Romantic sublimity. As Freeman



Going North, King’s Cross Station (1893), by George Earl

observes, J. M. W. Turner's stunning *Rain, Steam, and Speed* (1845) both celebrates the dynamism of the railroad and suggests its apocalyptic power.

Commerce and culture changed too. Fresh fish and beef arrived overnight in London from Scotland, and copies of Darwin's newly published *Origin of Species* sold like hotcakes at Waterloo Station. Meanwhile, cheap tickets were bringing long-distance travel to the masses for the first time. At the Great Exhibition of 1851 in the Crystal Palace, excursion trains attracted throngs of rural families. The companies' fare structure, Freeman suggests, helped integrate the working class into British society, especially as third-class amenities improved. But railroads also helped fragment social space. Even as they were creating the original middle-class suburbs around London, their new construction spawned domino-like waves of social displacement.

No 20th-century innovation changed everyday life as radically and permanently as railroading did in the 19th. Neither aviation nor atomic energy could compare. Only now is the Internet, for better or worse, giving us a sense of how our ancestors must have experienced the early trains, including the frenzy of financial speculation. Freeman has written a clear, engaging tribute to material and aesthetic accomplishments that continue to serve millions.

—Edward Tenner

WILD MINDS:

What Animals Really Think.

By Marc D. Hauser. Holt. 336 pp. \$25

Animal cognition is a rich and vital topic, and Hauser, a professor of psychology and neu-

rosience at Harvard University, aims to popularize it. Unfortunately, he has written a book that will appeal mainly to his fellow scientists.

He opens in the contentious style of a scientific paper, criticizing previous works (including my own) that, in his view, have too quickly drawn analogies between human thought and animal thought. Then he sets forth his own theories. Animals, in his view, lack self-awareness. They communicate by rote, and cannot combine sounds to form novel and meaningful expressions. They lack emotional self-awareness. They are incapable of empathy. They cannot be considered moral agents.

In support of his theories, Hauser trots out a virtual menagerie—vervet monkeys, honeybees, Clark's nutcrackers, desert ants—and describes field observations and laboratory experiments intended to demonstrate aspects of their cognition. It takes a skilled and experienced author to make behavioral studies come alive for the nonscientist, who tends to care less about experiments and theories than about animals. Hauser doesn't succeed.

But it can be done. In *The Nature of Horses* (1997), Stephen Budianski covered much of the same ground by concentrating on one species. He showed how the horse evolved from a solitary, forest-dwelling browser into the socialized athlete of the glacial steppes, for whom the seemingly simple act of running requires data processing powers almost beyond our imagination. We find ourselves in awe of horses and their remarkable abilities. Like Hauser, Budianski may not share all of my views on animal cognition, but he shows how an author can bring important scientific questions to a wider audience.

—Elizabeth Marshall Thomas

Contemporary Affairs

THE BABY BOON:

How Family-Friendly America Cheats the Childless.

By Elinor Burkett. Free Press. 256 pp. \$25

America has always cast a cold eye on the childless. Let it be known that the seen, heard, nasty, brutish, and short are missing from your

life and you will be pitied, censured, called "abnormal," and referred to a wonderful doctor who will find out what's wrong with you.

This prejudice is flourishing in today's "family-friendly" workplaces. Childless employees are being turned into a servant class for an aristocracy of parents who invoke the privilege of flextime to come in late, leave early, and beg



off Saturday work in the arrogant belief that their unblessed coworkers are happy to fill in for them.

The childless also bear the brunt of the tax burden, while parents get a \$500 tax credit per child, a \$1,500 tax credit for college tuition, a child-care tax credit, and extended unemployment insurance to stay home with a newborn. Moreover, companies skimp on benefits to the childless while lavishing on parents such perks as 12 weeks of unpaid maternity/paternity leave, adoption and foster care leave, on-site day care, breast-feeding rooms, paid absences for school plays and PTA conferences, and even “bonding time.”

In short, writes Burkett, the childless subsidize the fecund in “the most massive redistribution of wealth since the War on Poverty.” Burkett, a history professor turned journalist, approaches her subject with the shrinking timidity of Carry Nation. She calls family “the F-word” and thinks family-friendly policies are a “welfare program for baby boomers” and “affirmative action based on reproductive choice.” She also considers them profoundly reactionary. Rewarding parents at the expense of nonparents, she maintains, is no different from the old practice of paying men more than women because they had families to support.

“Parents,” of course, is a euphemism for frazzled working mothers. With a fine impartiality, Burkett blames the family policy rip-off on conservatives obsessed with motherhood and liberals obsessed with women’s rights. They have met their common enemy, and it is the childless. Feminists, who used to rail against the family as a patriarchal institution, must now support profamily legislation or else admit they were wrong when they told women they could have it all. “Feminism has become the ladies’ auxiliary of the parents’ rights movement,”

Burkett writes acidly, “and the words woman and mother have become synonymous once again.”

This no-holds-barred book will upset many, but it marshals a wickedly funny compendium of evidence of America’s child fixation: the 1988 presidential election, when George Bush and Michael Dukakis both campaigned in daycare centers; the peanut butter-free zones established in daycare centers when parents panicked over the allergy scare; the trial lawyer who found a right to breast-feed in the Constitution; and the \$375 breast pump that plugs into a car’s cigarette lighter, allowing lactating careerists to milk themselves while driving to work.

Burkett’s most controversial point is her suspicion that the real impetus behind the baby boon is the demographic forecast that minorities will be in the majority in the near future. Showering tax breaks and benefits on affluent whites rewards fertility and encourages “birth by bribery,” a ploy not unlike the Nazi practice of awarding the Mutterkreuz to Aryan super-moms.

—Florence King

THE NATURE OF ECONOMIES.

By Jane Jacobs. Random House. 190 pp. \$21.95

Jacobs burst on the scene in 1961 with *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a book that helped prevent the destruction of Manhattan’s SoHo manufacturing district by highway builders. Before moving to Canada in 1969, she was deeply engaged in stopping Westway, another monster highway project in New York. She arrived in Toronto only to find the Spadina Expressway bearing down on her home. She stopped that, too.

Death and Life and its successors, *The Economy of Cities* (1969) and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984), were works of economics by a journalist. The community of technical economists, accustomed to writing in highly mathematical language, ignored her (with the honorable exception of Robert Lucas at the University of Chicago). So, giving up on them, Jacobs switched to a different form.

Systems of Survival (1992) and, now, *The Nature of Economies* are Platonic dialogues among a handful of imagined citizens who inhabit a civilized New York quite like the city

Jacobs left: Armbruster, the retired publisher; Kate, the science writer; Hortense, the lawyer; Hiram, the fundraiser for students of “biomimicry” (which is really Jacobs’s topic); and Murray, Hiram’s economist father. These books are amusing to write, fun to read, but perhaps also confusing to, say, people flustered by the fictional narrator of Edmund Morris’s memoir of Ronald Reagan, *Dutch*.

Though it is a short book, *The Nature of Economies* is intended as a *summa*, an attempt to state three overriding principles of economics in terms of ecological and evolutionary processes. First, economic development is differentiation emerging from generality (the log used as roller becomes a wheel). Second, successful differentiations ordinarily are not final; they become generalities from which further differentiations emerge (the cart wheel becomes a spoked wheel, a waterwheel, a windmill, a propeller, a food processor). And, third, all differentiation depends on codevelopment in the ubiquitous competition for resources (the wheel becomes a gear and then a hundred different types of gear). Illustrations drawn from history and nature spin out like kittens chasing their tails.

The idea that economics and ecology have much in common is not new. The great Victorian economist Alfred Marshall was famous for his opinion that “the Mecca of the economist lies in economic biology rather than in economic dynamics.” But biological analogies were complex and little understood, while one could say something concrete using dynamic models, such as three balls in a bowl to demonstrate equilibrium.

Jacobs hasn’t solved the technical problem of developing biological models either, but she does succeed in explaining her view of economics with astounding clarity, probably because she never acquired the carefully wrought blinders of the professional economist. To the well-known “law of diminishing returns” she opposes the “law of responsive substitution,” meaning that people contrive substitutes for resources that have become too expensive. In contrast to the ordinary postulate of universal self-seeking, she observes that the oldest economic generality of all may be the practice of sharing. One of our sharpest observers for the past 40 years, Jacobs is more acute than ever.

—David Warsh

WHAT PRICE FAME?

By Tyler Cowen. Harvard Univ. Press. 256 pp. \$22

Two years ago, Cowen, a young economist from George Mason University, marched into the cultural minefield arguing that capitalism fosters great art. In *Praise of Commercial Culture* was an energetic paean to the free market as well as a show-and-tell of the author’s erudition; from the Greeks to Rodchenko to Skinny Puppy, there wasn’t much Cowen hadn’t stumbled upon. Asking everyone to join him at the table, lefties and neocons alike, he invoked British novelist John Cowper Powys on the purpose of culture (“to enable us to live out our days in a perpetual undertide of ecstasy”) and ended with a secular prayer: “Let not the differences in our personal tastes or political views dim the chorus of this ecstasy.”

Two years later, the world is still Cowen’s boom box. His new book analyzes the organizing principle of commercial culture: fame. “Fame has become the ideological and intellectual fabric of modern capitalism,” he writes. The key to our culture is “the commodification of the individual and the individual image.” Everyone wants to be famous. In the first two pages, Katharine Hepburn, Isaac Newton, Princess Diana, Beethoven, Proust, David Hume, and Adam Smith get hustled in to back up that point. Certainly Cowen himself wants to be famous—the Oprah of economists, why not admit it? A free market, he calmly explains, has little room for shame, or for morals.

Cowen tries to find the good in this marketplace of renown. Fame draws “forth a dazzling array of diverse and creative performances,” and “mobilizes the human propensity to talk in support of great achievements.” Still, he cannot deny a growing suspicion that all is not well. “A culture saturated with overfamiliarity becomes less hopeful, less interested, and less erotic,” he acknowledges. People become jaded; “cynicism and debunkings” displace intellectual curiosity. Fame also discourages innovation: the quest for renown makes scientists and other creators more secretive and less cooperative; desire for reputation encourages fraud; and people take fewer risks when they’re being watched. For the famous, in addition, fame can carry an onerous price. They may, like John Lennon, literally die of exposure. As he recites these terrible truths, Cowen often leans back on the pre-

amble “for better or worse,” as if daring the cultural pessimists to come and get him, the consummate pragmatist.

His previous book drew praise for its contrarian attitude toward aspects of our culture deemed repellent by more famous social critics

such as Daniel Boorstin and Allan Bloom. Back then Cowen was a whippersnapper in his early thirties. Now he’s 38. Give him another few years, a talk show appearance or two, and he’ll be a cultural pessimist like the rest of us.

—A. J. Hewat

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FROM THE CENTER

Some years ago when I was starting out in Congress, a wise observer of Capitol Hill told me that the worst thing about congressional service was that members never have time to put their feet up on their desk, look out the window, and think about the long-term needs of the country. I have come to appreciate the wisdom of that comment.

It may be unavoidable that Washington policymakers focus mainly on urgent problems, headlines, and crises, from hurricanes at home to upheavals abroad and, lately, spiking energy prices. But far too little attention is given to challenges that lie just over the horizon. I have been part of the federal government for more than three decades, and this is just not something—with a few notable exceptions—it does well. The challenges are numerous: How can we ensure adequate food and energy supplies? What is the likely course of world trade? What are our long-term national security needs? What domestic and international environmental challenges will we face? What problems will be posed by global inequality? How do we maintain a prosperous and open economy? In failing to address such questions, we both miss opportunities and overlook steps we should be taking today that could make tomorrow's problems far more manageable.

One of our key aims at the Wilson Center is to promote a more coordinated and coherent focus on the future. Along with governance, both here and abroad, and the U.S. role in the world, future challenges confronting the United States is one of the “themes” uniting much of the Center's work. As we launch a project in this field, we will be recruiting scholars and practitioners to help identify and illuminate the emerging challenges that most need attention. In seminars and other settings we will bring together experts, policymakers, and advocates—not only to discuss particular challenges but to grapple with the difficult problem of finding ways to get a distracted Congress and executive branch to pay attention. Washington policymakers must begin to do what business already does so well—strategic planning for the future. We believe they could learn a great deal from sessions devoted, for example, to assessing the existing federal efforts at longer-term thinking (such as the State

Department's Strategic Plan for International Affairs), surveying the experience of strategic planners in the private sector, and assaying the kind of federal data and statistics needed to support better thinking about the future.

Far from requiring esoteric speculation and gazing into crystal balls, many distant challenges are reasonably predictable. I recently met with one of our country's top demographers, who laid out a variety of changes that are likely to flow from the increased immigration of recent decades. There are some encouraging signs of greater governmental interest in such approaches. Speaking at the Wilson Center in February, George Tenet, director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, said that his agency is now working to free up more of its analysts' time for future studies, and it is also reaching out to tap the long-range thinking of more academics and private-sector experts. As Tenet put it, his agency has recognized the way the tyranny of the in-box keeps people from thinking about the future.

A project on future challenges is a natural fit for the Wilson Center. Indeed, the Center's existing programs already have a strong future orientation, with recognized expertise in fields ranging from the global environment to work force issues in Asia and Latin America, U.S.-Russian relations, and electronic commerce. We will soon hold a conference to explore the astonishing range of possible applications for the next generation of supercomputers. Our effort to focus on the future will help tie together many of our undertakings; improved governance, for example, is hard to achieve without more systematic long-term thinking.

In a city thickly populated with think tanks largely devoted to the issues of the day, the Wilson Center is a different kind of institution. We aim to enlarge the national vision, widening it by casting issues in their broader historical and political context, while also extending it by peering into the future. Looking over the horizon, moreover, is a fitting mission for an institution founded to honor the man who once declared that “my clients are the children; my clients are the next generation.”

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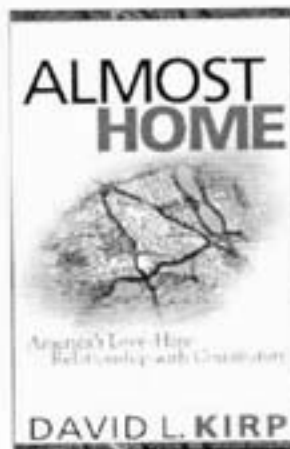
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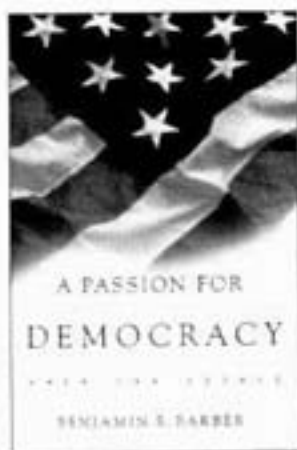
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