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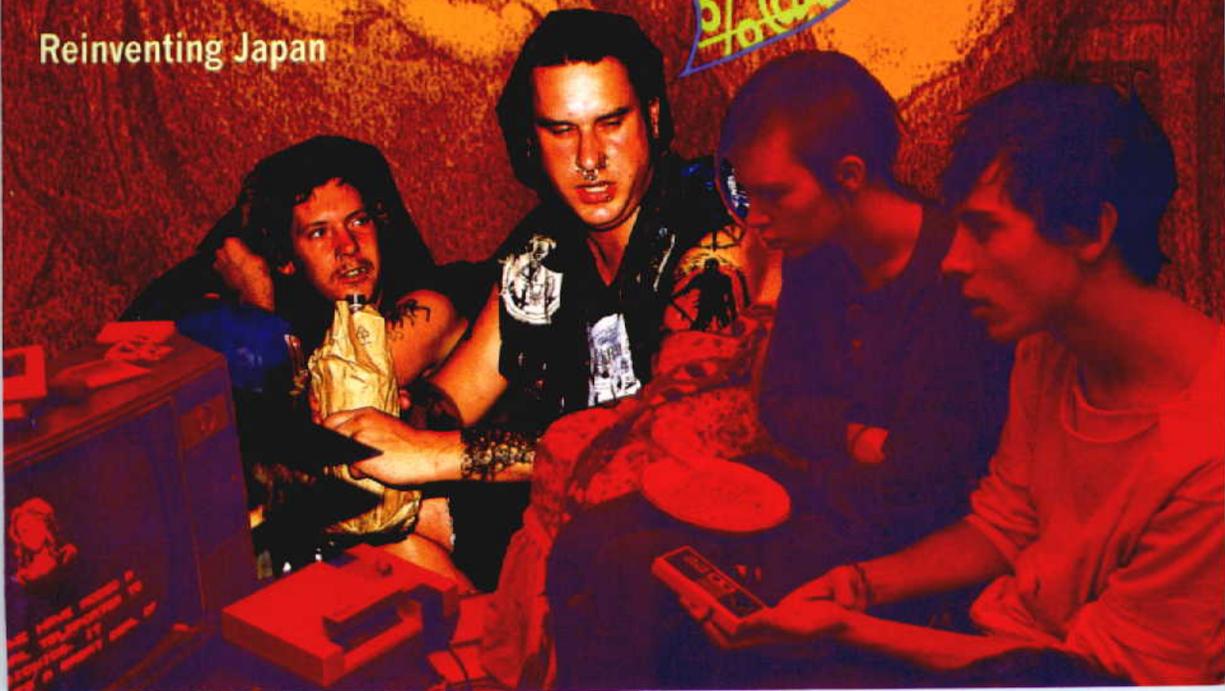
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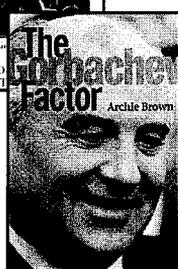
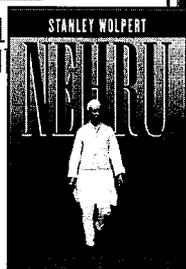
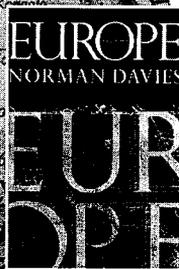
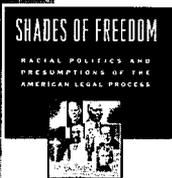
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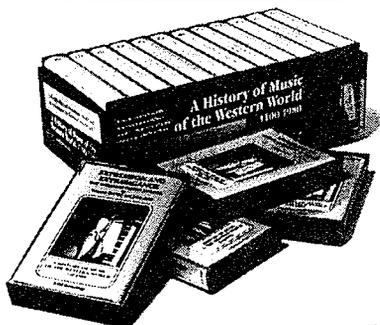
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Readers new to the *WQ* might conclude from this issue that we have a fixation on anniversaries. Three of our articles—those treating George Washington's Farewell Address, the writing of Japan's postwar constitution, and the life and thought of René Descartes—appear precisely because they are tied to significant dates. We assure you that this practice is not an obsession. Whole issues come and go without mention of someone who was born, or of something that took place, 100, 50, or even 10 years ago.

That said, I confess to a weakness for anniversaries. The reason, quite simply, is that they have a way of concentrating the mind—in our case, on new understandings of the people, events, or ideas that made the world the way it is.

The news, since we purport to be the “newsmagazine of the world of ideas,” consists emphatically of the *new understandings*. Our interest is never merely antiquarian. It's fine and good that the world keeps spinning 400 years after the birth of Descartes, but what pricks our curiosity is not only why his ideas continue to vex the best minds of the 20th century but how and why he came to his conclusion that the ground of certainty lies in the thinking self. This radical notion—now so commonplace as to defy our appreciation of its radicalness—has long seemed to have sprung full-formed from Descartes's head. Countering that misconception, our author, Anthony Grafton, untangles a skein of new scholarship (and brings in much of his own) to evoke the world in which the brilliant, Jesuit-educated polymath worked. We learn, for example, how Descartes both used and rejected aspects of his traditional humanistic education to take on questions that were almost daily being raised by Francis Bacon, Galileo, and other instigators of what we now call the Scientific Revolution.

Perhaps the only way around Descartes, the giant who continues to dominate the path of modern philosophy, is to return to him. And something similar might be said of all anniversary-inspired subjects: they allow us to move forward by first taking us back.

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Searching for the Health Care Cure

All of the articles in "Healing American Health Care" [WQ, Summer '96] address a fundamental proposition that Americans always try to sweep under the rug, namely, that any well-run health system will ration health care pervasively.

In the Canadian and European health systems, governments limit the size of the health system and then leave it to the system to ration health care, through the decisions of physicians and other key decision makers in the health system. Under American-style managed care, health care is carved up into myriad privately run, investor-owned, fully integrated mini-health systems. Their managers ration health care through practice guidelines and the judicious application of financial incentives that may, as Dr. Poplin suggests, create severe conflicts of interest among physicians.

Finally, under medical savings accounts (MSAs), there would be two-tiered rationing. In the first tier—up to the very high deductible—there would be rationing by price and household income. Surely the proponents of MSAs are under no illusion about the fact that, under their scheme, the children of well-to-do households would fare much better than those of low-income households, particularly because the tax-deductibility of the annual savings deposit would effectively make the after-tax cost of health care much cheaper for high-income households facing high marginal tax rates than it would be for low-income households. Once a household's medical spending exceeded the deductible, catastrophic insurance would presumably take over. Does anyone sincerely believe it would be "unmanaged" by insurance executives? In that tier of spending, there would inevitably arise rationing by private managed-care regulators, using many of the techniques that are now favored by the HMO industry.

Thus, we are merely debating the different techniques and distributive ethics associated with different styles of rationing. It is a worth-

while debate, but it must be conducted openly and honestly.

Uwe E. Reinhardt
Princeton University
Princeton, N.J.

Although the topic went undeveloped, a couple of stray remarks of your health care essayists should alert us to the plight of perhaps the most unfortunate, yet surely ignored population—middle-class people with chronic illnesses whose families wish to care for them at home.

Often their needs are simple: to change positions, to be served a meal, to be lifted to and from a commode—a total of maybe an hour of actual services across the eight hours the family care giver must be away at work. Yet the cost of even unskilled home-care aides for so many hours is ruinous and not covered by most private insurance or by Medicare, while Medicaid helps only the indigent.

To the chronically ill of the middle class, America says little beyond "You won't be middle class for long." Can't we find a less cruel solution for these people and their families?

P. M. Aliazzi
Hunting Valley, Ohio

Dr. Poplin's article ["Mismanaged Care"] belongs more on a newspaper "op-ed" page than in a scholarly journal such as the *Wilson Quarterly*. She needs to back up her rhetoric with some facts.

To cite one example, she states that "tasks formerly performed only by doctors—such as simple surgery and routine anesthesia—are being turned over to less costly 'physician extenders.'" Nurse anesthetists have been providing all types of anesthesia for almost 100 years but less frequently during the last 30. Currently, nurse anesthetists provide 65 percent of the anesthesia care provided in the United States. Jerry Cromwell, in *The U.S. Health Workforce: Power, Politics, and Policy*



(1996), states that “anesthesia is a traditional nursing function that has been replaced, in fair part, by physicians over the past 20 to 25 years.” This has led to significant cost increases, “simply because of the tremendous differences in cost between nurse and physician providers.”

Certainly an issue so important to so many people should be treated with more respect and less bias. Poplin’s concerns are not served by bad history.

*Robert J. McKennett
Boone, N.C.*

Your essays on health care note the complexity and perversity of the incentive system that has grown up in our health care system, which may—we don’t know yet, it’s too soon to tell—be creating even more Byzantine incentive structures with managed care. At the very least, we know that it threatens the edifice of trust between patient and physicians that is so essential to healing.

I worry most about the effects on patients. The people I see in my weekly practice are confused and concerned. They are confused about the tremendous shifts in our health care system that they have heard or read about, even if they haven’t experienced them personally. They are concerned about the attacks they read on doctors and their venality, health plans and their motives, government programs and their inefficiency, even if these attacks are ill-founded. My physician colleagues are frustrated by the inherent inefficiencies in all this turmoil—the increased paperwork, the heavier workload, the loss of control over care decisions—and these frustrations sometimes taint the care transaction, too. Studies show that patients can be “cured” of many ailments just by believing their doctor has given them something that will work; without that confidence, will even our most expensive drugs and procedures truly heal?

*Steven A. Schroeder, M.D.
President, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Princeton, N.J.*

The Divided China

Anne Thurston’s article [“Taiwan: The Little Island That Could,” *WQ*, Summer 1996] is an excellent introduction to the economic and political progress achieved by Taiwan’s 21 million people and the complexities of their relationship with mainland China.

It is inaccurate, however, to say that “Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo had

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to die before political reform could begin.” Thurston herself says that Chiang Ching-kuo began to institute political reforms in 1986: “lifting martial law, loosening controls on the news media, and legalizing the formation of competing political parties.” Ching-kuo’s appointment in 1984 of Lee Teng-hui as his political successor (which Thurston refers to as “his most dramatic political reform”) was the culmination of a process of “Taiwanization” of the party and government begun by Ching-kuo as premier in 1972. He appointed Taiwanese to higher positions and recruited increasing numbers of Taiwanese into the party.

By 1976, more than 75 percent of new recruits were Taiwanese, and Taiwanese constituted 55 percent of the entire party membership. KMT organizational reforms in the 1970s and the continuing process of making the membership more representative of Taiwan’s population (85 percent Taiwanese) paved the way for the dramatic political reforms of 1986. And these basic reforms, in turn, made it possible for Lee Teng-hui to manage the further transformation of Taiwan into a democracy.

Radicals in Beijing press for explicit acknowledgment by the Taiwan authorities that Taiwan is part of the PRC, while radicals in Taiwan press for worldwide recognition of Taiwan as an independent state. To prevent these irreconcilable demands from leading to military conflict, moderates on both sides of the straits encourage the expansion of economic and other forms of mutually beneficial cooperation, leaving open a decision on the eventual formal relationship of Taiwan to mainland China. The United States, Japan, and other states friendly to both parties should shape their policies to strengthen the moderates and avoid giving ammunition to the radicals.

Ralph N. Clough

*The Paul H. Nitze School of
Advanced International Studies
Johns Hopkins University
Washington, D.C.*

When Anne Thurston proposed Taiwan as the model for mainland China to follow toward a more open, democratic society, it brought to mind a traditional Chinese saying: “There’s something good to be said for the idea, and there are some drawbacks.”

On the plus side is Taiwan’s thriving economy. Until very recently, there was a labor shortage in many industries. Even now, though unemployment is officially just over two per-

cent, many people have side jobs or run small businesses out of their homes, reporting little or none of the income to the government. Summer youth unemployment, always listed as a problem in the United States, scarcely exists, since most teens are in some kind of summer school (a point sometimes ignored by Americans comparing test scores).

On the negative side, Taiwan invites serious questions about just what it means to be a democratic society based on the rule of law. Despite having laws similar to Japan’s, Taiwan is lax about their enforcement. Worst of all is the public spectacle in the National Assembly, where filibuster and debate frequently turn to screams, fistfights, and brawls. In one recent incident, an assemblywoman was savagely bitten on the neck by a man from the opposition party.

I like to tell myself that the real reason China didn’t invade Taiwan last spring was that the beaches were too filthy to land on, the streets too dangerous to drive on, and the people too unruly to govern. If the mainland Chinese have half the problems Thurston says they do, why would they want the extra headache of trying to handle Taiwan’s?

Monty Vierra

Chutung, Taiwan

Chineseness has long been an issue among cultures situated on China’s borders. That Taiwan could outdo the mainland in this department is not particularly noteworthy when we recall that Mongols and Manchus long ago successfully managed to assume the “mandate of heaven” during the imperial age.

Whether Taiwan ends up wagging the dog or vice versa, it is clear that the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China both share a common future. Lee Teng-hui is not disguising an independence movement by calling for “accommodation with the Mainland and Taiwanization.” Rather, he seems determined to find a way forward that permits the survival of a society whose history has diverged from China’s without denying the facts of history that bind each to the other. The Hong Kong saga is no less complex, though the certainty of 1997 makes the punch line obvious.

Clearly, the umbrella of English law has worked to the benefit of the local population. Any threat to that system endangers the pros-

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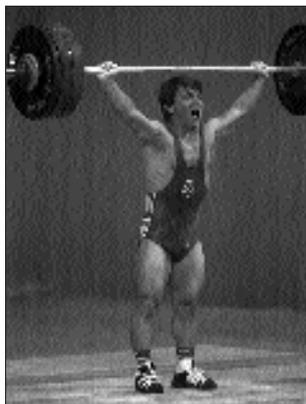
FINDINGS

ACADEMIC SET-ASIDES: It's hardly news that academic publishing is beset by a rising tide of "unoriginal interpretative rehashes of what is already known." But political writer Noel Malcolm, in the British magazine *Prospect* (Aug.–Sept. 1996), proposes a new and noteworthy two-step solution: (1) require candidates for academic appointments to provide not all of their many published works but what they consider to be their three best items produced in the preceding 10 years; (2) take a leaf from government agricultural policy and pay academics for not writing.

"Dons," Malcolm writes, "should be paid a bonus for every year in which they do not publish an article. Conversely, a rising scale of financial penalties should attach to every article or book that they produce. Pseudonym detection squads would sniff out fraudsters, like the satellites which monitor Sicilian olive groves."

SHORT STORY: You might have thought it was a good thing that Americans are growing taller with every generation. Not so. The long and lean look is ecologically unsound, writes engineer Thomas T. Samaras in *Futurevision*, a new book from the World Future Society. Taller folk require heaps of extra resources, energy, and farmland. They create additional air and water pollution. And

their calorie-rich diet is deadly. At an average height of 5'5", by contrast, the Taramuhara Indians of northern Mexico, light eaters to the last, are virtually free of heart disease



and diabetes. The Taramuhara may have other problems, but they are exemplary joggers, capable of running 60 to 120 miles without stopping. From an engineering standpoint, Samaras adds, smaller bodies are more efficient. Consider Turkish weight lifter Suleymanoglu (a.k.a. "the pocket Hercules"), an Olympic gold medalist at only 4'11". When you think about it, as Samaras points out, many of the world's most accomplished people have been on the short side, including, as he notes, Joan of Arc, Voltaire, Churchill, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, Jack LaLanne, and Bruce Lee.

CHIN UP, CHARLES: Long confined to the precincts of tabloid journalism, the shenanigans of the British royal family have recently kindled interest within academe. In a "deliberative polling" experiment conducted last July, University of Texas political scientist and former Wilson Center Fellow James Fishkin queried a random sample of Britons for their views on the scandal-ridden Windsors. Departing from conventional poll procedures, Fishkin brought the 300-odd participants together for a weekend confab to voice their opinions and learn about possible avenues of reform. (The ideas behind this approach, outlined in Fishkin's new book, *The Voice of the People: Public Opinion and Democracy*, 1996, also guided the National Issues Convention, aired by PBS last January before the presidential campaign got underway.)

As the good professor predicted, once "educated" about alternatives, many of the poll participants changed their views about the monarchy. Those thinking that the monarch should no longer serve as head of the Church of England went from 26 percent to 56 percent, for example. But not to worry, Prince Charles: even after a weekend of deliberation, a strong majority

remained convinced that nothing should be done to compromise the Rolls-Royce glamour of the British Crown.

TOO MUCH INFORMATION: For those who are fed up with America's shameless talk-show culture and are (politely) determined not to take it anymore, the British-born writer Christopher Hitchens offers an excellent suggestion. "On any given day," he writes, "a perfect stranger may ring you up at dinnertime to describe a brand-new product or credit card or investment scheme. Another newcomer to your life may take the next seat on an airplane and begin to confide about his or her religion, or his or her shrink. People pull up chairs at dinner tables and launch into a description of some intestinal or uterine nightmare, and the 'procedure' that brought relief from it. To all these, one could turn with a polite smile and say, "Too much information.'"

Putting Hitchens's gentle rebuff into general circulation might just have an impact. But it may be too late. Hitchens himself, after all, had to make his proposal in *Vanity Fair* (March 1996), one of our national citadels of self-revelation.

Sorry, too much information.

YOU SAY KENYA, BUT THEY SAY KANE-YA: Now comes geographer Reed Stewart, of Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts, with a reasonable question. Given that we now take greater pains in pronouncing the names of people from other parts of the world, why don't we take the trouble to say their countries' names correctly as well? Stewart calls on the American print media to write country names as closely as possible to the way natives say them. So it's not only España and Deutschland but Suriyah (for Syria) and Sa'udi (as in Sah-oo-di) Arabia. *No hay problema, Herr Professor*. But Stewart himself acknowledges potential hurdles. Imagine taking a slow boat to Zhoughua Renmin

Gonghe Guo, for instance. It sort of makes you pine for China.

CLASS NOTES: In the Spring 1996 issue of the *American Oxonian*, Secretary of Labor Robert Reich reports on the progress of his Rhodes Scholar classmate: "Bill CLINTON writes that he and Hillary celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary this past year, along with Chelsea's 16th birthday, and enjoyed their extended family including two young nephews.



Bill says that he is working harder than ever at his job as President of the United States. He finds the work more rewarding, even including, and sometimes especially, the debates with Congress. He says that the vision he has been working to realize is clearer when seen in contrast to the Republican vision embodied in the Dole-Gingrich budgets and other items in their Contract. It's a fascinating time, he writes, full of possibilities, but full of challenges. Becoming eligible for AARP membership has had a sobering impact, however. Recommended reading: D. H. Donald's *Lincoln*. Best films: *Il Postino*, *Braveheart*."

A NEW BREED: We suspect it's not just editors who are putting up with the newest variant of the old dog-ate-my-homework excuse. As schools press Gore-ishly forward in their effort to make every child computer "literate" (computerate?), teachers must already grow weary of "wired" explanations for tardy or missing assignments. A sampler: "My hard disk crashed," "I deleted the file by mistake," and best of all (since there are programs to retrieve accidentally erased files), "A virus destroyed everything in my computer." You might say that the computer revolution has given birth to its first virtual creature: the digital dog.

Hail to the Critic

The thoughtful *Washington Post* columnist E. J. Dionne last summer chided presidential candidate Robert Dole for his favorable review of the box-office hit *Independence Day* and his more mixed assessment of the recent output of Hollywood in general. Dionne's swipe was only half serious, and the columnist ultimately conceded that presidents and presidential aspirants should be encouraged to take matters of culture seriously, even to comment upon them from time to time.

They should indeed. In fact, it could be argued that, apart from the role as commander in chief of the military, the greatest responsibility now devolved upon the office of the president is that of first critic.

To varying degrees, presidents have always borne this responsibility. And from the Republic's infancy on, they have learned that the "bully pulpit" is an excellent place from which to pronounce upon the currents of our cultural life. George Washington, in his Farewell Address of 1796 (see page 65) and in other pronouncements, did so to great effect. Though he didn't use the word *culture*, Washington was supremely concerned with all those educative forces that shape the character of the citizenry: schools, churches, manners and morals, as well as political institutions and what might be called the civic creed. What he said about these matters in turn helped shape the civic creed that formed generations of Americans until, possibly, the more recent, past-neglecting ones.

Today, the forces that shape the citizenry are cultural in a somewhat different sense from what Washington would have understood. The term "popular culture" embraces many but not all of them, and the most powerful emanate from a vast, interlocking arts-and-entertainment industry that each year sells more than two million books, releases more than 400 new movies, promotes more than 10,000 professional sporting events,

publishes more than 10,000 magazine and periodical titles, ships more than one billion CDs and records, and produces countless hours of television and radio programming, to name but a few of its offerings. Today, moreover, most Americans, like most other citizens of the developed world, enjoy unprecedented leisure and disposable income: the enabling conditions of unprecedented cultural consumption.

Given the time and money dedicated to cultural consumption and production, it is hardly surprising that American popular culture has become almost synonymous with the American identity and the American destiny. We may cherish older ideals—the City on the Hill, the frontier and the frontiersman, the yeoman farmer, the innovator, the independent entrepreneur, but such ideals are more tokens of nostalgia and campaign rhetoric than objects of daily dreams and strivings. Movie stars, rock musicians, and sports idols, their accoutrements and "lifestyles," the words or expressions they utter—these are such stuff as dreams are now made on.

It's understandable, perhaps noble, but ultimately pointless to bemoan this fact of contemporary life. Moreover, American popular culture is so pervasive and resourceful that it can absorb and put to use almost anything that is said against it. But if its power and ubiquity defy moralistic dismissal, they should not insulate it from sustained and intelligent criticism—or from criticism that is political as well as aesthetic.

Plato's fear of the poets, and his desire to see them banished from the ideal republic, constitute a touchstone of political commentary on the role of the arts in shaping the citizenry. Plato might have been speaking hyperbolically (and no doubt was speaking with a philosopher's envy), but his famous ban has endured as a troubling reminder of the corrupting power of seductively shaped words, sounds, and images.

Yet in other ways, Plato as much as

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acknowledged that there was no way around the use of the arts as a school for character. The education he prescribed for young boys was to consist solely of athletics and music. Arguably, what Plato feared was not art as such—certainly not the great Aeschylean and Sophoclean tragedies, which formed the spiritual character of the Athenian polis at its height—but bad art, such as that of the lesser playwrights, which he feared inspired nothing more than cynicism and cheap irony, the emotional props of selfish individualism.

Selfish individualism: we might linger with the phrase. It could even serve as the starting point for a political critique of contemporary popular culture. To what extent do our arts and entertainments encourage mindless self-absorption and a blithe disregard for almost everything else, including other people, common decency, and the well-being of the nation? To what extent do the various offerings of the arts-and-entertainment complex contribute to our collective coarsening and the death of fellow feeling? Such litmus questions, if asked insistently enough by our political leaders, might be of far more use to the commonweal than endless wrangling over what precisely constitutes pornography or how much or what kind of violence is appropriate for adult as well as younger audiences. (Why such an expense of energy in grading the degree of our degradation?)

Individualism lies at the heart of the American ethos, of course, and anything that challenges it stirs wrath across the political spectrum. But a degraded individualism, an individualism run amok, has become our greatest spiritual affliction. Calvinism, as the historian Jack Diggins has argued, once provided a check against the excesses of individualism. With the demise of Calvinism and its various secularized variants, those excesses abound, and they poison the moral atmosphere of the nation.

Useless hand-wringing? Perhaps. But

every political issue facing Americans today, domestic or international, relates in crucial ways to how we answer the question of what, if anything, matters beyond the boundaries of our egos. Does our culture—high, low, and middle—encourage even a minimal concern for others?

If the question is impossible to answer in the aggregate, it can be explored through specific instances. And it would pay for our political leaders to be far more specific when they engage in cultural criticism. If *Independence Day* is salubrious art, Candidate Dole (or President Clinton), then what lessons do we take from it? What does it say, for example, about nationalist isolationism versus international cooperation? What does it say about divisions within our own society, and about how they might be transcended? And what does this very Old Testament story, with a rabbinical figure playing a crucial role in the plot's dramatic reversal, have to say about religion as a contract involving humility, heroism, sacrifice, and mutual concern?

It may seem far too much to ask of what is, after all, a popular science fiction entertainment. But a nation that spends a smaller portion of its gross national product on foreign aid than do any of the 21 donor nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (including such economic giants as Portugal and New Zealand) should be prompted, through whatever vehicle available, to contemplate the meaning of its relations with the rest of the world. We've heard American pundits calling for benevolent American hegemony in the post-Cold War world. Doesn't such hegemony call for sacrifice and generosity as well as strength and leadership?

Connections need to be made. That is what good art and intelligent criticism do. And politicians, precisely because it is their business to connect individual citizens with the collective destiny of the nation, and indeed of the world, should be able and willing to speak about the works that have such power to define, unite, or divide us.

—Jay Tolson

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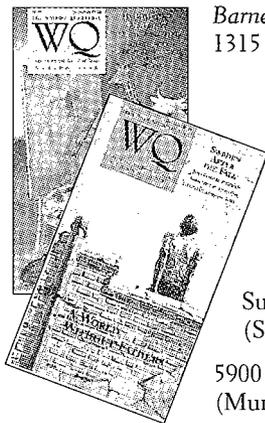
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THE RISE AND FALL OF CIVILITY IN AMERICA

From “shock-jocks” on the airwaves to shootings on the highways, the signs that civility in America is crumbling assail us. It is not only individuals who suffer. A democracy, more than any other society, is built on mutual trust and cooperation among strangers, on the street as well as in the meeting hall. Creating and sustaining such trust was an important public commitment of America’s early years, our authors write— one that we seem increasingly unable to make.



Detail from Susan Merritt's Picnic Scene (1853)

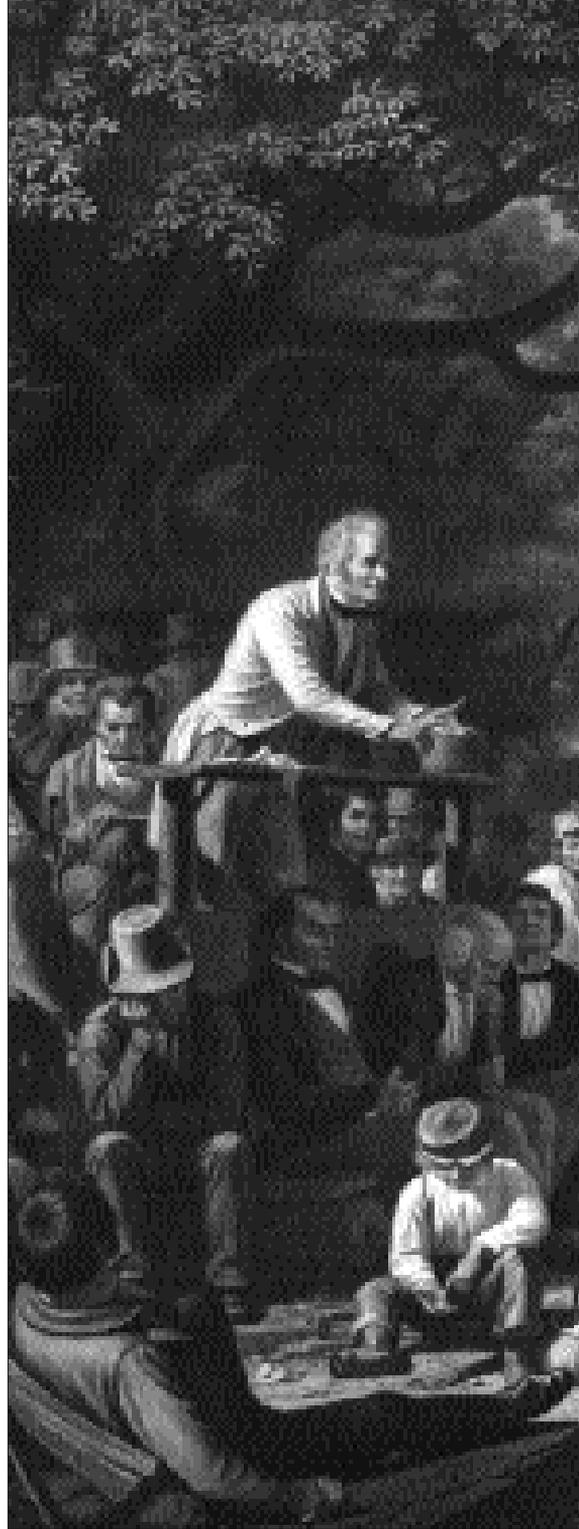
The Genteel Republic

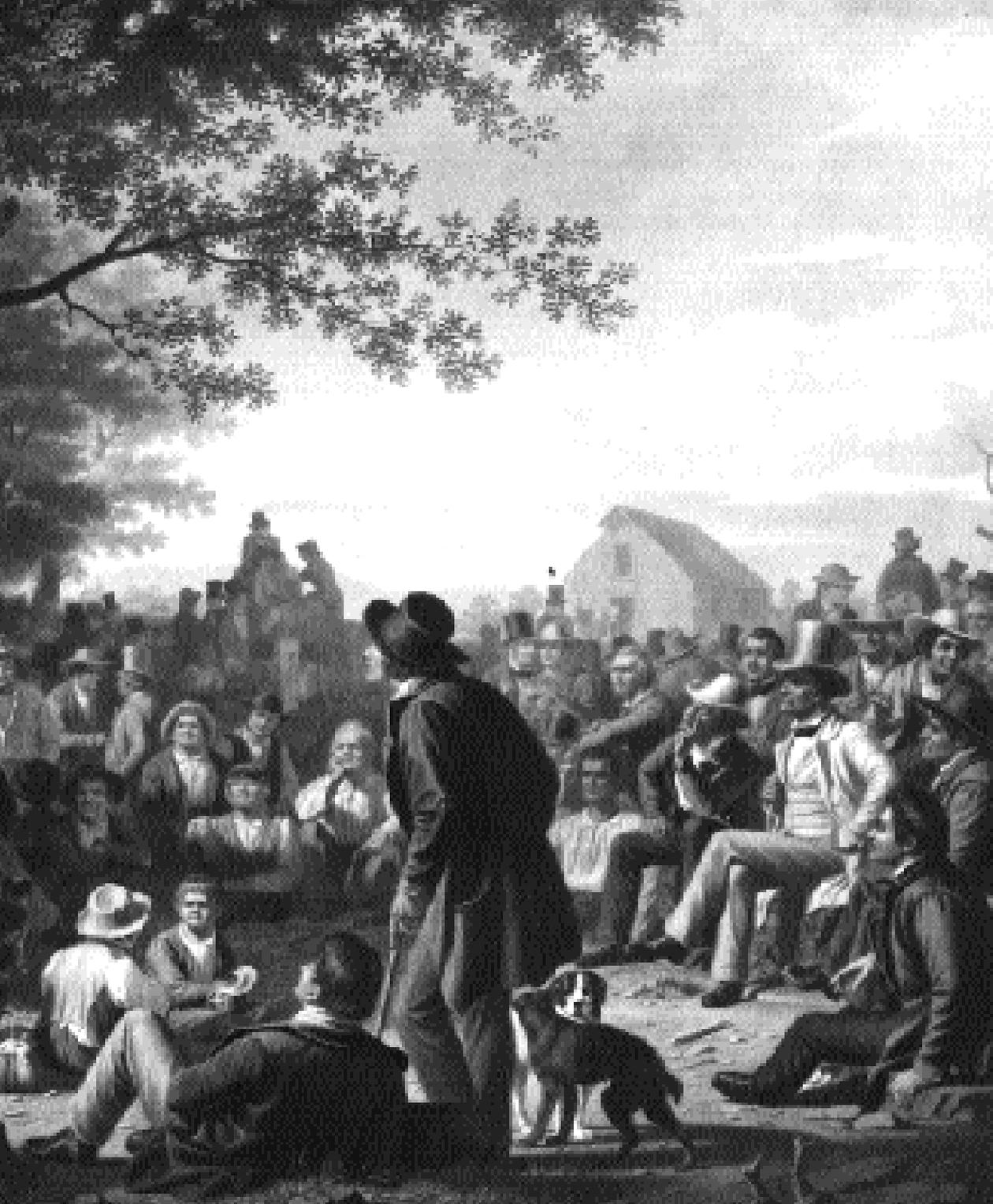
by *Richard L. Bushman*

Our is not the first age to feel pangs of anxiety about the decline of civility, refinement, and manners. Two centuries ago, the currents of revolution stirred similar fears among many of America's Founding Fathers. To these creatures of the Enlightenment, living in their Virginia plantation houses and Philadelphia mansions, manners and refinement ranked with the rule of law, the development of science, and the practice of the arts as the greatest of civilization's achievements. In their darker moments in the years after the Revolution, as a continuing democratic revolution shook the traditional social order, many of the Founders worried that the United States was sliding into barbarism. Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence, complained that "the principles and morals" of the people had declined and that government everywhere had fallen "into the hands of the young and ignorant and needy part of the community." Rush went so far as to say that he regretted all he had done to advance the revolutionary cause. Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, and Samuel Adams were among the many others who voiced deep disappointment with the state of postrevolutionary America.

The Founders' consternation grew out of an anxiety foreign to us: they feared that refinement and democracy were contradictory. Gentility, after all, was the product of an elite culture, a way of distinguishing ladies and gentlemen from common people, and thus hardly suited to a republican society.

These fears, of course, were not borne out. The old social order of prerevo-





A common code of civility allows people of many different kinds to meet for political discussion in George Bingham's Stump Speaking (1853–54).

lutionary America did pass out of existence. Gentility, however, not only survived but prevailed, becoming an essential element in the success of America's democratic experiment. After 1776, the middle-class people who were empowered by democracy—middling farmers, well-to-do artisans, clerks, and school-teachers—laid claim to their own version of gentility. Encouraged by entrepreneurs eager to sell them the trappings of respectable existence, Americans installed parlors in simple houses, purchased carpets for the floors, drank tea from inexpensive creamware, planted shrubs and grass in front yards where

there had been weeds and packed earth, and bought books instructing them in comportment and etiquette. From this peculiar amalgam of republican conviction, capitalist enterprise, and genteel practice there emerged an anomalous society: a middle-class democracy with the remains of an aristocratic culture embedded in its core. It was a society uniquely equipped to reconcile the promise of equality with the unpleasant realities of economic inequality and social division.

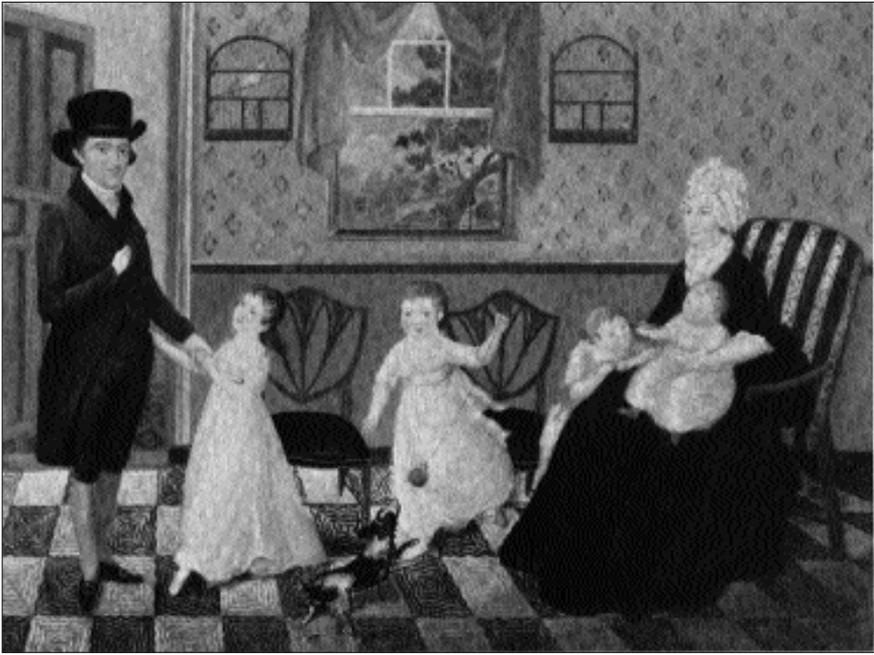
Gentility was not much on the minds of the first English settlers in North America. Their lives generally were governed by more austere religious codes, not to mention the austere material conditions of early colonial life. Then, at the end of the 17th century, a handful of merchants recently migrated from Britain built city houses in Boston and Philadelphia, houses that we would now call mansions. Soon substantial new dwellings in the fashionable Georgian style were going up in these cities and across the Virginia Tidewater, in Portsmouth, in the Connecticut River Valley, along the Hudson, and near Charleston. By the time of the Revolution, barely 90 years after Colonel John Foster built one of the first Boston mansions, every member of the colonial gentry felt he must reside in a mansion furnished with polished walnut furniture, creamwares, and plate—all ornaments of the genteel life.

These new houses were dramatically different from their predecessors. The homes of even the wealthiest people of the earlier era were cramped, low ceilinged, and dark. The new mansions tended to be taller, sometimes rising to three stories, with much higher ceilings inside. They were also more colorful. Earlier colonial houses were never painted, except occasionally for the door and window frames, and were rarely built of brick. The new houses often were red brick or, if frame, were painted bright hues of yellow, blue, and other colors. (Only much later did the white we associate with the era come into wide use.) The windows were large and numerous. The floor plan distinguished the great houses most of all. Where once the main rooms of even the finest house were used for working, eating, sleeping, and entertaining, now certain rooms were set aside strictly for a public purpose, the gathering of polite society.

The essence of gentility was a compulsion to make the world beautiful, beginning with the individual person and reaching out to the environment—houses, gardens, parks, even streets. Thus, even as they built grander, more refined houses, the gentry built new selves to inhabit them. As a boy of 10 or 12 in the 1740s, for example, George Washington was required by his tutor to copy “110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour In Company and Conversation.” It was one of hundreds of “courtesy books” in circulation during this era. The rules covered a multitude of trivial behaviors: “In the Presence of Others Sing not to yourself with a humming Noise, nor Drum with your Fingers or Feet.” Many were regulations required in a deferential society: “In Company of those of Higher Quality than yourself Speak not ti[ll] you are asked a Question then Stand upright put of your Hat and Answer in few words.”

Even among the European aristocracy, the practice of bathing regularly and wearing clean clothes, much less attending to manners, was a relatively recent

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Everything in this family portrait, from the clothing to the light and open feel of the room, is emblematic of late 18th-century genteel style.

innovation. Now everything associated with the body was subject to genteel discipline. Rule after rule told the young man to keep his mouth closed, not to let his tongue hang out or his jaw go slack. The firm, composed mouth, so indelibly associated with Washington, was the facial posture of a gentleman, a model for the treatment of the genteel person's entire body.

Washington's manual was one of literally hundreds of such books that circulated through Europe and its colonies from the 16th century onward.* Indeed, most of Washington's 110 rules were derived from an Italian manual, *Il Galateo*, first published in 1558. In Europe, the courtesy books were used to instruct young gentlemen preparing for life at court or in the households of noblemen. The books facilitated a crucial transition in the organization of power in Europe, from the feudal system of weak kings to a system which, by the end of the Renaissance, made kings the focal point of military, political, and social power. Nobles who had once ruled with nearly unchecked sovereignty over their own domains were now compelled to attend the monarch at court, where polished manners and beautiful appearances were needed to win favors and privileges.

Gentility was more than a decorative flourish adorning life at court. It was a form of power, a means of gaining favor and of asserting cultural superiority. Lawrence Stone, the great analyst of the English aristocracy on the eve of the Civil War, concluded that the 17th-century aristocracy nearly spent itself to extinction in an effort to keep up appearances under King Charles I (1625–49). They had to refine themselves, their houses, and their entire style of life to

*The word *genteel* itself derives from the French *gentil*, which entered English usage twice, first in the 13th century when it turned into the English *gentle*, and again in the late 16th century when, traveling to England along with the new ideas about behavior at court, it retained more of its French pronunciation and became *genteel*. The word was linked to a number of kindred terms: polite, polished, refined, tasteful, well-bred, urbane, fashionable, gay, civil.

maintain their positions at court and in society. Gentility thus arrived in the colonies with an honored pedigree and a mission. It was the culture of the court, of all that was considered high and noble, of the finest and best; it was also an instrument of power available to all who wished to claim it. No group needed such an instrument more than the colonial gentry, whose authority was built on the unstable foundation of wealth rather than inherited rank.

But the power of gentility cut two ways. To claim it, the gentry first had to submit to an exacting discipline. Gentility required the construction of mansions, demanded that parlors be furnished with walnut furniture, insisted on the best manners. It was not, moreover, a discipline undertaken merely for personal aggrandizement. Genteel conduct had a public as well as a private purpose. The purchase of beautifully decorated objects was not the whim of wealth or simpleminded mimicry. These objects and the forms of behavior that accompanied them were instruments for achieving a higher mode of living, a way of being polished, refined, civilized.

The genteel idea cut hard against the grain of many of the ideas and forces that pulsed through America in the years around 1776.

Nothing could have been more alien to the spirit of gentility than capitalism, with its demand for disciplined work, frugality, and self-denial. “A Cottage may keep a Man as warm as a Palace; and there is no absolute Necessity of covering our Bodies with Silk,” declared a writer in the *New York Weekly Journal* in 1735. “Is there no quenching of our Thirst, but in Chrystal? No cutting of our Bread, unless the Knife has an Agate Handle?” This is the voice of capitalist rationality elevated into moral injunction. Protestant ministers at times added their own critical voices. But republican politicians were probably the loudest critics. Gentility was an affront to the basic egalitarian impulse of republican culture. “Pray Madam,” John Adams asked his neighbor Mercy Warren in January 1776, on the eve of American independence, “are you for an American Monarchy or Republic? Monarchy is the genteelest and most fashionable Government, and I dont know why the Ladies ought not to consult Elegance and the Fashion as well in Government, as Gowns, Bureaus or Chariots.”

Adams went on to say that an American monarchy “would produce so much Taste and Politeness, so much Elegance in Dress, Furniture, Equipage, so

much Musick and Dancing, so much Fencing and Skaiting, so much Cards and Backgammon; so much Horse Racing and Cockfighting, so many Balls and Assemblies, so many Plays and Concerts that the very Imagination of them makes me feel vain, light, frivolous and insignificant.” A republic favored other qualities, Adams said. It would



Etiquette manuals proliferated during the 19th century. Here, readers are warned against “ungraceful positions” in the parlor. Figure no. 1, for example, “stands with arms akimbo.”

“produce Strength, Hardiness Activity, Courage, Fortitude and Enterprise; the manly noble and Sublime Qualities in human Nature.”

A revolutionary opposition can either destroy the culture of the preceding ruling class or appropriate it. In the American Revolution, the choice was appropriation. While many of the elite despaired at the prospect of vulgarity coming to power, others worked at polishing society. In the years after the Revolution, for example, museums were founded to elevate the public taste and reformers pushed for the creation of public schools, where manners were taught along with the three R's. Instead of obliterating genteel culture, American democracy allowed ordinary people to make gentility their own.

Once appropriated, gentility was turned to democratic purposes. In the colonies, gentility had set apart a small elite of wealthy, educated ladies and gentlemen who lived in the great houses, dominated society, and occupied high government offices. Now everyone could possess gentility. Everyone who could adopt genteel manners and exhibit a few of the outward signs of refined life—perhaps a parlor carpet and a cloth on the dining table—could be respectable. In the 18th century, “ladies and gentlemen” designated a distinct class of people who stood apart from the rest. Before long, farmers, minor artisans, clerks, and schoolteachers all answered to that name. By the middle of the 19th century, it included everyone who attended a circus.

What drove this transformation was a popular desire to emulate those who stood at the peak of society and government, to dignify one's life with a portion of the glory that radiated from the highest and best circles. But the extraordinary growth of gentility in the United States would not have been possible without the unlikely alliance that was forged between gentility and capitalism.

Gentility gave Americans a reason to buy the goods that capitalism produced, and capitalism in turn democratized gentility by turning out and energetically promoting affordable versions of the goods that genteel living required. The growth of the gentry during the 18th century by itself fueled startling economic gains. In the 19th century, the spread of refinement to a much larger segment of the population vastly enlarged the market for manufactured goods. Thousands of Americans now needed damask, silk, and fine woolens to replace the rough homespun once deemed quite adequate for dresses and suits. They required curtains for their windows, carpets for their floors, chairs for their parlors, paint for their clapboards, plantings for their gardens. Gentility, in short, established a style of consumption.

The volume of this increased consumption is not a matter of guesswork. In rural Kent County, Delaware, for example, less than 10 percent of those of middling means who died shortly before the Revolution left mahogany, walnut, or cherry furniture—the fancy kind used in parlors and dining rooms. Of those who died 70 years later, between 1842 and 1850, more than two-thirds owned such furniture. There were similar sevenfold increases in virtually every other kind of genteel household good. No one who died in Kent County on the eve of the Revolution owned a carpet; 70 years later, everyone in the top quarter of the population did, and more than half of the two middle quarters. Similar growth was seen in ceramic dinnerware, bed linens, looking glasses, clocks, and carriages. After the Revolution, Kent County's story was repeated all over the new United States, as striving families amassed the essential tokens of genteel living, creating a vast new market for consumer goods.

Just as gentility created a market for the goods produced in the industrialists' factories, so it facilitated a peculiar kind of equality. The greatest threat to

democratic equality was capitalism itself, with its vast payoffs for successful businessmen and its relatively meager rewards for most others. Indeed, industrial growth under capitalism depended on great inequalities of wealth to facilitate the accumulation of capital that made large-scale investment possible. From the Revolution to the Civil War, economic inequality in the United States grew increasingly severe, until by the end of the period, the upper 10 percent of property holders controlled more than 60 percent of the wealth. If wealth alone were the measure of success, as unadulterated capitalist culture implied, then the United States was a profoundly unequal and undemocratic society.

But moderating this view of human achievement were genteel cultural values that measured human worth differently. One might not be able to live in the same neighborhood as an Astor or a Biddle, but it was nevertheless possible through diligent effort to lay claim to an equal place in “respectable” society. This view was actively promoted by writers, preachers, and other reformers who worried about class divisions in the 19th century. Catherine Marie Sedgwick, a popular New England novelist, wrote that “there is nothing that tends more to the separation into classes than difference of manners. This is a badge that all can see.”

Sedgwick told uplifting stories of poor men who managed to live genteel lives despite their poverty. Mr. Barclay, the manager of a New York print shop in *Home* (1835), lives frugally in his modest tenement but spends some of his meager pay on good books, music, and drawing lessons, and sends his children to dancing school. When an acquaintance questions the dancing lessons, Barclay replies, “There is nothing that conduces more to ease and grace, than learning to dance.”

Like Sedgwick, Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York City’s Central Park, thought culture was the solution to the problem of inequality. “We need institutions that shall more directly *assist* the poor and degraded to elevate themselves,” he declared. People like himself had to “get up parks, gardens, music, dancing schools, reunions, which will be so attractive as to force into contact the good and bad, the gentleman and the rowdy,” in hope of uplifting the latter. Olmsted’s inspiration was the landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing, whose ringing 1851 manifesto “The New York Park” set Olmsted’s course when he laid out Central Park later in the decade: “The higher social and artistic elements of every man’s nature lie dormant within him, and every laborer is a possible gentleman, not by the possession of money or fine clothes—but through the refining influence of intellectual and moral culture. Open wide, therefore, the doors of your libraries and picture galleries, all ye true republicans! . . . Plant spacious parks in your cities, and unloose their gates as wide as the gates of morning to the whole people.”

Many 19th-century Americans took up the challenge and sought to add elements of refinement to their lives. Sedgwick’s publisher said her three volumes were “one of the most popular series of works ever published.” They were successful because hundreds of others were propagating genteel values through etiquette books, magazines, and novels. The tidal wave of print flooding the country bore images of genteel life into every corner of the land. All literate persons were exposed to good manners, and even more were exposed to the ornaments of genteel existence by shopkeepers, peddlers, and, later, mail-order catalogues.

The spread of genteel culture muted the class question in the United States,

softening divisions between rich and poor and between employers and employees. Any household whose members could learn to wash their hands and to blow their noses with a handkerchief, who could boast even a small parlor and an appreciation of flowers, could claim membership in the middle class. The adoption of the culture of the upper classes, even in rudimentary form, made it possible to claim membership in the same cultural order.

Many were left out to be sure, but many found their way in. Large numbers of working-class people by the late 19th century had parlors, and some even had

pianos in them. Their incomes might have been miniscule compared to what those in the better areas of town enjoyed, and their opportunities might have been limited, but they were not of a different order of life. Income differentials in the United States to this day are vast, and yet a huge proportion of Americans identify themselves as middle-class.

There was much in the republican vision of Sedgwick, Olmsted, and other reformers that was unrealistic. The notion that farmers would learn to draw beautiful pictures and write verses was naive. There was also much that was unforgiving. Their vision, generous though it was, excluded all those who failed to embrace their standards. Olmsted set strict rules of behavior for his new park in Manhattan. It was not to be a beer garden, he warned, and park-goers were to act like ladies and gentlemen—or else stay home. He asked a lot from a poor, rudely educated population, constantly augmented by immigrants. A large portion of the American populace still looked on gentility with scorn or indifference as an alien culture. Many lacked the means or the understanding to emulate their betters. African Americans fared worst of all. In Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, many of the black urban elite—schoolteachers, barbers, ministers, and artisans—embraced the genteel promise only to find that it brought them no closer to equality.

Yet the middle-class idea—the belief that proper conduct could lift a person into the ranks of the respectable—exerted a powerful influence in the United States. It was transmitted through virtually every channel of society to every corner of society, reaching down to the ghetto schools where immigrant children were tutored in the ways of the new country. As the population of the country's cities swelled from about 10 million in 1870 to some 54 million in 1920, the premium on simply getting along in public grew. Poor and working-class people had their own ways, but there was no question where the weight of public opinion lay. Around the turn of the centu-



Breakfast is served: "Citizenship Lessons," a 1920s series of stereo cards showing recent immigrants how "average" Americans live, promoted high standards of behavior.



Old manners and morals meet new in Paul Sample's Church Supper (1933).

ry, writes historian John F. Kasson, in the new movie and vaudeville theaters that brought together people from many different walks of life, uniformed ushers patrolled the aisles to maintain decorum, sometimes handing out printed cards admonishing offenders not to talk or laugh too loudly. “Gentlemen will kindly avoid the stamping of feet and pounding of canes on the floor, and greatly oblige the Management,” one said. “All applause is best shown by clapping of hands.”

Gentility's hold was not eternally assured, of course. Even as gentility reached its zenith as a cultural force around the turn of the century, its foundations were being undermined. From Freud on, we have been made to believe that the dark passions—lust, greed, fear—are the realities of human life, and that civilized refinement is a thin veneer covering raw forces below the surface. At best, gentility could be seen as a tragic necessity. The assertion that it is a measure of human progress, along with the rule of law, art, and science, long ago ceased to command assent. After Freud, it was also possible to insist—and many have—that gentility is a mask disguising our true nature, best ripped away to allow a more authentic self to emerge. Although hardly the belief of everyone, this conception of human life prepared the way for the counterculture's celebration of “authenticity” during the 1960s, with all of its continuing fallout for American society.

The genteel idea was moored not only in ideas. Throughout the 19th century, it was continuously reinvigorated by the presence of an aristocracy in Europe that was still considered the embodiment of elevated life. The writers of courtesy books cited the manners of the “best people” as their authority, meaning the European aristocracy and the American social elite that tried to imitate it. American captains of industry in the 19th century could imagine no greater glory for their daughters than for them to

marry lords. But bit by bit the aristocrats forfeited their illustrious standing, and today even the royals are more notable for their scandalous escapades than their social graces.

Since the retreat of aristocracy, no cultural authority has emerged to take command of conduct and consumption. Instead of buying goods to emulate an imagined superior society, people consume for pleasure, sensation, efficiency, therapy, comfort—a host of desirables—following the whims of magazine writers, admen, pundits, preachers, and pop psychologists. No unified authority presides over culture as it did in Washington’s day. Pleas for a return to civility grow out of a vague sense that social life deteriorates without good manners, not out of a serious commitment to submit the sovereign self to “society.” The word *genteel* itself is now a stain rather than a mark of distinction, signifying an excessive concern with nicety, a preoccupation with mere appearances, a refusal to face the hard realities.

With its intellectual and social foundations weakened, gentility may seem doomed to extinction. But it is premature to conclude that courtesy will lose its hold on our conduct altogether. Because it is held in place mainly by habit, there is no telling its fate in the long run, but an early death seems unlikely.

Although we lament the decline of manners—and observers were issuing such laments even in the Victorian era—gentility has been transmuted rather than obliterated. More than ever, social life is a performance in which, like the gentry of colonial America, we pay heed to appearance, albeit with dress-for-success apparel or fashions from the Gap. All over the country, people expend endless effort on manicured lawns to show their beautiful houses to best advantage and spend significant sums on exotic olive oils and other goods that advertise their cultural sophistication and refinement. Every respectable house must have a room where guests can be entertained and where the good china and silver can be put into play. And while we no longer admire the aristocracy, we still have superior societies that inspire emulation and striving. Part of the magnetic attraction of Ivy League universities is the aura they project of a higher and better society. Obtaining an Ivy League degree is the modern-day equivalent of marrying a title. The Ivies house the new aristocracy.

Powerful cultural forces such as gentility gather momentum over the centuries and roll on through inertia alone. This is as true of malign forces, such as racism, as it is of benign ones. Good cultural habits as well as bad ones are not easily broken, especially when they are taught in childhood. Middle-class children are still made to endure dancing schools, piano lessons, and endless instructions in behavior. Their parents know that at crucial points—applying for a job, interviewing for college, meeting a fiancé’s parents, impressing the boss, persuading a customer—manners count. Civil behavior, an effort to please, regard for others’ feelings, and virtually all the other principles in George Washington’s courtesy book still give an advantage. Our belief in civility may be too often honored in the breach, but until it no longer influences the way children are raised, gentility will endure, bruised and wounded perhaps, but very much alive.

Democracy Beguiled

by James Morris

The United States was not born civil. Its citizens learned how to behave themselves, in public and in private, over the course of a century and more. They did so by acceding to a homegrown version of the rules that had polished and made fit for social engagement their European forebears. A lively and instructive book by John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (1990), traces the gradual erasure of the rough edges on Americans and their transformation into smoothies fit for artful maneuvering in the big city. The 19th century was the great age of etiquette education in the United States and saw the publication of hundreds of manuals on manners and behavior. Kasson notes that “the most complete (but by no means definitive) bibliography of American etiquette books” includes 236 separate titles published in the United States before 1900. The conduct advocated by these manuals is presumably the mirror image of the conduct they meant to dispel. Why urge readers not to wipe their teeth with the tablecloth if the practice were not a routine mealtime gesture for some significant number of diners?

The demand for the etiquette manuals was immense because so many Americans were at once unsure of themselves and, characteristically, determined to improve. And history hustled them along. They built their confidence and self-assurance to fit the boundaries of the nation’s growing and sophisticated cities. There was a continent to be tamed, a society to be brought to heel and to the table, immigrants wanting to fit in, get ahead, gain acceptance, be taken for granted, be taken for everyone else. Americans taught themselves how to act at work and play, courting and visiting and consoling. The rules of engagement proliferated and were accepted. Indeed, many Americans came to believe that, after marking the surface, the rules also inscribed the soul.

Propriety kept its 19th-century momentum through most of the 20th. But, as this century runs out of years, the feeling grows that America may be running out of civility and has suspended the rules that once set the terms for acceptable behavior and taste. To be sure, manners are not dead or vanished from society. You have only to watch how most people treat each other in most public social situations to see that. Indeed, we may even be experiencing a current boomlet for them (at 497 pages, the latest Miss Manners volume, *Miss Manners Rescues Civilization*, carries weight, on coffee tables at least). Manners are a little winded, though, and in need



In our faces

of a sit-down and some space. If the society is plainly not Dodge City, neither is it the New Jerusalem. Manners continue to evolve, as always, and to shift and take new forms. They are fashion, and each age's fashion is another's eccentricity. They are aesthetics, and few things are as mutable as taste. You can't expect a nation of 260 million souls to have the homogeneity of a neighborhood block association.

Manners have only superficially to do with the right fork and the timely acknowledgment. Observing the old formal rules of etiquette—the ceremonies with gloves and hats and calling cards and permissions to visit, with drafting and answering invitations, with remarking on every success and sorrow—has always been less important than instilling a sensibility of concern and regard. And that more valuable interior sensibility is showing signs of erosion. There exists an uncertainty about critical norms of conduct and aesthetic judgment, and a reluctance to define or invoke them. One consequence has been a widespread, and usually unwitting, coarsening of behavior.

Some of the boorishness derives from the traditional need of the young to demarcate their behavior and provoke some outrage, when they fear all the options to shock may already have been exercised. In off-road vehicles borrowed from their parents, the young make a rebellious stand between the Harleys and the Evian concession. Their best revenge may be a supreme ease with the technology that scares their elders. But who could have foreseen the tribal craze among the young (and the not-so-young) for tattoos and piercings? This is novel. Will the accessorized ear yield to the lopped-off ear, as long hair yields to short? Some bodies are so laden with interpolated bits of steel that you wonder how they manage at airports. What does the attendant do when keys, change, lip-

stick, beeper, bracelet, and watch have been removed, and the curious detector, pointed waistward and lower, still hums in the presence of a hidden stimulus?

Willful disfigurement of the body is thus far at the extremes of expression, but nonviolent display also speaks volumes. Consider how people have allowed themselves to be turned into human billboards. They have the taste (and the money) to buy the best brands of clothes and all the trimmings, and they want the world to know. Crests and emblematic ponies were once sufficient clues to their savvy. No longer. The names of shrewd designers now travel their bodies in packs, across chest, over back, up pant-leg, along pocket, round the side of socks and the waistband of underwear. We wear more tags than kids sent off to camp.

Films of Americans in public (at a baseball game, say) until as recently as the 1960s suggest the crowd is under the sway of an alien force. The women wear blouses and skirts or dresses or, more formal still, suits—and hats, hats, hats. The men are suited too, and hatted row after row to the horizon with brimmed felt jobs, deftly creased. When the crowd rises to cheer or groan, its emotions may become unbuttoned, but its jackets do not. (The art of this movement is lost.)

What has happened since the 1960s? The subsequent scrapping of the rules, the wholesale revision of expectations, has let women wear the pants if they want, zipped or not as they choose, and maybe even ripped. It has rendered the male suit and the felt hat as archaic as tights, doublets, and a wizard's cone cap; they're now the regular habiliment solely of morticians and lobbyists.

 n men, the wide-billed cap, once proper to Little Leaguers, truckers, golfers, and street gangs, has won universal acceptance. In the Mercedes or the pick-up, doing the town or doing the wave, at the market and at the museum, strivin' or just hangin', it has become democracy's very chapeau, morphing distinctions of class and wealth and race and age and sex and interest and fashion sense. It sits on every other head, turned every which way—backward, sideward, aslant—to signify youth and rakishness and insouciance, and frontward when the staff at the nursing home finally make it so and the wearer is not up to recourse.

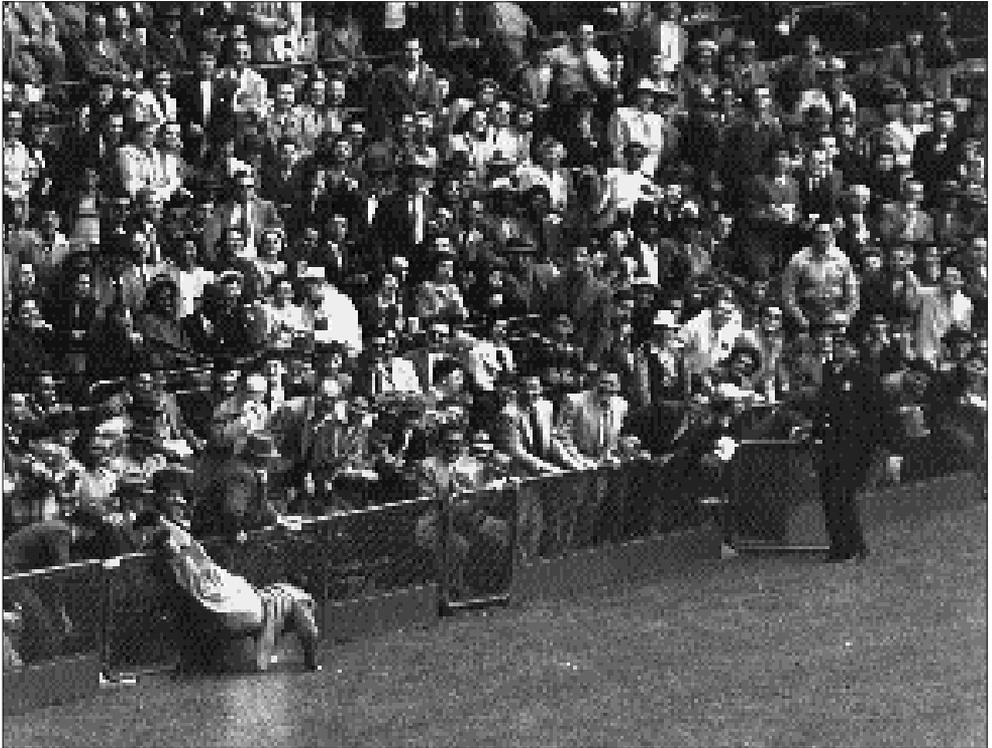
The change in fashion traces an evolutionary lurch in social behavior. People appear in public in clothes that must scare the hangers in a dark closet. The thonged foot, the hairy leg, the shorted thigh, the Spandex-cradled bottom, the polo-shirted paunch, and the chain-encrusted chest are familiar companions on plane and train, in shop and theater. Sweat-suited grannies ride the rails. Americans have been released from the tyranny of stodgy formality, goes the familiar line of defense. It's no wonder adults who believe this cannot sit in judgment on their children. What child would take them seriously? (Not that they have to: "Not in front of the children" now comes out "So, kids, what do you think?")

Some Americans show as little concern for their privacy as for their dignity (and not just those who admit on TV that they can't be left alone with farm animals). On bikes and park benches, on the street, in the air, at restaurant tables, in lobbies and waiting rooms, ordinary Americans now

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speak freely into trim devices. They speak with no self-consciousness, contemporary to the core, and they speak loudly, as if they need to be heard over an explosion or a garage band. (The decibel level of the entire culture has been raised, thanks to technology.) It's doubtful that the etiquette of the cellular phone has been codified yet, much less widely published. So why the sense—at least in some—that what these voluble solipsists are doing in public is a touch crass, though they store their technology in a cashmere pocket or in a niche on the dashboard of a Bimmer? Perhaps, beneath the raucous surface of the age, against all its steep tilt toward informality, there still runs a vein of old refinement, its location a matter of instinct (and sensibility).

In this age of “whatever,” Americans are becoming slaves to the new tyranny of nonchalance. “Whatever.” The word draws you in like a plumped pillow and folds round your brain; the progress of its syllables is a movement toward surrender and effacement, toward a universal shrug. It's all capitulation. No one wants to make a judgment, to impose a



What strange force compelled this crowd to wear jackets, ties, and dresses to a 1950 baseball game in Brooklyn, New York?

standard, to act from authority and call conduct unacceptable. But until something like that begins to happen, until standards of intelligence and behavior are defined and defended once again, we had better be prepared to live with deterioration.

The diffidence of manners bobbles along in the slipstream of the larger decline in taste. What we are enduring is not the end of taste, or the end of manners, but simply the ascendancy of questionable taste and regressive

manners. Was it on another planet that a campus free-speech movement in the early 1960s rubbed traditional sensibilities raw with the sandpaper of four-letter words? In polite society, the words are now as natural as breath. Their power to shame, to anger, to provoke, to wound is gone. It has passed, oddly, to possessives like “his” or to words schoolkids once tossed like stones—stupid, fat, ugly, crippled, queer—the mindlessness of their cruelty now judged to be full of harsh intention and ripe for judicial settlement.

But to imagine a past time of exquisite courtesy and refinement, if not 50 years ago, then 100, or 123, is to regret a world of bubbles. That world, if it existed, is as vanished as a politician’s promises, and not worth tears. Other decades had their own absurdities, to which they were blind, their own prejudices that prescriptions about manners helped sustain. In perpetuating the dream of a golden-age post-World War II America—where homes and lives were ordered in rows, where fathers wore ties and got home unrumpled every evening for dinner with the family, and mom’s apron was never smudged despite her kitchen duties, and boys played baseball and tag and, reluctantly, the piano, and girls read books and talked on the phone and slapped any stray male hand—let’s not forget the reality of the kids you were told not to play with, the people who could not be invited to dinner, the topics that could never be discussed, the Sears-sized catalogue of actions that were “shameful” and “unforgivable” and “unmentionable.” Would anyone really trade the present, disheveled as it is, for that speciously safe, ignorant, constricted past?

The answer to the question, of course, is “Yes, *someone* would.” And that’s the crux of the problem. No standard of conduct can be everyone’s standard without causing, in some quarter, resentment and, ouch, diminished self-esteem. Pressured to tolerate all difference and every individuality, Americans are slow to shift the value of any self from democracy’s gold standard. The openness is, at once, America’s glory and the clouded fleck that brings imperfection to its clear eye.

Responsibility—blame and credit both—for changes in national social behavior is not easily assigned. For each cause you catch, another ducks round the corner. Still, from a line-up of suspects (peppered with decoys), you might identify three and argue a case. They do not carry all the responsibility, nor do they collude. But their presence in the same place and at the same time has been of some consequence. The three? A popular culture of immense reach and marketability; modern technology, the innocent bystander made unwitting accomplice in the culture’s manufacture and sale; and maybe even democracy itself.

* * * *

American popular culture gets trotted out so often as the cause of every woe that it risks winning victim status. This culture—trivial, galvanizing, engulfing—deserves no sympathy. It needs scrutiny instead, because it has become so powerful and so seductive, so dexterous at shaping taste and attitudes and behavior, so difficult to avoid or to counter. The floodgates that once kept popular culture in check—including a presumptive self-censorship on the part of its purveyors, and a much narrower pre-TV access to markets—no longer function; they’re rusty



Drawing by Wm. Hamilton; Copyright © 1971 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

*“But, darling, many very successful young revolutionaries—our own
Thomas Jefferson among them—dressed for dinner.”*

with disuse and stuck in an open position.

The country may not get the behavior it deserves, but it does get the behavior it countenances. If violent movies drew no audiences, they would implode and vanish. We actually debate the availability of assault weapons in the society and their allowable firepower. Should the hordes of music groups whose names associate them with violence, or the calculated—to budgets and to box office—and increasingly strained violence of movies come as a surprise? The culture jumbles real death and play death, and both are losing their sting. (Even the meek drive like Messala out to teach Ben Hur who’s boss.)

America accepted the unbuttoning of the 1960s, the me-ism of the ’70s, and the aggression of the ’80s, and it has coddled the practiced cool of the ’90s. Suddenly, we’re all grown-ups here, as imperturbable and understanding as seraphim. Sights that not so long ago would have left audiences open-mouthed with wonder leave them droopy-eyed with boredom. To every age, perhaps, its proper surfeit: in old Rome, worried impresarios probably cut deals for more spears, more tigers, more Christians.

For 30 years, at every stage of the culture’s coarsening, the change has been deplored, at least by some. To no avail. The worthlessness of much of this culture now seeps into the carpet where we step, and we track the residue into every room. Movies, music, television, newspapers, magazines dwell routinely on topics once too hot for whispers. The first prime-time premature-ejaculation sight gag debuted on network TV early one evening last season. And there followed . . . indignation? A crusade? An apology? Nothing of the kind. Nothing at all, really. The black hole of the acquiescent culture sucked the moment in without trace or resonance. If everything can be said and anything can be joked about in a format that beams the speech and the action to tens of millions of homes, why are we surprised that

decorum, civility, courtesy, and taste suffer? No single incident makes much of a difference; the sum of them makes a revolution.

We fail even to notice how radically the terms of the discussion have changed. Sexual promiscuity, for instance . . . no sooner are the words written than one wonders whether the concept still exists, though the practice does. Vulgarity washes over little old ladies, and they shake it off like seals. They would never dream of using such language themselves, and they deplore its pervasiveness, but what can be done?

Pop culture is without malicious intent. It does not mean to topple the society it lives off. It exists only to divert and to turn a profit, not to make a lasting contribution to civilization. (Although that can happen accidentally: Aristophanes did not calibrate his topical humor to scholarship 2,500 years off.) Its traditions have the shelf life of bread. Pop culture thrives on novelty and has to keep pushing the bounds of the accepted to admit the novel. On the compass it uses to locate what the society can be persuaded to accept, the needle heads always to true profit. The motives for the public's acceptance and essential complicity are probably complex. At least, let's hope so. But they are for psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and economists to read—texts for whole troops of “ists.” The amateur will note only that each age tends to define itself against its predecessors: “To this they said no, so we say yes.” Novelty lies most often in the direction of the outrageous—the previously unspeakable, unsingable, unwearable, unshowable—and only occasionally, through exhaustion, as an aberration, toward reserve.

* * * *

Technology inhabits our age as comfortably as a rent-controlled tenant. It has captivated us. Understandably. We take transforming technological advance for granted. Nothing seems astonishing, only inevitable. We engage with the technology actively at times, as at a keyboard, and passively more often, when we see the world as it is cut to fit a TV screen and a TV mentality, or attend movies that would be unthinkable without technology and that technology in other guises persuades us are cultural events. These movies make hundreds of millions of dollars, in this country and around the world. The coarsened sensibility that appreciates them in America is also one of our leading exports.

The technology is gloriously indifferent, but it has been co-opted by the single-minded commercialism of pop culture to affect attitudes and behavior. Technology provides modern markets a life-support system. Bit by bit, byte by byte, it helps craft the consumer soul. The culture could not be so invasive without technology to lend it a saturating power: TV airs a trailer for a movie whose stars are then interviewed later that evening, a week before the movie opens and is written about in magazines and newspapers, just as the soundtrack makes it to music stores and product tie-ins crowd the counters of burger chains or float in the vast flea-market of the Internet. Before long, a single company will own the network, the movie, the stars, the press, the music company, the plastics factory, the abattoir, and the cyberspace. “Tie-in” is indeed the operative term—tie in and across and up, till the public is bound and submissive. A common taste is created for products, events, candidates, amusements. The sadism of the process is no less noisome for its being accomplished with good old American grit and

flair. But self-control is one basis for manners, and incessant manipulation takes a toll on the sensibility that informs behavior.

Americans believe their freedom to choose is limitless; they do not consider enough how the agenda of choices they are presented, no matter how crowded, frames their terms for action. Advertisers speak of consumers as “targets.” Segments of the public are shot right through with arrows of desire. Some targets you only hit, and some you destroy in the process. An advertising campaign may flirt with pornography, but what’s the difference if the ads succeed? Across the pages of magazines, a rogues’ gallery of fragile young men/women, linked in a conga line of pointless sexuality, have opted for a new cologne over bathing. They do not look nice to be near. But, ah, the target group is struck. Over every televised second of noble achievement at last summer’s wounded Olympics hovered the buzzards of commercialization and spin, to co-opt emotion and swoop and pick at will. Here was the authority of the marketplace in regalia to humble a king.

We surf so quickly through fashion that, in their desperation for novelty, some designers of the 1990s even looked to the 1970s. They were drawn again to disco wear—the shoes so high they lessen oxygen, the pants so wide their wayward whip saws the air. Only to a parched imagination could the 1970s suggest rain. Needs are planted, nurtured, harvested, and then plowed over, to be replaced with tomorrow’s cravings. Affections shift and are easily won, as among adolescents. Nothing is accorded an enduring value—it is this month’s model only—and the consequence is to flatten the value of everything.

* * * *

How else does the culture deaden taste and affect behavior? You can find examples in the commonplace. Consider the absence of aesthetic value in the design of everyday items. Their function is all. The comfortable private environment of the old phone booth—a seat at just the right level and, as the folding door was shut, a light that brightened automatically and a little fan that blew from a top corner—is now just myth. Rows of phone booths have been replaced by rows of nakedly public phone modules, objects of industrial design and probably industrial strength, that resemble urinals hoisted and clamped to a wall. A phone booth invited polishing; a phone module needs hosing down.

An impatience with properties that distract from the substance drives too much contemporary design. Look at what has happened to pens and shavers and watches. Most of these objects exist to be replaced. The function, not the appearance, matters—as it matters just to get the food down, dash through the door first, have your shouted say over others’ whispers.

What’s aesthetic defers to what’s economical. Theaters have been stripped of detail and reduced in size, and the ceremony of visiting them has diminished. The extravagance of theaters built in the days before television had a civilizing effect. It created an environment where people were made to feel privileged, however briefly, and where they socialized accordingly. Who feels social in a polyplex unit the size of a rec room, with a screen barely larger than a TV’s, a half-gallon of soda wedged through a hole in the arm of your

seat, an oil drum of popcorn locked between your knees, your eyes glued only intermittently to the screen but your feet stuck securely to the floor? The aesthetic dimension of ordinary ritual is lost. The experience *tout court* is what's important. The curlicues that might embellish it have as little relevance as the flourishes that are manners.

This coarsening of the society is an indulgence. It is not the old honest coarseness of frontier settlers removed from society and struggling with bears and the seasons. It occurs in a land of plenty that has turned inward because no external crisis poses a mortal threat or diverts its attention from self. The mirror is its closest friend, and eventual worst enemy. Expectations of daily material entitlement beyond the dreams of Americans 50 years ago are routine. There is simply more *stuff* in America, everywhere in America, not just among the rich, who lead lives of unprecedented ease, but among the majority middle class, and even among those whom official statistics identify as the poor. Because their choices look so prodigal, Americans believe they enjoy great freedom. Yet their movement, random and deliberate, occurs within parameters to which the market governs entrance (and from which it guards egress). In an age of rampant self-esteem—when a book entitled *Yes! You!* could be an exhortation to weight loss, an accountant's degree, the Air Force, or a corporate takeover—Americans have suffered a diminution of self-respect and become a spawning ground of appetites. To say that America is an unbuttoned, liberated society because it appears to have no use for codes of behavior that once supported repression and hypocrisy is to pay insufficient attention to the hold a technologically empowered market has over us. Its grip is the essence of beguilement.

* * * *

Manners, like taste, are dependent on an acknowledgment of authority, and, in a vigorous, strutting democracy, authority can be hard to come by. Without being Martin Luthers exactly, Americans concede it only grudgingly. The “says who”/“who are you to say”/“this is a free country”/“that’s just your opinion” line of thought runs like a fault through the society. Rather than rush to judgment of social behavior, as was once all too common, we rush from judgment, disposed to justify or overlook the most appalling lapses. The unthinkable has become not just thinkable but option #2. There are few implausible alternatives anymore in America. If you kill a parent, there’s probably a good reason, and a smart lawyer will help you to remember it.

Criteria and authority are suspect. Direction and control bear the taint of “fascism.” We are reluctant to say “enough” and be accused of that most mortal of all contemporary sins, “imposing your values on others.” The absence of a fuss by any but those who are called “extreme” eases the way to further transgression. And the purveyors will up the ante next time. No one wants to point a finger, and charity’s gain is probably the nation’s loss.

What’s being lost is the sense that there can be national norms for ordinary behavior. A nickel notion of democracy and difference, as if respect for every view meant that no view goes unchallenged, threatens to absolve us of the need for civility. It’s leveling the nation to the mean. In the sphere of manners and behavior, this embrace of democracy’s most superficial

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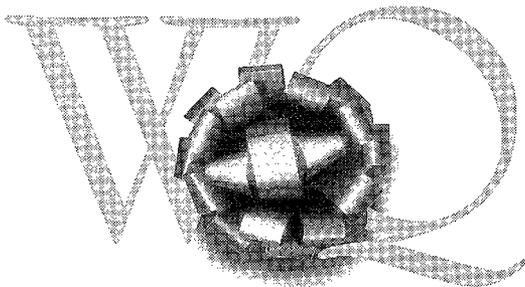
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The tyranny of indifference

appeal—its lavish distribution of acceptance and random freedoms—may, perversely, fragment the society. It's a corrosive benignity. It dulls democracy's sharper and truer reality, which depends on honest debate and on differences not indulged but subordinated and sometimes over-ruled.

Allow that behavior is just cultural and that its norms are constructed. So what? Our whole lives are lived among constructions, and if societies are to be ordered and interesting, they need rules and goals and judgments and prohibitions, not fixed for all time but stable enough to inspire and temper behavior and supple enough to slip their bonds when reason counsels change. Manners are the face we turn to the world, and looks, of course, can deceive. Most times they do not, if only because most people lack the will and the wit for sustained pretense. What you get is, to a substantial degree, what you see.

Some poems are shapelier than others. Some cars ride better than others. Some teams prevail. We routinely invoke standards against which we measure achievement of every sort. So why do we hesitate to discriminate among forms of behavior or to set standards for day-to-day conduct—not legal standards but mere, invaluable, social standards? The answer invokes the vastness of the country, the heterogeneity of the population, the integrity of the individual, the arbitrariness of all standards, the impossibility of consensus. And yet we permit commercial forces to shape consensus daily.

The idea that calling attention to bad manners is itself unmannerly and that one should teach by the example of one's own propriety is valid on paper and in monasteries. Is it really plausible that the boom-box bearer sharing his taste in music with the population of a large city will look around and think "Wait a second, no one else's luggage is throbbing"? That chatterers at a movie will suddenly feel they are being left out of the general silence? That strangers to either side of you on a plane who decide from their respective window and aisle seats to begin a courtship across your chest will realize they haven't looked at the complementary flight magazine? That the woman at the opera who can extend the unwrapping of a lozenge to fill all the longeurs of *Parsifal* will learn to act with Rossini-like dispatch? These people and the hordes of their thoughtless compatriots across the land require immediate attention. Let the saints teach by example. Ordinary crusaders have their own lesson plans and know that Americans are better taught by a neatly turned put-down or an undeleted expletive.

But a posse of decorum vigilantes loose in the land is a stopgap measure at best. Manners are a legacy of education, and the society's failure is in its reluctance to provide education, in and out of a classroom, that can be trusted to instruct the young about the world and its history, the nation and its context, to instill critical discrimination and an ease with nuance, to set the terms for everyday conduct, and to rank bad, better, best. An adequate education should leave you on perpetual alert, accustomed to raising the possibility, like a flare at a disaster site, that what you are being told is nonsense, even if it's hardbound and best-selling, and what you are being sold is junk, no matter its label's cachet. Thus guarded and prepared, you will move through the society with a reserve that, at the least, intends no offense.

Then again, who knows? Shaggy-haired parents breed buzzcut offspring, and maybe fashion will gyre around again to old-fashioned coded rules of behavior—the spell broken, incivility deplored. It's more probable that manners will survive as an exercise of intuition, an uncertain progress along the wall of a dim alley. So long as a vigilant sensibility guides the steps, ignorance of what's peripheral is unimportant. All the good will in the world cannot decode the functions of a cadre of utensils in drill formation around a plate, and shrimp may get taken with a cake fork. But the untutored may nonetheless say "thank you" for favors and dress each request in a "please," rise from a bus seat and will it to another, defer instinctively to age and beauty, speak low and woo persuasively.

* * * *

Several decades ago, placards with the single word THINK began to appear on desks and walls. The encouragement should have been unobjectionable, but the bald injunction sounded ominous. This new age needs a softer directive. Perhaps plain old CONSIDER (three syllables, to wrestle the three of WHATEVER). The word first turns us inward, toward reflection, before it sends us out to share in the teeming, indifferent world.

Descartes the Dreamer



Frontispiece of Descartes's Opuscula Posthuma (1701)

No single thinker has had a more decisive influence on the course of modern philosophy—and general intellectual inquiry—than René Descartes (1596–1650).

On the 400th anniversary of Descartes's birth, Anthony Grafton considers the forces that shaped the man and his thought.

by Anthony Grafton

All philosophers have theories. Good philosophers have students and critics. But great philosophers have primal scenes. They play the starring roles in striking stories, which their disciples and later writers tell and retell, over the decades and even the centuries. Thales, whom the Greeks remembered as their first philosopher, tumbled into a well while looking up

at the night sky, to the accompanying mockery of a serving maid. His example showed, more clearly than any argument could, that philosophy served no practical purpose. Those who take a different view of philosophy can cite a contrasting anecdote, also ancient, in their support: after drawing on his knowledge of nature to predict an abundant harvest, Thales rented

out all the olive presses in Miletus and Chios. He made a fortune charging high rates for them; better still, he showed that scholar rhymes with dollar after all.

At the other end of Western history, in the 20th century, Ludwig Wittgenstein held that propositions are, in some way, pictures of the world: that they must have the same “logical form” as what they describe. He did so, at least, until he took a train ride one day with Piero Sraffa, an Italian economist at Cambridge. Making a characteristic Italian gesture, drawing his hand across his throat, Sraffa asked, “What is the logical form of that?” He thus set his friend off on what became the vastly influential *Philosophical Investigations*, that fascinating, endlessly puzzling text which the American philosophers of my youth took as their bible, and to the exegesis of which they brought a ferocious cleverness that would do credit to any seminarian. If Helen’s face launched a thousand ships, Sraffa’s gesture launched at least a hundred careers.

In each case—and in dozens of others—the story has passed from books to lectures to articles and back, becoming as smooth and shiny in the process as a pebble carried along by a swift-flowing stream. In fact, these stories have become talismans of sorts: evidence that the most profound ideas, the most rigorous analyses, have their origins in curious, human circumstances and strange, all-too-human people. Such anecdotes accessibly dramatize the heroic originality and rigor of philosophers—qualities that one cannot always appreciate only by studying their texts, slowly and carefully.

It seems appropriate, then, that no philosopher in the Western tradition has left a more fascinating—or more puzzling—trail of anecdote behind him than the Frenchman René Descartes. Like Wittgenstein’s philosophy, Descartes’s began from curious experiences; but in his case the provocation was—or was remembered as—nothing so banal as a train ride.

Early in his life, Descartes became a soldier, serving two years in the Dutch army, before joining the Bavarian service. He writes that in the late fall of 1619, while stationed in the German city of Ulm, he

“was detained by the onset of winter in quarters where, having neither conversation to divert me nor, fortunately, cares or passions to trouble me, I was completely free to consider my own thoughts.” He refused all company, went on solitary walks, and dedicated himself to an exhausting search for . . . he did not quite know what. Suddenly he stumbled on what he called “the foundations of a marvellous science.” After an almost mystical experience of deep joy, Descartes fell asleep, in his close, stove-heated room. He then dreamed, three times.

In the first dream, terrible phantoms surrounded him. His efforts to fight them off were hindered by a weakness in his right side, which made him stagger in a way that struck him as terribly humiliating. Trying to reach a chapel that belonged to a college, he found himself pinned to the wall by the wind—only to be addressed by someone who called him by name, promising that one “M.N.” would give him something (which Descartes took to be a melon from another country). The wind died, and he awoke with a pain in his left side. Turning over, he reflected for some time, slept again, and dreamed of a clap of thunder. Waking, he saw that his room was full of sparks. In the third dream, finally, he found two books, which he discussed with a stranger. The second book, a collection of poems, included one about the choice of a form of life—as well as some copperplate portraits, which seemed familiar.

Waking again and reflecting, Descartes decided that these dreams had been divinely sent. He connected them, both at the time and later, with the discovery of the new method that would ultimately enable him to rebuild philosophy from its foundations. Paradoxically, Descartes, the pre-eminent modern rationalist, took dreams as the basis for his confidence in his new philosophy—a philosophy that supposedly did more than any other to deanimate the world, to convince intellectuals that they lived in a world uninhabited by occult forces, among animals and plants unequipped with souls, where the only ground of certainty lay in the thinking self.

Like Wittgenstein, Descartes enjoys a

tribute that modern philosophers rarely offer their predecessors. He is still taken seriously enough to be attacked. Courses in the history of philosophy regularly skip hundreds of years. They ignore whole periods—such as the Renaissance—and genres—such as moral philosophy, since these lack the qualities of rigor, austerity, and explanatory power that win a text or thinker a starring position in the modern philosophical heavens. But Descartes continues to play a major role. In histories of philosophy, he marks the beginning of modernity and seriousness; he is, in fact, the earliest philosopher after ancient times to enjoy canonical status. Students of Descartes can rejoice in the existence of an excellent *Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, edited by John Cottingham, two helpful Descartes dictionaries, and even a brief and breezy *Descartes in Ninety Minutes*—as well as in a jungle of monographs and articles on Descartes's epistemology and ethics, physics and metaphysics, through which only the specialist can find a path. (One standard anthology of modern responses to Descartes's work extends to four thick volumes.) Descartes still provokes.

In a sense, moreover, he provokes more now than he did 20 years ago. In the last generation, developments in a wide range of disciplines—computer and software design, primate research, neurology, psychology—have made the question of how to define human consciousness more urgent, perhaps, than it has ever been. What would show that the computer or an ape thinks as humans do? Can one prove that the measurable physiological phenomena that accompany mental states should be identified with them? How can physical events cause mental ones, and vice versa? And who should settle such questions: philosophers, or scientists, or both in collaboration?

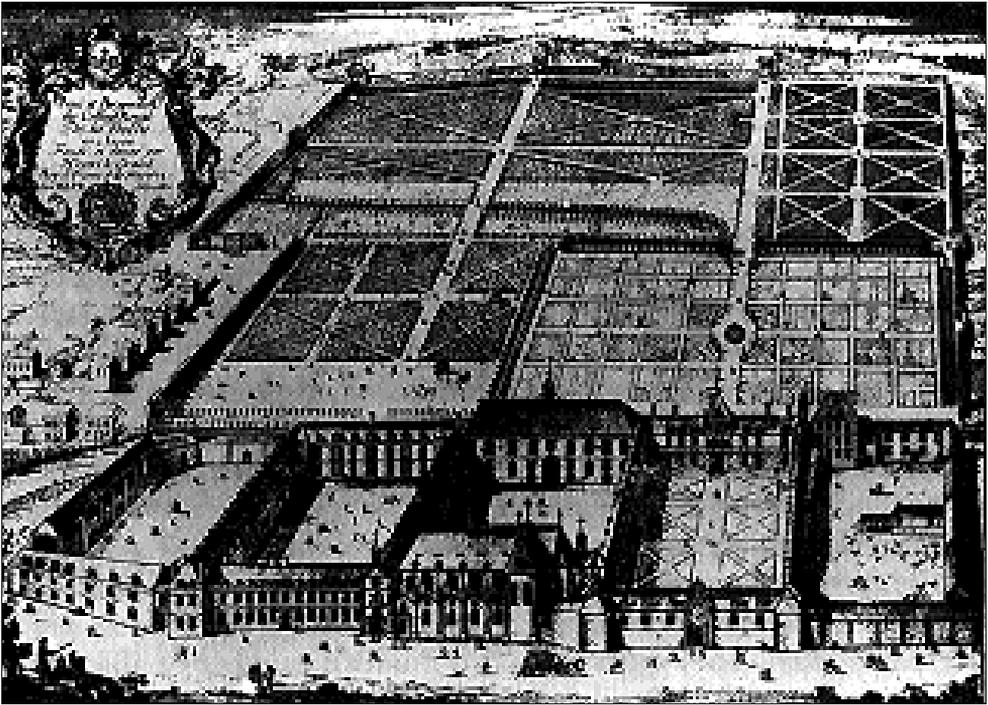
New interdisciplinary programs for the study of consciousness or artificial intelligence provide forums for the debate—which remains fierce—on these and other

issues. And the debates are, if anything, becoming fiercer. Successes in solving particular problems—such as the creation of a machine genuinely able to play chess, rather than the man disguised as a machine unmasked by Poe—excite some of the specialists responsible for them to declare victory: if a computer has a mind, then the mind is a computer. Stalwart opponents swat these optimists with rolled-up newspapers, insisting that vast areas of mental and emotional experience—like the pain caused by the rolled-up newspaper—undeniably exist and matter even though they have no counterpart in computer models. From whatever side they come, a great many of the contributions to these debates start with a reference to, or amount to, a sustained attack on Descartes.

It is not hard to explain why this Frenchman, who has been dead for three and a half centuries, still seems modern enough to interest and irritate philosophers who otherwise feel contempt for most of their predecessors. He felt and wrote exactly the same way about his own predecessors.

Descartes, as is well known, began his career as a philosopher in a state of radical discontent with the resources of the intellectual disciplines. He described this state with unforgettable clarity, moreover, in the autobiography with which he began his most famous text, his *Discourse on the Method* (1637). Born in 1596, Descartes lost his mother as a baby and saw little of his father, a councilor in the *parlement* of Brittany at Rennes. For almost a decade, beginning around the age of 10, he attended the Jesuit college of La Flèche at Anjou. Here, he recalled, he made a comprehensive study of classical literature and science. He read—and wrote—much fine Latin, debated in public, learned how to produce an *explication du texte*. He knew all the clichés that humanists used to defend the classical curriculum, and he recited them with palpable irony: “I knew . . . that the charm of

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La Flèche, the Jesuit school in Anjou that Descartes attended for almost 10 years, beginning at age 10.

fables awakens the mind, while memorable deeds told in histories uplift it and help to shape one's judgment if they are read with discretion; that reading good books is like having a conversation with the most distinguished men of past ages."

But all this contact with traditional high culture left Descartes unconvinced. Knowledge of literary traditions and past events might give a young man a certain cosmopolitan gloss, but it could not yield profound and practical knowledge: "For conversing with those of past centuries is much the same as travelling. It is good to know something of the customs of various peoples, so that we may judge our own more soundly and not think that everything contrary to our own ways is ridiculous and irrational, as those who have seen nothing of the world ordinarily do. But one who spends too much time travelling eventually becomes a stranger in his own country; and one who is too curious about the practices of past ages usually remains quite ignorant about those of the present."

The humanists of the Renaissance had praised the Greeks and Romans, who did not waste time trying to define the good but made their readers wish to pursue it with their powerful rhetorical appeal. Descartes

recognized fluff when he heard it: "I compared the moral writings of the ancient pagans to very proud and magnificent palaces built only on mud and sand. They extol the virtues, and made them appear more estimable than anything else in the world; but they do not adequately explain how to recognize a virtue, and often what they call by this fine name is nothing but a case of callousness, or vanity, or desperation, or parricide." So much for the soft, irrelevant humanities—still a popular view in American and English philosophy departments. Descartes, in other words, was the first, though hardly the last, philosopher to treat his discipline as if it should have the austere rigor of a natural science.

Even the study of mathematics and systematic philosophy, however—at least as Descartes encountered them in his college—had proved unrewarding. The mathematicians had missed "the real use" of their own subject, failing to see that it could be of service outside "the mechanical arts." And the philosophers had created only arguments without end: "[philosophy] has been cultivated for many centuries by the most excellent minds, and yet there is still no point in it which is not dis-

Descartes insisted that most of philosophy's traditional tools had no function.

puted and hence doubtful." All previous thinkers, all earlier systems, seemed to Descartes merely confused.

He thought he knew the reason, too. All earlier thinkers had set out to carry on a tradition. They had taken over from their predecessors ideas, terms, and theories, which they tried to fit together, along with some new thoughts of their own, into new structures. Predictably, their results were incoherent: not lucid Renaissance palaces, in which all surface forms manifested the regular and logical structures underneath them, but messy Gothic pastiches of strange shapes and colors randomly assembled over the centuries. Such theories, "made up and put together bit by bit from the opinions of many different people," could never match the coherence of "the simple reasoning which a man of good sense naturally makes concerning whatever he comes across."

Descartes's "marvellous science" would be, by contrast, all his own work, and it would have the "perfection," as well as the explanatory power, that more traditional philosophies lacked. To revolutionize philosophy, accordingly, Descartes "entirely abandoned the study of letters." He ceased to read the work of others, turned his attention inward, and created an entire philosophical system—and indeed an entire universe—of his own. He hoped that this would make up in clarity and coherence for what it might lack in richness of content. And the first publication of his theories, in the form of the *Discourse* and a group of related texts, made him a controversial celebrity in the world of European thought.

As Wittgenstein, 300 years later, cleared the decks of philosophy by insisting that most of its traditional problems had no meaning, so Descartes insisted that most of philosophy's traditional tools had no function. Like Wittgenstein, he became the idol of dozens of young philosophers, who practiced the opposite of what he preached by taking over bits of his system and combining them with ideas

of their own. Unlike Wittgenstein, however, he also became the object of bitter, sometimes vicious criticism, from both Protestant and Catholic thinkers who resented the threat he posed to theological orthodoxy or simply to the established curriculum. No wonder that he, unlike his opponents, remains a hero in the age that has none. What characterizes modernity—so more than one philosopher has argued—is its state of perpetual revolution, its continual effort to produce radically new ideas and institutions. Modern heroes—from Reformation theologians such as Martin Luther to political radicals such as Karl Marx—established their position by insisting that traditional social and intellectual structures that looked as solid and heavy as the Albert Memorial would dissolve and float away when seen from a new and critical point of view. The Descartes who wrote the *Discourse* belongs to this same line of intellectual rebels, and in this sense he is deservedly regarded as the first modern philosopher.

Again like Wittgenstein, Descartes refused to take part in normal or in academic high society. Though he devoted a period at the University of Poitiers to study of the law, he made little effort to follow a career as a lawyer—a path chosen by many intellectuals at the time. Though admired by patrons and intellectuals in France and elsewhere, he took little interest in court or city. He did not spend much time in Paris, where in his lifetime the classic French literary canon was being defined on stage and in the Academy and where the fashionable gossiped brilliantly about literature, history, and sex.

Descartes, who contributed so much to the development of that classic French virtue, clarity, kept aloof from his colleagues in the creation of the modern French language. He lived most contentedly in Holland, sometimes in towns such as Leiden and Deventer but often in the deep country, where he had at most one or two partners in conversation—one was a cobbler with a gift for mathematics—and led an existence undisturbed by great excitements. He only

once showed great sorrow, when his illegitimate daughter Francine, who was borne by a serving maid named H el ene in 1635, died as a young child. And he only once departed from his accustomed ways: when he moved to the court of that eager, imperious student of ideas, texts, and religions, Queen Christina of Sweden. There he became mortally ill when she made him rise at four in the frozen northern dawn to give her philosophy lessons. He died at the age of 53, a martyr to intellectual curiosity, in February 1650.

Descartes’s “marvellous science” portrayed a whole new universe: one that consisted not, like that of traditional philosophy, of bodies animated by a number of souls intimately connected to them, and related to one another by occult influences, but of hard matter in predictable motion. He cast his ideas not in the traditional form of commentary on ancient texts and ideas, but in the radically antitraditionalist one of systematic treatises that did not cite authorities—other than that of Descartes’s own ability to reason. He said that he saw no point in weaving together chains of syllogisms, as the Scholastics of the Middle Ages had, in the vain hope that major and minor premises of unclear validity, drawn at random from old texts and swarming with unexamined assumptions, could somehow yield new and important conclusions. He did not try to protect his weaker arguments from attack by covering them with a thick, brittle armor plating of quotations from ancient and modern sources in the manner of the Renaissance humanists, who saw philology as the mainstay of philosophy.

Descartes, instead, claimed that he could build entirely on his own something new, coherent, and symmetrical. He liked to compare his work to that of the great town planners of his time, who saw the ideal city as a lucid walled polyhedron surrounding a central square, rather than an irregular, picturesque embodiment of centuries of time and change. The “crooked and irregular” streets and varied heights of the buildings in old cities suggested that “it is chance, rather than the will of men using reason, that placed them so,” he said. Coherence, uniformity, symmetry attract-

ed him: the Paris of the Place des Vosges rather than the palaces and alleys of the older parts of the city.

Descartes saw mathematics as the model for the new form of intellectual architecture he hoped to create. For he himself, as he discovered later than stereotypes would lead one to expect, was a very gifted mathematician, one of the creators of modern algebra and the inventor of analytical geometry. Like a mathematician, he tried to begin from absolutely hard premises: ideas so “clear and distinct” that he could not even begin to deny them. In these, and only in these, he found a place to stand. Descartes could imagine away the physical world, the value of the classics, and much else. But he could not deny, while thinking, the existence of his thinking self. *Cogito, ergo sum.*

From this narrow foothold he began to climb. He proved the existence of God in a way that he himself found deeply satisfactory though many others did not: the idea of God includes every perfection, and it is more perfect to exist than not to exist. Hence God must exist—and be the source of the innate faculties and ideas that all humans possess. He worked out the sort of universe that God would have to create. And he devised, over the course of time, a system that embraced everything from the nature of the planets to that of the human mind, from the solution of technical problems in mathematics to the circulation of the blood.

Wherever possible, precise quantitative models showed how Cartesian nature would work in detail: he not only devised laws for the refraction and reflection of light, for example, but also designed a lens-grinding machine that would apply them (and prove their validity). Parts of his system clanked and sputtered. His elaborate cosmology—which interpreted planetary systems as whirlpools, or vortices, of matter in motion—was technically outdated before it appeared. It could not account for the mathematical details of planetary motion established by Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. Nonetheless, the rigor and coherence of his system inspired natural philosophers on the

Continent for a century and more after his death.

The reception of Descartes's philosophy was anything but easy or straightforward. At the outset of his career as a published writer, in the *Discourse on the Method*, he invited those who had objections to his work to communicate them to him for reply. He circulated his *Meditations* for comment before he published them in 1641, and printed them along with systematic objections and his own replies. Thomas Hobbes, Marin Mersenne, Pierre Gassendi, and others now known only to specialists pushed him to define his terms and defend his arguments. At the same time, his thought became controversial in wider circles. Descartes long feared this outcome. Both a good Copernican and a good Catholic, he was appalled by the condemnation of Galileo in 1633. This led him both to delay publication of his treatise *The World* and to try to devise a metaphysics that would prove his natural philosophy legitimate.

But once his work reached print, Descartes could not avoid controversy. In 1639, his supporters in the faculty of the University of Utrecht began to praise his new philosophy, holding public debates about his theories. The influential theologian Gisbert Voetius defended traditional theology, not only against Cartesianism but against Descartes, whose beliefs and morality Voetius attacked. Descartes found himself forced to defend himself in a series of pamphlets. He lost some sympathizers—such as the scholar Anna Maria van Schurmann, one of a number of women with whom he discussed theological or philosophical issues.

In the 1640s, Descartes's political and legal situation became extremely serious, and his life in the Netherlands increasingly exhausting and disturbing. Nor did he always agree with those who considered themselves his followers. Ironically, if inevitably, Descartes's philosophy mutated

into Cartesianism—one more of the philosophical schools whose competing claims had driven the young Descartes to try something completely different. Some academic Cartesians—as Theo Verbeek and others have shown—even used his philosophy along with others in a deliberately eclectic way their master would have condemned.

Nonetheless, until recent years philosophers generally thought they had a clear idea both of what Descartes meant to do and about why he framed his enterprise as he did. The question of consciousness, of the nature of the mind and

*The drawing from
Treatise of Man (1662)
illustrates Descartes's
theory of how nerves
transmit sensations to
“animal spirits” in
the brain.*

its relation to the body, provides a good example of how Descartes has generally been read. Earlier philosophers, drawing on and adding to a tradition that went back to Aristotle, explained life and consciousness in a way that varied endlessly in detail but not in substance. A whole series of souls, hierarchically ordered, each of them equipped with particular faculties, accounted for organic life in plants, movement in animals, and consciousness in humans. The number and quality of faculties possessed by each being corresponded to its position in the hierarchical chain of being, which determined the number and kinds of souls that being possessed. And the well-established nature and location of these faculties in the body could be used to show how body and soul were intimately and intricately connected. It made perfectly good sense to assume—as the astrol-

ogers, then almost as fashionable as now, regularly did—that celestial influences, acting on the four humors in the body, could affect the mind. No one could establish an easy, clear division between mind and body, man and nature.

Descartes, by contrast, drew a sharp line, here as elsewhere, both between his views and traditional ones and between physical and mental processes. He proved, as he insisted he could, that mind and body were in fact separate. Descartes could imagine that he had no body at all, but he could not imagine that he, the one imagining, did not exist. The mind, in other words, was fundamentally different from the body. Bodies had as their defining properties hardness and extension. Their other attributes—such as color and texture—were merely superficial, as one could see, for example, by melting a lump of wax. The material world, accordingly, could be measured, divided, cut. The mind, by contrast, was clearly indivisible; when conscious, one always had access to all of it. Descartes divided human beings, accordingly, into two components: a material, extended body, mobile and mortal, and an immaterial, thinking soul, located somewhere within the body but at least potentially immortal. He redefined the struggles between different souls which Saint Augustine had so influentially described in his *Confessions* and of which others regularly spoke as struggles between the body and the soul. These took place, Descartes argued, in a particular organ: the pineal gland, within the brain, the one point where soul and body interacted. He held that animals could not have minds, at least in the sense that human beings do. And the firm distinction he made between the physical plane that humans share with other beings and the mental operations that attest to their existence on more than a physical plane continues to irritate philosophers—just as his sharp distinction between the real world of solid matter in motion and the qualitative, unreal world of perception and passion once enraged T. S. Eliot and

Basil Willey, who held him guilty of causing the 17th century’s “dissociation of sensibility.”

Descartes’s position in the history of thought has seemed, in recent years, as easily defined as his innovative contributions to it. By the time he was born, in 1596, intellectual norms that had existed for centuries, even millennia, were being called into question. The discovery of the New World had challenged traditional respect for the cosmology and philosophy of the ancients. The Protestant Reformation had destroyed the unity of Christendom, offering radically new ways of reading the Bible. The Scholastic philosophers who dominated the faculties of theology in the traditional universities, though all of them worked within a common, basically Aristotelian idiom, had come into conflict with one another on many fundamental points, and some humanists claimed that their vast Gothic structures of argument rested on misunderstandings of the Bible and Aristotle.

Some thinkers looked desperately for moorings in this intellectual storm. Justus Lipsius, for example, a very influential scholar and philosopher who taught at both Calvinist Leiden and Catholic Louvain, tried to show that ancient Stoicism, with its firm code of duties, could provide an adequate philosophy for the modern aristocrat and military officer. Others began to think that there were no moorings to be found—and even to accept that fact as welcome, since it undermined the dogmatic pretensions that led to religious revolutions and persecutions. The philosophy of the ancient Skeptics, in particular, offered tools to anyone who wished to deny that philosophers could attain the truth about man, the natural world, or anything else.

Skepticism, as Richard Popkin and Charles Schmitt have shown, interested a few intellectuals in the 15th century, such as Lorenzo Valla. But it first attracted widespread interest during the Reformation. Erasmus, for example, drew on skeptical arguments to show that Luther was wrongly splitting the Catholic Church on issues about which humans could never attain certainty. The major ancient skeptical texts,



After Galileo appeared before the Inquisition and was condemned in 1633, Descartes feared the Church would find fault with his own work.

the works of Sextus Empiricus, appeared in Latin translation late in the 16th century—just as the Wars of Religion between French Calvinists and Catholics were reaching their hottest point. Michel de Montaigne, the great essayist whom Descartes eagerly read and tacitly cited, drew heavily on Greek Skepticism when he mounted his attacks on intellectual intolerance. To some—especially the so-called Politiques, such as Montaigne, who was not only a writer but one of the statesmen who negotiated religious peace in France at the end of the 16th century—Skepticism came as a deeply desirable solution to religious crisis. To others, however—especially to Catholic and Protestant philosophers who still felt the need to show that their religious doctrines not only rested on biblical authority but also corresponded to the best possible human reasoning—Skepticism came as a threat to all intellectual certainties, including the necessary ones.

Descartes tried on principle to doubt everything he knew. (He called his method, eloquently, one of “hyperbolic doubt”.) But he found, as we have seen, that there were

some things even he could not doubt, and many others found his arguments convincing. Accordingly, Descartes appears in many histories of philosophy above all as one of those who resolved a skeptical crisis by providing a new basis for physics, metaphysics, and morality. Similarly, he appears in many histories of science, alongside Francis Bacon, as one of those who created a whole new method for studying the natural world.

For the last 20 years or so, however, this view of Descartes’s place in the history of thought has begun to undergo scrutiny and criticism. Not only students of consciousness but historians of philosophy and science have begun to raise questions about Descartes’s isolation in his own intellectual world. For all his insistence on the novelty of his views and the necessity for a serious thinker to work alone, he always looked for partners in discussion.

And this was only natural. “Even the most radical innovator,” write the historians of philosophy Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene, “has roots; even the most

outrageous new beginner belongs to an intellectual community in which opponents have to be refuted and friends won over.” Descartes, moreover, not only belonged to a community, as he himself acknowledged; he also drew, as he usually did not like to admit, from a variety of intellectual traditions.

For example, Stephen Gaukroger, whose intricately detailed new intellectual biography of Descartes elegantly balances close analysis of texts with a rich recreation of context, finds an ancient source for Descartes’s apparently novel notion that certain “clear and distinct” ideas compel assent. The core of the Jesuit curriculum Descartes mastered so well was formed by rhetoric, the ancient art of persuasive speech. Quintilian, the Roman author of the most systematic ancient manual of the subject, analyzed extensively the ways in which an orator could “engage the emotions of the audience.” To do so, he argued, the orator must “*exhibit* rather than *display* his proofs.” He must produce a mental image so vivid and palpable that his hearers cannot deny it: a clear and distinct idea.

Gaukroger admits that Roman orators saw themselves first and foremost as producing such conviction in others, while Descartes saw his first duty as convincing himself. But Gaukroger elegantly points out that classical rhetoric, for all its concern with public utterance, also embodied something like Descartes’s concern with the private, with “self-conviction.” The orator, as Quintilian clearly said, had to convince himself in order to convince others: “The first essential is that those feelings should prevail with us that we wish to prevail with the judge.”

Descartes’s doctrine of clear and distinct ideas is usually described as radically new. It turns out, on inspection, to be a diabolically clever adaptation to new ends of the rhetorical five-finger exercises the philosopher had first mastered as a schoolboy. Gaukroger’s negative findings are equally intriguing: he interprets Descartes’s famous dreams as evidence not of a breakthrough but of a breakdown, and he argues forcefully that Skepticism played virtually no role in Descartes’s original formulation of his method and its consequences.

Several other studies have revealed similarly creative uses of tradition in many pockets of Descartes’s philosophy. As John Cottingham has shown, Descartes more than once found himself compelled to use traditional philosophical terminology—with all the problematic assumptions it embodied. Despite his dislike of tradition, he also disliked being suspected of radicalism, and claimed at times not to offer a new theory but to revive a long-forgotten ancient one—for example, the “*vera mathesis*” (“true mathematical science”) of the ancient mathematicians Pappus and Diophantus. No one denies the substantial novelty of Descartes’s intellectual program; but students of his work, like recent students of Wittgenstein, show themselves ever more concerned to trace the complex relations between radicalism and tradition, text and context.

Descartes’s dreams—and his autobiographical use of them—play a special role in this revisionist enterprise. His earliest substantial work, composed in the late 1620s but left unfinished, takes the form of *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*; his great philosophical text of 1641 bears the title *Meditations*. In structure as well as substance, both works unmistakably point backward to his formation in a Jesuit college. There he had not only to study the classics and some modern science but to “make” the *Spiritual Exercises* laid down for Jesuits and their pupils by the founder of the Jesuit order, Ignatius Loyola. These consisted of a set of systematic, graded exercises in contemplation, visualization, and meditation. Students—and candidates for membership in the order—had to reconstruct as vividly as they could in their minds the Crucifixion, Hell, and other scenes that could produce profound emotional and spiritual effects in them. These exercises were intended to enable those who did them to discipline their minds and spirits, to identify and rid themselves of their besetting weaknesses, and finally to choose the vocation for which God intended them. Visions—and even mystical experiences—regularly formed a controlled part of the process, as they had for Ignatius himself. The similarity between these exercises in spiritual self-discipline

and Descartes's philosophical self-discipline is no coincidence. Here too Descartes transposed part of the education he thought he had rejected into the fabric of his philosophy.

In seeing visions as a form of divine communication—evidence of a special providence that singled recipients out as the possessors of a Mission—Descartes remained firmly within the Jesuit intellectual tradition. He was, in fact, far from the only product of a good Jesuit education to trace his own development in minute interpretative detail. Consider the case of his near contemporary Athanasius Kircher—another mathematically gifted young man, who studied in Jesuit schools in south Germany before becoming the central intellectual figure in baroque Rome. Kircher's interests were as varied as Descartes's were sharply defined: he spelunked in volcanoes, experimented with magnets, reconstructed the travel of Noah's Ark, and studied languages ranging from Coptic to Chinese, with varying degrees of success. But he defined the core of his enterprise with Cartesian precision, if in totally un-Cartesian terms, as an effort to decipher the ancient philosophy encoded in the hieroglyphic inscriptions on Egyptian obelisks. This effort attracted much criticism but also received generous papal support. Ultimately it inspired some of Bernini's most spectacular Roman works of sculpture and architecture, in the Piazza Navona and before the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

Descartes would have found most of Kircher's project risible. Yet they had something vital in common. Kircher, like Descartes, tried to prove the rigor and providential inspiration of his work by writing an autobiography. Kircher's dreams and

visions played as large a role in this work as his colorful and sometimes terrifying experiences. Like Descartes, he saw his unconscious experiences as evidence that God had set him on earth to carry out a particular plan. His accidental encounter with a book in which Egyptian hieroglyphs were reproduced and discussed exemplified—he thought in retrospect—the sort of special providences by which God had led him in the right direction. Evidently, then, Cartesian autobiography was actually Jesuit autobiography. Brilliant style, concision, and lucidity set off the beginning of the *Discourse on the Method* from Kircher's Latin treatise. But the enterprises were basically as similar as the larger enterprises they were meant to serve were different. And Descartes's dreams not only make a nice



story to adorn the beginning of a lecture but actually shed light on the origins of his central intellectual enterprise.

In effect, then, Descartes has come back to new life in recent years—in two radically different ways. The Descartes who appears in so many studies of the philosophy and physiology of mind—the radical innovator, owing nothing to his predecessors, who devised the brutally simple theory about “the ghost in the machine”—seems hard to reconcile with the Descartes now being reconstructed by historians: the complex, reflective figure, whose relation to tradition took many different forms, and whose system embodied foreign elements even he did not recognize as such. Gaukroger's book marks a first and very rewarding effort to bring the two Descartes together. But the task will be a long one. It may prove impossible to fit Descartes the dreamer into traditional genealogies of modern thought—or to establish a simple relation between his theories of intelligence and current ones. Descartes lives, a troubling ghost in the machine of modern philosophy.

THE END OF INDONESIA'S NEW ORDER

Indonesia, a newsmagazine recently reminded its readers, “is no obscure backwater.” It was a strange thing to say about the world’s fourth most populous country and its largest Islamic one. Yet for 30 years this vast, ethnically varied archipelago state has, by trading political freedoms for stability and material progress, avoided many of the woes that draw attention to developing countries. Now, however, the long reign of 75-year-old President Suharto is nearing its end—and with it, perhaps, the commitments and compromises that made Indonesia’s New Order possible.

by James Clad



Going to Market (1985), by Dede Eri Supria

A large, bold, black letter 'A' is positioned at the start of the first paragraph, serving as a drop cap.

fter many years and much speculation, a long-anticipated moment in the life of modern Indonesia may finally be at hand. Until recently, the word *transition* summed up a simple but delicate question in this nation of 200 million people: who will become president once General Suharto, now nearing the end of his sixth five-year term, departs the scene? Defined this way, the problem of who-comes-next led to a simple question of *when*, leaving the *how* unasked. It suggested, moreover, that the most acute political problem facing this fast-developing Asian country arises only from uncertainty about the precise chronological moment when the 75-year-old Suharto either hangs up his spurs or drops dead, scepter still in hand.

In the aftermath of last July's two-day riot in Jakarta that left as many as 10 people dead and a number of buildings in ashes, the city's most serious violence in two decades, all such illusions have dropped into the dust bin: this city of 11 million people is now focusing intently on the *how* of Suharto's departure. (Like many people from the island of Java, Suharto uses a single name.) So is the world beyond. What happens in Jakarta will have profound consequences not only for Indonesia but for the rest of Asia, and much of the world beyond.

Indonesia's 13,600 islands stretch across four time zones and more than 3,000 miles, a distance greater than that separating California and New York. It is the world's fourth most populous country (and its largest Muslim one), a significant OPEC oil producer, an industrializing exporter of textiles, electronics, and other goods, and the chief pillar of Southeast Asia's prosperous stability. It sits, moreover, astride two crucial shipping routes; unimpeded passage through the Lombok and Malacca straits enables huge Persian Gulf oil tankers (and U.S. warships) to pass between the Pacific and Indian oceans. All of this may help to explain why a White House staffer burred, "He's our kind of guy," to a *New York Times* reporter covering Suharto's visit to Washington, D.C. in November 1995.

Few in Indonesia think that Suharto, even now, will have any difficulty winning a seventh term as president in 1998, if he chooses to run. As in the past, a newly elected national assembly will gather after elections in 1997; then, in early 1998, the assembly will meld with scores of extra government appointees to form the supreme People's Consultative Assembly (the MPR), which will elect the president. Since 1967, Suharto has emerged the victor from each of these stage-managed convocations; it would be beyond all precedent for him to even face a presidential challenger. Yet it was precisely such a prospect that set in motion the events leading up to the July riots.

The immediate cause of the violence lay in Suharto's surprisingly clumsy efforts to marginalize Megawati Soekarnoputri, the 49-year-old daughter of his predecessor, Sukarno, and head of the hitherto tame, government-created Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). Under Megawati, the PDI had come to serve as a symbol for a variety of people and forces yearning for change in Indonesia: members of the growing



“Mega! Mega!” chanted crowds of demonstrators in Jakarta last July. These protesters brandish images of Megawati and her father, Sukarno.

urban middle class, industrial workers in Indonesia’s booming export zones, restive Muslims anxious about Indonesia’s rapid modernization, and a handful of organizations concerned with rural-urban income gaps, the destruction of tropical forests, and other issues. Megawati’s real sin, however, might have been to hint that she might challenge Suharto for the presidency.

In the months before the July 1996 riots, Suharto moved to undermine Megawati, blocking her efforts to build up a serious PDI organization before the May 1997 parliamentary elections. Then the regime encouraged thugs connected to a rival PDI leader to evict Megawati’s

followers from the party's headquarters in Jakarta. That ignited the riots of July 27 and 28. In the eyes of her supporters and in most Western reportage, Megawati found herself increasingly compared to Southeast Asia's most famous women oppositionists—the Philippines' Corazon Aquino and Burma's Nobel laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi. Many Western analysts familiar with Indonesia think she doesn't deserve that ranking—at least not yet.

Southeast Asia watched the Jakarta disturbances with scarcely disguised unease. In Singapore, my discussions with government leaders focused on nothing else. The same anxiety prevailed in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. Tremors in the sprawling archipelago are felt everywhere in the region. In Manila, some of that city's extravagantly free press

even trumpeted a likely “repeat performance” of the “People Power” revolution that evicted Ferdinand Marcos from the Presidential Palace in 1986.

The comparison to Marcos is not far-fetched. Since the wily, quiet-spoken Suharto

For 30 years, Suharto has been the deft *dalang* of Indonesian politics, exploiting the time-tested principle of divide and conquer to achieve his ends.

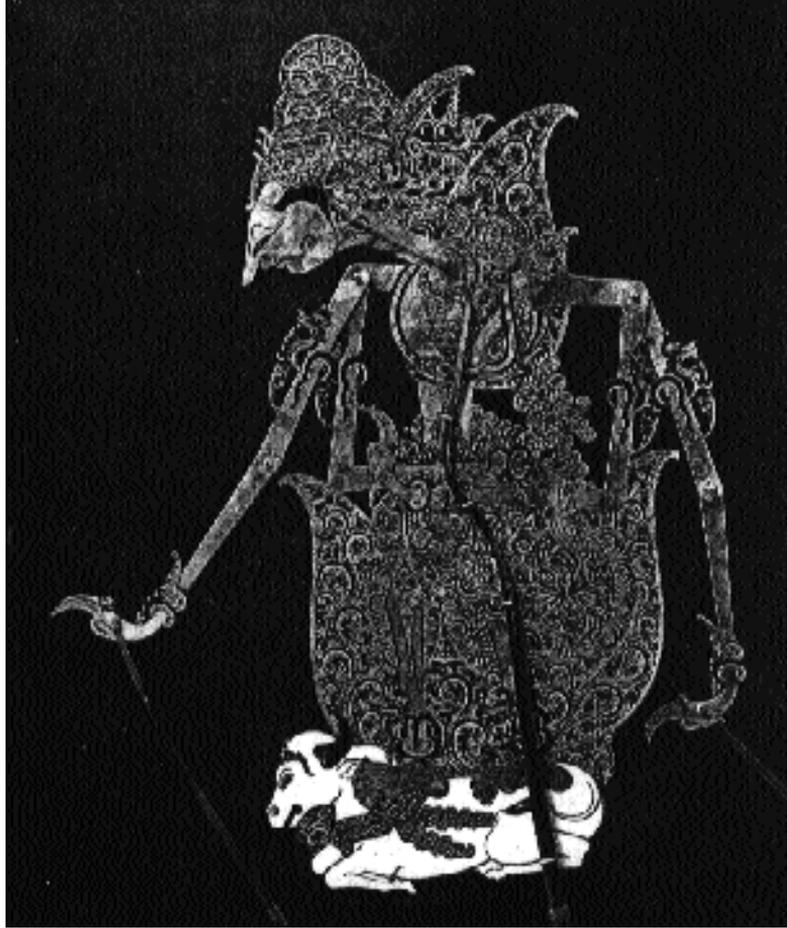
took power 30 years ago, the regime's most senior technocrats have sought to sanitize Indonesia's notoriously corrupt business culture through a succession of liberalizing measures, opening the economy to greater competition. For three decades, however, the president's own family and a favored group of Chinese businessmen have continued to exemplify the worst of the bad old ways, becoming immensely wealthy through preferential business deals. But their most egregious free riding on Indonesia's robust economy had seemed a thing of the past.

In the months before the July riots, however, local reports began to circulate about new depredations by “the Family.” There was a scheme under which a Suharto grandson would collect a tax on all the beer guzzled in Bali by foreign tourists. That came to nothing. But Suharto's youngest son, Hutomo Mandal Putra (known as Tommy), still stood at this writing to profit enormously from a plan to create an Indonesian “national car” shielded from all serious competition by high tariffs. And these were only the biggest scandals. Suddenly, the New Order (the Suharto regime's self-designated name to differentiate it from the “Old Order” of 1945–65) looked as nepotistic and greedy as ever.

Finesse matters in politics everywhere, but especially in Asia, and there is now a sense in Indonesia that Suharto, so long the master of Indonesian politics, has lost his touch. Indonesians often compare their politics to the *wayang* (shadow puppet theater), whose indigenous Javanese genre is particularly rich in intrigues and deception. In the *wayang*, the puppeteer, or *dalang*, speaks the lines for each nominally independent character. For 30 years, Suharto has been the deft *dalang* of his nation's politics, exploiting the time-tested principle of divide and

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Wayang (*shadow puppet*) performances remain the most popular form of entertainment in Java's villages. References to mythical wayang characters pop up in everyday conversation.



conquer to achieve his ends. From time to time, the old master has seemed momentarily to lose his touch—only to regain control. Now another such moment has arrived. Given his age and the country's pressing need for an orderly succession, most Indonesians agree that the old puppeteer must now attempt not the resumption of his mastery but something for which a lifetime's intrigue has poorly prepared him: the transfer of authority to a new leader.

Each visit to Jakarta—from the Sanskrit words *jaya-karta*, meaning the place of glorious deeds—disorients a traveler who first became familiar with the city in the 1970s. Huge bank buildings and shopping plazas dot the flat coastal expanses which were once rice fields and marshlands. Traffic snarls along Jalan Sudirman and other main avenues as badly as it does in the infamously gridlocked thoroughfares of Bangkok and Manila. Thousands of commuters take a new elevated railway to work, reading along the way glossy new magazines such as *Eksekutif* (Executive), which bulge with advice on how to spend their growing paychecks. Indonesia now seems set, if it manages the Suharto transition well, to become another Asian economic powerhouse early in the 21st century.

The foundations of this material success were laid after the last transition, when Suharto took power in 1965. In essence, his New Order has traded political participation for economic progress, or *pembangunan* (development). Swiftly putting out the welcome mat for Japanese and Western investors after 1965, Suharto's Western trained technocrats, including a coterie of University of California-schooled economists known as the Berkeley Mafia, prepared the way for an export-led boom that began in the early 1980s. The boom has transformed urban and, increasingly, rural life.

In just a decade, the country has witnessed a huge expansion of exported manufacturing in industrial zones located near Jakarta and other major cities in Java and Sumatra. Factories producing Nike shoes, Motorola electronics, and Matsushita electrical appliances have sprouted. Whereas, as recently as the late 1970s, Indonesia relied on oil for three-quarters of its export income, today that dependence has dropped to just over 20 percent thanks to rising overseas sales of manufactured goods and agricultural products (including many created from the felling of Indonesia's vast—though rather less vast now—tropical forests).

In addition to promoting export industries, the Suharto regime has emphasized self-sufficiency in rice, rejecting the World Bank's warnings that fertilizer subsidies would cause grave "distortions" in the rural economy. Since the mid-1980s, the country has produced enough rice to feed itself and has even had a small surplus available for export. This represents a stunning rebuke to conventional wisdom, which, as recently as two decades ago, dealt in images of an impending Malthusian nightmare in which Java's teeming hordes would finally exhaust the country's food supplies and bring down political disaster on the archipelago. Indonesia's current self-sufficiency in rice should by itself guarantee the aging president a place in the history books.

The economic data alone speak volumes. Per capita gross domestic product has jumped from \$90 in 1968 to more than \$1,000 today. About 60 percent of all Indonesians now live above the poverty line. In Jakarta and other cities, disposable incomes are much, much higher than \$1,000—hence the magnetic appeal to hundreds of thousands of rural migrants coming to Java, and to Jakarta, each year. Asian Development Bank surveys and other studies show that income distribution, while it hasn't improved, at least hasn't worsened much during the last 15 years. The rising tide has lifted all boats. Western critics denounce the new Indonesian factories as "sweatshops," but as Asia specialist Robert A. Manning wrote recently, "to many young women from local villages, the minimum wage they earn is far



more than anything their parents made, and is viewed as a step on the road to a better life. With unions and civic groups gaining strength in the country's power calculus, these young workers face even better prospects."

Other changes reinforce the contrasts between 1965 and today: Indonesian satellites relay telephone messages and TV images in the national tongue. Superhighways speed motorists from Jakarta up to the once quiet Dutch hill town of Bogor. All the gains and losses of global culture—the information revolution, the inane mass commercialism—all of these reside easily in Indonesia. Even the most minute details of the July 1996 riots were quickly sent out, to Jakarta's suburbs and to the world beyond, on telephone wires as faxes or E-mail.

Indonesia's peace and prosperity have been paralleled in most of the nations of Southeast Asia, since 1980 the fastest-growing region in the developing world. This is no coincidence. Indonesia's resumption of normal international conduct after 1965 allowed the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to emerge and thrive. (The association includes Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and, since 1995, Vietnam. Cambodia, Burma, and Laos are expected to join during the next two or three years.)

Today, the region's stock and domestic consumer markets, its export industries, and its oil, timber, and minerals, as well as burgeoning new business opportunities in aviation, telecommunications, and other forms of infrastructure, lure investors from Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Western Europe. Political stability, especially in Indonesia, the colossus of Southeast Asia, makes all this possible. (As recently as 1990, several senior Australian military officers identified Indonesia as the principal long-term security challenge to Australia—but the two countries have since signed a mutual security pact, apparently motivated by concern over growing Chinese power in Asia.) Indonesia's steadiness will become more important as China emerges as a great power. Any regional consensus about standing up to Chinese pressure on diplomatic, military, commercial, and other matters will evaporate if Indonesia reverts to the turmoil of the Sukarno years.

The world's largest archipelagic state dates its modern origin to what must be the shortest declaration of independence on record: "We, the people of Indonesia, hereby declare Indonesia's independence," Sukarno scribbled. The date was August 17, 1945. Tokyo had just surrendered to the Allies, and British troops were steaming toward Japanese-occupied Java (where Sukarno and other nationalists had collaborated with the Japanese during the occupation) to reimpose Dutch authority. Speed was of the essence. Sukarno's declaration closed just as tersely as it opened: "Matters concerning the transfer of power and other matters will be executed in an orderly manner and in the shortest possible time." And that was that.

"The dominating fact about the islands," reporter John Gunther wrote in 1939, "is that, like Croesus and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., they are rich. They are the Big Loot of Asia."

Subsequent events did not share the brevity of Sukarno's declaration. The nationalist cause had only slowly gathered strength in the years before World War II, impeded by Dutch East Indies authorities determined to keep their 350-year-old empire, the brightest jewel in the Netherlands' crown, indefinitely under their stewardship. Spice, coffee, indigo, and sugar had enriched The Hague and Rotterdam during past centuries, and the rise of the automobile in the 20th century had produced another bonanza in rubber and oil, also abundant in the archipelago. "The dominating fact about the islands," reporter John Gunther wrote in 1939, "is that, like Croesus and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., they are rich. They are the Big Loot of Asia."

So the Dutch were not about to go willingly. Besides, they knew that the nationalists enjoyed far-from-universal support. Especially in the Christianized outer islands many miles from Java and Sumatra, people felt little affinity for the movement. Indeed, the Dutch might very well have stayed on much longer in the East Indies had they not been so ignominiously and speedily evicted by the Japanese after Pearl Harbor. Just eight days after the first Japanese soldier set foot on Java early in 1942, the Dutch capitulated. Like the British and French in their own Southeast Asian empires, the Dutch were never to recover from that loss of prestige.

Still, it took time for the Dutch to realize that they had lost their grip. Native troops drawn from Manado and the Moluccas fought alongside Dutch regulars in Sumatra, Sulawesi, and especially in Java, inevitably the archipelago's core by virtue of tradition and population. (Nearly two-thirds of Indonesians live on the island.)

In 1946 and '47, despite having endured five grinding years of Nazi occupation, The Hague managed to dispatch 150,000 troops to reclaim Holland's East Indies treasure. Although Indonesia's post-independence historiography depicts an epic struggle for freedom, much of the fighting was inconclusive. Eventually the Dutch will to win was broken by a combination of United Nations condemnation, stubborn guerrilla resistance, and American pressure. (Once anticommunists got the upper hand within Indonesia's nationalist movement, after 1948, Washington tied Marshall Plan aid for the Netherlands to Dutch concessions).

A loosely federal "United States of Indonesia" was born in 1949, but the independence agreement lasted barely a year, with new fighting then breaking out between the Dutch and the nationalists. A unitary state with a parliamentary form of government emerged in 1950, with Sukarno as president. But this system, in turn, survived just seven years, undone by economic strains, Sukarno's vast ambitions, and regional rebellions in the Moluccas and West Java. Martial law was imposed in 1957. Uprisings the next year in Sumatra and Sulawesi, aided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency—which was alarmed by the growing power of the Partai Kommunist Indonesia (PKI), then the third largest communist party in the world—gave Sukarno the excuse he needed to impose what he called "guided democracy." This was basically a quasidictatorship in which Sukarno played *dalang* over a variety of competing forces: the PKI, the armed forces, and the nationalists.

It was to the PKI that Sukarno increasingly turned for support after 1958, as his conflicts with the Indonesian army intensified. Moscow gave Sukarno as much as \$1 billion in aid between 1960 and '65—much of it going, ironically, to the anticommunist military. Already possessing vast authority under martial law, the generals increased their power even more as

they assumed effective control of many nationalized Dutch enterprises during the 1950s—mines, plantations, and transport systems. But the military's corrupt and inept management of these enterprises helped to pitch Indonesia's economy into chaos.

Sukarno didn't help matters. He governed erratically. Moreover, he launched a bombastic policy of confrontation in reaction to plans to create a new Federation of Malaysia by merging the Federation of Malaya, independent since 1957, with two

giant, British-administered territories in Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak. Sukarno's "*konfrontasi*" campaign came on top of a series of commando incursions to "recover" West New Guinea, the only part of the former Dutch East

Indies not ceded to the new Indonesian Republic in 1949. To top it off, Sukarno pulled his country out of the United Nations with great fanfare in 1965, announcing his intention to establish instead a new "anti-imperialist" axis with China, North Vietnam, and Cambodia.

These were years of wild political rhetoric, economic disintegration, hyperinflation, and rising anger among Muslims—a chaotic period whose mood was captured in Philip Koch's novel *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1979), later made into a movie. Finally, on the night of September 30, 1965, a small band of army officers, claiming they were acting to head off a CIA-sponsored coup, murdered six senior Indonesian army generals, then seized the Jakarta radio station and announced the formation of a Revolutionary Council.

Egged on by Suharto, the army and civilian vigilante bands embarked on a months-long campaign of terror and violence against the Communists. The death toll may have reached one million.



President Suharto and his wife Ibu Tien (who died recently) in a mural promoting a five-year plan to build a more "just and prosperous society"

Suharto, then a little-known general, quickly made his own power play. He too claimed to be acting in defense of Sukarno but charged that the coup attempt was part of a communist plot to take over the government. The original plotters—who, many Indonesians believe, might have received Suharto's secret encouragement to act—were quickly arrested. Egged on by Suharto, the army and civilian vigilante bands (including many Islamic foes of the PKI) embarked on a months-long campaign of terror and violence against the Communists. Hundreds of thousands of Indonesians died. The death toll may have reached one million.

By March 1967, Suharto had installed himself as acting president and had put Sukarno under house arrest. "Sukarno was first immobilized," observed anthropologist Clifford Geertz, "then, with that controlled, relentless grace the Javanese call *halus*, deposed." (He died a few years later.) Ever since then Suharto has presided, with only the occasional disturbance, over the long political stillness of the New Order.

Thirty years ago, then, Indonesia had all the makings of a Third World disaster story. That the country has prospered mightily instead is due partly to Suharto's leadership, and partly to some pre-existing or latent strengths that existed well before Suharto assumed control.

Indonesia is lucky that its early-20th-century nationalists decided not to elevate Javanese into the national language. Although Indonesians today either speak Javanese or one of more than 250 distinct languages at home, the nation's schools instruct them in *bahasa Indonesia*, a national language consciously adopted from the Malay trading dialect of a lesser ethnic group in Sumatra. Made back in the 1920s, this decision meant that the numerically preponderant Javanese would not come to dominate the archipelago with their language (though the question of Javanese *cultural* domination is another matter)—thus sparing Indonesia the debilitating linguistic politics that have bedeviled India, Sri Lanka, and many other countries.

A clear separation between the state and the predominant religion of the islands, Islam, has also helped Indonesia to remain united. The separation has been easier to maintain than one might imagine. Although about 90 percent of Indonesians describe themselves as Muslims, the degree of their orthodoxy varies considerably. People in the lightly populated outer islands far from Java and Bali generally tend to be more religiously observant. Yet it is also true that people living along the coasts of Indonesia's many islands tend to profess a stricter mode of Islam than those dwelling in the interior, especially in Java and the other larger islands, such as Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), Sumatra, and Sulawesi.

Nowhere is the difference between *pedalaman* and *pesisir* (the interior and the coastal area) more obvious than in Java. The interior of the world's most densely populated island, home to tens of millions of Indonesians, remains so strongly influenced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions predating Islam that its people are sometimes described as "nominal Muslims." In rural Java, where wet rice farming is still the primary occupation, I have often come across floral offerings left in the ruins of ancient Hindu temples. The principal characters of the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* appear in Javanese shadow theater, and, perhaps more revealingly, in print and TV advertisements for common consumer goods.

Indonesia's syncretic religious style is a legacy of its rich past as a center of Asian trade and commerce. Blessed by a superior location athwart the trade



A procession of the faithful at the Hindu Mother Temple in Besakih, Bali

routes between China and India and by favorable trade winds, many small trading kingdoms were flourishing in Java and Sumatra by the early years of the Christian era. With trade came settlers and new religious faiths, including both Buddhism and Hinduism. In A.D. 671, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim reported that it took him only 20 days to sail from Canton to the Sumatran kingdom of Śrivijaya, then entering its centuries-long heyday as the leading entrepôt of Southeast Asia.

By the 10th century, Java had emerged as the political and cultural center of Indonesia—the monumental Buddhist temple at Borobudur was erected around A.D. 800—and its dominance was assured after King Kertanagara reunified much of Java and extended his rule to southern Sumatra between

The Java Question

The quest for an Indonesian identity, observes anthropologist Clifford Geertz in After the Fact (1995), inevitably revolves around the country's dominant island.

The great florescence of Indic civilization—Barabudur, batik, gamelan music, the shadow-play—occurred in Java. The 16th century trade emporium was centered on its north coast, even if the most profitable cargoes came from elsewhere. The Dutch settled the headquarters, first of their Company, then of their colony, there. The rise of nationalism and the revolution against the Dutch mostly took place there. And today Java and the Javanese remain, despite strenuous efforts by the government to cloud the fact and occasional efforts, occasionally violent, by non-Javanese to alter it, the axis upon which the national life of the country turns. . . .

Indonesian nationalists have always regarded this situation as a heritage of colonialism, the result of a deliberate, divide-and-rule tearing apart of an ancient unity. But it is rather more the effect of the impact of an integrate-and-manage mercantile imperialism upon an ancient fragmentation. If the French were obliged to “pacify” Morocco sheikh by sheikh, the Dutch were obliged to gather up the East Indies people by people, fighting a series of extremely bitter and in some cases extended ethnic wars: against the Ambonese, Tematens, and Gowans in the 17th century; against the Javanese in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries; against the Minangkabau in the 1830s; against the Acheneese from 1873 to 1904; against the Bugis, the Balinese, the Torajans, and various smaller groups in the first decade of the present century. In unifying the archipelago under their hegemony, a process which took about 200 years, the Dutch turned a competitive diversity in which Java was prominent into a hierarchical one in which it was preeminent.

By 1925, when the Netherlands East Indies reached its *faux apogée*, this Java-and-the-others structure of ethnic identification was locked thoroughly in place. Only northeast Sumatra, where tobacco and rubber growing were concentrated (and half the laborers were indentured Javanese), approached Java as a locus for Dutch attention, Dutch presence, and the billiards, whist, fans, and *rijsttafel* form of life that the planters, soldiers, and civil servants who lived it called *indisch*. . . .

Nationalism, too, despite the fact that a number of its leading figures were transplanted Minangkabaus from West Sumatra (who, in any case, soon lost out in the power struggles that followed Independence) found its main battleground in Java and its champions mainly among the Javanese. The chief of these was, of course, Sukarno. . . .

The massacres of 1965 were also for the most part a Javanese, indeed an intra-Javanese, phenomenon; a conflict not between peoples but within one people, as to the symbolic basis, Islamic, Javanist, Civic, or Populist, on which “Java” and “The Seberang” were to be held together. Since then the history of the Republic has been broken, by the Indonesians themselves and by foreign observers, into the “Old Order” under Sukarno, a time of romantic nationalism, leftward drift and final catastrophe, and the “New Order” under Suharto, a time of army domination, managerial rule, and seeming permanence. But whatever the differences in style, tone, policy, and technique of the two leaders, and whatever the contrasts in esprit or efficiency of the regimes they put in place, the continuity between them is a good deal greater than partisans of either would like to admit. . . .

It is not simply the multiplicity of groups, cultures, languages, races, and social structures, but the depth of their disparities—in size, in centrality, in setting, in wealth, in complexity, and in world view—that insures that the politics of *suku*, the reconciliation of communities to one another, all of them to Java, and Java to itself, will remain at the heart of government. What Sukarno sought to do with rhetoric, charisma, and the mystique of revolution, Suharto has sought to do with soldiers, technocracy, and a ritual commemoration of revolution—to contain the divisiveness of cultural difference, pride, rivalry, and weight.

Suharto may have been the more successful: at least he has so far not so dramatically failed. . . . Whoever (or whatever) will succeed him is unclear. But whoever (or whatever), they will still be faced with a gathering of peoples imperfectly balanced.

1268 and 1292. His Hindu successors founded a new capital at Majapahit in 1293, and ruled for centuries. By the time Majapahit was founded, traders were already carrying Islam to the archipelago, where it spread slowly (and, unlike in many other lands, peacefully), its strength diminishing with distance from the coast. Christianity arrived in a few places with the Portuguese and other Europeans in the 16th century.

This long era of greatness left Indonesia a magnificent cultural legacy of lyric poems, epics, and legends, and a history of courtly life and political achievement that remains profoundly influential. The layers of religion (not including Christianity) have blended more than they have remained distinct, much like the colors of an intricate batik. Indonesia's few practicing Buddhists today are ethnic Chinese; Hinduism is largely confined to Bali. But, in a deeper sense, Buddhism and Hinduism are everywhere. To be sure, the major life passages—birth, marriage, death—continue to have an important Islamic gloss, but the spiritual temperament of the region bears obvious traces of the pre-Islamic past.

This is not to say that Indonesia's 180 million Muslims do not have their differences with the existing order. Some, not many, would dearly like to see the imposition of *sha'riah* (Islamic religious law) on the entire country. Others see Indonesia's rapid modernization (which they equate with Westernization) as morally destructive. But Indonesian Islam has too many faces to permit either generalizations or easy description. Repelled by greed and emboldened by Qu'ranic injunctions against usury, some Islamic reformers in Indonesia seek a more equitable social order. For these people, social control of key industries, and public subsidies of basic staples for the rural and urban poor, have much appeal. At the Friday observances at the mosques, one can hear oblique (and sometimes not so oblique) criticisms of corruption and of the extravagant lifestyles enjoyed by the regime's ethnic Chinese business collaborators. Yet Abdurrahman Wahid, the head of a moderate-to-conservative Muslim organization called Nahdlatul Ulama and a man who has tens of millions of followers, is "conservative," as the *Economist* notes, "only in that he believes in the relaxed and generally tolerant kind of Islam that has existed in Indonesia for centuries."

Another important reason why politicized Islam in Indonesia has always failed to reach a critical, pan-archipelagic mass has to do with the role of the Indonesian military, which both gives to, and borrows from, the secular course set by Indonesia's founding fathers. Because the 365,000-man ABRI (the Indonesian acronym by which the military is known) has special roots in Java, which supplies most of its officers and enlisted men, its outlook remains decidedly—even aggressively—secular. ABRI's aversion to radical politics became entrenched during the fighting against the Dutch when a PKI-endorsed revolt-within-a-rebellion erupted in 1948 in the East Java town of Madiun, challenging the infant Indonesian Republic's authority. ABRI put down that revolt with some difficulty. During the 1950s, it suppressed a number of Islamic-inspired regional revolts.

In part because of these experiences, the secular Indonesian state ideology *Pancasila* (Five Principles) has no more fervent supporters than the leaders of Indonesia's military. Created decades ago by Sukarno and still faithfully committed to memory by Indonesia's schoolchildren, this five-point mantra calls for humanitarianism, social justice, consensual politics, adherence to the constitutional process, and a belief in "God who is the Great One." That



Outside Jakarta, a new highway thrusts across land once occupied by farms and villages, part of Indonesia's continuing transformation.

god need not go by the name “Allah.”

ABRI's special place in Indonesian society has a name, *Dwi Fungsi* (Dual Function). Under this doctrine, the military claims both the traditional role of guarantor of national security and a special place in society—and in the economy—as the guardian of “national resilience.” Often seen as a threadbare excuse enabling military hands to plunge deeply into the ample cookie jar of Indonesia's economy, the Dual Function arises from a profound historical experience.

In essence, and like the Thai and Burmese military, ABRI sees itself as the only truly reliable guarantor of national cohesion, unity, and longevity. ABRI is the institution from which Suharto comes; he has bent it and blended it to suit his purposes for 30 years, most recently directing a rapid series of high-level reshufflings in top officer corps positions to discourage anti-Suharto plotting. In military eyes, Indonesia in its half-century of independence has weathered many challenges by the grace of God and, more important perhaps, with the help of ABRI's vigilance.

But the military itself has created two conflicts that still cause Jakarta endless trouble. The first arises from the bullying takeover, in the 1960s, of the Dutch-administered territory of West New Guinea. The reluctant Indonesians of Irian Jaya, as the territory is now called, have their sense of grievance kept alive by the contempt that many Javanese and other Malay peoples feel for Melanesian peoples, whose physical traits—wavy or wiry hair, broader noses, darker skin—become steadily more prevalent the farther east one travels in the archipelago. In 1996, the world's attention focused briefly on Irian Jaya when ethnic Melanesian separatists kidnapped seven European university researchers. After the hostages were freed by Indonesian commandos, the world resumed its indifference to Irian Jaya's fate.

Indonesia's second trouble spot is the product of its forcible incorporation in 1975 of the eastern half of the island of Timor. A sleepily administered Portuguese colony for some 400 years, Timor attracted nobody's attention until a leftist former customs official declared independence from Portugal in 1975 following a revolution in Lisbon the year before. Alarmed by the prospect of "a Cuba on the doorstep," Suharto launched an invasion. Between 1975 and 1978, perhaps 200,000 East Timorese died in the fighting or from starvation and other causes following the invasion. The chronic unrest and separatist yearning in East Timor—what Indonesian foreign minister Ali Alatas calls "that pebble in my shoe"—refuse to go away, and East Timor remains the blackest blot on Indonesia's international reputation.

Apart from East Timor and Irian Jaya, only one other region poses a serious, recurrent challenge: the formerly independent sultanate of Aceh, on Sumatra's northwestern tip, where separatists have hijacked airplanes and destroyed bridges. Elsewhere in the archipelago, however, separatist troubles have receded in recent decades.

The effort by Suharto and the army to prevent the rise of a divisive politics growing out of regional, religious, and cultural differences was probably essential to Indonesia's success during the past 30 years. Now, however, as the end of the Suharto era approaches, it can be seen as the nation's biggest handicap.

Perhaps the most noteworthy void in Indonesian life today is the lack of a robust civic life. The regime emphasizes *mufakat* and *musyawarat*, words that mean "consultation" and "consensus." But though the words connote a mushy consensual decision-making process, the truth is that Indonesia's political culture makes a virtue of an almost complete lack of overt contention in the political arena. For 30 years, Suharto has marginalized virtually every Indonesian leader with enough independence, popular support, or charisma to emerge as a potential challenger. He has tried to root out or control not only all manifestations of ethnic or religious politics but more narrowly focused activism as well. After this summer's rioting, Suharto and his top officers warned ominously that the environmentalists, social reformers, and labor activists attracted to Megawati's cause had been seduced, "consciously or unconsciously," as Suharto put it "by PKI-like" rhetoric.

The chronic unrest and separatist yearning in East Timor remain the blackest blot on Indonesia's international reputation.

Suharto's hatred of communism and distrust of politicized Islam only slightly exceed his dislike of liberal democratic politics—the fractious, quibbling politics of "50 plus one," as Sukarno used to say. Twenty-five years ago his successor created a mostly for-show electoral triptych composed of two government-created political parties, and a pro-government organization, Golkar, which functions as the government's parliamentary party. Megawati's PDI originated in a forced merger of pre-1965 nationalist and socialist parties; the Development Unity Party (PPP) combines the principal Muslim-oriented political parties that existed in 1971. Golkar and its putative opponents come to life every five years to contest a carefully

stage-managed parliamentary election which Golkar always wins, although never so overwhelmingly as to discredit the entire process.

Such acts of electoral artifice have a comfortable intellectual foundation in parts of Asia. In the early 1990s, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and other Malaysian, Singaporean, and Chinese writers castigated the West for its "corrupting" embrace of individualism and human rights. Asia, they said, stood out by contrast as a place where social responsibility, order, and stability take pride of place. It is an argument that Suharto and his allies could have comfortably endorsed.

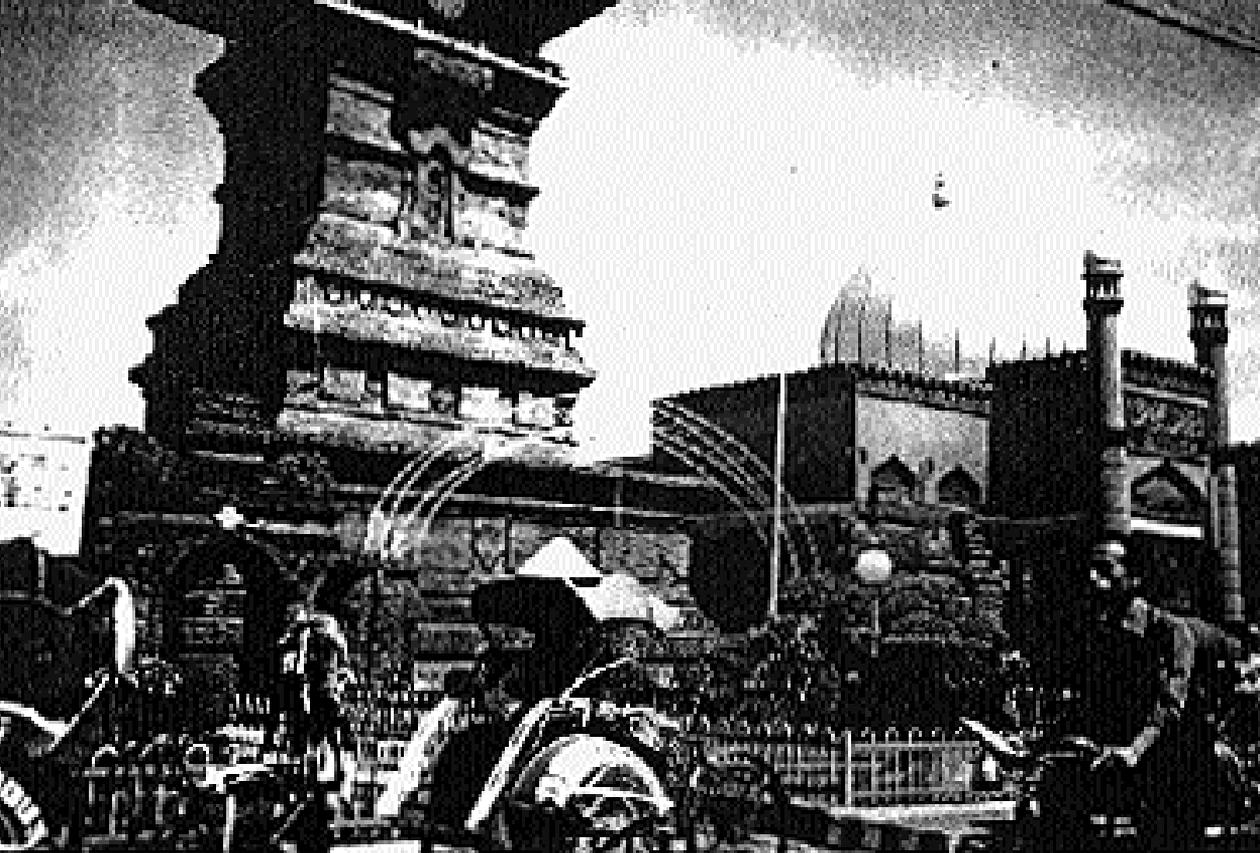
On the other side of the debate over Asian and Western values, editorial writers at periodicals such as the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Asian Wall Street Journal* point to the "inevitability" of greater political freedom once economic freedom is widened. Rapid economic growth normally creates a larger middle class which, so the argument goes, makes a strong push for greater political participation. The Clinton administration's embrace of "democratic enlargement" as a major U.S. foreign policy objective leans heavily on this model of democratic transformation. The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta reckons that Indonesia's middle class (households with annual incomes of at least \$5,000) now includes between 14 and 18 million people, or roughly eight percent of the total population. But it is not at all clear that the Indonesian middle class is ready to take risks for a new political system after Suharto is gone.

"Leaving aside the arguments about whether middle class size has much to do with democratization or not," Indonesia specialist Douglas Ramage says, "it is likely that the Indonesian middle class will not, at any time in the foreseeable future, be large enough or sufficiently united to act in concert politically." Indonesian environment minister Sarwono Kusumuaatmadja complains that he is "tired of analyses contending that Indonesia's growing middle class will agitate for democratization." Sarwono sees Indonesia's middle class as quite different from that of Thailand or Taiwan, where democratic reform has gone much further, in part because its members are very beholden to the economic opportunities provided by Suharto's authoritarian government.

If correct, this view augurs poorly for any rapid moves toward more representative and participatory government in post-Suharto Indonesia. There is, moreover, precious little raw material with which to build democracy. To be sure, the country has a superabundance of pluralism—ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural. Its 27 provinces are home to 366 distinct ethnic groups and dozens of distinct language groups. But mature institutions of *political* pluralism do not exist.

The trade-off between political and economic development is felt acutely in Indonesia. Suharto's foreign and internal critics tend to minimize the importance of the economic transformation wrought by the New Order. Yet the fear of jeopardizing these solid gains probably remains the regime's single most effective claim on public support. The fear of disruption can delay change just as effectively as troops and tear gas. In any succession scenario, stability will probably remain the overriding concern—to the generals, to peasants, to foreign investors, and to the middle class.

Thus, even after Suharto leaves, Indonesia will probably remain essentially autocratic, with a clear delineation of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" political behavior. There is little reason to expect a quick democratization and the rise of a more parliamentarily-focused, less hierarchical system. Indonesia's



With its Hindu-style minaret and its more obviously Islamic main hall, this mosque in Java embodies Indonesia's syncretic style of worship.

only fully free election occurred during the despised parliamentary period, back in 1955. Electoral democracy suffers from its association in the popular mind with the revolving-door governments of the early post-independence era. And almost every political experience of Indonesia's people, from the era of the great kingdoms, with their elaborate political culture of deference, to the revolts and upheavals of the recent past, argues for strong, unitary leadership from the center.

Indonesia's future will probably look more like its present than its past. Certain styles of governance will continue. The stage-managed People's Consultative Assembly will be convened to anoint whomever emerges to step into the general's shoes. Unlike the former Yugoslavia or Soviet Union—also multiethnic entities dominated by authoritarian leaders—Indonesia has achieved a transcendent nationalism. It is not an ethnic time bomb waiting to go off once its Tito departs the scene. Fifty, even 20, years ago, citizens of the country still counted themselves Batak, Sundanese, Balinese, Malay, or Javanese—to name just a few of the country's ethnic groups. With few exceptions (the East Timorese are one), they feel today that they are Indonesians.

Similarly, even active participation in the Suharto succession by politically energized Muslims will not likely lead to an Islamic state or even, as in Malaysia, to a state embracing Islam as its official religion. Indonesian tolerance, the country's syncretic approach to religious practice and traditions, will continue because they are rooted in the Javanese heartland.

Standing against all of these arguments for continuity is the fact that the New Order, which would serve as the foundation for whatever came next, itself enjoys only uncertain legitimacy. Outsiders wondered why Suharto insisted, as recently as the early 1990s, on executing a number of alleged

coup plotters from 1965 and why a number of others remained in jail for decades. These elderly men, after all, posed no plausible danger to Suharto.

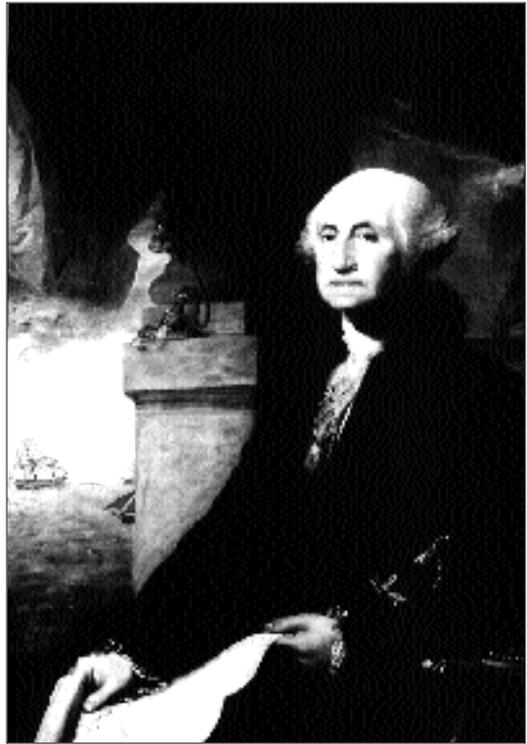
Except, perhaps, to Suharto's version of what happened during those hours back at the end of September in that crucible year. For many suspect that Suharto played a classic double game that night of September 30, 1965; that he caught the Communists off guard and eliminated his chief rivals within the military for good measure. Whatever the truth, the New Order began in the way most dynastic changes began in ancient Java, with acts of betrayal and then a slaughter of lesser players—which in 1965 extended to a great crowd of innocents.

With this history, no one can be sure that Indonesia's next transition, that polite term still given the process, will be as "orderly" as Indonesians and others would like. But Suharto, the enigmatically smiling general with his ambiguous past, the indulgent family man, the master of Javanese obliqueness, must soon pass from the scene. Whatever autocrat emerges to promise the preservation of unity within this archipelago's extraordinary diversity, Indonesians whose memories extend back to 1965 can only hope that the new ruler comes to power swiftly and painlessly.



George Washington's Farewell Address

Two hundred years ago, on September 19, 1796, George Washington announced his decision to step down from the presidency. As venerated as Washington remains today, few Americans appreciate the wisdom contained in his carefully crafted Farewell Address—wisdom that earlier generations of Americans considered an indispensable part of their nation's political thought.



Portrait of Washington by Gilbert Stuart (1796-97)

by **Matthew Spalding**

Our Washington is no more! The hero, the patriot, and the sage of America, the man on whom, in times of danger, every eye was turned, and all hopes were placed, lives now only in his own great actions, and in the hearts of an affectionate and afflicted people.” With these words, drafted by James Madison and Henry Lee, John Marshall offered resolutions in Congress calling for a national period of mourning and the creation of an appropriate memorial to honor the memory of President George Washington after his death in December 1799.

Congressman Henry Lee—Lighthorse Harry of Revolutionary War renown—was chosen to deliver the official eulogy, which included these memorable words:

First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen, he was second to none in humble and enduring scenes of private life. Pious, just, humane, temperate, and sincere; uniform, dignified, and commanding; his example was as edifying to all around him as were the effects of that example lasting. . . . Correct throughout, vice shuddered in his presence and virtue always felt his fostering hand. The purity of his private character gave effulgence to his public virtues. . . . Such was the man for whom our nation mourns.

Two centuries later, Washington remains one of the most recognized and widely respected figures in American history. Indeed, in recent years there has been a major revival of interest—marked by a spate of biographies, popular essays, and political

speeches. This revival is no accident. Americans increasingly question their national purpose and role in the world. They doubt the ability of government to address the very real problems of society. They fear the breakup of community and family, and the deeper loss of morality, that seem to result from unrestrained individualism. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that Americans might look to the father of their country for guidance and inspiration.

Remarkably, though, this renaissance has so far paid scant attention to Washington's most famous written work, his Farewell Address of 1796. Such neglect is all the more strange considering the high regard in which the address was so long held. Along with the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the *Federalist*, it was judged by prominent Americans of earlier times to be one of the great documents of American history and a major contribution to our political thought.

Washington's objective, as explained in the address itself, was "to offer to your solemn contemplation and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a People." He was not alone in claiming some permanency for the Farewell Address. John Quincy Adams expressed his hope that the American people "may not only impress all its admonitions upon their hearts, but that it may serve as the foundation upon which the whole system of their future policy may rise, the admiration and example of future time." When Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were designing the primary reading list for the University of Virginia in 1825, they described the address as one of the best guides to the distinctive principles of American government. And Daniel Webster, speaking at the centennial of Washington's birth in 1832, said it was

"full of truths important at all times" and called on "every man in the country to reperuse [it] and consider."

Yet today, when not completely forgotten, the address is thought of as a document concerned almost exclusively with foreign policy. In fact, it is far more comprehensive. Its two great themes are union at home and independence abroad, but union and independence were not goals unto themselves. They were necessary preconditions for and the consequence of the development of what Washington called a national character.

Washington had earlier set forth his understanding of the American character in his Circular Address to the States in 1783, upon his retirement from the army, and in his First Inaugural Address in 1789. But the final and most mature statement of his views appeared, unostentatiously, on page two of Philadelphia's *American Daily Advertiser* on September 19, 1796, under the simple heading, "To the PEOPLE of the United States" and then "Friends and Fellow Citizens," all in slightly enlarged type. The author of the 6,100-word article was not disclosed until the end: "G. Washington, United States, September 19, 1796."

Washington had begun work on the address the previous spring. Finishing a rough draft (which contained several paragraphs that James Madison had written for him in 1792), he had turned it over to Alexander Hamilton for editing, reshaping, and elaboration. At the president's behest, Hamilton skillfully produced a new and fuller draft, which Washington then reworked into the final manuscript. Though a collaborative effort, the address was (as comparison of the first and final drafts reveals) emphatically Washington's at its intellectual core. And the circumstances of its publication—it was not communicated to Congress or given any official fanfare—emphasized Washington's intent to speak directly to the American people. In all respects, it was an appropriate capstone to his long public career, the culmination of four decades of political

> MATTHEW SPALDING is Director of Lectures and Educational Programs at The Heritage Foundation and co-author of *A Sacred Union of Citizens: George Washington's Farewell Address and the American Character* (Roman & Littlefield, 1996) from which this article is adapted. Copyright © 1996 by Matthew Spalding.

wisdom and practical experience.

The opening of the address is an explanation and defense of Washington's decision to retire. He modestly notes the "inferiority" of his qualifications for president and states that he has discharged his responsibilities as best "a very fallible judgment was capable." At the age of 64, the "weight of years" has made the "shade of retirement" as necessary as it is welcome. Yet his decision has been made foremost in his capacity as "a dutiful citizen" and reflects neither a diminution of zeal nor a deficiency of gratitude.

Washington's announcement is a small part of the address, but it sets the tone and gravity of the whole document. The opening carries such weight precisely because it explains more about the decisionmaker than the decision. It is a proof of Washington's character, emphasizing modesty and duty as evidence of his republicanism.

If announcing his decision to retire was Washington's sole intention, he could have ended at this point: "Here, perhaps, I ought to stop." Instead, he chose to use the occasion to offer some thoughts for the "solemn contemplation" and "frequent review" of the American people. The main body of the Farewell Address is composed of a long section recounting Washington's advice on the necessity and importance of national union, the Constitution and the rule of law, political parties, the proper habits and dispositions of the people, foreign influence in domestic affairs, international relations, and commercial policy.

At first glance, this medley of topics seems haphazard, yet an order emerges. The general theme is the preservation of the Union as the core of American nationhood. Washington argued for the policies needed to perpetuate the Union—the most important being a well-formed constitution and measures to promote good character among the people. His advice was to maintain the Union, the Constitution, and the habits of good citizenship, and to observe good faith and justice toward all nations. His warnings were to distrust the passions of political parties, be wary of foreign influence, avoid an entangling foreign policy,

and be mindful of policies that might undermine the Union, the Constitution, or the character of the people. The thread that held all these thoughts together was self-government, for the question Washington's advice was intended to answer was whether the American people were capable of ruling themselves.

In the end, Washington's argument for union was based on the idea of a common interest—persuading the people that they could best achieve the material requirements of independence by being united rather than divided. The two primary benefits of this unity were prosperity and security.

Washington's Union, however, was not a mere agreement of security or convenience. He predicted that if the people would assess the immense value of national union not only to their collective but also their individual happiness, they would inevitably come to cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it. Not only did he urge the people to discourage any hint of abandoning the Union and to disapprove any attempts to alienate its geographic sections; he also warned of those who sought to enfeeble the sacred ties which now linked the various parts. These ties—the foremost being the Union, the formal tie being the Constitution—must be cherished as *sacred* and must be *sacredly* maintained. Long before Abraham Lincoln, Washington was calling for a form of political religion.

The cornerstone of this sacred union was the uniting of the states and the people under one government: "To the efficacy and permanency of Your Union, a Government for the whole is indispensable." The previous loose confederation of states (1781–88), although chartered under the "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union," had been proven inadequate for the purposes of nationhood. Fortunately, this endeavor had been "improved upon" by a plan calculated to create a national union. The new Constitution (in force for eight years at the time of the Farewell Address) was sufficiently energetic to meet the requirements of good government yet limited in its scope: it was "completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with

energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment.”

According to the Declaration of Independence, governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed; it was the right of the people to form, alter, or abolish their constitution so as best to effect their safety and happiness. The Constitution was formed on the basis of this principle. Such grounding in consent, according to Washington, made it “sacredly obligatory upon all” until it was formally changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole People.

One principal threat to the Union, Washington knew, was sectionalism. He was concerned that a strong preference for one’s state or local section of the country might become destructive of the common interest and national character. As though anticipating the conflict between union and sectionalism in the mid-19th century over the question of slavery, he spoke of designing men who might misrepresent the opinions of other sections of the country as an expedient to their own political power.

Taking “a more comprehensive view,” Washington warned of the “baneful effects of the Spirit of Party”—one of the two most famous recommendations of the Farewell Address. (The other recommendation, concerning foreign alliances, comes later.) This was not surprising, for the question of party, and the more notorious problem of faction, was the dominant question of Washington’s presidency and a prominent concern throughout the Founding period.

Washington noted that the spirit of party was to be found in the “strongest passions of the human mind” and was inseparable from “our nature.” (Likewise, James Madison wrote in *Federalist* 10 that “the latent causes of faction are sown in the nature of man.”) He was well aware that, in monarchies, party might be a useful check on the administration of government and thus serve the cause of liberty. Nevertheless, it was “a spirit not to be encouraged” in popular governments.

The threat of party spirit was not its existence, however, but “the constant danger of excess.” Party spirit stirred up individual passions and overpowered man’s reason, bring-

ing out the worst aspects of popular government. In its worst form, excessive party spirit distracted the government, agitated the community, fomented riots and insurrections, and opened the door to foreign influence and corruption. The problems of party spirit made it both “the interest and duty of a wise People to discourage and restrain it.” An effort ought to be made to mitigate it, he argued, not by law or coercion but by “the force of public opinion.”

Washington’s solution was not to increase the diversity of interests so much as to shape a common opinion that would transcend the petty and self-interested differences that divided men. This common opinion would be shaped by strengthening important shared characteristics: civic responsibility and education, morality and religious obligation, independence and justice toward foreign nations.

The Farewell Address teaches that the creation of a regime with a national purpose and a national character demands not only a good government but the cultivation of the proper habits and dispositions on the part of both the rulers and the ruled. The problem under the regime of the Articles of Confederation, dominated by the state governments, was that jealous and petty politics invited and encouraged a jealous and petty spirit in the people. By nourishing petty politics, speculation, and special interests, and in general serving narrow political passions, bad government generated licentious appetites and corrupted morals.

The new Constitution, Washington argued, actually encouraged moderation and good habits of government. First, the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances thwarted governmental despotism and encouraged responsibility in public representatives. A responsible government, in turn, bolstered responsible people. Second, the legitimate constitutional amendment process allowed democratic reform at the same time that it elevated the document above the popular passions of the moment, thereby encouraging deliberation

Washington advised that the United States should “observe good faith and justice towards all Nations.” As there was a connection between private morality and public happiness in a people, so there was a connection between the virtue and happiness of a nation; as there were proper dispositions and habits of people, so too with nations. This conduct was enjoined by both religion and morality as well as good policy. Washington noted that “it will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period, a great Nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a People always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence.” Besides, proper conduct toward other nations served to elevate and distinguish the national character: “The experiment is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human Nature.”

This demanded not only freedom of action but also independent thinking. If just and amicable relations with other nations were to be cultivated, “inveterate antipathies” or “passionate attachments” on the part of the people must be overcome. Americans must be free from their hatreds and allegiances to foreign nations if they were to become partisans of their own nation and the larger cause of human freedom it represented. Foreign influence, in addition to the “baneful effects” of party, was “one of the most baneful foes of Republican government.”

Washington recommended as the great rule of conduct that the United States primarily pursue commercial relations with other nations and have with them “as little political connection as possible.” Binding the destiny of America to Europe would only serve unnecessarily to “entangle” the new nation’s peace and prosperity with “the toils of European Ambition, Rivalship, Interest, Humour [and] Caprice.”

In the most quoted and misinterpreted passage of the document, Washington warned against excessive ties with any country: “’Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent Alliances, with any portion of the foreign world.” Although Washington’s words are usually cited to support isolationism, it is difficult to construe them

as a recommendation of strict noninvolvement in the affairs of the world. (For one, the activities of his administration suggested no such policy.) The infamous warning against “entangling alliances,” often attributed to the Farewell Address, is in the 1801 Inaugural Address of Thomas Jefferson. Washington warned of *political* connections and *permanent* alliances and added the hedge, “So far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do.”

Instead, Washington favored harmony and liberal intercourse with all nations as recommended by “policy, humanity and interest.” President Washington followed these principles in declaring the United States’ neutrality in the European war in April 1793. He recommended that the nation pursue a long-term course of placing itself in a position to defy external threats, defend its own neutrality, and, eventually, choose peace or war as its own “interest guided by justice shall Counsel.” Rather than a *passive* condition of detachment the president described an *active* policy of national independence as necessary for America, at some not too distant period in the future, to determine its own fate.

In the end, Washington was reluctant to assume that his counsels would have the intended effect: “I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression, I could wish.” Given the significance that Washington knew would be accorded his thoughts under the circumstances, this comment seems an understatement—much like Lincoln’s remark that his words at Gettysburg would be little noted nor long remembered.

Washington was well aware that he was aiming high. He hoped that his advice might lead Americans to “controul the usual current of the passions and prevent our Nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the Destiny of Nations.” He was endeavoring to affect the usual course of human affairs, to inculcate maturity and moderation in both domestic and international affairs. If the American people chose to follow his advice, they would have to learn to control not only their public but also their private proclivities to follow their desires

instead of their reason.

And if this was too much to ask, Washington held out the prospect that his ideas might still be productive of some partial benefits. He hoped that his advice might “now and then” be remembered so as to “moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign Intrigue, [and] to guard against the Impostures of pretended patriotism.” If his words did not moderate the people, at least they might serve to moderate their leaders and representatives.

The final themes of the Farewell Address are citizenship and friendship. Washington anticipated his own retirement with “pleasing expectation.” After 45 years of public service, he surely deserved the peace and quiet of private life. He hoped to enjoy for himself the blessings of the more perfect union he had worked so long and hard to secure. Yet the “ever favourite object” of the departing president’s heart was not individual solitude. Instead, he spoke as a republican citizen looking forward to sharing the rights and responsibilities of his political community: “I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow Citizens, the benign influence of good Laws under free Government.”

It is no coincidence that the Farewell Address was framed by references to citizenship and friendship. Washington began by referring to himself as a “dutiful citizen” and concluded by speaking of “my fellow Citizens” and to “you, my Countrymen.” Early on, Washington presented his thoughts as the “disinterested warnings of a parting friend,” while toward the end he referred to “these counsels of an old and affectionate friend.” Citizenship and friendship were literally the beginning and the end of Washington’s collected wisdom for the nation.

When he prepared his draft in 1796, before sending it to Hamilton for revision, Washington added at the top of the first page: “Friends and Fellow Citizens.” This was, in part, a recognition of an international audience. It appealed to the natural ground of peaceful and just relations among all human beings, whatever conventional divisions might separate and distinguish them. But it also reflected Washington’s understanding of his domestic audience. Early in the Farewell Address, he hoped that not just union but “Union and brotherly affection be perpetual.” Later, he warned of a perception of local interests and views that tended to render “alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection.” In the end, although commercial and security interests cemented the relationship, true political harmony existed only if Americans were tied together by the bonds of friendship.

That Washington could say in 1796 that Americans had become friends and fellow citizens—despite the geographical differences, party divisions, and foreign policy dangers at the time—suggests that the Founding, meaning the creation of the regime, was in his mind complete. The challenge from that point forward was perpetuating it. Washington warned Americans that they must be ever vigilant in maintaining their constitutional government. The real task, according to the Father of the Country, was to maintain the brotherly affections of the people by guarding and encouraging the dispositions and habits most conducive to republican government.

To be sure, this is no small labor. But the challenge of perpetuation remains with us today. If Americans hope to restore their character as a nation—under much different but no less demanding circumstances—they would do well to remember the wisdom of George Washington.

Six Days to Reinvent Japan

Fifty years ago, in postwar Tokyo, General Douglas MacArthur gave a group of young Americans the assignment of drafting a new constitution for Japan. The resulting democratic charter has ordered Japanese political life ever since. Our author tells the story of this unusual “constitutional convention.”

by Alex Gibney

On February 2, 1946, amid the ruins of postwar Japan, *His Butler's Sister*, starring Deanna Durbin, opened at the Ginza Subaruza in downtown Tokyo. The film, a musical comedy in which a temporary maid falls for her sophisticated boss, was the first American movie approved for showing by the office of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur. The Japanese audiences—who were supposed to be impressed by the film's democratic sentiments—were instead stunned by the sumptuous gowns, well-stocked refrigerators, and other emblems of material wealth that the characters in the film took for granted. Their world was so remote and alien to the viewers in the Ginza Subaruza that the movie seemed almost like science fiction.

But just a few blocks away, something even more fantastic was taking place: General MacArthur, the de facto emperor of Occupied Japan, was preparing orders to revise the fundamental principles of the Japanese state.

Two days later, at his direction, General Courtney Whitney assembled 25 American men and women—military officers, civilian attachés, researchers, and interpreters—in the Dai Ichi Insurance building, across the moat from the Imperial Palace. “Ladies and gentlemen,” Whitney boomed, “we will now resolve ourselves

into a constitutional convention . . . entrusted . . . with the historically significant task of drafting a new constitution for the Japanese people.”

The Americans intended to change the 57-year-old Meiji charter that had allowed a militaristic regime to arise in Japan. They hoped thereby to establish a peace-loving democracy and a legal structure guaranteeing the rights of the Japanese people.

They did their work well. Fifty years later, the constitution they drafted—including the famous “no war” clause of Article Nine and the guarantees of civil rights and democratic freedoms—remains fully in force. Remarkably, during all those years, the Japanese have never seen fit to amend the document.

That may now be changing. During the Cold War, the United States served as Japan's military shield and economic sponsor. With the struggle over, and with Japan prosperous and at peace, some Japanese, as well as a number of Americans, have begun to wonder if the time has not come to alter the constitution's Article Nine, which renounces war and “the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.” Is the United States, which has 45,000 troops stationed in Japan, now stuck with a costly and unnecessary military burden? Does



Standing in the rain outside the imperial palace in Tokyo on May 3, 1947, Emperor Hirohito doffs his hat to a throng of 20,000 gathered to celebrate the adoption of the new Japanese constitution.

the constitutional provision allow Japan to evade its international responsibilities? Is it time, as some contend, for Japan to become a “normal” country again?

There are even more basic questions. Doubts persist among many Japanese and foreign observers as to whether Japan is truly a full-fledged democracy. Because democracy was imposed from above, not demanded from below, by the Japanese people, many maintain that powerful special interests, including big industry, the government bureaucracy, and the Liberal Democratic Party itself, effectively undermined the best efforts of the American framers.

Yet the fact remains that the Japanese people have not cast off their American-drafted constitution. And the reason is clear: most Japanese deeply believe in its principles. This belief was especially strong in 1946, when the rubble and twisted metal throughout Japan’s great cities gave proof of a failed political system. Defeated in war, the Japanese were ready for a General MacArthur, acting like a new emperor, to transform the system that had led to such catastrophe.

MacArthur did not accomplish the task by himself, of course. It helped that the men and women to whom he gave the assignment of revising the constitution were idealistic amateurs, uninhibited by extensive special knowledge of Japan and fervently convinced that the principles of liberal democracy were universal truths.

Buoyed by their nation’s victory in war, the members of SCAP’s Government Section exuded a self-confidence that almost equaled their commander’s. As is well known, MacArthur lacked neither vainglory nor the will to make history. Perhaps because of both, he was willing to sanction occupation policies that seemed to fly in the face of his conservative principles. The policies proclaimed in his name included busting trusts, purging businessmen and politicians tainted by connections with the wartime regime, initiating land reform, bolstering the power of labor unions, and releasing Communists from jail.

The Potsdam Declaration proclaimed by the Allies in 1945 called for the Japanese government to “remove all obsta-

cles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people” and to establish “freedom of speech, of religion, of thought, as well as respect for fundamental human rights.” Those under MacArthur’s command who saw Potsdam as a license to effect a social revolution in Japan could be certain of his support, so long as giving “power to the people” was part of a military program of dismantling the governmental machinery behind Japan’s war effort.

The members of MacArthur’s Government Section were convinced that the very nature of the Meiji Constitution, written in 1889 by the great 19th-century statesman Ito Hirobumi, had encouraged Japan’s militarism. The charter’s goals were summed up by the slogan “Fukoku Kyohei” (“Rich Nation, Strong Military”). In a hurry to modernize Japan and so protect it from the weapons of the Western powers, Ito traveled all over the world in search of models for a constitution that would adapt modern Western statecraft to the Japanese character, in a way that would centralize power (no time for democracy in the push to modernize) and unify a weak and isolated country of feuding domains (*han*) around a nationalistic symbol.

The charter Ito gave Japan combined the Prussian constitution of Otto Von Bismarck (which is why Japan’s parliament bears the German name Diet) with the mystical allure of the Japanese emperor (a legendary descendant of Japan’s “mother,” the Sun Goddess Amaterasu) who—until he was resurrected by Ito—had been a purely ceremonial figure in Kyoto. By moving the 16-year-old Emperor Mutsuhito to Tokyo from the old imperial capital, dressing him in a military uniform, and making him the sovereign of the Japanese state (with the ceremonial name “Meiji,” meaning “enlightened rule”), Ito and his fellow modernizers from the western domains of Satsuma and Choshu had been able to create a strong national sym-

bol and to design a form of government that looked like a parliamentary democracy.

But, in practice, as political scientist Chalmers Johnson has noted, Ito’s constitution neither permitted real democracy—which many educated citizens had begun to demand—nor bestowed real power upon the emperor. While the constitution gave the emperor the power to declare war and peace, conclude treaties, and appoint key officials, the actual levers of power were operated by the men behind the throne—advisers such as Ito (who also became prime minister) and, later, Japan’s wartime cabinet ministers. Responsible to the emperor, not the Diet, they “were basically beyond the law,” Johnson observed.

After the war, when the American occupiers made it clear that they wanted changes in this political system, Prime Minister Shidehara Kijuro appointed a distinguished group of jurists, the Matsumoto Committee, to consider a few modifications to Ito’s constitution. But when an enterprising Japanese journalist revealed details of the committee’s secret first draft on the front page of Japan’s *Mainichi Shimbun*, readers—most of them extremely bitter toward the existing system—were shocked at how superficial the proposed changes were. The Matsumoto Committee, believing that the militarists had abused a Meiji Constitution that was fundamentally sound, thought that constitutional revision meant little more than dusting off the old furniture. General MacArthur had other ideas.

When General Whitney relayed MacArthur’s order for them to draft a new constitution for Japan, his young subordinates could not believe it. “I was flabbergasted,” recalled Colonel Charles Kades, the popular deputy chief of SCAP’s Government Section who was selected to chair the Constitution Steering Committee (and who died this past June at the age of 90). He was even more astonished when Whitney told them how much time they had to complete their work: a

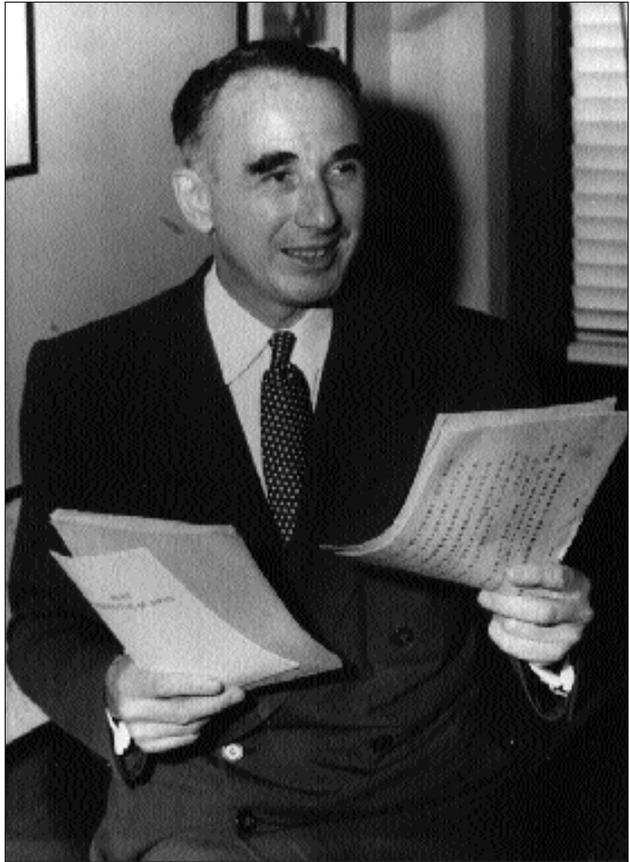
> ALEX GIBNEY, a writer and documentary producer, was the executive producer of the Emmy Award-winning 10-part PBS series “The Pacific Century.” He is completing a book about the American authors of the Japanese constitution. Copyright © 1996 by Alex Gibney.

mere six days.

The story of their mission mocks the portentous stereotypes of nation building. Kades and the others given this daunting assignment were not learned philosopher-statesmen. They were intelligent, educated men and women who, owing to the urgency of the military's assignment and the might of their nation, found themselves in a peculiar position of power. Their inexperience might even have been an advantage, making them more willing, perhaps, than constitutional scholars or "experts" on Japan to institute the dramatic political changes deemed necessary by the Allies in general, the Americans in particular, and many of the Japanese themselves. Guided by their native idealism, they set out to transform Japan into a Western-style democracy and a beacon of pacifism—in MacArthur's words, "the Switzerland of Asia."

The men and women chosen for this task of "creative destruction" were a diverse lot. They included a doctor, a novelist, a former congressman and governor of Puerto Rico, a newspaperman, a foreign service officer, two academics, and five lawyers. Though they held views that ran the political spectrum, most were liberals who had supported President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and were sympathetic to the use of government to promote social equality. They also shared a faith in the American way, and they espoused it with an almost missionary zeal. "We felt that what we knew about American experience could be imposed and replicated almost totally in Japan," says Milton Esman, now an emeritus professor of government at Cornell University, then a 24-year-old with a freshly minted Ph.D. from Princeton.

The brash confidence of the drafters was in part a reflection of their ignorance of



Charles Kades, a lawyer who had been one of FDR's New Dealers before the war, led the Americans who drafted a charter for Japanese democracy.

Japan. "My knowledge was zero," Kades candidly admitted. "Before I arrived, I knew nothing about Japan except that which one would glean from a local American newspaper." Indeed, there was a disdain in the Government Section for anyone—such as the old "Japan hands" in the State Department—who had special knowledge of, or affection for, Japan which might make them reluctant to implement radical social changes.

It was clear to the Americans that the Japanese government did not represent the wishes of the Japanese citizenry. "There were ultra-nationalists in the cabinet at the time," said Kades, "whereas it was clear from the press and the radio and the letters to the editors that the Japanese people wanted to swing to the left. Not to the left of center, but from the extreme right toward the center."

To reinvent Japan, these foreign

“The idea that a woman couldn’t decide whom she wanted to marry . . . that she couldn’t divorce a man . . . that she really had no rights as far as property was concerned . . . was very disturbing.”

founders had precious little to work with. There were a few translations of published draft constitutions, drawn up by independent Japanese groups and political parties, that the Americans had collected or that had arrived, unbidden, in the Dai Ichi building. There was a dog-eared copy of a vague State Department directive about democracy. And Colonel Kades clutched a handwritten note from MacArthur advising the committee of his wishes. These included retaining the emperor, ending the “feudal” rights of peerage, abolishing war as a sovereign right of the nation, and patterning the budget after “the British system.” “I don’t think any of us had any idea what the British system was,” Kades said, and any resemblance the final draft had to it was, he added, “purely coincidental.”

“I thought, ‘my goodness, we have to have some prototypes,’” recalls Beate Sirota Gordon, who, at 22, was the youngest member of the Government Section and—other than the translators—the only one able to speak Japanese. She commandeered a jeep and driver and set out through the bombed-out ruins of Tokyo in search of constitutions from various countries. Under orders to keep the operation secret, Sirota drove from library to library, taking only a few constitutions from each place, because she “didn’t want to make the librarians suspicious.” She returned with more than a dozen constitutions, and spread them out on a table for her colleagues.

Supervising the “constitutional convention” was a Steering Committee made up of Kades, Lieutenant Colonel Milo Rowell, a conservative Republican lawyer from Fresno, California, and Alfred Hussey, a navy commander and Harvard-trained lawyer from Plymouth, Massachusetts. They divided the members of the “convention” into seven committees.

In drafting a new charter, the Americans tried to preserve some of the character of

the old one. They did not try to force an American-style president and congress on Japan. Rather, they retained the form of a parliamentary system while insisting that both houses of the old bicameral Diet be popularly elected. (In the Meiji Constitution, the upper house had been composed of members of the imperial family, nobles, and imperial appointees.) To forestall abuses of power by the cabinet and unofficial “advisers” to the throne, the new system had the prime minister elected by the lower house, and the entire cabinet responsible to the Diet, not the emperor, as under the Meiji Constitution.

The Committee on the Emperor, Treaties and Enabling Provisions—led by Richard Poole, one of the younger members of the Government Section (and now a retired foreign service officer)—had the important job of defining the emperor’s new constitutional role. “We didn’t want him to be just window dressing,” Poole says. Nor did they want him to retain the power he had under the Meiji Constitution. They finally arrived at the formula that the emperor was “the symbol of the state and the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power.”

That the emperor should continue to have a role was of the greatest concern to the conservative Japanese government, which regarded the imperial institution as essential to the Japanese polity. But in the United States and among U.S. allies, there was considerable pressure to abolish the institution and to try Emperor Hirohito himself as a war criminal. Fearing that “blood would flow in the streets” if Hirohito were deposed, MacArthur unilaterally decided to keep the emperor. But he was to be stripped of all semblance of power. The constitution that emerged stipulated that the emperor “shall not have powers related to government.” His role was to be purely symbolic.

Yet even as a mere symbol, the emperor remained a problem because he was identified so closely with Japan's militarism and aggression. The solution was to have the Japanese, in the new charter, renounce forever the right to wage war. Kades assigned himself the task of writing Article Nine, the "no war" provision.

The origin of the idea for Article Nine is still a mystery. Though some credit Prime Minister Shidehara, the emperor, or even Kades (who casually mentioned the idea to General Whitney during a car ride to see Shidehara), most informed observers agree that the inventor was probably MacArthur. He, in any case, was the only man with the authority and the audacity to insist on its inclusion. "MacArthur was concerned with his place in history," says Esman, who believes that the general was motivated primarily by his titanic ego. He thought history would take keen and admiring interest in a military man who "was able to induce a society like Japan to renounce armaments."

In Kades's view, Article Nine stemmed partly from a pragmatic concern: MacArthur's fear that Japan might be the battleground for an American-Soviet confrontation if Japan were not "neutral." But Article Nine also resulted from "sheer idealism," said Kades. "MacArthur decided that he might be able to change the course of history, by changing the nature of Japan."

In writing the provision, Kades made a critical change in MacArthur's wording in his handwritten directive, one that looms large even today. MacArthur had written: "Japan renounces [war] . . . even for preserving its own security." Kades struck out that last clause because he "didn't feel it was practical to forbid a nation's self-defense." That stroke of a pen, along with some minor Japanese changes in the text that Kades approved, gave "the color of respectability" (in his words) to the establishment of Japan's Self-Defense Forces—a rather large military body allowed to defend Japan from external attack but prohibited from foreign deployment. (For this reason, Japan provided no troops in the Persian Gulf War.)

Next to Article Nine, the most radical constitutional changes were made by the Committee on Civil Rights. Imagining the reaction of the conservative Japanese Government, the Steering Committee, as an inside joke, staffed this committee with the Government Section's most ardent leftists. Among them was Beate Sirota, a recent graduate of Mills College who had grown up in Japan, spoke fluent Japanese, and was determined to right the social wrongs—particularly, those suffered by women—that she had perceived as a child. She was assigned to the Civil Rights Committee, Kades later said, precisely because "she knew what it was like to live in a police state." Inside the committee, she was given the job of dealing with women's rights, as well as with academic freedom.

In drafting the charter's section on women's rights, Sirota was largely on her own. The Steering Committee provided no initial guidance. The U.S. Constitution had no equal-rights provision. There was nothing about women's rights in any of the State Department directives. And the various constitutions proposed by the Japanese political parties had nothing meaningful on the subject. So this part of Japan's national charter was simply invented on the spot by an idealistic young woman who felt strongly that fundamental injustices inflicted on Japanese women needed to be corrected. "The idea that a woman couldn't decide whom she wanted to marry . . . that she couldn't divorce a man . . . that she really had no rights as far as property was concerned . . . was very disturbing to me," she says.

To prevent any misinterpretation or evasion, Sirota made her first draft pointedly specific. Expectant and nursing mothers were to be guaranteed public assistance, for instance, and not only was there to be universal compulsory education but "school supplies shall be free." The assorted rights were proclaimed in terse one- or two-sentence paragraphs. "I wanted them to be like bullets," she recalls.

Not to be outdone, the other members of the Civil Rights Committee drafted a plan that gave workers the right to orga-

nize, to bargain collectively, and to strike, as well as the right “to earn a living.” They also drafted constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, due process, and “economic liberty.” Many of the rights set down by the committee became part of the constitution, but others were modified by Kades, the Steering Committee, Whitney, or MacArthur himself.

As for Beate Sirota’s “bullets” for women’s rights, Kades decided that “meritorious though they might be, the provisions were the concern of statutory regulation and not constitutional law.” Sirota confronted the colonel in the hall outside the conference room. She was certain that—given the weight of tradition and male domination of the government—the failure to be specific meant that women would never get equal rights. Why couldn’t Kades—for whom Sirota had the highest regard and affection—understand? She leaned against him and began to cry. Kades was a bit taken aback. No military handbook had prepared him for this spontaneous display of deep emotion by a subordinate. But it changed no one’s mind. While Kades and the Steering Committee left Sirota’s broad guarantees of social security and women’s rights in the constitution, they removed all of her carefully aimed “bullets.”

On February 13, nine days after General Whitney told the men and women of the Government Section about their historic mission, he, Kades, Rowell, and Hussey

The Japanese officials apologized for keeping the Americans waiting. “Don’t worry,” General Whitney replied. “We’ve been enjoying your atomic sunshine.”

drove to the foreign minister’s residence and presented the American draft of Japan’s new constitution to Shigeru Yoshida, the foreign minister (and a future prime minister), and two other government representatives. The Japanese were stunned. Instead of making a few minor changes, the Americans had turned the

Meiji Constitution on its head—taking power from the emperor and his advisers and giving it not only to the Diet but to women, intellectuals, and labor unions.

After huddling among themselves for half an hour, the Japanese officials apologized to the Americans for keeping them waiting in an adjacent garden. Whitney replied with a brutal but meaningful quip: “Don’t worry, we’ve been enjoying your atomic sunshine.” As if on cue, a B-29 flew by, rattling the windows of the foreign minister’s residence. “It certainly had a persuasive element,” Kades recalled.

Faced with the unmatched force of an occupying power, and the threat that MacArthur would present the new constitution directly to the Japanese people (who were likely to embrace it), Prime Minister Shidehara, Yoshida, and the others agreed to present the American version to the Diet as a Japanese draft. Though few were fooled about the document’s origins (one Japanese journalist said it “smelled of butter,” meaning it was distinctively American), the constitution was approved by both houses of the Diet on November 3, 1946, in the form of an amendment to the 1889 constitution. It went into effect on May 3, 1947.

Besides clarifying the nation’s political system, spelling out with whom political power rested and from whom it came, the new constitution proclaimed a vastly expanded list of popular rights, including not only those enshrined in the U.S.

Constitution but equality of the sexes and the right of labor to bargain and act collectively.

The document’s idealism struck a responsive chord in a devastated populace eager to put the immediate past behind it. To those whose lives had been shattered by war, some of

them living in tin-roofed shacks amid the rubble of Tokyo, the permanent peace offered by Article Nine was strongly appealing. And to Japanese used to living under the wartime regime’s unchecked powers, the guarantees of personal rights and freedoms were also very welcome.

Still, the new constitution *was* being



The effort to democratize Japan did not end with the new constitution. A Tokyo newspaper in 1950 organized a fair near Osaka that featured replicas of American landmarks, including a papier-mâché U.S. Capitol.

imposed by a foreign power. Milton Esman never imagined that the charter would outlast the occupation, which ended in 1952. Today, he credits its lasting popularity to the disparate groups—women, intellectuals, teachers, and labor unions—that fought against any basic changes that might encourage militarism or limit freedom of expression.

The fact of the matter is that many of the democratic ideas contained in the “MacArthur Constitution” were not foreign to many Japanese. Even during the Meiji era, as proved by the discovery of model constitutions in village farmhouses all over Japan, educated citizens were reading the works of Locke, Spencer, and Rousseau, and pressing their government for greater popular representation and individual rights. Their ideas had simply been suppressed by Japan’s rulers—men whose power was buttressed by a constitution and a system of government that strengthened the state at the expense of freedom and democracy. The “MacArthur Constitution” was an attempt to fix that.

Ironically, the Americans themselves were partly responsible for weakening the

very democratic reforms that the constitution encouraged. With the advent of the Cold War and the fall of China to Mao Zedong’s Communists, and the election of a Republican majority in the U.S. Congress, American occupation policy in Japan changed. Instead of shoring up all of the new constitution’s reforms, the architects of U.S. foreign policy focused on building up Japan as a bulwark against communism in Asia. In practice, that meant bolstering conservative forces within the Japanese political economy while undermining more liberal forces, such as labor unions. The occupation command sent clear signals—through aggressive “red purges” and the banning of strikes—that the democratic traditions embedded in the constitution should not be carried to “extremes.”

While the Americans’ ignorance of Japan may have helped them to make sweeping constitutional changes, it was a disadvantage when it came to understanding how the new democratic principles would be implemented. As a result, the Diet remained weaker than intended and, as Kades admitted to me, because the Government Section never understood

the unique power of Japan's bureaucracy in relation to the Diet, the unsympathetic bureaucracy was able to undermine many of the democratic reforms.

Still, the constitution made a great difference. The drafters could not have foreseen the extraordinary impact that Article Nine was to have on Japan—and the world. “It never occurred to us,” recalled Kades, “that [because of Article Nine] Japan would not have to spend enormous amounts of money on defense and therefore could channel that money into economic recovery and become an economic superpower.”

Today, Japan has grown so used to its military dependency on the United States that it sometimes has difficulty charting its own course in world affairs. A 1994 report by a nongovernmental commission in Japan urged that the nation assume a larger international role, including taking a greater part in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In recent years, stung by criticism of its failure to send troops to take part in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Japan has bent Article Nine to send unarmed soldiers to assist international peacekeeping efforts in Cambodia, Mozambique, and Rwanda. Increasingly, though, both inside and outside Japan, there are calls for Japan to amend its “Peace Constitution.”

Yet Japan, constrained by its own history, has not done so. Inside Japan, there is still great popular resistance to strengthening the military. And among other nations, there is also strong resistance. Many in South Korea, North Korea, China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia have not forgotten the brutality of Japan's military aggression in World War II. When Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visited the controversial Yasukuni shrine to the spirits of the country's military heroes in Tokyo this past July, there were immediate protests from China, the two Koreas, and other Asian countries.

In the post-Cold War world, Japan is trying gradually to define its proper role. If the Japanese do amend Article Nine so as to be able to fulfill their international responsibilities, they will have to find a way to mollify the fears of Asia's other powers, lest the specter of a revived Japanese militarism prompt a destabilizing arms race in the region.

The other radical constitutional change that Charles Kades and his cohorts made—the guarantees of civil rights and freedoms—has also proven a lasting legacy. Until recently, Japan was the only country in Asia where the people enjoyed freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the right to a fair trial; where unions had the right to organize, and where women were at least constitutionally assured of equality with men.

That last guarantee—of sexual equality—has not, to be sure, turned Japan into a fully egalitarian society. Although the enfranchisement of women and the constitutional guarantees of women's rights, including the right to own property and the right to divorce, were tremendous advances, Japanese culture, with its tradition of female subservience, has proven resistant to change.

And that points up the central contradiction of Japan's democratic constitution: it was bestowed as a gift from above rather than achieved through strong popular demand. As a document drafted by foreign amateurs in less than a week, it was a remarkable accomplishment, and it has served Japan well in the half-century since. But its weakness was also the weakness of the occupation: it was democracy by directive. Nevertheless, the constitution was not rejected. As the Japanese have more and more made it their own, it has grown stronger. The constitution's origins still matter, but what matters more is how the Japanese continue to interpret and adapt it to fit the needs of their own changing society.

Huck's Black Voice

The author of Was Huck Black? tells how she came upon an insight, long recognized by African-American writers, that led to her pathbreaking book.

by Shelley Fisher Fishkin

October 1, 1994. The Mark Twain House's annual fall symposium had brought the pioneering comic Dick Gregory, cultural critic Michael Eric Dyson, columnist Clarence Page, novelist Gloria Naylor, journalist Andrea Ford, folklorist Roger Abrahams, myself, and others to Hartford, Connecticut, for a day of panel discussions followed by dinner and a tour of Twain's house. The symposium had originally been called "Nigger and the Power of Language." This title had quickly proved too combustible, and the initial epithet was dropped from all but the most preliminary advance notices about the event. But the word had hovered behind all the day's discussions—whether I was quoting Twain's 1869 antilynching editorial in the *Buffalo Express* entitled "Only a Nigger," or Dick Gregory, who had titled his autobiography *Nigger!*, was holding forth on Twain's genius as a satirist.

I had reread Gregory's autobiography on the plane to Hartford, and was struck anew by its brashness and bite, starting with the dedication on the book's first page:

Dear Momma—Wherever you are, if you ever hear the word "nigger" again, remember they are advertising my book.

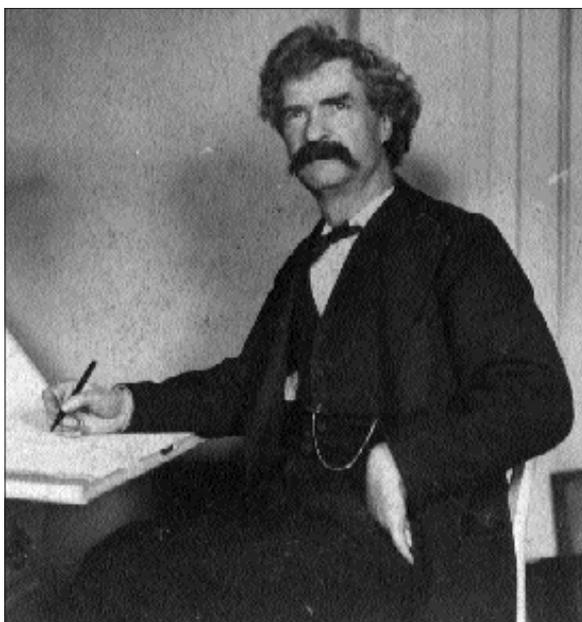
When I read Gregory's masterful jabs at Southern good ol' boys,

I recalled Twain's comment about no tyranny being so strong that it can withstand the weapon of ridicule:

"Last time I was down South I walked into this restaurant, and this white waitress came up to me and said: 'We don't serve colored people here.'"

"I said: 'That's all right, I don't eat colored people. Bring me a whole fried chicken.'"

"About that time these three cousins come in, you know the ones I mean, Klu, Kluck, and Klan, and they say: 'Boy, we're givin' you fair warnin'. Anything you do to that chicken, we're



Mark Twain in the 1880s, when he wrote Huckleberry Finn

gonna do to you.’ About then the waitress brought me my chicken. ‘Remember, boy, anything you do to that chicken, we’re gonna do to you.’ So I put down my knife and fork, and picked up that chicken, and *kissed* it.”

And I was moved by the way Gregory combined bold social critique and lyrical paean to

all those Negro mothers who gave their kids the strength to go on, to take that thimble to the well while the whites were taking buckets. Those of us who weren’t destroyed got stronger, got calluses on our souls. And now we’re ready to change a system, a system where a white man can destroy a black man with a single word. Nigger.

The book was first published in 1964, soon after the assassination of Medgar Evers and the Birmingham church bombing that killed four little girls, and shortly before the Watts riots, the murders of the three civil rights workers in Mississippi, and my first encounter with Pap Finn in high school. Gregory’s narrative of his experiences brought back to me the violent lunacies of that era more vividly than anything I have read since. As I reread the book, something else caught my eye that had somehow slipped my attention the first time around: Gregory hailed from Missouri, the same state as Mark Twain.

Both of us were scheduled to appear on the morning panel. The van from the hotel dropped all of us at the Aetna Center, where the symposium was being held. We were instructed to make our way to the green room until it was time to go on stage. Dick Gregory had been a hero of mine for so long that I found myself star-struck at his side as we headed down the long corridor.

I nearly tripped when he told me he was aware of my work. (My book, *Was Huck*

Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices, had come out the year before.)

“Hm-hm,” he said. “We always said Mark Twain got his stuff from things black folks told him. My *grandmother* said that. Now white folks with Ph.D.’s get government grants to discover that stuff.” He shook his head.

I started to explain that I had never received any government grants to discover anything, when I stopped myself: that wasn’t really the point. Gregory was right: blacks had known it all along. True, they hadn’t “proved” it. But they had known it and said it. Only nobody out there listened. Well, almost nobody.

Nine years earlier, in the spring of 1985, the Mark Twain Memorial in Hartford had invited me to be a guest at its annual meeting, an event that was being held jointly with the convention of the New England American Studies Association. The award-winning novelist David Bradley, author of *The Chaneyville Incident* (my candidate for the great American novel of our time), was scheduled to speak. He titled his talk, provocatively, “The First ‘Nigger’ Novel.”

Imposing and impressive—in fact, looking a bit like pictures I’d seen of Frederick Douglass—Bradley stared out into the crowd of mainly white American studies scholars and Hartford patrons of the arts and said, “You folks know a lot about Sam Clemens. Sam Clemens was white. But who here among you has ever seen Mark Twain? Mark Twain was black.” He then proceeded to make a case for *Huckleberry Finn* (1889) as a work that prefigured the fiction of African-American writers in the 20th century—including his own. The audience was (to put it mildly) in shock. Some were outraged. Some felt threatened. Others were simply confused.

I remember clearly my own response:

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he was right. His speech was a virtuoso performance rather than a scholarly disquisition. But his insights were right on target. It made perfect sense to view *Huckleberry Finn* as a key precursor to a great deal of fiction by black writers that came after it, just as he said; I was certain of it. I had no more proof at that point than he did—which, save for when he was speaking as a writer himself, was none at all. But could I prove it? Slave narratives had rarely employed dialect, seeking to demonstrate instead, through well-crafted, standard-English prose, the ex-slave's claim to a place at the table of humanity. And most of Twain's black contemporaries (with one or two exceptions) had steered clear of using the vernacular in their work as well, preferring the measured tones of the educated middle class. It was certainly plausible that Twain had been an important influence on writers such as Langston Hughes and Ralph Ellison. And hadn't Bradley acknowledged his own debt to Twain?

The seeds planted that night took six or seven years to germinate. During that time, as my antennae picked up everything that had bearing on the subject, I found a paper trail that supported Bradley's argument. Black writers who admired Twain included Charles Chesnutt, who kept a bust of Twain in his library, Ralph Ellison, who kept a photo of him over his desk, and Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, both of whom had paid eloquent homage to Twain in print. Through conversations and correspondence over the next few years, I found that Twain had been important to other contemporary black writers besides Bradley, including Toni Morrison, who returned to Twain when she was honing her craft as a writer. It was during an interview with Ralph Ellison in 1991 that my own variation on Bradley's theory began to take shape. Ellison spoke of Twain's special appreciation of the vernacular and of the irony at the core of a nation founded on ideals of freedom that tolerated slavery and racism in its midst. Mark Twain, Ellison said, "made it possible for many of us to find our

own voices." Why had Twain played this empowering role for black writers? I wondered aloud. Could some of the things Ellison learned from Twain be things Twain himself had learned from the rhetorical performances of African Americans? Yes, Ellison responded, "I think it comes full circle."

From that moment on, I began to systematically track all black speakers in Mark Twain's work. I reread a posthumously published essay by Twain in which he referred to an "impudent and delightful and satirical young black man, a slave" named Jerry (whom he recalled from his Missouri childhood) as "the greatest orator in the United States." I also reread an obscure article Twain had written in the *New York Times* in 1874 about a 10-year-old black child named Jimmy who had impressed him as "the most artless, sociable, exhaustless talker" he had ever come across, someone to whom he had listened, "as one who receives a revelation." I found compelling evidence that black speakers had played a central role in the genesis not only of Twain's black characters but of his most famous white one: *Huckleberry Finn*.

If black oral traditions and vernacular speech had played such an important role in shaping Twain's art, why hadn't anyone noticed it before, given the thousands of books and articles on Twain that had appeared? Literary scholars had denied any African-American influence on mainstream American texts, much as linguists had denied any African-American influence on southern speech and American speech in general. All of them, I became increasingly convinced, were wrong.

Among the Mark Twain Papers at the University of California, Berkeley, I examined, among other things, the manuscript of that essay about the "satirical young black man" named Jerry, and found that Twain had first called him "the greatest *man* in the United States." Back in Austin, at the University of Texas, I mined published and unpublished fiction and nonfiction by Twain, folklore and linguistic studies, history,

“The black man,” Ralph Ellison had said,
was the “co-creator of the language
Mark Twain raised to the level of literary eloquence.”

newspapers, letters, manuscripts, and journals. I didn't come up for air all spring.

As I knew from my first encounter with the book in high school, critics had long viewed *Huckleberry Finn* as a declaration of independence from the genteel English novel tradition. Something new happened here that had never happened in American literature before. *Huckleberry Finn* allowed a different kind of writing to happen: a clean, crisp, non-nonsense, earthy, vernacular kind of writing that jumped off the printed page with unprecedented immediacy and energy; it was a book that talked. I now realized that, despite the fact that they had been largely ignored by white critics for the last hundred years, African-American speakers, language, and rhetorical traditions had played a crucial role in making that novel what it was.

Ralph Ellison had Mark Twain's number. “The spoken idiom of American negroes . . . [was] absorbed by the creators of our great 19th-century literature even when the majority of blacks were still enslaved. Mark Twain celebrated it in the prose of *Huckleberry Finn*,” Ellison had written. But his comment drew little notice. “The black man,” Ellison had said, was the “co-creator of the language Mark Twain raised to the level of literary eloquence.” But literary historians ignored Ellison and continued to tell us that white writers came from white literary ancestors and black writers from black ones. I knew that story had to change if we wanted to do justice to the richness of our culture.

I hadn't dialed his number in years, but I knew I had to call Bradley and tell him. After all, wasn't it really his idea? I called him in February 1992. “This may sound crazy,” I remember saying, “but I think I've figured out—and can prove—that black speakers and oral traditions played an absolutely central role in the

genesis of *Huckleberry Finn*. Twain couldn't have *written* the book without them. And hey, if Hemingway is right about all modern American literature coming from *Huck Finn*, then all modern American literature comes from those black voices as well. And as Ralph Ellison said when I interviewed him last summer, it all comes full circle because *Huck Finn* helps spark so much work by black writers in the 20th century.”

I stopped to catch my breath. There was a pause on the other end of the line. Then a question.

“Shelley, tell me one thing. Do you have tenure?”

* * * *

Ralph Ellison had been kind enough to read my manuscript through before I went public with my findings. When we spoke on the phone after he read it, he couldn't help chuckling with pleasure, delighted to have his intuitions validated after all these years. The actor Hal Holbrook, who has inhabited Mark Twain's voice for four decades, also read the manuscript. He told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that he had “sensed a black strain in Huck's voice but never knew for sure, adding ‘It's almost like the truth about something is so clear that you can look right through it.’”

Senior scholars who had devoted their lives to Twain's work were, for the most part, wonderfully open to my findings, and remarkably supportive. The occasional curmudgeon, of course, willfully ignored the fact that I was talking about the genesis of Huck's *voice* and not his skin color. And a scholar who should have known better argued something to this effect: how can Huck's voice be black if a sizable portion of it comes from white humorists? I had assumed that all of my readers would be able to recognize that my book's title, *Was Huck*

Black?, alluded to the famous “one-drop rule” that legally defined a person as black if he or she had only the most minute amount of “black blood.” In retrospect, I realize that was a mistake. The concept—crucial as it is to understanding the history of American race relations—had not made it into either E. D. Hirsh, Jr.’s, list of “What Every American Needs to Know” or the general “cultural literacy” of the country. I should have explained it: Huck’s voice did not have to be “*all-black*” in order to be considered “black” according to the traditional law of the land—it only had to be “*part-black*.” And the evidence that his voice had been shaped at least in part by African-American voices was strong—as even the most skeptical critic had to concede.

* * * *

Standing in the foyer of Mark Twain’s house in 1994, waiting for the rest of the group to join me to take the bus back to our hotel, I wondered how many of us had been drawn to visit this lavish, sophisticated mansion because the man who had lived there had painted a simple dawn on a silent river that was more real and memorable than any dawn we had ever witnessed. I thought about the demands Twain put on us, the contradictions he required us to acknowledge and address. The paterfamilias hosting elegant dinners in this house in Hartford also contained within himself the unruly child who hated to put on shoes. The man who felt such a deep sense of shame about the role white people played in oppressing blacks in America that he made that oppression central to his greatest works of fiction, explored the subject so artfully that he would be constantly misunderstood. Why was he so cagey? Why so reti-



Twain’s house in Hartford, Connecticut

cent to stake out these positions unequivocally? I thought of the many fragments Twain wrote but chose not to publish. So many—like “The United States of Lynchdom”—dealt with issues of race. Twain wrote his publisher that he would not have a friend left in the South if he went through with that book. (He seems to have been unaware of the fact that the black writer Ida B. Wells had written a very similar book several years before Twain conceived of his.) Was Twain guilty of trying to “have it all”—being true to his principles yet retaining that “option of deniability” that enabled him to banish controversy from his doorstep whenever he chose to do so? Did the local-boy-made-good who relished the chance to “go home again” to a hero’s welcome somehow make it too easy for his fellow Americans to avoid confronting the dark currents under the raft?

As I stepped out into the crisp night air of a New England autumn, I thought about how many Twains there seemed to be—and how the ones we choose to make our own reveal us to ourselves in fresh and surprising ways.

CURRENT BOOKS

Resisting Temptation

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE:

From Prometheus to Pornography.

By Roger Shattuck. St. Martin's. 384 pp. \$26.95.

by Robert Royal

Western culture, especially as shaped by the universities, prides itself on having no dogmas. We like to think of ourselves as open, intrepid, and unflinching in our pursuit of the truth. Though the very notion of truth has been battered a bit in recent decades, its impartial pursuit remains a high and honored calling. To question the value of seeking knowledge for its own sake is to risk being branded a reactionary or a fanatic.

Roger Shattuck is willing to take the risk. Indeed, he points out that this contemporary stance toward knowledge is itself a kind of dogmatism. A professor of literature at Boston University, he established himself as one of our foremost critics 28 years ago with his magisterial study *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France*. Recently he served as president of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics, a distinguished group of intellectuals, including Saul Bellow and Robert Alter, that challenges the theory-driven approach to literary studies championed within the Modern Language Association. Shattuck's eminence adds weight to his assertion that "the time has come to think as intently about limits as about liberation."

Shattuck bases his claim on a wide-ranging survey of religion, philosophy, history, and literature. We are accustomed, he says, to the biblical warning against tasting the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, so accustomed that we tend to dismiss it as a quaint religious notion. But so many similar warnings are sounded throughout Western literature, from the ancient Greeks to Albert Camus, that Shattuck would have us take them more seriously—not just in the humanities, where "trans-

gression" is exalted over moral concerns, but also in the sciences, where pure research is elevated above consideration of possible real-life consequences.

In Greek mythology, Shattuck reminds us, the story of Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and incurred their wrath, is coupled with that of Pandora, who opened the box that now bears her name and loosed a host of evils. In *The Odyssey*, Ulysses stops the ears of his sailors so that they will not hear the Sirens' song, and can only hear it himself without being destroyed because he has himself lashed to the mast. While Shattuck is careful to point out here and elsewhere that in all these stories we cannot say that knowledge itself is ever simply evil, we can see that, given human nature, certain forms of knowledge are dangerous and need to be approached, as Ulysses teaches us, with prudence and precaution.

Shattuck makes his argument largely through literary and cultural exegesis, for instance comparing the stark tale of Adam and Eve in the third chapter of Genesis with John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "a great work of Christian faith produced in the turbulence of 17th-century England." Although Milton was a champion of free speech and inquiry, Shattuck does not accuse him of "standing Genesis on its head." Rather, he writes, Milton "wished to reestablish the great European religious tradition in sturdily Protestant terms." That is, Milton respected the human craving for knowledge but also feared the accompanying sin of pride. "In vivid filigree behind the theological meaning of Eden," Shattuck writes, "Milton narrates a secular story about a legendary yet very human couple who move through four stages of

knowledge: innocence, fancy or dream, experience, and wisdom. We can read *Paradise Lost* as a tale about a downward path to wisdom, a path that must lead through the experience of sin.”

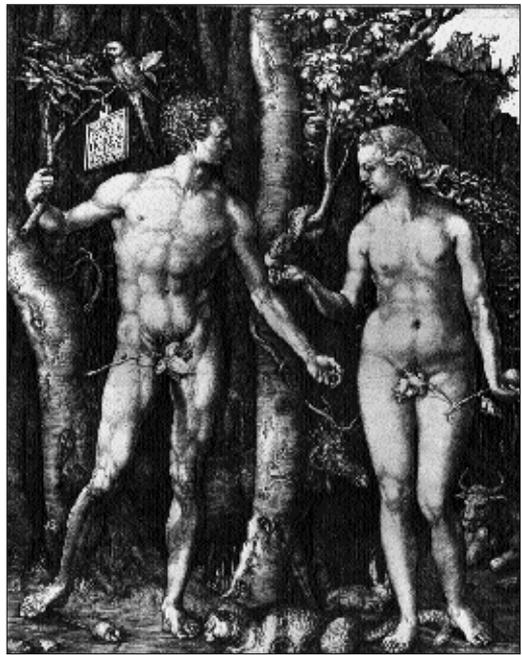
For Shattuck, this “downward path” was followed with a vengeance by the romantics. In the 16th century, Christopher Marlowe conceived of Doctor Faustus as a figure tempted by Satan to exceed the proper bounds of human knowledge. But by the early 19th century, Goethe had produced a version of the story in which Faust is pardoned by God precisely because God admires his relentless “striving.” While appreciating the brilliance of Goethe’s *Faust*, Shattuck faults it for passing too lightly over the indisputable evils—seductions, abandonments, deaths—caused by Faust’s restless quest for he knows not what. To dismiss these moral lapses out of romantic admiration for human aspiration, Shattuck says, is to be seduced by art from a fuller wisdom.

Interestingly, Shattuck finds in several women writers a recognition that “overcoming limits and restraints on experience” is not the only path to wisdom. He cites Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) as a youthful but perceptive portrait of the Promethean tendencies of her romantic contemporaries, including her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the flamboyant Lord Byron. It would be too sweeping a statement to say that the romantic cultivation of one’s own genius and creativity results in half-human monsters. But there was beginning to emerge in Western consciousness some notion that the romantics’ unbridled attempt to take life apart and put it together again would lead to problems for both the creators and their creations.

Even before the romantics, Shattuck argues, certain female writers looked askance at what today would be called personal liberation. In the classic 17th-century novel by Madame de La Fayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*, a married woman who renounces the man she loves, even after the death of her husband, is shown to achieve a deeper understanding of the human heart through renunciation than

through indulgence of her desire. At the close of the romantic period, Shattuck finds a similar “self-restraint and withdrawal” in Emily Dickinson. “In that context,” he writes, “eight lines of a single poem [“Charm”] . . . , because they describe the rewards of renunciation, bear comparison with Mme. de La Fayette’s 200-page novel.” It is a measure of our current condition that Shattuck devotes a long and intricate chapter to explaining “the pleasures of abstinence,” a concept that would have been understood by both La Fayette’s and Dickinson’s contemporaries.

In our own time, we assume that knowledge—in the form of empathy and understanding—is morally good because



it fosters forgiveness. For Shattuck, two modern novels, Melville’s *Billy Budd* (1891) and Camus’s *The Stranger* (1942), expose the hidden danger of this assumption. Both novels are about a murder: Billy Budd kills a sailor named Claggart; Camus’s protagonist, Meursault, shoots a nameless Arab on the beach. Yet both of these novels are so successful at exploring the mind and heart of the murderers that they eclipse the condition of their victims—and the enormity of their crimes. As a result, most readers come away believing Billy and Meursault to be innocent. Shattuck reports that his students,

writing about Camus, usually dwell on the guilt of “society” without much noticing the murdered Arab. Apparently too much understanding can foster moral blindness.

Moving from literature to science, Shattuck cites Francis Bacon’s distinction between “pure” knowledge, which is discovered through the study of nature, and “proud” knowledge, which trespasses on theology and revelation. We still make this distinction when we take scientific knowledge, at least prior to technological applications, as an unalloyed good. Yet Shattuck shows that the separation of natural science from moral issues is not so sharp. He cites J. Robert Oppenheimer’s worries after the success of the Manhattan Project, and recalls the self-imposed restrictions of scientists pioneering DNA recombination. One such researcher summed up the unavoidable moral dimension of his work: “It is no longer enough to wave the flag of Galileo.”

The Human Genome Project, for example, threatens to violate the integrity of the human species while blithely holding to the fiction that we know enough about “genetic material” to cure diseases without hazarding potentially horrifying consequences. Shattuck foresees a “Sorcerer’s Apprentice” syndrome, whereby we succumb to forces we understand just well enough to set them in motion but not well enough to anticipate their consequences. He calls for a kind of Hippocratic oath for scientists, whose powerful position in the modern world is similar to that of clergymen and doctors in the past. Recalling the story of Odysseus and the Sirens, he asks, “Who, if anyone, can or should bind our scientists to a mast?”

Shattuck is just as demanding of his own profession. Writing of the Marquis de Sade, he notes, with dry irony, the “double presumption” that has recently fueled Sade’s reputation among literary critics: “He had spent time in prison; his works had been censored. Do we need any further proof of his heroic stature?” Figures such as Simone de Beauvoir,

Georges Bataille, and Michel Foucault have lionized what they see as the revolutionary aspect of Sade’s sheer transgressive-ness. “Thanks to his stubborn sincerity,” wrote de Beauvoir, “Sade deserves to be recognized as a great moralist.”

Taking these critics at their word, Shattuck traces the impact of Sade’s “morality” in the real world. Specifically, he examines the influence of pornography in violent sex crimes such as the Moors killings in England and the Ted Bundy serial murders in the United States. Shattuck knows the difficulty of proving cause and effect in such cases; indeed, to the question of whether, as citizens of a liberal society, we should burn the works of Sade, his answer is that we cannot and should not.

Yet Shattuck will have none of the fashionable veneration of Sade. Confronting his fellow critics, he asks: should we “rank [Sade] as a major thinker and writer to read along with Machiavelli and Rousseau? George Eliot and Dostoevsky? Should we follow the Harvard *History of French Literature* in celebrating his work as ‘the triumph of desire over objective reality?’” Sade’s writings may be “forbidden knowledge that we may not forbid,” but that should not preclude labeling them evil and pernicious. To do less is to play with real fire that burns real people.

Shattuck concludes with a taxonomy of the various ways in which knowledge may be thought of as forbidden. His most helpful remarks are directed toward clarifying the responsibilities of scientific and cultural institutions. If we conceive of Sade’s case as being not just about free speech but also about public health and safety, then other works of art and science may also be subject to the same scrutiny. About these forms of knowledge we must continually ask: Do they embody our most responsible behavior? Or organized presumption? The answers may be crudely moralistic. Or, like Shattuck’s, they may involve a sophisticated balancing of every kind of human truth against the boundless claims of a single part of our nature.

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Are Jobs the Solution?

WHEN WORK DISAPPEARS:

The World of the New Urban Poor

by William Julius Wilson. 322 pp. Knopf. \$26

by Glenn C. Loury

William J. Wilson is arguably the nation's leading urban sociologist. Two of his previous books, *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978) and *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), exerted a profound influence on both the academic and the popular discussions of race and urban poverty in America. For 24 years a professor at the University of Chicago and now at Harvard University, Wilson has received just about every honor available to a scholar of modern society, including a recent invitation to join the prestigious National Academy of Sciences—a rare achievement among sociologists, whose work is often regarded by “hard” scientists as less than rigorous.

Wilson is therefore well positioned to bring the authority of science to bear upon that nagging question of public policy: what must be done about the ghettos? In his new book, he does not shrink from the task. He sets forth both a diagnosis of and a prescription for what ails our inner cities. The problem, he says, is that “the new urban poor” lack adequate employment opportunities. The cure, he thinks, would be a federally supported social policy agenda that includes greatly expanded public works to provide jobs of last resort, employment training for unskilled or displaced adult workers, universal and publicly provided health care, greater tax credits for low-income workers, and subsidized child care. Those who fail to see the *scientific* necessity for this agenda—the Republican congressional majority, for instance—are portrayed by Wilson as know-nothings, or worse.

Wilson's diagnosis and prescription are supported by the Urban Poverty and Family Life Study (UPFLS), a massive, decade-long, multimillion-dollar empirical inquiry into the economic and social

life of several impoverished Chicago neighborhoods (some practically in the shadow of the university). Assisted by an army of graduate students, Wilson and his colleagues have interviewed hundreds of housing project dwellers, community activists, employers, social service professionals, welfare recipients, and working-class residents. The result is a richly textured and revealing set of data, including both statistical and ethnographic materials, that will benefit scholars for years to come.

But what has Wilson made of these data, by way of a grand synthesis? Regrettably, despite his often intriguing use of the UPFLS materials, his new book does not represent a fundamental advance over his previous work. Moreover, it raises essential questions without answering them effectively. How do individual behavioral problems interact with pathological cultural patterns and impediments to economic opportunity to produce intractable, multigenerational poverty? For someone purporting to be a scientist, Wilson's views on this complex matter seem surprisingly dogmatic.

The most valuable feature of his book is its summary of the UPFLS data. Whether showing the impact of drug trafficking on social cohesion, the attitudes among men and women toward marriage and child-bearing, or the beliefs of employers about the work habits of various ethnic groups, Wilson's findings are invariably provocative and troubling. Many readers, convinced of the need for drastic action, will endorse his call for “social rights,” alongside economic and political rights, for every citizen of the United States. These rights have not been acknowledged, Wilson says, because, alone among Western democracies, America embraces an ideol-

ogy of individualism in which economic failure is attributed to individual shortcomings rather than to structural factors for which society should take responsibility. Hence Wilson advocates a political program intended to counter this ideology and (he believes) to benefit the majority of American workers, not only the poor.

Wilson's data and proposed solutions are linked by his central "scientific" claims: that the absence of "good jobs at good wages" has precipitated social collapse, and that until employment opportunities are restored in the central cities, the tragic disintegration to be observed there will continue apace. The disappearance of work is decidedly a structural result, driven by technological change and the globalization of economic competition, and it cannot be counteracted by individual action—as many middle-aged workers displaced by corporate downsizing can attest. To Wilson, the conclusion is compelling and obvious—so obvious as to need no defense.

Evidently, Wilson is still working through some of the controversies sparked by his previous books. *The Declining Significance of Race* was acclaimed by sociologists for its historical analysis of the relationship between race relations and the economic requirements of American society. But it was also denounced by many black intellectuals for minimizing the importance of racial discrimination (thereby undermining support for affirmative action policies) and for speaking too candidly of social pathologies in the underclass (thereby giving ammunition and comfort to conservatives). In both *The Truly Disadvantaged* and his present volume, Wilson tries to insulate himself from such criticism. It does no good, he notes, to ignore the all-too-visible behavioral problems of poor blacks. Yet, he insists, these problems must be understood as the natural consequences of limited economic opportunities. Moreover, while race continues to be an important fact of American social life, it turns out (by happy coincidence) that the instruments of policy most likely to improve the condition of the black poor will also benefit the white working class. The political implication is

clear: those concerned with advancing black interests should form transracial coalitions on behalf of expanded social programs universally applicable to all.

What is the *scientific* basis for these claims? How does Wilson know that the root cause of behavioral pathology in the ghettos is the disappearance of work? It is true that attachment to the work force is appallingly weak among the ghetto population. It is also true that attachments to marriage, education, and law-abidingness are just as weak. Which is cause, and which is effect? Even after nearly two decades of research, Wilson has yet to produce convincing evidence that his causal hypothesis is valid.

Wilson's contempt for the leading alternative explanations—the incentive effects of welfare and the autonomous influences of ghetto culture—is undisguised. I share his skepticism about the effects of welfare. But I cannot be so certain that patterns of self-destructive behavior among successive generations, reinforced by cultural changes throughout American society, have not assumed a life of their own. Here is the problem: too many ghetto dwellers are unfit for work. They have not been socialized within families to delay gratification, exercise self-control, communicate effectively, accept responsibility, and feel empathy for their fellows. These deficits are not genetic; they reflect the disadvantages of being born into the backwaters of a society marked by racial and class segregation, and they should elicit a sympathetic response. But they are deficits nonetheless—deep, severe deficits that may not be so easily reversible as Wilson assumes.

Distressingly, Wilson seems closed to argument on this point. As examples of wrong-headed analysis, he repeatedly cites Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* (1984) in the same breath as Lawrence Mead's *Beyond Entitlement* (1986). The former, of course, became the battle plan for the Reagan-era assault on the welfare state as fostering dependency and social pathology. But Mead's argument is altogether different. He explicitly rejects Murray's thesis and argues that, unlike the poor of generations past, today's hard-core

impoverished lack the skills, habits, and values that would enable them to become self-reliant. Therefore, says Mead, they need substantial, morally authoritative intervention. Instead of addressing Mead's point, Wilson simply asserts that "increasing the employment base would have an enormous positive impact on the social organization of ghetto neighborhoods. As more people become employed, crime—including violent crime—and drug use will subside; families will be strengthened and welfare receipt will decline significantly; ghetto-related culture and behavior, no longer sustained and nourished by persistent joblessness, will gradually fade."

This scenario is not entirely implausible. It may be that WPA-style public jobs, which Wilson strongly advocates, could reverse the disintegration of the black family, drive crack cocaine from the ghettos, and transform the negative attitudes toward work and responsibility expressed by the young black men in Wilson's urban laboratory. But I suspect that more, much more, will be needed. I suspect that even the most enlightened interventionist social policy will not be capable of changing the entrenched patterns of child rearing and social interaction by which personal incapacity—criminal violence, promiscuous sexuality, early unwed childbearing, academic failure—are passed from one generation to the next. I suspect that the moral life of the urban poor will have to be transformed before the most marginalized souls will be able to seize such opportunities as may exist. These suspicions of mine might have been allayed if Wilson had provided any direct proof that increased job opportunities reverse the tide of social pathology in an existing community. Regrettably, he has not.

Nor has he dealt effectively with some devastating criticism of his earlier theorizing on this matter. In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, he advanced his "marriageable pool" hypothesis, a bid to explain the high proportion of out-of-wedlock births and single-parent families among poor blacks as a function of declining employment opportunities among low-skilled men—a

factor that, in Wilson's view, makes them less marriageable in the eyes of prospective mates. In the same book Wilson offered his "spatial mismatch" hypothesis, speculating that the unprecedented concentration of poor people in today's inner cities contributes materially to the development of behavioral problems among them.

Both of these ideas have since been tested. A number of analysts have explored the possible relationship between male employability and the strength of marital ties among poor blacks. Their studies, based in nationally representative samples, have found no clear evidence supporting Wilson's "marriageable pool" hypothesis. Wilson does not dispute these findings, but neither does he let them affect him. Rather, he observes that in his Chicago-based sample, men with jobs are more likely than unemployed men to marry the women who have borne them children—as though this were refutation enough.

Likewise, there is mounting evidence that the location of jobs within a certain metropolitan area (either in the central city or the suburbs) is only weakly related to the level of employment among the area's ghetto residents. Yet here, too, Wilson is unmoved. He continues to cite the "spatial mismatch" hypothesis as if its validity had not been questioned, and to prescribe the development of mass transit systems (which may be desirable for other reasons) as a solution to the job woes of the urban poor. He makes the same kind of argument about child care. Because single mothers who work are more likely to have access to informal child-care arrangements than those who do not work, he concludes that the lack of child care is a major barrier to single mothers' finding jobs.

The problem, again, is that Wilson is not able to identify the precise causal mechanisms at work. Perhaps responsible men whose lives are already well organized are able to keep faith with both their employers and their families. Perhaps people who place a high value on being self-supporting are not deterred from a couple hours' commute on a bus. Perhaps women who are energetic and disciplined can hold down jobs while sustaining the kinds

of relationships with friends and relatives that make informal child care possible. The fact that most criminals are unemployed is not sufficient proof that unstable ghetto youths will prefer minimum-wage public employment to entry-level positions in the crack trade.

The irony is that Wilson's own ethnographic findings undermine his conclusions. For example, he has rich comparative data on the experience of poor, unskilled Mexican immigrants in Chicago. It turns out that neither the employment experience nor the familial attachments of Mexican immigrants are as weak as those of native-born black Americans. This contrast is not lost on employers, who report sharp differences in the reliability and trustworthiness of Mexican versus black labor. Wilson suggests that, because Mexican immigrants still bear the imprint of their rural, Catholic social origins, they are more likely than blacks to put up with grief on the job. But he predicts that, over time, the attitudes and behaviors of Mexicans will begin to resemble those of ghetto blacks. Maybe, maybe not. Wilson has no evidence for this prediction. What he does have is clear evidence that, in the exact same economic environment, some poorly educated people are much more able than others to seize the available opportunities. By itself, this fact entitles us to ask whether a mere expansion of job prospects will induce a cultural and social transformation among those who now languish.

Strikingly, Wilson's data reveal a convergence between the reports about young male ghetto dwellers provided by their prospective employers on the one hand, and by their prospective mates on the other. On the whole, neither of these parties has a terribly high opinion of the capacities and intentions of these young men. Perhaps that's because, on the whole, their capacities are minimal and their intentions unworthy. This state of affairs may be entirely a consequence of social and economic processes operating over decades and

lying beyond any individual's control. But the origin of the malady, if it be that, need not matter. The counterproductive values and behavior patterns of these young men must be reckoned with on their own terms. The issue is not "blaming the victim" or avoiding such blame. It is, rather, a question of affixing responsibility and prescribing a remedy.

Wilson has done both: the responsibility is public, and the remedy is an array of European-style social benefits. Yet this radical-sounding position may not be radical enough. I fear that, out of fealty to his own ideological commitments—which stress above all that structural arrangements are autonomous and individual behaviors derivative—Wilson has failed to ask the hard questions. Exactly what interventions can counteract the impact on early-childhood cognitive development of bad parenting by ignorant and depressed teenage girls? How can urban neighborhoods be rescued from criminally violent adolescents while also affording some prospect that the youths in question can be helped to construct—not reconstruct—decent lives? What specific reforms are needed in the educational system before the underclass can become minimally competitive in the modern economy? Can the seductive power of gangs, and more generally of degenerative ghetto culture, be neutralized? Is there any way to fire the ambition of ghetto youths without resorting to the burnt-out ideologies of racial revolution or the pipe dreams of athletic or entertainment superstardom? Is it possible to replace these fantasies with a healthier, more realistic assessment of individual life chances in this free and prosperous nation, which remains the leading destination of indigent people from around the world?

Wilson's sole answer to these questions—"jobs"—is just not good enough.

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History

HAIL TO THE CHIEF: The Making and Unmaking of American Presidents.

By Robert Dallek. Hyperion. 207 pp.
\$22.95

This is a useful book. It is also an unsatisfying one.

It is useful because Dallek, a historian at the University of California at Los Angeles, has devised a sensible set of criteria for why some presidents succeed and others do not.

Similar exercises abound, from political scientist Clinton Rossiter's list of seven "qualities that a man must have or cultivate if he is to be president," to veteran journalist Hedley Donovan's list of 32 "attributes of presidential leadership." Still, there is an admirable compactness in Dallek's combination of his elements into five characteristics: vision, pragmatism, consensus, charisma, and credibility.

Taking the characteristics in turn, Dallek lists the presidents who had each and those who did not. Vision belonged to George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Lyndon Johnson, and Ronald Reagan. At the opposite extreme are those presidents with "no clear idea of where they wished to steer the ship of state": William Howard Taft, Warren Harding, Jimmy Carter, George Bush, and Bill Clinton.

But vision alone does not make for a successful presidency, and Dallek knows this. Indeed, the value of his approach lies in his subtle appreciation of how the five attributes interact to produce a successful, or unsuccessful, administration.

Pragmatism might be considered the antithesis of vision. Yet, as Dallek notes, "political accomplishments often required flexibility of means to reach desirable ends." On the one hand, Jefferson managed to overcome his constitutional scruples and buy Louisiana. Lincoln delayed emancipation because it might have precipitated Kentucky's secession. Wilson, on the other hand, failed the pragmatism test when he refused to compromise with the Senate and thereby lost the League of Nations treaty.

If Dallek's criteria are so sensibly handled, then why is his book so unsatisfying?

Dallek's considerable talent, as demon-

strated in his major books about FDR and LBJ, is for archival research and the layering of many details into a rich tableau. But this slim volume is a series of short takes: Jefferson's deliberations on Louisiana occupy a mere two pages, Lincoln's decision to free the slaves only three. And Dallek is not adept at the essay form. His language lacks elegance, though occasionally he enlivens the book with borrowings from such stylists as Russell Baker and Garry Wills.

Ultimately the reader is left with a collection of assertions rather than a narrative supporting an argument. The problem, apparently, is that *Hail to the Chief* was written as the "prospectus" for a television documentary. In fact, it would make an excellent TV program, with the texture provided by footage of FDR accepting the 1932 Democratic nomination, for example, or Nixon bidding farewell to his staff. As a book, however, it is bare-bones historiography: a thoughtful arrangement of material, perhaps, but still a bit like a professor's notes for an upper-level course on the American presidency.

—Stephen Hess

THE UNKNOWN LENIN: From the Secret Archive.

Edited by Richard Pipes with the assistance of David Brandenberger. Yale Univ. Press. 256 pp. \$27.50

A specter is haunting Soviet historiography. Following the recent opening of the long-sealed Lenin archive in Russia, the secular deity of the Soviet state is losing what little luster he recently possessed. According to Pipes, emeritus professor of Russian history at Harvard University, these documents "cast fresh light on Lenin's motives, attitudes, and expectations, as well as on the personal rela-



tionships among Communist leaders . . . minus the retoucher's distortions."

But Pipes puts it mildly. The unretouched picture is raw indeed.

These documents establish Lenin's direct connection with—in fact, his eager stewardship of—the terror that directly followed the Russian Revolution. Instead of a stern idealist shedding blood for the future of humanity, the author of these letters and memoranda comes off as a vindictive, bloody-minded zealot who took grisly glee in bribing, manipulating, and intimidating his erstwhile comrades. Unwelcome advice was scorned—"We always manage to get shit for experts." And dissent was diagnosed as insanity long before Stalin's forced institutionalization of dissidents became an international scandal.

Toward his perceived enemies, Lenin was simply brutal. Ordering the confiscation of the property of the Orthodox Church, he ordered all priests who resisted shot—"the more the better." With regard to the kulaks, or propertied peasants, his instructions were clear: "Hang (hang without fail, so the people see) no fewer than one hundred."

The Unknown Lenin does not pretend to be definitive. Pipes is careful to say that he has not "seen all or even the bulk of previously unpublished Lenin documents." Perhaps future selections will mitigate the harshness of this initial glimpse. But it seems unlikely. The opening of this archive has summoned Lenin's ghost and left it to unsettle a new generation of historians.

—*Jessica Sebeok*

THE OPENING OF THE AMERICAN MIND:

Canons, Culture, and History.

By Lawrence W. Levine. Beacon. 240 pp. \$20

One of America's most accomplished historians, Levine has made a distinguished career out of championing subjects—the world of William Jennings Bryan, the culture and consciousness of black slaves, the vitality of popular culture—long ignored or disdained by traditional historians. In his new book, Levine provides a spirited apologia for that career, and a celebratory defense of the modern university—accompanied by a fierce polemic against those, ranging from Allan Bloom to C. Vann Woodward, who (it seems) would like nothing better than to consign such subjects to the outermost darkness.

The results are, to say the least, uneven. As a brief for the opening of historical and literary studies to nontraditional topics and perspectives, based upon an appreciation of the fluidity and dynamism of American society, the book is convincing. Though much of what is offered here is a more-than-twice-told tale, it is good to be reminded of how unendurably narrow and stupefying most "higher education" has been throughout American history—and how long it took for American authors, even such now-canonical writers as Herman Melville and Walt Whitman, to be taken seriously within the Anglophile precincts of the academy. Measured against such a cramped standard, and considering the limited range of human types permitted to attend college in those days, today's universities look very attractive indeed.

In addition, Levine correctly points out that many of the contemporary critics of higher education have themselves been guilty of sloppy research and excessive rhetoric. He is right that the accusation of "political correctness" is used far too promiscuously and that talented students have always found—and will always find—ways to work around the peeves and prejudices of their teachers. Moreover, it is surely a salutary thing to have the experience of those who are not members of "hegemonic elites" represented in the historical record of a nation as diverse as this one.

But Levine repeatedly goes overboard in fulminating against critics and traditionalists. In the end, he damages his own credibility by disparaging such people as mere case studies of what Richard Hofstadter once called "the paranoid style," rather than acknowledging the elements in their critique that are accurate. For example, he dismisses as perfervid fantasy the notion that the historical professoriate is dominated by the radical Left. He argues that the fragmenting of the subject of history into countless multiculturalist pieces is something that had to happen, because historical writing always "reflects reality"—in this case, "the *Zeitgeist*" of a changing America. But if these assertions are true, then why has the growing political and social conservatism of the American people, consistently reflected in electoral results and polling data for nearly three decades, been so unreflected in the academy, where the opinion trends have

over those years run dramatically in the opposite direction? Levine would have done better to address himself frankly to such dis-

parities, rather than to airily proclaim that they do not exist.

—Wilfred M. McClay

Science & Technology

DEMONIC MALES: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence.

By Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson. Houghton Mifflin. 350 pp. \$24.95

Why are men aggressive? For centuries, there have been only two explanations: original sin and human culture. Now come Wrangham, professor of anthropology at Harvard University, and Peterson, a professional writer, to offer a third possible explanation: the biological heritage we humans share with the great apes.

The authors begin with Wrangham's observation, in 1973, of a party of male chimpanzees raiding a neighboring community and savagely killing a lone male. Not food, not sex, not even territory was at issue; the act was simple murder. Over the years, researchers in four different African locations have identified similarly lethal raids. "In all four places the pattern appears to be the same," write the authors. "The male violence that surrounds and threatens chimpanzee communities is so extreme that to be in the wrong place at the wrong time from the wrong group means death."

While most people know that chimpanzees have humanlike qualities, it is only since 1984, when researchers developed the technique known as DNA hybridization, that chimps have been shown to be genetically closer to humans than to the other great apes. Chimps are more like us than they are like gorillas or gibbons, and not just in killing: males will also rape and batter females. To draw the nexus even tighter, Wrangham and Peterson cite the American anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon's studies of the Yanomamö tribe of the Amazon Basin. Despite having "not yet been pacified, acculturated, destroyed, or integrated into the rest of the world," the Yanomamö "are famous for their intense warfare." Their



frequent raids on neighboring villages produce a rate of violent death among young males that is roughly the same—about 25 percent—as it is among chimps.

Among chimps, the size of each gang is determined by the amount of food available. When the best food is scattered, wider-ranging travel is necessary and the gangs are smaller. Females, weaker and burdened by young, cannot keep up. So, with occasional exceptions, the gangs are all male.

Yet gang formation is not universal among the great apes. Among a rare species, the bonobos, there is no rape, battering, or warfare. The reason, says Wrangham, is the abundance of food in the bonobos' territory, which allows females to travel with males and keep them from forming gangs. The females band together, form their own strong attachments (often involving homosexual behavior), and protect themselves from errant males.

The sole weakness of this book is its neglect of the neurobiology of primate violence. The crucial role of differing serotonin levels in both human and monkey behavior is well known. Individuals with low levels of serotonin exhibit high levels of aggression, and vice versa. It would be useful to know whether similar findings exist with regard to the great apes, but the authors of this otherwise lucid and compelling book do not mention such research.

The authors strongly suggest that human gangs, known to have been present throughout recorded history, are hardly the product of drugs, shoot-'em-up television shows, or bad government policies. Faced with this dispiriting conclusion, the authors explore some ideas about how to control male violence but find few to be effective. Indeed, there is only one reliable method: marriage. When men are married to women, and women have (through countless means, including courts and democratic voting sys-

tems) the ability to protect their claims and control demonic males, society becomes more tolerable. Less exciting, perhaps, but more tolerable.

—James Q. Wilson

WHERE DOES THE WEIRDNESS GO?

Why Quantum Mechanics Is Strange, But not as Strange as You Think.

By David Lindley. Basic Books. 251 pp. \$24

Quantum mechanics is the branch of physics that considers the structure and behavior of the fundamental, unobserved components (atoms, electrons, photons) of the visible world. Given that some world-class physicists have found it difficult to understand and accept the principles of quantum mechanics (Einstein himself was a doubter), it's not surprising that the theories should puzzle the layperson. What is surprising is that a scientist should undertake to explain quantum mechanics to the general reader, and that he should succeed as well as David Lindley has in this compact, patiently argued volume. A certain unease lingers with the reader at the close of the book, but that is nature's fault, not Lindley's.

If a layperson knows anything about quantum mechanics, it is likely to be some variant of the principle that "measurement affects the thing measured." Alas, even that knowledge is flawed, for the statement is misleading. It implies that a quantum object—"the thing measured"—has a definite but unknown state, which is disturbed and altered

by the act of measurement. A more accurate formulation is that measurement itself gives definition to quantities that were previously indefinite. That is, a quantity has no meaning until it is measured. The primal state is indeterminism.

Hence the "weirdness" whose disappearance Lindley traces. The word refers to the ambiguous behavior of the particles that are the basis of everything in our workaday physical world (the world of classical physics). How, Lindley asks, does the unobservable, unstable subatomic world (where particles may be waves, and waves, particles, and photons seem to be in two places at once) provide the basis for a physical world susceptible to measurement and routinely exhibiting the stability lacking in its minutest components? Is there a boundary separating one world from another, across which the transformation occurs?

Yes and no. Or, fittingly, no and yes. Lindley insists on only as much certainty as the topic will bear. Quantum mechanics provides mathematical explanations for how the subatomic world works. But despite their validity, these mathematically unambiguous explanations leave us some distance short of understanding. Why? Because they cannot be made to assume shapes that we recognize from our experience of the workaday world. The reality they describe seems so ghostly and elusive that we wonder finally whether it has any claims on our attention. Lindley's accomplishment is to persuade us that it does—while at the same time reassuring us that nature as we know it is not thereby undermined.

—James Morris

Arts & Letters

LIFE OF A POET:

Rainer Maria Rilke.

By Ralph Freedman. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 640 pp. \$35

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) is that rare oxymoron, a popular poet. Not in the academy, where young Germanists stake their careers in trendier soil, but among the ragged ranks of the reading public, Rilke is one of the most beloved poets of the 20th century. Born in Prague of a German-speaking family, he rejected the military and busi-

ness career that was expected of him and, after a brief marriage to the sculptor Clara Westhoff, became a wandering artist, cultivating friends and admirers all over Europe. In the modernist age he began as a romantic, evolving over time into a visionary poet who revolutionized the German language.

One might quibble with the emphasis, or lack thereof, given certain minor works and figures in this biography. But Freedman, emeritus professor of comparative literature at Princeton University, manages to distill

Rilke's letters, and many other sources besides, to their narrative essence—while doing justice to the major works, personae, and events. (Rilke scholars will also appreciate the book's comprehensive appendix.) Of special interest are the portraits of the writer Lou Andreas-Salome, arguably the most influential woman in Rilke's life, and of the artist Paula Modersohn-Becker, whose enigmatic painting of Rilke graces the book's cover and whose tragic early death inspired the poem "Requiem for a Friend."

Rilke's concept of nonpossessive love (*besitzlose Liebe*) was central to his life and work, even though it caused him great anguish. In his letters to the artist Baladine Klossowska, the conflict between Rilke's calling as a poet (and the solitude it required) and his attraction to certain creative women comes through most clearly. As Freedman shows, Klossowska actually helped Rilke complete his most important work, the *Duino Elegies* (1923), by finding him a permanent home in the Château de Muzot, a primitive 13th-century tower in the Valais canton of Switzerland.

Rilke is sometimes seen as a pampered would-be aristocrat, flitting from one noble lord's (or lady's) castle to another. Yet while Freedman makes no attempt to gloss over the poet's shortcomings, the overall picture that emerges from these pages is admiring—and deservedly so. Rilke's life was hardly one of ease; his emotional and financial travails were real. But from pain he made poetry, as he himself explained in his *Letters to a Young Poet*: "Do not believe that he who seeks to comfort you lives untroubled among the simple and quiet words that sometimes do you good. His life has much difficulty and sadness. . . . Were it otherwise he would never have been able to find these words."

—Richard Pettit

HOMAGE TO ROBERT FROST.

By Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Walcott. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. 117 pp. \$18

For several generations of Americans, the name Robert Frost has conjured up a rustic cliché: in Joseph Brodsky's words, "a folksy, crusty, wisecracking old gentleman farmer"; in Seamus Heaney's, "a mask of Yankee homeliness"; in Derek Walcott's, "that apple-cheeked, snow-crested image that the country idealized in its elders." Not surpris-

ingly, each of these Nobel laureates—the Russian Brodsky, the Irishman Heaney, and the Caribbean Walcott—discards the familiar caricature of Frost in favor of the poet's complex, often abrasive genius.

In Frost's nature lyrics and narrative poems, Brodsky finds a spiritual anguish all the more chilling for being understated. The pitch-black woods of "Come In" suggest an image of "the afterlife" that "for Frost is darker than it is for Dante." The stripped-down dialogue of "Home Burial" exposes an "extremely wide margin of detachment" from a subject (the death of a child) that came directly from Frost's own life. Likewise, Heaney locates a "crystal of indifference" at the core of Frost's extraordinary poetic technique. In "Desert Places," Heaney uncovers a vein of stoicism toward the annihilating stillness of a New England snowstorm, and in the concluding lines a willingness to open the poet's mind—and the reader's—to "the cold tingle of infinity."

For all of Frost's sidelong glances into the abyss, it is the



American poet to whom Walcott returns. In a 1934 letter to his daughter, Frost wrote (of the proposed cast of an opera by Gertrude Stein) that "negroes were chosen to sing . . . because they have less need than white men to know what they are talking about." Sorting out his reactions to this comment, Walcott admits that it has the power to diminish his "delight" in the poet. But it is just as mistaken, he adds, to dwell on Frost's prejudices as it is to wrap him in the red-white-and-blue bunting of American patriotism. Only by discarding such associations can we experience the poet in his own terms, weathering the "black gusts that shook his soul."

—Hugh Eakin

WITTGENSTEIN'S LADDER: *Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary.*

By Marjorie Perloff. University of Chicago Press. 285 pp. \$27.95

"What is it about this man, whose philosophy can be taxing and technical enough,

that so fascinates the *artistic* imagination?” The words are critic Terry Eagleton’s, but the question is Marjorie Perloff’s. Professor of humanities at Stanford University and an authority on artistic modernism, Perloff finds a striking affinity between the philosophical practice of Ludwig Wittgenstein (especially late in his career) and the poetic practice of certain 20th-century avant-garde writers.

Unlike his philosophical contemporaries, Wittgenstein did not distinguish between “literary” and “ordinary” language. Nor did he lay claim to a philosophical “metalanguage” that could step outside everyday discourse and make pronouncements on how it works. In his later writings, especially the *Philosophical Investigations* (1958), Wittgenstein understood that language transcends our efforts to analyze it. “When I talk about language,” he wrote, “I must speak the language of every day. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say? *Then how is another one to be constructed?*”

This rejection of philosophical convention should have allied Wittgenstein with the artists of his time, argues Perloff. But he showed no interest in modernism. “It is a delicious irony,” she writes, “that this icono-

clast, who refused to listen to Mahler and Schönberg and paid little attention to the great art movements of his day, was himself the most radical of modernist writers.” In such avant-garde figures as Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett, Perloff finds word play—puns, shifts of syntax, simultaneously proliferating and eroding meanings—similar to Wittgenstein’s. It is in the move from expository to experiential narrative, whereby the reader puzzles out the text unaided, that she locates Wittgenstein’s modernism.

Is Perloff justified in making Wittgenstein the “patron saint” of avant-garde literature? There is a cryptic charm in many of the philosopher’s utterances, such as “Why can’t my left hand give my right hand money?” And Wittgenstein did say that “philosophy ought really to be written only as a form of poetry.” But does this make him kissing cousin to experimental poets such as Ingeborg Bachmann, Robert Creeley, and Ron Silliman? To Perloff, the answer is clearly yes, and she labors tirelessly at mapping every contour of resemblance. Yet her book neglects the most important difference between Wittgenstein and his literary admirers: his dense, startling style was a teacher’s tool; theirs is a pupil’s game.

—Genevieve Abravanel

Contemporary Affairs

ALL THAT WE CAN BE: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way.

By Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler. Basic Books. 193 pp. \$24

Part scholarly analysis, part policy prescription, part starry-eyed advocacy, this small book has a big agenda: the dismantling of “the paradigm of black failure.” The authors, both veterans, sociologists, and noted observers of military affairs, advance two striking propositions.

First, they assert that the U.S. Army, beleaguered by racial problems in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, is now the nation’s most successfully integrated institution. This change did not occur by chance, they



argue, but rather as a result of a series of well-conceived reforms devised and forcefully implemented by the army’s top uniformed and civilian leaders. Second, the authors suggest that the approach adopted by the army to close its racial divide provides a model for solving the seemingly intractable racial problems of the larger society.

Overall, the second proposition is less convincing than the first.

About the army’s monumental achievement, Moskos and Butler are essentially correct. Black Americans accept the army’s claim of zero tolerance of discrimination. Talented young African Americans see the army as an institution wherein effort correlates with re-

ward, and black leadership is nurtured. So they enlist and re-enlist in large numbers: in 1995, African Americans made up 27.2 percent of the army's total enlisted and officer personnel, their presence contributing greatly to the service's current health and effectiveness.

How was this accomplished? Not, as the opponents of affirmative action might wish, through the simple issuing of equal-opportunity edicts. As the authors insist, "The army is not race-blind; it is race-savvy." Given the racial climate outside the military, a level playing field alone would not suffice. So the army developed a comprehensive system of incentives and sanctions—the former generously underwritten, the latter strenuously enforced. For example, the army's "efficiency reports" (personnel evaluation reports) rate individuals on whether they support equal opportunity. Most get a positive rating; a negative one will stop a career in its tracks.

So far, so good. Yet in considering how to transfer this wisdom to the rest of society, the authors stumble. Applauding the army's blending of white and black folkways into a "multicultural uniculture," they propose a national embrace of "our common Afro-Anglo heritage." However stirring it sounds, this formulation leaves out the Navajos, recent arrivals from Mexico, and the second-generation Chinese Americans (to name but a few). Absent military-style discipline, such a narrow version of multiculturalism seems unlikely to command wide assent.

Such ruminations apart, the authors' chief concern is to promote national service. Indeed, this is their true agenda. Accepting (with reluctance) that the draft is unlikely to be reinstated soon, Moskos and Butler propose national service as a way to mobilize young Americans in pursuit of common goals while teaching them valuable skills and easing racial tensions.

Yet there are problems with this proposed cure for racism. The army would likely oppose national service, on the grounds that it would hurt military recruiting. More important, national service would not entail the forced intimacy and shared hardship of military life—conditions that are essential to breaking down barriers and forging bonds of mutual respect. Cleaning up national parks or tutoring schoolchildren is hardly comparable to basic training, let alone combat.

—A. J. Bacevich

A GRAND ILLUSION?

An Essay on Europe.

By Tony Judt. Hill & Wang. 150 pp. \$20.

Discussions of the European Union often work better than a lullaby: two minutes on exchange rates, and even the most seasoned Euro-wonk begins to nod. Less soporific, even bracing, is this short book by Judt, a professor of European studies at New York University. Judt avoids the drone by focusing on the big question: can the EU bring about an ever closer union and still accept new members on the same terms? Judt's answer, in a word (though with many qualifications), is no. The EU, he argues, was designed to accommodate the prosperous Europe of the Cold War—an entity that no longer exists.

Until recently, the European community worked well. Political leadership was shared by France and Germany. The economy expanded without a trace of the inflation and unemployment that plagued the continent before World War II. Prosperity blessed all social classes, and welfare was generous. But beginning in the 1970s, some of the old demons began to resurface. The resurgent influence of Germany magnified the relative decline of France. The 1974 oil crisis halted economic growth, giving rise to an urban underclass. And today, with the baby boom generation nearing retirement, the once robust European welfare states look sickly indeed.

Under these straitened circumstances, Judt notes, "it would be an act of charity" for the EU to accept its eastern neighbors as full members. Realizing this, Eastern Europe has been making its case in strategic terms: better for the West to give the East alms than leave it prey to a resurgent Russia. Yet Judt speculates that an eastern "buffer zone" would, by appearing to threaten Moscow, actually undermine Western security. At any rate, he says, the addition of any new members would only further paralyze decision making in Brussels.

Located in the prosperous, politically stable, culturally Franco-British Benelux countries, the EU's administration strikes Judt as seriously out of touch. Indeed, he maintains that, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany has emerged as the de facto leader of Europe—a situation complicated by that nation's deep ambivalence toward its own power. With a characteristically apt turn of

phrase, Judt describes post-1989 Germany as “a muscle-bound state with no sense of national purpose.”

Recent upheavals make this leadership vacuum all the more troubling. With the crisis of the welfare state and the continuing influx of immigrants—many of them Muslims who do not assimilate easily into modern Europe—neofascism is rearing its ugly head. Likewise, the collapse of communism has allowed Europe’s trademark nationalism to revive, reaching tragic extremes in the former



Yugoslavia. Regrettably, Europe’s leaders and intellectuals remain wedded to the notion of union as a cure-all.

Does Judt consider himself a skeptic on European unity? Not really. While he argues that local problems need local solutions, he holds no illusions about the “embattled, mutually antagonistic circle of suspicious and introverted nations” that once made up Europe. He would like to split the difference. “Europe,” he writes, “is more than a geographical notion but less than an answer.” Union may be desirable in some respects, but it’s not the Holy Grail. “We must remind ourselves not just that real gains have been made, but that the European community which helped to make them was a means, not an end.”

—Michael Brus

ORIGINS OF A CATASTROPHE: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers.

By Warren Zimmerman. Times Books.
256 pp. \$35

Ever since Yugoslavia fell apart in 1991, there has been much hand-wringing about how the United States and the European Community could have prevented the breakup—or, failing that, stopped the brutal war that led to the “ethnic cleansing” of Bosnian Muslims by a Bosnian Serb military backed by the “Yugoslav” (in name only) government of Slobodan Milosevic. In this fluently written memoir of his four years as U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia (1989–92), Zimmerman argues that the breakup was inevitable but that the West could have contained the slaughter by the timely application of limited military force. “The failure of the Bush administration to commit

American power early in the Bosnia war,” he writes, “was our greatest mistake of the entire Yugoslav crisis.”

Ending in May 1992, when Zimmerman was recalled by the Bush administration to protest against Serbian aggression in Bosnia, the memoir describes the ambassador’s efforts to persuade Milosevic and the Croatian leader Franjo Tudjman to abandon their expansionist policies. He got nowhere. Milosevic, with “habitual mendacity,” denied that he was backing the Bosnian Serbs. Tudjman bragged that Serbia and Croatia had every right to carve up Bosnia. And the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (whom Zimmerman likens to Heinrich Himmler) painted the Bosnian Muslims as fundamentalist fanatics crazed with enmity toward the West. Zimmerman recounts the many quarrels between the United States and the European Community over diplomatic policy, judging them finally a waste. “Short of a credible threat of force,” he reiterates, “the United States and its allies lacked decisive leverage.”

On the question of how Milosevic and Tudjman—two former Communists—could stir up such a witches’ brew of ultranationalism, Zimmerman spurns the myth of Yugoslavia as a land of ancient hatreds. There has been no strong evidence of anti-Muslim feeling for several centuries. And though Serbs and Croats massacred each other during World War II, postwar Yugoslavia saw an intermarriage rate—among all groups—of roughly 20 percent. Embers of ultranationalism had long smoldered in Serbia, but to fan them into conflagration took the bellows of state-controlled television. Once Milosevic made the “rational calculation” that ultranationalism was the path to power, the next step was to fill the airwaves with images of mutilated corpses and other horrors, all neatly blamed on the Croats or Bosnian Muslims. (The same bloody fare was offered on Croatian TV.) As one Yugoslav journalist remarked, “You Americans would become nationalists and racists too if your media were totally in the hands of the Ku Klux Klan.”

In Zimmerman’s view, Marshal Tito was partly responsible for the rise of ultranationalism, because his long-lived communist regime forbade any democratic venting of ethnic concerns. Yet Zimmerman is also soft on Tito’s regime, playing up its economic

successes and playing down its brutality. Equally puzzling is Zimmerman's comment that the Slovenes "bear considerable responsibility for the bloodbath that followed their secession"; elsewhere, he implies that Milosevic and Tudjman would have gone on their rampage regardless of what Slovenia did. These are minor distractions, however, in a book that is required reading for anyone concerned about America's future role in the Balkans—and in the larger world.

—Stephen Miller

HOME FROM NOWHERE:
Remaking Our Everyday World for the Twenty-First Century.

By James Howard Kunstler. Simon & Schuster. 318 pp. \$24

No one who is concerned about the spread of suburban sprawl in the United States can avoid paying serious attention to the New Urbanist movement—and to this manifesto by one of its leading publicists. Everyone complains about sprawl, but only these architects and planners know what to do about it: build main streets (not malls), with adjoining residential streets organized in something like a grid, houses placed close together and close to the street, and plenty of green spaces. In a word, towns.

Kunstler, the author of eight novels and one previous nonfiction book, has a weakness for bombast—is it really true that “we have become, by sheer inertia, a nation of overfed clowns, crybabies, slackers, deadbeats, sadists, cads, whores, and crooks”? But he is also clever and persuasive, never more so than when explaining why the contemporary American suburb breeds such a strong, if vague, “dis-ease.” Simply allowing people to walk to their destinations rather than

drive, he argues, would be “spiritually elevating. . . . When neighborhoods are used by pedestrians, a much finer scale of detailing inevitably occurs. Building facades become more richly ornamented and interesting. Little gardens and windowboxes appear. . . . In such a setting, we feel more completely human.”

We need not share Kunstler's conviction that bad design is the chief cause of eroding American communities to recognize that it is *one* of the causes—and one of the few we have the power to influence directly through law. The community zoning ordinance is the genetic code of the modern suburb, making it virtually impossible to build the kinds of towns we once erected as a matter of course. As Kunstler points out, today's zoning codes leave no alternative to the one-story strip mall, with its huge setbacks from the street, forbidding parking lots, and absence of apartments over stores. Financing is another impediment: banks are reluctant to back anything but conventional sprawl development. Forget about building a new Main Street; it's both illegal and prohibitively expensive.

Kunstler does not seem to expect the New Urbanism to succeed on its own merits. But he does suggest that a return to towns and cities may eventually be forced by the end of cheap gasoline. Ironically, the Disney Corporation, which comes in for some abuse in this book, exhibits more faith than Kunstler in the possibility of selling the idea to the American public. The much-hyped new town of Celebration that Disney is building in Orlando, Florida, is practically a textbook example of New Urbanist construction.

—Steven Lagerfeld

Religion & Philosophy

MARY THROUGH THE CENTURIES:
Her Place in the History of Culture.

By Jaroslav Pelikan. Yale University Press. 240 pp. \$25

Vestiges of Mary, the mother of Jesus, are not as ubiquitous as those of her son, from whose birth (approximately) we date our checks and our letters. But traces of Mary's prominence are not hard to find: witness this

past summer's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* or, in high culture, the recordings of medieval Marian music by the Anonymous 4, which have repeatedly gone to the top of the classical charts.

Do only vestiges remain? Not according to the distinguished Yale religions historian Jaroslav Pelikan. His new book—a short, suitable companion to his earlier *Jesus through the Centuries* (1985)—concludes by

calling Mary “The Woman for All Seasons—And All Reasons.” Without sentimentality, Pelikan chronicles Mary’s eminence in both expected and unexpected ways.

Among the expected are discussions of the quite limited references to Mary in the New Testament, historical expositions of important Marian titles and doctrines, such as Theotokos (mother of God), Assumption, and Immaculate Conception, and reports of the Virgin’s still-multiplying apparitions. Pelikan’s method is historical, but he also engages the theological debate. For example, he defends the notion of doctrinal development against those who, out of fundamentalist literalism or modern historicism, would restrict interest in Mary to the mentions of her in the Bible.

Unexpected is Pelikan’s discussion of the tribute paid by the Protestant Reformers to the person of Mary, even as they attacked Roman “Mariolatry.” The Reformers saw Mary as the model of faith, and faith was for them the sole path to salvation. Equally surprising is the extensive account of Mary in the *Qur’an*, which likens her to Hagar, servant of Abraham and Sarah and mother of Ishmael. Just as Judaism looks to Isaac as its progenitor, so Islam looks to Ishmael—and through him to Abraham. Mary, Pelikan suggests, is not only the link between Judaism and Christianity; she is also, by reason of her similarity to Hagar, a connection joining all three faiths.

The image of Mary’s womanhood affects



even nonbelievers. Yesterday’s romantics found in Mary “the eternal feminine”; today’s historians would do well to study her in the same light, Pelikan argues: “Because Mary is *the* Woman par excellence for most of Western history, the subtleties and complexities in the interpretation of her person and work are at the same time central to the study of the place of women in history, which has begun to claim its proper share both of scholarly and of popular attention.” Pelikan makes no proposals, but plainly he believes that reflection on Mary would make all three divides—Catholic-Protestant, Christian-Muslim, and believer-unbeliever—easier to span.

—Joseph Brinley

HAYEK:

The Iron Cage of Liberty.

By Andrew Gamble. Westview. 221 pp.

\$51 cloth, \$19.95 paper

“Samuel Smiles or Horatio Alger would have regarded Professor Hayek’s writings as slanderous of his fellow Christians, blasphemous of God, and ultimately subversive of the social order. I am not sure about the first two of these accusations, but I am fairly certain about the validity of the last.” So wrote the “godfather” of neoconservatism, Irving Kristol, in 1970. Gamble, a professor of politics at the University of Sheffield, is no neo-conservative, but his new book essentially upholds Kristol’s judgment. His well-crafted study establishes Friedrich August von Hayek (1899–1992) as a great theoretician and polemicist on behalf of capitalism, even as it lays bare the gaps in the Austrian economist’s vision.

The key to Hayek’s philosophy, argues Gamble, “is that civilization arose through a process of spontaneous, unplanned development, not by design.” This concept of “spontaneous order” includes the “invisible hand” of the market as described by Adam Smith. But Hayek reached further, seeking a grand explanatory device for how all human evolution has proceeded. Of course, as Gamble points out, this antirationalist proposition makes Hayek’s long and passionate *political* fight against socialism almost unintelligible.

Further, writes Gamble, Hayek’s concept of spontaneous order led him to accept “as benign whatever evolved spontaneously.” So Hayek championed corporate capitalism, despite his admission that an economy dom-

inated by corporations is one in which most individuals are “employees rather than independent producers.” Hayek never demonstrated how capitalism, which presupposes the continued vitality of an entrepreneurial class, could survive in such an adverse environment.

Perhaps most timely is Gamble’s observation that “the apartheid regime in South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s could have been defended on Hayekian principles.” That the regime lacked democratic or moral legitimacy is of little matter; it was capitalist, after all. No wonder the American Left never devoted much time to refuting Hayek’s ideas. It understood that an exclusively economic argument in favor of bourgeois society leaves that society defenseless against its radical critics.

—Adam Wolfson

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING.

By Lin Yutang. Morrow. 462 pp. \$26

Lin Yutang (1895–1976) was a lazy fellow from Fujian Province who smoked too many cigarettes and, after abandoning his parents’ devout but narrow Christianity, spent the rest of his life loafing with friends from Shanghai to Cambridge (Massachusetts), Leipzig to Beijing, New York to Taipei. He also wrote or translated some 80 books, founded three magazines, and invented the first Chinese typewriter. Published in 1937, this most seductive of Lin’s works became a best seller in the United States years before the Beats took up Zen or the swingers tackled the Kama Sutra. But this introduction to Chinese philosophy is no compendium of inscrutable wisdom from the mysterious Orient. Instead, it offers sweet and salty musings on such topics as “On Having a Stomach,” “The Cult of the Idle Life,” “On Being Wayward and Incalculable,” and “Good Taste in Knowledge.”

One of Lin’s main concerns—which he shares with Confucian and Taoist thinkers going back 25 centuries—is the arrogance of pure intellect. “Philosophy in the Western sense seems to the Chinese eminently idle,” he writes. “In its preoccupation with logic, which concerns itself with the method of arrival at knowledge, and epistemology, which poses the question of possibility of knowledge, it has forgotten to deal with the knowledge of life itself. . . . The German philosophers are the most frivolous of all;

they court truth like ardent lovers, but seldom propose to marry her.” In the Chinese tradition, the point is not to “have a great philosophy or have a few great philosophers”; rather it is “to take things philosophically”—to live in a way that makes life not only bearable but delightful.

Delight is Lin’s true subject. Should we read books to improve our minds? No, he replies, “because when one begins to think of improving his mind, all the pleasure is gone.” Sitting upright at a desk will not help. Conversely, “if one knows the enjoyment of reading,” one can study anywhere, “even in the best schools.” And when school is out, one can follow “the famous Ch’ing scholar, Ku Ch’ienli, . . . ‘known for his habit of reading Confucian classics naked’ in summer.”

The lesson Lin teaches is that delight is neither as easy nor as hard to attain as people think. The easy part is agreeing that warmth, vitality, and the capacity to experience pleasure are among the necessary conditions. The hard part is accepting that they are not sufficient. “Because life is harsh,” Lin cautions, “warmth of soul is not enough, and passion must be joined to wisdom and courage.” At the word “wisdom” we balk, picturing Chinese sages with wispy white beards on impossible, cloud-covered peaks. We’re not about to climb those peaks, so why bother to seek wisdom?

Not to worry, assures Lin, bringing us gently back to earth. It’s the little things that count: the quotidian business of “eating and sleeping, of meeting and saying good-bye to friends, of reunions and farewell parties, of tears and laughter, of having a haircut once in two weeks, of watering a potted flower and watching one’s neighbor fall off his roof.” We are human beings, not gods.

Or ants. One test of Lin’s durability is his quick distrust of totalitarianism. In 1937, he took a dim view of Hitler and Mussolini—but then so did most intellectuals. More striking is his wisecrack that the ants must be “the most completely rational creatures on earth,” because for a million years they have lived in “a perfect socialist state.” Lin’s only error was to predict that such ant-idiocy would never succeed in China. But since his real point was that totalitarianism contradicts human nature, he was more right than wrong. And about everything else he is as right, and fresh, as spring rain.

—Martha Bayles

POETRY

Miklós Radnóti

Selected and introduced by Edward Hirsch

Miklós Radnóti's poems have an anguished intimacy and intensity as well as a profoundly humane spirit. This modern Hungarian poet, killed during World War II at the age of 35, clung with a desperate—and stoic—serenity to the classical values of the Western tradition at a time when those values were most imperiled, indeed, close to extinction. Radnóti's poems were both deeply felt and thoroughly modern—filled with his sense of anxiety, uncertainty, and fate—but their formal values tended to the classical. This makes him akin to his great Russian contemporary, Osip Mandelstam. One feels in reading him a growing level of despair countered by such aesthetic and moral ideals of antiquity as the clarity of poetic form, the virtues of reason, and the philosophical rectitude of Stoicism.

Radnóti's life was shadowed by tragedy. Born in Budapest on May 5, 1909, he was haunted by the fact that his mother died giving birth to him and his twin brother, who was stillborn (“Monster I was in my nativity,/ twin-bearing mother—and your murderer!”). He was 12 when his father died, and he was raised by distant relatives. Radnóti studied Hungarian and French literature at Szeged University, where he also joined the Art Forum of Szeged Youth, a group of talented intellectuals and artists with socialist leanings and a strong interest in Hungarian folklore. He earned his doctorate with a brilliant dissertation on the artistic development of the novelist Margit Kaffka but, because of his Jewish heritage, never received the university positions he deserved. He eked out a living as a freelance writer, translator, and schoolteacher.

In the early 1940s, Radnóti, a fierce antifascist, was drafted for hard labor into various work camps. The third and last time, he was taken to Bor, Yugoslavia, where he worked in a copper mine. He was taken from the mine and driven westward across Hungary in a forced march and there, near the town of Abda sometime between November 6 and November 10, 1944, was one of 22 prisoners murdered and tossed into a mass grave by members of the Hungarian armed forces. It was an unspeakable death. After the war, Radnóti's wife had his body exhumed and his last poems were found in his field jacket, written in pencil in a small Serbian exercise book. These poems display the classical poise of his art and literally rise from the grave to give testimony to his torment.

Radnóti published six individual collections of poems during his lifetime: *Pagan Salute* (1930), *Song of Modern Shepherds* (1931), *Convalescent Wind* (1933), *New Moon* (1935), *Walk On, Condemned* (1936), and *Steep Road* (1938). All the poems written during his internment appeared in a posthumous volume, *Sky with Clouds* (1946), which is one of the pinnacles of Central European poetry in this century. He also published a collection of selected poems (1940), an autobiographical novel, *A Month of Twins* (1940), and a volume of translations, *In the*

Footsteps of Orpheus (1942), which ranges across 2,000 years of European literature. He translated Greek and Latin writers, Elizabethans and English romantics, and German writers from all major periods. He was also among the first to introduce into his own language such modern poets as Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars, and Georg Trakl. Radnóti's sense of an ideal European heritage should be understood as a conserving stance—a humane action—against the destructive forces of European barbarism.

Radnóti's poems are filled with echoes of, and allusions to, classical literature even as they reveal debts to French poetry of the early 20th century. His youthful free-verse poems enthusiastically embrace an urbane pastoralism. These celebrations (pagan greetings) romanticize village life and endorse a natural eroticism. But as the 1930s progressed and the chaos of the times escalated, Radnóti responded by exercising more and more traditional formal control over his poems. The dreamy introspection of his early poetry gave way to the chiseled meters and crystalline precision of his later work. In a mad time, he was terrified of madness:

But don't leave me, delicate mind!
 Don't let me go crazy.
Sweet wounded reason, don't
 leave me now.

Don't leave me. Let me die, without fear,
 a clean lovely death,
like Empedocles, who smiled as he fell
 into the crater.

(*“Maybe. . .”*)

Radnóti's poems are filled with disquieting premonitions of the horrors to come. Characterizing the times, he wrote, “I lived on this earth in an age/ when man fell so low/ he killed willingly, for pleasure, without orders.” He was doom-ridden and had an uncanny sense of his own impending destruction. “I am the one they'll kill finally/ because I myself never killed,” he prophesied in 1939 for a new edition of *Steep Road*, the last individual collection of his poetry published while he was still alive. One high-water mark of his work is a series of eight eclogues, written in hexameters, that refashion the pastoral form to address an era when morality is turned upside down and right and wrong have changed places. He calls on the pastoral muse to assist him in trying to preserve the values of civilization. These poems sing to overcome terror, invoking the splendor of memory, the landscape of childhood, and the necessity of love at a time when “reason falls apart.” The eclogues affirm the redemptive powers of art as the highest human achievement.

Radnóti's descriptive powers never faltered, enabling him to characterize with poignant accuracy the horrors he experienced. His final poems—so immediate they are nearly unbearable to read—constitute a tremendous act of poetic witnessing. Here is a deeply compassionate poet whose lyrics honor human emotion, show the greatest respect for human intellect, and, above all, preserve humane values.

Clouded Sky

The moon hangs on a clouded sky.
I am surprised that I live.
Anxiously and with great care, death looks for us
and those it finds are all terribly white.

Sometimes a year looks back and howls
then drops to its knees.
Autumn is too much for me. It waits again
and winter waits with its dull pain.

The forest bleeds. The hours bleed.
Time spins overhead
and the wind scrawls
big dark numbers on the snow.

But I am still here
and I know why and why the air feels heavy—
a warm silence full of tiny noises circles me
just as it was before my birth.

I stop at the foot of a tree.
Its leaves cry with anger.
A branch reaches down. Is it strangling me?
I am not a coward. I am not weak, I am

tired. And silent. And the branch
is also mute and afraid as it enters my hair.
I should forget it, but I
forget nothing.

Clouds pour across the moon. Anger
leaves a poisonous dark-green bruise on the sky.
I roll myself a cigarette,
slowly, carefully. I live.

June 8, 1940



All the poems are taken from Clouded Sky, by Miklós Radnóti, published by Harper & Row in 1972, and are reprinted by permission of the translators. English translation copyright © 1972 by Mrs. Miklós Radnóti, Steven Polgar, Stephen Berg, and S. J. Marks.

The Terrifying Angel

The terrifying angel is invisible and silent
inside me, he doesn't scream today.
But then I hear a slight noise,
no louder than a grasshopper's jump.
I look around and don't find anything.
It's him. But he's cautious now. He's getting ready.
Save me, Oh you who love me, love me bravely.
He hides when you're here. But as soon as you leave
he's back. He rises from the bottom of the soul,
screaming. And screaming he accuses me.
This insanity works inside me like poison.
He doesn't sleep much, lives both in and outside of me,
and when the moon is out, in the white darkness,
he runs through the meadow in whistling sandals.
He searches my mother's grave and wakes her up.
"Was it worth it?" "Was it worth it?"
He whispers to her about rebellion, about giving in.
"You gave birth to him and died of it!"
Looking at me, sometimes he tears off
the pages of the calendar too soon.
"How long" and "Where to"
depend on him forever now. Last night
his words fell into my heart
the way stones fall into water,
forming rings, wobbling, and spinning.
I was just going to bed, you were already asleep.
I stood there naked when he came in
and started to argue with me quietly.
There was a weird smell, his
breath chilled my ear. "Go ahead!"
He urged. "Skin shouldn't cover you.
You're raw meat and bare nerves.
Tear it off! After all, bragging about skin
is like bragging about prison,
it's crazy.
That thing all over you is only an illusion.
Here, here's the knife.
It doesn't hurt. It only takes a second, there's only a hiss!"

And the knife woke up on the table and flashed.

August 4, 1943

The Fifth Eclogue

Fragment

To the memory of György Bálint

Dear friend, you don't know how this cold poem made me shiver,
how afraid I was of words. Even today I tried to escape them.
I wrote half lines.

I tried to write about other things,
but it was no use. This terrible, hidden night calls me:
"Talk about him."

Fear wakes me, but the voice
is silent, like the dead out there, in the Ukrainian fields.
You're missing.

And even autumn doesn't bring news.

In the forest
the promise of another furious winter whistles today. In the sky,
heavy clouds filled with snow fly past and stop.
Who knows if you're alive?

Even I don't know today. I don't shout
angrily if they wave their hands with pain and cover their faces,
and don't know anything.

But are you alive, wounded?
Do you walk among dead leaves, circled by the thick smell of
forest mud,
or are you a smell too?

Snow drifts over the fields.
He's missing—the news hits.

And inside, my heart pounds,
and freezes.

Between two of my ribs, a bad, ripping pain starts up.
It quivers, and in my memories, words that you said a long time ago
come back sharply and I feel your body just as real
as the dead—

And I still can't write about you today!

November 21, 1943

Fragment

I lived on this earth in an age
when man fell so low
he killed willingly, for pleasure, without orders.
Mad obsessions threaded his life,
he believed in false gods. Deluded, he foamed at the mouth.

I lived on this earth in an age
when it was honor to betray and to murder,
the traitor and the thief were heroes—
those who were silent, unwilling to rejoice,
were hated as if they had the plague.

I lived on this earth in an age
when if a man spoke out, he had to go into hiding
and could only chew his fists in shame—
drunk on blood and scum, the nation went mad
and grinned at its horrible fate.

I lived on this earth in an age
when a curse was the mother of a child,
when women were happy if they miscarried,
a glass of thick poison foamed on the table,
and the living envied the rotting silence of the dead.

I lived on this earth in an age
when the poets too were silent
and waited for Isaiah, the scholar
of terrifying words, to speak again—
since only he could utter the right curse.

May 19, 1944

Forced March

You're crazy. You fall down, stand up and walk again,
your ankles and your knees move pain that wanders around,
but you start again as if you had wings.
The ditch calls you, but it's no use you're afraid to stay,
and if someone asks why, maybe you turn around and say
that a woman and a sane death a better death wait for you.
But you're crazy. For a long time now
only the burned wind spins above the houses at home,
Walls lie on their backs, plum trees are broken
and the angry night is thick with fear.
Oh, if I could believe that everything valuable
is not only inside me now that there's still home to go back to.
If only there were! And just as before bees drone peacefully
on the cool veranda, plum preserves turn cold
and over sleepy gardens quietly, the end of summer bathes in
the sun.

Among the leaves the fruit swing naked
and in front of the rust-brown hedge blond Fanny waits for me,
the morning writes slow shadows—
All this could happen! The moon is so round today!
Don't walk past me, friend. Yell, and I'll stand up again!

September 15, 1944

Postcard

1

From Bulgaria the huge wild pulse of artillery.
It beats on the mountain ridge, then hesitates and falls.
Men, animals, wagons and thoughts. They are swelling.
The road whinnies and rears up. The sky gallops.

You are permanent within me in this chaos.
Somewhere deep in my mind you shine forever, without
moving, silent, like the angel awed by death,
or like the insect burying itself
in the rotted heart of a tree.

In the mountains

Postcard

2

Nine miles from here
the haystacks and houses burn,
and on the edges of the meadow
there are quiet frightened peasants, smoking.
The little shepherd girl seems
to step into the lake, the water ripples.
The ruffled sheepfold
bends to the clouds and drinks.

Cservenka
October 6, 1944

Postcard

3

Bloody drool hangs on the mouths of the oxen.
The men all piss red.
The company stands around in stinking wild knots.
Death blows overhead, disgusting.

Mohács
October 24, 1944

Postcard

4

I fell next to him. His body rolled over.
It was tight as a string before it snaps.
Shot in the back of the head—“This is how
you’ll end.” “Just lie quietly,” I said to myself.
Patience flowers into death now.
“Der springt noch auf,” I heard above me.
Dark filthy blood was drying on my ear.

Szentkirályszabadja
October 31, 1944

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

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The Still-Passionate Debate over Darwinism

A Survey of Recent Articles

One hundred and thirty-seven years after the appearance of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, debate about his theory of evolution through natural selection is heating up again. The publication of one book last year by a philosopher touting the theory's immense implications and of another this year by a scientist challenging its very validity have filled the nation's journals with controversy.

The general public, meanwhile, seems nowhere near as enchanted with Darwinian theory as the intelligentsia is. Many Americans utterly reject Darwin's concept of naturalistic evolution. Forty-seven percent, according to a 1993 Gallup Poll, say they believe that God created man and woman in approximately their present form only within the last 10,000 years. Only nine percent accept the Darwinian view. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the battle over the teaching of evolution in the schools still goes on. But this struggle, contends Eugenie C. Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education, writing in the *Sciences* (Jan.–Feb. 1996), is not between science and religion. "Some of the strongest criticism of creation 'science' has come from mainstream Christian denominations, which hold that evolution is part of God's plan." Some 40 percent of Americans, according to the Gallup survey, believe that "man has developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process, including man's creation."

Politically sensible as it may be for Scott's organization (which fights to keep creation "science" out of the public schools) to reach out to those Americans in the middle, many

scientists insist that, in the debate over Darwinism, there really is no intellectual middle ground. "The dichotomy is precisely between religion and science, and one cannot evade the issue," geneticist Anthony R. Kaney of Bryn Mawr College asserts in the *Sciences* (Mar.–Apr. 1996). Any scientist "who accepts Darwin's theory must face the conflict. Darwin himself was fully aware of [it]."

Daniel C. Dennett, director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University and author of *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (1995), agrees, likening the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection to a "universal acid" that eats through anything it touches. It "cuts much deeper into the fabric of our most fundamental beliefs than many of its sophisticated apologists have yet admitted, even to themselves."

Indeed, there is considerable debate among Darwinists themselves about some of Darwinian theory's basic features. Whereas "ultra-Darwinists" regard natural selection working on genetic variation as sufficient to explain the evolution of life, other scientists, such as Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, do not. Rejecting the notion that the destiny of species is worked out solely by the slow working of natural selection, he has stressed the role of mass extinctions and other sudden changes.

John Maynard Smith, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Sussex, scoffs in the *New York Review of Books* (Nov. 30, 1995) at the widely published scientist's views. Gould, he complains, is painting "a largely false picture of the state of evolutionary theory."

But serious debate about Darwinian theory is not confined to Darwinists, as the publication this year of Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* attests. A professor of biological sciences at Lehigh University, Behe argues that gradual, undirected evolution cannot explain cellular biochemistry's "irreducibly complex" adaptive systems, such as blood clotting. Such systems are like the mousetrap: collectively, its elements trap mice, but individually, none do, and deprived of even one of its elements, the device does not work. Hence, there is no way that a mousetrap—or any such irreducibly complex system—could gradually evolve in the Darwinian fashion, because there would be no function to select until all the elements were in place and properly organized to work together.

Behe stresses the importance of "intelligent design" in biology. But he goes too far, argues James A. Shapiro, a microbiologist at the University of Chicago, writing in *National Review* (Sept. 16, 1996), when he suggests "that intelligent design may lie outside the domain of scientific investigation." Nevertheless, Shapiro says, Behe does succeed in showing "that evolution remains a mystery. Its fundamental driving forces have not been resolved either in detail or in principle."

Shapiro says he is amazed "that Darwinism is accepted as a satisfactory explanation for such a vast subject—evolution—with so little rigorous examination of how well its basic theses work in illuminating specific instances of biological adaptation or diversity."

In Dennett's view, however, "the basic Darwinian idea . . . is as secure as any in science." Evolution by natural selection is an algorithmic process, he argues in the *Sciences* (May–June 1995). An algorithm is a mechanical procedure whose power derives from its logical structure; its rules are so simple that they require no intelligence to carry them out, and the results, whatever they are, are always the same. "Incredible as it may seem," he says, "the entire biosphere is the outcome of nothing but a cascade of algorithmic processes feeding on chance. Who designed the cascade? Nobody. It is itself the outcome of a blind algorithmic process." The slow pace of natural selection is sometimes accelerated by other forces, such as sexual reproduction (a

relative latecomer to the evolutionary game) and human culture.

Britain's Richard Dawkins is another ultra-Darwinist. The author of best-selling books on Darwinian themes, he "promotes his subject in a way that—if you wanted to drive him crazy—you could call evangelical," reports Ian Parker in the *New Yorker* (Sept. 9, 1996). In his latest book, *Climbing Mount Improbable* (1996), writes Parker, Dawkins notes that to achieve the complexity of, say, an eye through natural selection, it would seem necessary "to scale sheer cliffs of improbability." Natural selection, for one thing, does not provide for developments that will turn out to be advantageous only after a million years of evolution. "What good is a half-evolved eye? But Dawkins points out the long, winding paths that lead to the summit of Mount Improbable—paths that have the gentlest of slopes and require no freakish upward leaps. He takes his reader up the slope from no eye to eye: a single (not entirely useless) photosensitive cell caused by genetic mutation, a group of such cells, a group arranged on a curve, and so forth."

David Berlinski, a former university teacher of mathematics and philosophy and the author of *A Tour of the Calculus* (1995), is not persuaded. "What is at work in sight," he writes in the course of a wide-ranging critique of Darwinism in *Commentary* (June 1996), "is a visual system, one that involves not only the anatomical structures of the eye and forebrain, but the remarkably detailed and poorly understood algorithms required to make these structures work." Could a system imperfectly understood be constructed "by means of a process we cannot completely specify? The intellectually responsible answer . . . is that we do not know—we have no way of knowing. But that is not the answer evolutionary theorists accept."

In one of many letters in *Commentary* (Sept. 1996) in response to Berlinski's attack on evolution, former *Scientific American* columnist Martin Gardner writes that it "contains one huge, glaring omission. Nowhere does he tell us what brand of creationism he supports." Berlinski replies: "It is not necessary to choose between doctrines. The rational alternative to Darwin's theory is intelligent uncertainty."

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Warren, We Hardly Knew Ye

“Reputational Entrepreneurs and the Memory of Incompetence: Melting Supporters, Partisan Warriors, and Images of President Harding” by Gary Alan Fine, in the *American Journal of Sociology* (Mar. 1996), 5835 S. Kimbark, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

No other president in this century, not even Richard M. Nixon, has had his reputation sink so low. In the contemptuous judgment of historians, Warren G. Harding—his name indelibly associated with the Teapot Dome scandal, the “Ohio Gang,” the “smoke-filled room,” and his avowed quest for national “normalcy”—was an unintelligent man who was too trusting of his cronies, too tolerant of corruption, and too passive a chief executive. He was, they say, quite possibly the worst president the United States has ever had.

But that’s just the way the reputational cookie happened to crumble, argues Fine, a sociologist at the University of Georgia. Other, more favorable interpretations are quite possible. Harding could be seen, for instance, as a principled conservative president, a martyred president betrayed, or even (because he was long rumored to have had black ancestors) as the first African American president.

Winning the White House in a landslide in 1920, after waging a “front-porch” campaign from his home in Marion, Ohio, Harding named some strong figures to his cabinet (including Charles Evans Hughes at the Department of State and Herbert Hoover at the Department of Commerce), and nominated the well-qualified William Howard Taft to the Supreme Court.

Harding himself, a former newspaper publisher, was honest, likeable, and sincere—the embodiment of small-town virtue (and a few small-town vices). His administration, Fine contends, “had a string of real accomplishments.” These included the creation of the Bureau of the Budget, reduction of the national debt, and tax cuts that fueled an economic recovery. Harding convened the 1922 Washington Naval Disarmament Conference, the first successful arms reduction talks in history. In contrast to his predecessor, Woodrow Wilson, he was sensitive to civil liberties: he pardoned the imprisoned socialist leader Eugene Debs and other dissidents. He also cared about race relations. He appointed some blacks to office and supported anti-

lynching legislation (which southern Democrats killed in the Senate). The black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey hailed one Harding speech on race as “one of the greatest statements of the present day.”

When Harding, at age 57, died of mysterious causes (from food poisoning, perhaps, or a heart attack; there were even implausible claims of suicide or murder) in San Francisco in the summer of 1923, he was greatly



The Teapot Dome scandal loomed very large indeed in this 1924 cartoon.

mourned. Millions of Americans lined the route to pay their respects as the train bearing his body back to Washington passed.

Months later, as details emerged of the Teapot Dome scandal (in which Harding’s secretary of the interior received nearly \$500,000 for leasing federal oil reserves to private firms), Harding was not around to defend his reputation, Fine points out. Democrats and Republican progressives such as Senator Robert LaFollette (R-Wisc.) attacked, aided by the tabloid newspapers and radio. President Calvin Coolidge and other mainstream Republicans tried to distance themselves from the Harding administration. The strategy worked: Coolidge won the election of 1924. But Harding lost.

Progressive journalists and historians soon cemented his reputation as a presidential failure and turned him into a symbol of a

greedy and self-indulgent age. That may not have been quite the way it—or Warren G. Harding—was.

Toward a New Patriotism

“Identity Politics and the Left” by Eric Hobsbawm, in *New Left Review* (May–June 1996), 6 Meard St., London W1V 3HR.

Even its adherents see the Left today as essentially a coalition of “identity groups”—feminists, gays, blacks, and others, each with its own self-interested agenda. Too often forgotten, argues Hobsbawm, the eminent British Marxist historian, are the Left’s grander aspirations to equality and social justice for all of humanity.

“The political project of the Left is universalist: it is for *all* human beings,” he writes. “However we interpret the words, it isn’t liberty for shareholders or blacks, but for everybody. It isn’t equality for all members of the Garrick Club or the handicapped, but for everybody. It is not fraternity only for old Etonians or gays, but for everybody. And identity politics is essentially not for everybody but for the members of a specific group only. This is perfectly evident in the case of ethnic or nationalist movements.”

The rise of identity politics has come about, in Hobsbawm’s view, as a result of profound social change that has weakened people’s traditional ties to nation and class and a “cultural revolution” that has eroded traditional standards and values, leaving many people feeling “orphaned and bereft.” Never, he says, has the word *community* been used so indiscriminately and emptily as in recent decades, “when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life.”

Although identity groups all claim to be “natural,” exclusive identity politics does not in fact come naturally to people, he contends. “No one has one and only one identity. Human beings cannot be described even for bureaucratic purposes, except by a combination of many characteristics.”

In the past, Hobsbawm argues, identity groups were not central to the Left. The mass social and political movements inspired by the American and French revolutions and by socialism “were indeed coalitions or group alliances, but [they were] held together not by aims that were specific to the group, but by great, universal causes through which each group believed its particular aims could be realized: democracy, the Republic, socialism, communism, or whatever.” Now, however, “the decline of the great universalist slogans of the Enlightenment” has deprived the Left of any obvious way of formulating a common interest.

Hobsbawm believes that the Left should look to “one form of identity politics which is actually comprehensive. . . : citizen nationalism. Seen in the global perspective this may be the opposite of a universal appeal, but seen in the perspective of the national state, which is where most of us still live, and are likely to go on living, it provides a common identity. . . ‘an imagined community’ not the less real for being imagined.”

At times in the past, Hobsbawm says, the Left not only has wanted to rouse the nation but “has been accepted as representing the national interest, even by those who had no special sympathy for its aspirations.” In Britain in 1945, for instance, the Labor Party was chosen “as the party best representing the nation against one-nation Toryism led by the most charismatic and victorious war-leader on the scene.” Yet today, he laments, “the words ‘the country,’ ‘Great Britain,’ ‘the nation,’ ‘patriotism,’ even ‘the people,’” are seldom spoken by leaders on the British left.

Was Brown’s Way Wrong?

“Coming Clean About *Brown*” by Richard E. Morgan, in *City Journal* (Summer 1996), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Arguments against judicial activism soon run up against the almost sacrosanct example of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954),

the Supreme Court’s famous decision outlawing segregation in public schools as a violation of the 14th Amendment’s equal

protection clause. Morgan, a professor of constitutional law and government at Bowdoin College, argues that it is time to admit that, constitutionally, the Court was simply wrong.

In *Brown*, he notes, Chief Justice Earl Warren brushed aside 70 years of precedents, relying instead on social science findings (since called into question), showing that black children were psychologically damaged by racial segregation in the schools. That the Court was using sociological, rather than constitutional, reasoning was widely recognized at the time, but most critics held their tongues, seeing the outcome as morally right, whatever the reasoning used.

While many people have similarly regarded the *Brown* ruling as historically essential because it triggered the civil rights revolution, Morgan contends that recent scholarship has found otherwise. Very little actually changed in the segregated South, he says, before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which, along with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, “provided the federal government with the statutory muscle to undertake the heavy lifting involved in dismantling Jim Crow.”

Nor did *Brown* fuel the drive for that legislation: civil rights protest activity dropped after the Court handed down its decision. In fact, Morgan says, “by dramatically increasing racial tension in the South, [*Brown*] froze progress, at least in that region.” If the ruling contributed to positive change, he believes, it was only in a perverse way: the “ugly” conflicts over subsequent school desegregation mobilized northern public opinion in favor of civil rights.

Protections against racial discrimination are now firmly enshrined in law, but *Brown*’s legacy of judicial activism continues to influence the way these laws are interpreted, Morgan says. All too often, legislation that was “born color-blind” is given a race-conscious spin in the courts. The best way to correct that—and to clear away the *Brown* obstacle to stopping other exercises in judicial activism—is, in his view, a constitutional amendment barring government from making decisions that discriminate for or against persons on the basis of race. That would “align the text of the Constitution with our national ideals, and bury Jim Crow the way he should have been buried in the first place—by votes in legislative assemblies.”

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Let the People Rule

“A Democratic Foreign Policy” by Eric Alterman, in *World Policy Journal* (Summer 1996), World Policy Institute, New School for Social Research, 65 Fifth Ave., Ste. 413, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Americans have “a consistent set of values” with regard to international affairs, but U.S. foreign policy frequently fails to reflect it, contends Alterman, a columnist for the *Nation*.

The views of the foreign policy Establishment fly in the face of public opinion, he says, citing quadrennial surveys conducted since 1978 by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Whereas “opinion leaders” “are ideologically committed to free trade and widespread military intervention,” the general public “believes that the United States should protect American jobs and mind its own business whenever possible.” Asked in 1994 if the United States should go to war to defend South Korea from a North Korean invasion,

84 percent of the elite, but only 45 percent of the public, said yes. More than 80 percent of the public deemed protecting the jobs of American workers “a very important goal”; barely half of the opinion leaders did.

“The values of the foreign policy establishment,” Alterman asserts, “are less reflective of the political interests of poor and middle-class Americans than of the transnational class of bankers, lobbyists, lawyers, and investors.” Ordinary Americans, in contrast, are “liberal republicans,” much as the country’s founders were.

Alterman urges adoption of a “liberal republican foreign policy.” Its goals would include:

- “A stable peace enforced by the United Nations, NATO [the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization], and unilateral American power as its extreme last resort. . . . If a less interventionist United States means a less tidy world, with greater instability in some areas and unfortunate ethnic strife in others, so be it.”

- “Reciprocal free trade fortified by a crusade on behalf of a global workers’ bill of rights.” Access to the U.S. market would depend on reciprocity and adherence to “a set of agreed-upon international workers’ rights and employer [standards].”

- “A realistic strategy to control immigration.” Alterman says that “the American people want a carefully controlled, extremely limited policy of immigration, based on the country’s domestic needs.”

A liberal republican foreign policy, Alterman continues, would also seek to terminate all U.S. covert activities abroad, control and reduce international arms sales, and promote “a sustainable global ecology.”

The Establishment’s tradition of acting independently of public opinion goes back to Franklin Roosevelt’s efforts to counter Nazi Germany’s strategic aims before Pearl Harbor, despite the isolationist mood of the public. But there is no Nazi threat today to justify the Establishment’s actions. Its defiance of “the clearly stated values of the American people for purely political or ideological reasons,” Alterman believes, is undermining American democracy.

The ‘Vilest Thing’

Casting a suspicious eye on gala commemorations of war, Paul Fussell, a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania and “a superannuated, badly wounded, former infantry lieutenant,” warns in *Society* (Sept.–Oct. 1996) against the political uses of patriotic gore.

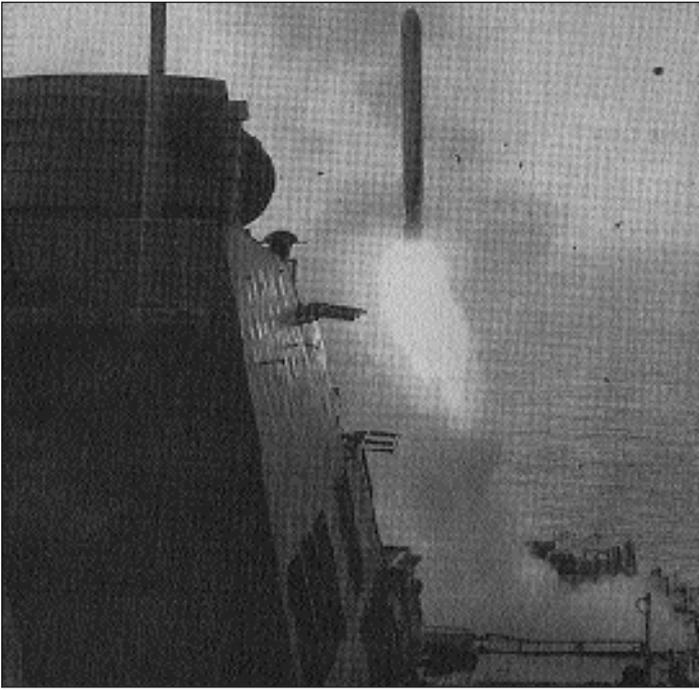
The truth is that very few people know anything about war. In an infantry division, for example, fewer than half of the troops actually fight, that is, fight with rifles, mortars, machine guns, grenades, and trench knives. The others, thousands upon thousands of them, are occupied with truck driving, photocopying, cooking and baking, ammunition and ration supplying, and similar housekeeping tasks. Now those things are no doubt necessary, but they are hardly bellicose; they do not provide the sort of experience required to define what the word “war” might mean. This is the reason why most combat veterans tend to smile cynically and sardonically at veterans’ reunions when those reunions are attended by very large numbers. Very few of those attending, the real veterans know, deserve to be there. For most soldiers participating in World War II, the war meant inconvenience rising sometimes to hardship, enforced travel and residence abroad, unappetizing food, and the absence of tablecloths or bedsheets. For those unlucky enough to be in the forward combat units, the war meant death or maiming, usually in extraordinarily dirty and undignified circumstances. At the very least, for most it meant a rapid and shocking metamorphosis from boyhood innocence to adult cynicism and bitterness. . . . Tolstoy’s words are worth recalling: War, he said, “is not a polite recreation, but the vilest thing in life, and we ought to understand that and not play at war.”

Virtual War?

“Morality and High Technology” by A. J. Bacevich, in *The National Interest* (Fall 1996), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

The dazzling high-tech swords that U.S. forces unsheathed during the 1991 Persian Gulf War—stealth aircraft, antiballistic

missiles, and “smart” munitions—seemed to herald the dawn of a new age of “sanitary war.” Americans would be able to exercise



The destroyer USS Laboon fires a Tomahawk cruise missile last September at a target in Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

commanding influence around the globe while avoiding the moral ambiguities that accompany conventional war. Unfortunately, the reality is not likely to be so simple, warns Bacevich, executive director of the Foreign Policy Institute at the Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies.

After the war, many defense specialists waxed enthusiastic about the potentially revolutionary effect of new technological marvels. U.S. commanders would be able to operate on "a transparent battlefield," with military intelligence so good they could almost "see" what the enemy was doing before he did it. They would be able to hit distant targets with such precision that civilian casualties and other "collateral" damage would rarely occur. And they would be able to make informed decisions and communicate them so quickly that enemy generals would not even have time to lace up their boots. All this seemed to promise that the moral questions involved in waging a "just war"—much discussed by Americans before Desert Storm—would be easily answered in the future.

The problem with this high-tech vision, Bacevich says, is that America's future adversaries are unlikely to go along with it. Military revolutions beget military revolutions. For

example, after Great Britain transformed naval warfare in 1906 by launching the *Dreadnaught*, the first in a new class of very fast, heavily armored, big-gun battleships, Germany turned in World War I to undersea warfare—the U-boat campaign. Like the German navy, Bacevich says, America's challengers will seek ways to render the latest military technology superfluous. Unconventional warfare is an obvious option: "people's war, subversion, terror, and banditry." And combating such attacks, he notes, presents grave difficulties for those

who would adhere to "just war" morality.

But just as the U-boat revolution was superseded by a third, even more sweeping transformation in the nature of war—the advent of naval air power—so, Bacevich suggests, a more fundamental transformation may be in the works now. Our increasingly wired world, utterly dependent on free flows of financial, technical, and other information, is becoming more vulnerable every day to "virtual war"—undeclared, continuous, and fought by "computer-wielding technicians." The object in such a conflict would be not massive physical destruction but disruption of "high-value networks critical to the smooth functioning of society," Bacevich suggests. The targets would be economic and political systems rather than masses of soldiers and machines, and the damage, while different in nature, might well be more widespread. This "virtual" warfare would present a fresh challenge to the just-war tradition with its concepts of discrimination and proportionality in the use of force.

Thus, Bacevich concludes, America is likely to be faced with not one military revolution but several. In this "tangled reality," there will be no shortage of moral dilemmas—and technological wizardry will not provide any "shortcut to a clear conscience."

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Shadow over Social Security

A Survey of Recent Articles

Social Security may well be the most popular government program ever established in the United States, and no American politician wants to monkey with it. But the next president, together with Congress, will be under great pressure to make some major changes in the venerable New Deal creation. Economists and others have been debating how radical the changes should be.

“Thanks to our aging population, longer lifespans, generous benefit hikes, and stagnant growth,” declares Matthew Miller, economics editor for the *New Republic* (Apr. 15, 1996), “the one thing certain about Social Security is that before the baby boom retires something will give. Call it Ponzi’s revenge.” The number of workers paying into the system per retiree was seven in 1950 and five in 1990. It will be fewer than three in 2030, by which time all the baby boomers will have turned 65.

“Financially,” Miller says, “these trends mean the ‘pay-as-you-go’ nature of Social Security, in which today’s workers are taxed to fund the retirement of their parents, simply can’t continue without big tax hikes or benefits cuts for tomorrow’s workers.”

Under existing law, notes Martin Feldstein, an economist at Harvard University and former chairman of the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, writing in the *American Economic Review* (May 1996), government actuaries predict that the payroll tax rate will need to increase over the next 50 years from about 12 percent to more than 18 percent, and perhaps as high as 23 percent.

“The prospect of ever-increasing taxes is unacceptable to most Americans,” Barry Bosworth, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, points out in the *Brookings Review* (Fall 1995). “And the prospect of ever-diminishing benefits is no better.”

Feldstein adds that the Social Security system is also partly responsible for the disastrously low rate of private saving in the United States. People expecting generous benefits in the future save less of their own money than they ought to—nearly 60 percent less, he estimates. That represents a significant loss of investment capital to the nation’s economy.

When Social Security was last “fixed” in 1983, it was thought that the payroll tax increases and other changes would keep the system in actuarial balance for more than 75 years, Bosworth notes. But demographic factors, including immigration and lower birth rates, as well as the fact that Americans are living longer and retiring earlier, have confounded that expectation. Although Social Security is currently running a surplus—\$69 billion in 1995—its trustees said in a 1995 report that the Social Security trust fund would run dry in 2030. (The assets accumulating in the trust fund today are less than five percent of Social Security liabilities. More than 90 percent of payroll tax receipts are still paid out immediately as benefits.)

Rescue plans seem to be proliferating, which may be a sign that momentum is building for major changes. In the *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1996), Peter G. Peterson, a New York investment banker and former U.S. secretary of commerce (1972–73), proposes an annual “affluence test” that would progressively reduce Social Security (and other entitlement) benefits to those with household incomes above \$40,000. He would also raise the retirement age at a faster rate. (Congress already has raised it from 65 to 67, to be phased in from 2000 to 2027.) Finally, Peterson calls for a mandatory, fully funded, privately managed, and portable system of personal retirement accounts. “The system I envision would initially supplement Social Security—and over time might increasingly substitute for it,” he says.

The federal Social Security Advisory Council, headed by Edward M. Gramlich, an economist at the University of Michigan, worked for two years to come up with recommendations for overhauling the system. The 13 members of the panel have not been able to agree on a single approach but instead have put forward three different ones, summarized by Gramlich in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Summer 1996):

Maintain the current system. This approach would tax as regular income all Social Security benefits that exceed an individual’s previous employee contributions. That,

Gramlich notes, might be “the most sensible way” to get current retirees, “who already get a good money’s worth return on their Social Security contributions,” to help solve the system’s problems. This approach would also have the Social Security trust fund gradually invest up to 40 percent of its assets in the stock market—instead of, as is now done, in Treasury bills—to take advantage of the historically higher returns. One danger: with more than \$1 trillion—one-seventh of the gross domestic product (GDP)—involved, management of the money might become politicized.

Individual accounts. “My personal favorite,” Gramlich writes, “tries to scale back benefits to eliminate today’s long-term actuarial deficit.” The normal retirement age would gradually rise, and benefits for high-wage workers would be cut. Then comes the critical part: mandatory individual savings accounts funded by a 1.6 percent payroll tax. The accounts would be held by the Social Security system, but individuals would be free to choose whether to invest their funds in bond index funds, stock index funds, or some combination. This would reduce, if not eliminate, the danger of politicized investment decisions.

Personal security accounts. Instead of small-scale individual accounts, this scheme would create much larger individualized sav-

ings accounts, called “Personal Security Accounts.” Of the 12.4 percent payroll tax (paid half by employers, half by employees), five percent would be diverted to those accounts, which could be administered by private registered investment companies. Government benefits would be reduced correspondingly. Feldstein favors a complete switch to a fully funded, privatized system of individual accounts.

The biggest problem with privatization, notes Matthew Miller, is figuring out “how to get from here to there. The trick in switching midstream from ‘pay-as-you-go’ to a pre-funded private retirement system is that one generation has to pay twice: first for the retirement of its parents and then for its own. . . . Chile, whose successful privatization of Social Security these reformers love to tout, paid for the change thanks in part to the five percent of GDP budget *surplus* they were running when they switched. No such luck here.”

Radical privatization may be unlikely, but there is little doubt that the New Deal program is due for a major overhaul. “Whether there’s a Republican or Democrat in the White House, they’ll be forced to make changes in Social Security,” Senator Bob Kerrey (D.-Neb.) told the *Wall Street Journal* (July 9, 1996). “The world has changed a lot since 1935.”

Cutting the Price of Power

“Electrical Storm” by Tom Arrandale, in *Governing* (July 1996), 2300 N St. N.W., Ste. 760, Washington, D.C. 20037; “Electric Utilities: The Argument for Radical Deregulation” by Peter Navarro, in *Harvard Business Review* (Jan.–Feb. 1996), and Thomas R. Kuhn et al., “Electric Utility Deregulation Sparks Controversy,” in *Harvard Business Review* (May–June 1996), Boston, Mass. 02163.

Deregulation has come to telecommunications, airlines, and other industries, and now it seems to be the electric utility industry’s turn. Traditionally, electric power has been supplied by tightly regulated local utilities that enjoy government-sanctioned monopolies. Some 200 such utilities today provide three-fourths of all the electric power in the United States. “But that monopoly system is about to break up,” reports Arrandale, a freelance writer.

In high-rate states such as California (where the price of electricity is roughly 50 percent above the national average), major industries have been seeking to cut their electric bills, and even threatening to move out of state. In 1992, Arrandale notes, Congress “cleared the way for unregulated private companies with efficient gas-fired

generating plants to sell power to wholesale customers [i.e. utilities themselves] at cheaper prices. This year, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ruled that these discount competitors must be allowed to use the long-distance transmission grids that the utilities have built to carry power across the countryside.” Now, the unregulated companies want states to give them “access . . . to the poles and wires along the streets and highways of virtually every community in the country.” Massachusetts has already embraced the concept, and small-scale experiments are under way in Michigan and Maine. Meanwhile, mergers have sharply increased, as companies seek to cut costs and gain control over large regional markets.

In the debate over how far and how fast

electric utility deregulation should go, two issues stand out:

Who should pay for past mistakes? “With federal and state regulators’ consent,” Arrandale notes, “U.S. utilities have sunk \$160 billion into their white-elephant nuclear generating plants and money-losing power purchase contracts.” If outside companies are now allowed to pick off these utilities’ customers, investors will suffer. Kuhn, president of the Edison Electric Institute, the industry’s main trade association, argues that a utility’s “departing customers” should be required to pay their fair share of the accu-

mulated bill. Navarro, an economist at the University of California, Irvine, who favors “a radical, national deregulation” of the industry, contends that this would reward bad management and be unfair to consumers. He favors a zero-recovery policy.

Will deregulation hurt small businesses and residential customers, who lack bargaining power? That will indeed happen, admits Navarro, unless such “small captive customers” band together. Government regulators, says this advocate of radical deregulation, “must help organize [these] customers into large, more effective bargaining units.”

Molding Good Corporate Citizens

“Reinventing the Corporation” by Jonathan Rowe, in *The Washington Monthly* (Apr. 1996), 1611
Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

On the second day of 1996, with Christmas just safely past, the American Telephone and Telegraph Corporation outdid Ebenezer Scrooge. Although its profits were soaring (along with executive salaries), AT&T announced it was laying off 40,000 workers. Presumably the action was intended to increase efficiency and maximize profits—but was it the decent, responsible thing to do? Many Americans thought not—and Rowe, a contributing editor at the *Washington Monthly*, contends that they were right.

“The problem, of course, is that corporations today aren’t constituted to be responsible,” he says. The CEOs of large, publicly traded corporations are forced to heed “an institutional mandate to maximize pecuniary gain.”

Yet the corporation, Rowe points out, is a government creation. The state grants a charter to a group of people, recognizing them as a separate entity—a corporation—with its own rights and liabilities, distinct from those of the individuals involved. Limited liability encourages large-scale ventures, because the individuals involved

do not put their entire fortunes at risk. Yet since the corporation is a creature of the state, the U.S. Supreme Court observed in 1906, “it is presumed to be incorporated for the benefit of the public.”

When the Constitutional Convention was held in 1787, only about 40 business corporations had been chartered, and most were for the construction of bridges, toll roads, and other public works. Most enterprises were small enough to require the capital of only an owner or a few partners. Even as corporations became more common in the 19th century, states imposed restrictions on those they chartered, confining them to certain types of business, limiting their size, and often fixing 20-to-50-year time limits on the charter. A corporation that failed to fulfill its responsibilities could have its charter revoked.

But with the rise of the “robber barons” and their large trusts in the late-19th century, that began to change, Rowe says. States competed to offer the fewest restrictions. Delaware won. By the mid-1970s, half of the 500 largest corporations in the country were chartered there.

With “corporate responsibility” now seen by many as an oxymoron, it is time, Rowe contends, to “reconnect the corporation to the social



and community concerns it was originally intended to serve.” He suggests revising estate tax laws and using other tax incentives to encourage “socially cohesive forms of [corporate] ownership—family, local, and employee,” instead of ownership by thousands of scattered and unrelated stockholders. The largest corporations, Rowe argues, should be chartered by the federal government—or, at the very least, there ought to be a federal minimum standard for state charters. “That standard should

include individual responsibility for corporate officials, of the kind that existed before Delaware’s lax and permissive regime. Charters should specify particular kinds of business, the way they used to. And charters should expire after a given period of years, for review under fair standards that ensure renewal except for egregious bad behavior,” he says. That, Rowe believes, should ensure that corporations exhibit “a minimum level of decent conduct—without a multitude of new regulations.”

SOCIETY

First Feminists

“American Women’s First Collective Political Action: Boston 1649–1650” by Mary Beth Norton, in *Arts & Sciences Newsletter* (Spring 1996), Cornell University, Binenkorb Center, Goldwin Smith Hall, Ithaca, N.Y. 14853–3201.

Women banding together to state their views about an issue related to reproduction is a familiar sight in modern America. And it has a longer history than many people imagine. Cornell University historian Norton has discovered evidence of what she believes is the first such political action by American women. It occurred nearly 350 years ago.

In 1649 and 1650, six petitions, four from women in Boston and two from women in Dorchester, Massachusetts, were submitted to colonial authorities in behalf of a midwife named Alice Tilly, who was accused of the “miscarrying of many wimen and children under hir hand.” No account has survived of the precise charges against her, but the male authorities apparently thought she had taken some unwarranted action in the course of her medical practice.

Three of the petitions, asking that Mistress Tilly be allowed to leave jail to attend her patients, were submitted before her trial. The fourth petition, written after she had been

convicted, renewed the request. “Led by the wife of the chief pastor of the Boston church,” Norton says, “26 female Bostonians begged the judges to ‘heare the cryes of mothers, and of children yet unborn.’ This time the court acquiesced, allowing Mistress Tilly to leave prison whenever she was needed at childbeds.” Then, in the spring of 1650, after her husband had threatened to move the family elsewhere unless, in his words, “‘her innocencie may be cleared,’” the women of Boston and Dorchester again submitted petitions, urging that she be entirely freed from custody.

“The astonishing aspect of the petitions,” Norton says, “was the total number of signatures (294), ranging from a low of eight and 21 on the first petitions to a high of 130 on the last.” Most of those who signed were women in their prime childbearing years or their mothers or mothers-in-law. In the end, the women apparently prevailed; the authorities seem to have released Mistress Tilly.

Psychoanalysis off the Couch

“Freud and the Culture Wars” by Yale Kramer, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1996), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

The two decades after World War II were the golden age of psychoanalysis in America. Sigmund Freud was a cultural hero and every analyst had a full case load—“and those with middle-European accents had two-year wait-

ing lists” regardless of professional competence, recalls Kramer, a practicing psychoanalyst and a clinical professor at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Then, in the mid-1960s, something happened. “Analysts’

waiting lists became shorter, then disappeared. Gaps appeared in appointment books, and fees stopped climbing.”

What had happened, Kramer argues, was that psychoanalysis had finally advanced beyond Freud’s early “dammed-up libido” theory—but the public had not. That simple theory traced certain neuroses to the frustra-

tion of sexual impulses. Introduced to America by Freud himself during a visit in 1909, this theory had a profound impact, first in intellectual circles and high society and later, after World War II, among the middle class. From there it was an easy leap to the notion that the repression of “natural” impulses, sexual or otherwise, was the root of all human problems. To everybody from Greenwich Village bohemians in the 1920s to restless college students in the 1950s, Freudian psychoanalysis represented all that was progressive and forward looking.

Meanwhile, psychoanalysis itself moved on. Freud jettisoned the “dammed-up libido” theory by 1926, and other thinkers, including his daughter Anna Freud, helped move the discipline in new directions. In modern psychoanalysis, Kramer explains, adaptation is the key to mental health. The healthy individual is the person who “has reached an equilibrium between the gratification of his instinctual needs, his moral needs, and the demands of reality. In modern psychoanalysis, old-fashioned attributes such as patience, fortitude, and common sense took on new value and new names, e.g., ‘impulse control,’ ‘frustration tolerance,’ and ‘reality testing.’” These were not the sorts of things that the popular American interpreters and lay supporters of psychoanalysis—including sociologists, literary critics, educators, and journalists—and even some analysts, wanted to hear, Kramer says. They remained “stubbornly attached to their oversimplified, anti-bourgeois sexual beliefs”—beliefs that fueled the youth culture of the 1960s.

Psychoanalysis fell out of favor not only with an American public bent on self-indulgence but with the left-wing intellectuals who had once championed it. It isn’t only the “adult” sound of modern psychoanalysis that disturbs the Left. Feminists object to its insistence that there are important basic differences between men and women. Gays dislike the “abnormal” label Freud

Being Poor in America

	Nonpoor Families	Poor Families
Total before-tax family income	\$55,394	\$8,501
% of income from:		
Wages/salaries	78.9	50.0
Self-employment	6.2	1.7
Welfare	0.2	20.3
Food stamps	\$65	\$1,392
Total family expenditures	\$36,926	\$11,596
% of expenditures for:		
Food	15.6	29.8
Shelter	18.6	22.3
Utilities	6.9	14.0
Transportation	20.1	10.3
Health care	5.4	2.8
Entertainment	5.4	2.8
Items owned or in home or building (%)		
Washing machine	92.7	71.7
Refrigerator	99.5	97.9
Color television	98.5	92.5
Air conditioning	71.9	49.6
Telephone	97.2	76.7
Car or truck	97.2	76.8
Owned home (%)	77.6	40.8
More than one person per room (%)	4.2	19.2

What does it mean to be poor in America? Government analysts drew upon nine national surveys conducted between 1988 and '93 in an effort to supply an accurate, comprehensive statistical answer. Some of their findings, reported in *Monthly Labor Review* (May 1996), are shown above. A mixed portrait of comfort and hardship emerges. (The fact that reported expenditures exceed income plus food stamps may be due to under-reporting of income, as well as to measurement problems in the surveys.) Single-parent poor families, not shown in the chart, with average incomes of \$6,794 (40 percent of it from welfare or other public assistance), are significantly worse off than the typical poor family.

stuck on homosexuality. And the psychoanalytic emphasis on individual responsibility goes against the grain of the leftist view that environment is almost everything.

Psychoanalysis never should have gotten

mixed up in politics, Kramer concludes. "With a little luck, it can do considerable good for an individual patient. Outside, in the world of values, it can only be debased, misunderstood, and misused as ideology."

Rome Lives!

"The Vanishing Paradigm of the Fall of Rome" by Glen W. Bowersock, in *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (May 1996), Norton's Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

For centuries, the Fall of Rome has been a handy, even irresistible, metaphor for thinkers who fret about the state of civilization. Have a social problem on your mind? Trot out a comparison to the last days of the empire. Today, however, observes Bowersock, a professor of historical studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, historians have a surprisingly different view of that oft-invoked example. Rome, they contend, never really fell.

The image of the empire's "decline and fall" was strongly impressed upon the scholarly and popular minds by Edward Gibbon's magisterial *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, whose first volume appeared in 1776. The traditional view then was that the Fall of Rome occurred in 476 A.D., when the invading Ostrogoths, a Germanic people, brought the rule of Romulus Augustulus, the last Western emperor, to an end. But that view was no more than a literary conceit, Bowersock says.

There was no "clear and decisive end" to

the Roman Empire, he asserts, and Gibbon knew that. Rome "changed and multiplied itself. Its centers of power and administration moved." After the fifth century, Italians regarded their sovereign as resident in the East, in Constantinople. It was there, under emperors such as Leo III and Basil II, that Hellenized Roman culture survived for a thousand years. That is why Gibbon ended his history of the Roman Empire in 1453, with the capture of Constantinople ("the new Rome") by the Turks.

Modern historians have gone much further. In his influential *World of Late Antiquity* (1971) and later works, Bowersock says, Peter Brown portrays the age after the supposed Fall of Rome "as the beginning of something grand and distinctive rather than as the end of the classical world everyone knew and admired." Cultures that seemed to Gibbon barbaric and alien in spirit to everything Rome represented now look to his successors like the legates of eternal Rome.

PRESS & MEDIA

Nattering Nabobs?

"Bad News, Bad Governance" by Thomas E. Patterson, in *The Annals* (July 1996), The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 3937 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Why are Americans disgusted with their government? One reason is that the national news media are relentlessly, corrosively negative in their coverage of political leaders, argues Patterson, a professor of press and politics at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

In 1992, according to his content analysis, 60 percent of the news coverage given presidential candidates Bill Clinton, Ross Perot, and incumbent George Bush was negative in tone. In 1960, by contrast, 75 percent of the

news coverage of John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon was positive. It's not that Kennedy and Nixon were political paragons, Patterson says, because "the tone of election coverage became steadily more negative [after 1960] regardless of who was running." Politicians left and right alike were objects of the media's scorn.

In both TV and newspapers, he notes, "interpretive" reporting has come to replace "just the facts" journalism. As the narrator, the reporter becomes more important in the

In Search of the Golden Age

“Broadcast journalists need to believe that their trade wasn’t always so silly and meretricious,” writes Andrew Ferguson, a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard* (July 22, 1996), so they often speak of their profession’s Golden Age, when “‘standards’ were higher and everybody knew it, and profits were lower and nobody cared.” But the precise time of this glorious era, Ferguson notes, can be hard to pin down.

Disinterested observers will have some trouble fixing the Golden Age of broadcast news in chronological time. It doesn’t help to work backwards. Shortly after Charles Kuralt retired in 1994, he lamented the lost era, implying that it had closed not too long ago.



“The bean counters are really in control now,” he said. “I decided to leave before they could invite me to leave.” (Thanks.) But several years earlier, in the late ’80s, Dan Rather was lamenting the lost Golden Age also, the “tragic transformation from [Edward R.] Murrow to mediocrity” that had recently been accomplished. To the early ’80s then? No, for Walter Cronkite himself had announced that by then the “Murrow continuum” “had really come to a terminal point.” Cronkite may have placed the Golden Age in the years leading up to his retirement in 1981. He would have gotten an argument from Eric Sevareid, who in the mid-1970s said CBS News had “degenerated into show biz.”

Perhaps Sevareid was referring to the golden time as the glorious ’60s and early 1970s, the period leading up to his own retirement. Alas, no. For in 1969 Alexander Kendrick, himself a Murrow Boy and author of the first gargantuan Murrow biography, announced that “the Murrow window on the real world had been shrunk to a peephole. . . . Controversy, with its pros and cons, had given way to compatibility. . . . Emotion replaced editorial perspective.” Fred Friendly, one-time president of CBS News, agreed, although Kendrick was apparently off by a few years. By Friendly’s account, CBS had wholly succumbed to worldly forces by 1966, the year, coincidentally, of his retirement.

And so the Golden Age recedes and recedes, until we reach its first autopsy, performed in 1958 (!) by Murrow himself. In a widely noted speech he declared TV news to be trivial and soporific, given over at last to “decadence, escapism, and insulation.” No matter what day it is, the Golden Age of Television News always ended the day before yesterday.

story than the news maker, using facts mainly as illustrations of the theme he has chosen for the story. In network news coverage of the 1992 general election, the journalists covering the candidates got six minutes of airtime for every minute the candidates were shown speaking.

Reporters today, Patterson says, “constantly question politicians’ motives, methods, and effectiveness. This type of reporting looks like watchdog journalism but is not. It is ideological in its premise: politicians are assumed to act out of self-interest rather than also from political conviction.”

The reporters’ pose of objectivity in such cases often conceals mere opinion—and misguided opinion at that. “Most bad-press sto-

ries criticize politicians for shifting their positions, waffling on tough issues, posturing, or pandering to whichever group they happen to be facing,” Patterson says. But the reality is usually quite different. Four extensive studies conclude that presidents, for example, generally carry out the promises they make on the campaign trail; when they do not, it is often because Congress balks or conditions change dramatically.

The news media have robbed “political leaders of the public confidence that is required to govern effectively,” Patterson writes. Journalists need not go back to the old-fashioned sort of reporting, he concludes, but, in the public interest, they should recognize their own limitations as objective watchdogs.

A Blind Eye on China

“In the Chinese Gulag” by Harry Wu, in *Index on Censorship* (July–Aug. 1996), Writers & Scholars International Ltd., Lancaster House, 33 Islington High St., London N1 9LH.

The world press has not been nearly as tough on Chinese communism as it was on the Soviet variety, asserts Wu, the American human rights campaigner. Although Western reporters have gained increasing access to Chinese society, he says, they have been reluctant to ask Chinese authorities about the Laogai—China’s gulag. They have failed to ask the most basic questions: How many labor camps are there? How many prisoners are in them? How many have died? And what products are made in the camps?

As a young man, Wu spent 19 years in Chinese camps before emigrating to the United States in 1985 and becoming a citizen. His own efforts to investigate the system led to his imprisonment for two months in 1995, an event that generated intense international concern.

The forced labor camps, he contends, are “an integral part of the national economy.” According to Wu, 60 percent of China’s rubber-vulcanizing chemicals are produced in a Laogai camp in Shenyang city; one of the largest exporters of hand tools is a camp in Shanghai, and one-third of China’s tea is produced in Laogai camps. Recently, he adds, it came to light that auto parts made in the Beijing Laogai were being used in a joint venture with the Chrysler Corporation to build Jeeps in Beijing.

The world news media have also paid little attention to what is happening in the countryside, where 80 percent of China’s 1.2 billion people live. “Reporters have so far concentrated on trends within the major cities,” Wu says, “but it is in the countryside that the future of China will be determined.”

Journalism’s Little Dragons

“The Strength of Weeklies” by Judith Sheppard, in *American Journalism Review* (July–Aug. 1996), 8701 Adelphi Rd., Adelphi, Md. 20783–1716.

Like comedian Rodney Dangerfield, most weekly newspapers “don’t get no respect,” at least not in the newsrooms of big-city dailies. But that may be changing, writes Sheppard, a former reporter who teaches journalism at Auburn University, in Alabama. While many daily papers are grimly struggling to keep readers, weeklies devoted strictly to local news have seen circulations soar.

In 1985, according to the National Newspaper Association, which promotes community newspapers, there were 7,704 “weeklies” (publishing one to three times a week), with a collective circulation of 49 million; a decade later, 8,453 weeklies reported 79 million readers, with the greatest growth taking place in the suburbs of major cities.

The weeklies’ lifeblood, Sheppard writes, is the local news that most dailies, as well as television, ignore. Many weeklies publish every reported crime, arrest, or other activity recorded in the local police blotter. “One issue of the Ellsworth, Maine, *American* carried 60 inches of crimes such as the theft of 20 sets of Christmas lights from a home that was a finalist in the neighborhood decoration contest and the names of everyone arrested

for drunk driving or assault.” Many weeklies also cover local government and school board meetings in great detail. But quality varies. Most weeklies are given away free, and many are merely platforms for advertisements.

Weekly editors, Sheppard observes, “don’t need focus groups and market surveys to keep them abreast of readers’ concerns.” When he walks across 235th Street in the Bronx, says Bernard Stein, co-owner of the *Riverdale Press*, he is “stopped 12, 15, 20 times by people who want to know why the Kiwanis Club was on the left-hand page and the Rotary Club was on the right, or why I wrote that stupid editorial. Folks in Riverdale feel they’re stakeholders; they’ve got ownership rights. It’s their newspaper.”

Daily newspapers, especially in big cities, are starting to view weeklies as serious rivals, newspaper industry analyst John Morton told Sheppard. This is reflected in the dailies’ zoned editions, which offer targeted local news. Champions of weeklies claim that, as one put it, such efforts just provide “generic news that doesn’t get into the heart and soul of the community.”

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

What Do American Jews Believe?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Whatever else American Jews may believe in, it is doubtful the majority of them believe in Judaism.” So the editors of *Commentary* (Aug. 1996) assert at the outset of an extensive (nearly 80-page) symposium on the state of belief among American Jews. Forty-seven Jewish thinkers and rabbis from various points on the denominational spectrum take part.

Two of Judaism’s fundamental convictions—that the Jewish people were chosen by God at Sinai to serve as a model for the rest of humanity, and that they were to follow His commandments (*mitzvot*) in the scripture of the Torah—are expressed in a benediction recited every day in virtually every synagogue: “Blessed are You, God, King of the universe, Who has chosen us from all peoples, and has given us His Torah.” Yet despite this popular usage, laments Jack Wertheimer, a professor of Jewish history at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Conservative), fewer and fewer American Jews seem to be making the blessing’s message their own.

The weakening of religious faith among the nearly six million American Jews is reflected in the declining membership in synagogues and the rising rate of intermarriage with Gentiles. The magnetic pull of American secular culture is a powerful assimilative force. “There is a sharp dissonance between traditional Jewish perspectives and the prevailing cultural outlook within American society,” Wertheimer observes. “As a result, some of the most basic categories of Jewish thought are eroding.”

But what is Judaism? The estimated 4.8 million Jews who belong to the synagogues or temples of the four main branches of Judaism—Conservative (2 million), Reform (1.3 million), Orthodox (1 million), and Reconstructionist—hold a variety of views about the most basic elements of the faith.

Are Jews the chosen people of God? Yes, says David Novak, a professor of modern Judaic studies at the University of Virginia. However, David M. Gordis, president of Hebrew College in Boston, largely rejects the notion. “Every community and culture is unique and the concept of chosenness is more mischievous than useful,” he says.

Are all the commandments of the Torah binding? “The challenge of observing the commandments without picking and choosing is precisely what makes them commandments,” argues David Berger, a historian at Brooklyn College and an Orthodox Jew. David G. Dalin, a Conservative rabbi and a professor of American Jewish history at the University of Hartford, thinks otherwise: “Divine revelation since Sinai, I believe, continues (in part) in the form of new interpretations of the Torah, and reevaluations of the *mitzvot* contained therein by the rabbis of each generation. Not all of the commandments have been binding for all people, in all lands, at all periods of Jewish history.”

This is the main division in Judaism today, asserts Marshall J. Breger, a visiting professor of law at Catholic University of America: the split between those—Orthodox and some Conservative Jews—who accept Jewish law (*halakhah*) as binding, and those—Reform and most Conservative Jews—who instead regard the law “as some kind of historical archive for spiritual inspiration.” In the latter camp are “the great majority of American Jews,” according to Eric H. Yoffie, a Reform rabbi and president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. For them, he says, “there is no leader or institution with the authority to impose commandments; the autonomous individual decides for himself or herself.”

Susannah Heschel, a professor of Jewish studies at Case Western Reserve University and the daughter of the eminent Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–72), is an example. As a feminist, she doubts that commandments “unfair to women” were the work of God. “I feel I am a Jew without a home,” she confesses. The “rigidity” of modern Orthodoxy does not appeal to her, yet Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform Judaism, despite their “many wonderful, thoughtful decisions equalizing the status of women and men,” seem, she says, to lack “the intense prayer and devotion that fill the little hassidic *shtiebl*, or prayer house.”

American individualism is not the only serious challenge to traditional Jewish life, notes

Political Shepherds

A recent argument that liberals should wake up to the political power of religion and use it—made by Amy Waldman, an editor at the *Washington Monthly*, [see *WQ*, Spring '96, pp. 120–121]—leaves Alan Pell Crawford, writing in *Chronicles* (Aug. 1996), cold. He is the author of *Thunder on the Right* (1980).

Every few years secular intellectuals “rediscover” religion, almost always concluding that it must be a good thing because it seems to make better citizens of the faithful—better liberal Democrats, in this case. The neoliberals at the Monthly seem to believe that the imitation of Christ is important because it will make us all more like Bobby Kennedy.

Susan Sontag—no right-winger she—once derided the attitude of such philosophes as “religious fellow-traveling.” What intellectuals always want, Sontag wrote in the early '60s, is the personal, political, and societal advantages of religious faith without actually having to believe in anything. They are for “religion” in a general sense, which, Sontag noted, is of course meaningless. You cannot practice “religion” in general any more than you can speak “language” in general; you speak English, French, or Farsi; you practice Catholicism, Buddhism, or Santeria. You’re either a snake handler or you ain’t.

Jon D. Levenson, a professor of Jewish studies at Harvard University. The “melting pot” also beckons. Today, nearly three out of 10 married Jews-by-birth are wed to Gentiles. “The illiberal truth that intermarriage is Jewish suicide has not been well-received among that most liberal of groups, American Jews,” Levenson writes.

For centuries, rabbinical law and tradition held that only children born of a Jewish mother were Jews. In 1983, however, the Reform movement expanded the definition to include children born of a Jewish father. This “threatens the religious unity of the American Jewish community as never before,” asserts Conservative rabbi David Dalin.

Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University (Orthodox), in New York, agrees. Genuine religious unity is inconceivable to him when the Reform wing “has embraced patrilinealism, ordained gays and lesbians as Reform rabbis, and otherwise given enthusiastic ecclesiastical approval to almost every

avant-garde liberal movement in the general society. Extremes beget extremes, and significant segments of Orthodoxy are moving in the opposite direction, demanding conformity, and associating almost automatically with the more (or even most) right-wing political movements both in America and Israel.”

Yet despite all the serious problems besetting American Jews as a community, many of the pessimistic symposium participants remain hopeful. “Demographic data suggest a grim future for Judaism in America,” concludes Jon Levenson, “but there is more in heaven and earth than is comprehended in demographic surveys. I sense a deepening concern about the erosion of the moral foundations of society and mounting doubt that secularism can repair or sustain them. Among Jews, probably the most secular group in America, this rethinking has barely begun. Its fruits remain to be seen.”

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Justice in the Laboratory

“An Injustice to a Scientist Is Reversed and We Learn Some Lessons” by Daniel J. Kevles, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 5, 1996), 1255 23rd St. N.W., Washington D.C. 20037.

For a decade, Nobel laureate David Baltimore and immunologist Thereza Imanishi-Kari endured an ordeal worthy of Kafka. It started with “whistle-blowing” by a postdoc-

toral assistant. Imanishi-Kari was accused of faking data for a paper co-authored by Baltimore. He strongly defended her and was forced to quit the presidency of Rockefeller

University as a result, while Imanishi-Kari, now at Tufts University, had her reputation besmirched and a federal research grant terminated. Recently, their ordeal came to an end when a federal appeals panel cleared her of the fraud charges. In the future, argues Kevles, director of the Program in Science, Ethics, and Public Policy at the California Institute of Technology, scientific misconduct cases should be handled very differently.

To begin with, he says, it should be recognized that scientific misconduct in its most serious form appears to be quite rare. Of 26 investigations closed in 1994 by the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), only six concluded that research data had been fabricated or falsified—"a minuscule incidence, given all of the biomedical research sponsored by the NIH." In light of this, Kevles questions whether a special investigative office such as ORI is even necessary.

Whatever the governmental machinery employed to handle misconduct cases, he says, those conducting the investigations "should have the courage to insulate the proceedings from political pressure." Repre-

sentative John Dingell (D.-Mich.), then chairman of the House Energy and Commerce committee, with jurisdiction over the NIH budget, and a relentless watchdog, cast an "overbearing shadow" over the Imanishi-Kari case, Kevles contends, with unfortunate results. In addition, he says, the investigators should not serve as prosecutor, judge, and jury, as the ORI did.

"The procedures should guarantee the accused the rights of due process from the beginning," Kevles writes, "and, while giving due attention to whistle blowers, should keep those making the charges" at arm's length. Until the appeals board took up her case, Imanishi-Kari was not permitted to see the evidence against her, cross-examine witnesses, or call any of her own.

Finally, Kevles concludes, scientific misconduct should be narrowly defined—limited to falsification, fabrication, and theft of intellectual property. "Pursuing vague notions, such as the deviation of a scientist's practices from 'commonly accepted' ones, will invite still other houndings of hapless researchers and very likely have a chilling effect on the practice of science itself."

The Sacred Language of Genes

"Genetics, God, and Sacred DNA" by Dorothy Nelkin, in *Society* (May-June 1996), Rutgers—The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

Religious critics of genetic engineering hold that it is wrong to tinker with, as one evangelical writer put it, "our essential humanity." In 1983, 21 Catholic bishops joined other religious leaders in calling for a ban on genetic engineering, declaring that humans have no right to "play God." Nelkin, a sociologist at New York University, asserts that geneticists play into the hands of such critics by using religious language themselves to describe their subject.

Scientists, she says, "seem to endow the biological structure called DNA with a nearly spiritual importance as a powerful and sacred object—an essential entity through which human life and human fate can be explained and understood." Frequently, they refer to the human genome as the "Bible," the "Book of Man," and the "Holy Grail."

"Our fate is in our genes," claims Nobel laureate James Watson, codiscoverer of the double helix and the first director of the Human Genome Project. Another Nobel laureate, molecular biologist Kary Mullis, even offers, via a company he founded, the equivalent of early Christian relics, Nelkin writes: cards and jewelry that purportedly contain DNA cloned from rock stars, athletes, and other "secular saints."

Scientists are using religious metaphors "as part of their effort to convince the public of the centrality and power of the genes—and of the importance of supporting their research," Nelkin says. Their language also reflects their nearly religious belief "that there is underlying order in nature." But the scientists' words, Nelkin says, are easily turned into weapons by their critics and used in the campaign against genetic science.

Einstein's Curious Mistake

"The Reluctant Father of Black Holes" by Jeremy Bernstein, in *Scientific American* (June 1996), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017-1111.

"Black holes"—celestial objects so dense that their gravity prevents even light from escaping—seem strange and improbable. Yet modern science, drawing on Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity and his invention of quantum-statistical mechanics, insists that they really exist. Ironically, writes Bernstein, a physicist and former staff writer for the *New Yorker*, Einstein himself rejected the weird notion.

Before the turn of the century, astronomers had begun to identify "white dwarfs": small, dim stars that must be extremely dense. In 1930, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, a young Indian scientist, calculated that any white dwarf whose mass was greater than 1.4 times the mass of the sun would collapse under the force of its own gravitation. This conclusion, Bernstein says, "set off a revolution," and pointed the way toward the modern understanding of black holes.

Coming at the problem of the black holes (though he did not use that term, which was coined in 1967) from another direction, Einstein himself tried to show that their existence is impossible. He had been impressed in 1916 when a German astronomer named Karl Schwarzschild, working out the extremely complicated gravitational equations in the case of a planet orbiting a star, had come up with an exact solution. But something Schwarzschild had discovered while doing that, and had dismissed as of no practical consequence, bothered Einstein. Schwarzschild had

found, Bernstein explains, that at a certain distance from the center of the star, "the mathematics goes berserk. At this distance, now known as the Schwarzschild radius, time vanishes, and space becomes infinite." Schwarzschild's analysis "did not satisfy certain technical requirements of relativity theory," Bernstein says. That piqued Einstein's interest.

Looking at a collection of small particles moving in circular orbits under the influence of one another's gravitation, Einstein wrote in a 1939 paper that such a configuration could not collapse into a stable star with a radius equal to its Schwarzschild radius, Bernstein says.

Einstein's reasoning about a *stable* star was correct but irrelevant, Bernstein explains. "It does not matter that a collapsing star at the Schwarzschild radius is unstable, because the star collapses past that radius anyway."

At the same time that Einstein was doing his research, physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and a student, using Einstein's general theory of relativity, came to a very different conclusion. They found, Bernstein writes, that what seems to happen to a collapsing star "depends dramatically on the vantage point of the observer." To a distant observer, the star seems frozen at its Schwarzschild radius. It is only from close up that the star appears to be collapsing. Einstein was undone, in other words, by his own theory.

A Grinch's Guide to Garbage

"Recycling Is Garbage" by John Tierney, in *The New York Times Magazine* (June 30, 1996), 229 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

It's not really news anymore that recycling, virtuous though it may make citizens feel, is generally wasteful. (See *WQ*, Autumn 1995, p. 131.) But in the course of a comprehensive critique of the practice, Tierney, a staff writer for the *New York Times Magazine*, offers some glittering nuggets worth recycling:

- A federally financed study of the costs of curbside recycling in six communities found that all but one of the programs, and all the composting operations and waste-to-energy

incinerators, increased the cost of waste disposal.

- Mandatory bottle-deposit programs do encourage recycling and reduce litter, but they typically cost \$500 for every ton of cans and bottles collected, "which makes curbside recycling look like a bargain," Tierney says. The most efficient way to cut litter is to hire cleanup crews, which pick up more than just bottles and cans. Recycling saps support from other cleanup efforts. When New York City's

Sanitation Department started its recycling program, it cut back on street cleaning.

• Are reusable cups and plates better than disposables? “A ceramic mug may seem a more virtuous choice than a cup made of polystyrene. . . . But it takes much more energy to manufacture the mug, and then each washing consumes more energy (not to mention water),” Tierney notes. According to one chemist’s calculations, the mug would have to be used 1,000 times before it consumed as little energy per use as the foam cup. And then there is the matter of bacteria surviving on the reusables. . . .

But isn’t landfill space disappearing? Well, no, says Tierney. While the 1987 saga of the

garbage scow *Mobro* was presented by the news media as “a grim harbinger of future landfill scarcity . . . it actually represented a short-lived scare caused by new environmental regulations.” Landfills in the rural South and Midwest now vigorously compete for East Coast garbage.

Does that make these dumping grounds losers? Not at all, argues Tierney. The private operator of the new landfill in Charles City County, Virginia, for example, pays the county fees totaling \$3 million a year—as much as the county takes in from all its property taxes. “If you are heavy with garbage and guilt,” Tierney writes, “Charles City is the place to lay down your burden.”

ARTS & LETTERS

The Great American Novel?

“U.S.A.” by Daniel Aaron, in *American Heritage* (July–Aug. 1996), Forbes Bldg., 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011, and “‘U.S.A.’ Today” by Joseph Epstein, in *The New Yorker* (Aug. 5, 1996), 20 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

John Dos Passos’s monumental trilogy, *U.S.A.*, was hailed by Lionel Trilling in 1938 as “the important American novel of the decade,” and indeed, many people at the time felt the novelist had achieved what Joseph Epstein, editor of the *American Scholar*, calls “the literary Holy Grail”: the Great American Novel. By casting his fictional characters into “the snarl of the human currents of his time,” Dos Passos was attempting to evoke, in Epstein’s words, “the tumult of American life in the first three decades of the century.” Aaron, a Harvard University English professor, calls the work “an idiosyncratic biography of a nation,” one that has, in his view, lasting worth.

In *The 42nd Parallel*, *Nineteen Nineteen*, and *The Big Money* (all initially published between 1927 and 1936, and now reissued by the Library of America to mark the centenary of Dos Passos’s birth), Dos Passos portrayed an America populated by “a servile generation of white-collar slaves” and “moneygrubbers,” and a huge “disunited strata of workers and farmers kept mostly in an opium dream of prosperity by cooing radios, the flamboyant movies, and the installment plan.”

But how best to depict the nation’s moral bankruptcy? Building on techniques he had employed less successfully in *Manhattan Transfer* (1924), Dos Passos wove together

the fictional strands of *U.S.A.* by employing three distinctive literary devices: “newsreel,” in which he strung together scraps of popular song and newspaper clippings to convey the interconnectedness and fabric of seemingly unrelated events across the nation; biographies—26 portraits of “important personalities of the time,” including the Wright brothers, Thorstein Veblen, and Eugene Debs; and, finally, “The Camera Eye.” This last is the closest thing the books have to a narrative voice, with the protagonist being, Aaron explains, the author self-observed as he passes through a “moving cyclorama” of his own design. At the trilogy’s core is the politically charged Sacco-Vanzetti case, which led to the 1927 execution of the two anarchists convicted of murder and outraged Dos Passos and others on the left.

U.S.A., Aaron notes, “isn’t an atlas or a cultural guide to the United States”; the South and Far West receive short shrift and black Americans “are conspicuously absent.” Moreover, the fictional characters in Dos Passos’s swirling pastiche of the American scene are reduced, as one critic said, to “colliding billiard balls.” Nevertheless, Aaron maintains, in the 60 years since the final volume in the trilogy appeared, no other work has come closer to realizing that oft-pursued but elusive dream

of the Great American Novel.

Epstein once shared Aaron's enthusiasm but says he finds his opinion tempered by a fresh reading. Originally awed by "the god-like aura of a novelist working on a vast stage with a huge cast of characters," Epstein now believes U.S.A.'s "truths were almost entirely

political ones—and such truths are all too mutable." Dos Passos "missed the main story"—"the eternal confusions of human beings." Still, although Dos Passos failed to fashion "a book for the ages," Epstein says, U.S.A. "was a book for his age, and that is no small thing."

When Bebop Was Born

"Bebop: Modern New York Jazz" by Peter Rutkoff and William Scott, in *The Kenyon Review* (Spring 1996), Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio 43022.

On November 26, 1945, a little-known young saxophonist named Charlie Parker entered the recording studios of radio station WOR in New York with trumpet player Dizzy Gillespie and four other jazz musicians. They were about to introduce the public to a startlingly different sound: bebop.

"Energetic, sometimes frantic, and bluesy, bebop's incendiary style, pulsing rhythm, and intensity contrasted with the melodic, linear, and commercial qualities of swing," note Rutkoff and Scott, who teach history at Kenyon College. With bebop, they argue, modern jazz divorced itself from the dictates of commerce and returned to its African-American roots—and black jazz musicians liberated themselves from "white control."

The jazz world was segregated during the first three decades of the century, the authors note. "White musicians, played, wrote, and arranged jazz, organized orchestras and tours, made recordings and performed on the radio, often borrowing the most innovative styles and songs of African-Americans for their own, achieving commercial success and popularity." Most black jazz musicians in New York, for example, recorded on "race" records and performed in Harlem for black audiences.

Only during the '30s did this racial segregation give way. But the music and the industry remained white dominated. Parker, like many other players, chafed at the creative restrictions imposed by the swing bands. He and others also resented the money white bandleaders made by "covering" tunes originated by black artists.

Playing alto saxophone (and washing dishes) at Dan Wall's Chili House at Seventh Avenue and 140th Street in December 1939, Parker had a musical epiphany. Working over "Cherokee," a danceable and melodically straightforward tune, he later related, "I

found that by using the higher intervals of a chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes, I could play the thing I'd been hearing. I came alive."

During the next few years, the authors write, Parker, Gillespie, drummer Kenny Clarke, and pianist Thelonious Monk, "individually and collectively, built on that innovation" and created bebop. It was a form of music that demanded extraordinary virtuosity, and so, they believed, could not be "covered."

A union ban on recording (in effect, a strike against record companies) from mid-1942 to 1944 kept the new music underground. In the fall of 1945, Parker and his friends stepped into the WOR studios and put "Ko-Ko," whose jagged melody he constructed over the harmonic structure of "Cherokee," on acetate for the Savoy record label, starting a revolution in jazz that has never really stopped.



Charlie Parker, shown in 1948, led the bebop revolution in jazz.

No Modern Art, Please, We're British

At the end of this century, Britain will open the Bankside Gallery, its first museum dedicated to modern art. George Walden, a Tory member of Parliament, ponders Britain's belated attention to modernism in *Prospect* (July 1996).

One reason for this failure of imagination was that modernism was not a British discovery; those who practiced it, such as the Vorticists, were sneered at as the provincial agents of internationalism. In rejecting modernist art we behaved like the ministry of defense when it declined to adopt the rifled barrels favored by its allies because they were not invented here. The fact that rifled barrels shoot straighter, or that modernism's early phase hit the nerve of the century with impact and precision, was no recommendation to the colonels of convention.

To ministers and civil servants the opening of the new gallery will seem futuristic—a daring innovation “putting Britain at the forefront of contemporary art” (one could draft the opening speeches). A century late, we see ourselves as contemporary—even a touch futuristic. Whatever one's view of Bankside or of modernism, the facts are simple: the new gallery will be dedicated to the art characteristic of the previous century, whose principles were laid down before the first world war by artists of greater brilliance and inventive genius than any living today.

We came late to modern art, as we did to sex; we are still a little over-excited about both.

Policing the Art Trade

“Arresting the Flow of Stolen Art,” by Amy Schwartz, in *Asian Art and Culture* (Winter 1996), Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

The worldwide traffic in stolen and illegally exported art and artifacts has reached an estimated \$2 to 6 billion per year. Efforts to control this flourishing trade, notes Schwartz, a *Washington Post* writer, raise some surprisingly complicated issues. An international accord drafted in Rome last year, requiring documentation of the provenance of all art and artifacts bought and sold on the international market, has run into strong opposition from dealers, auction houses, and many major museums in Europe and the United States.

The accord, drafted under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), would require owners to show documentation of an object's provenance. Owners who exercised “due diligence” in trying to determine that provenance and were required to return the object would be compensated—and the dealer who sold it to them might have to foot the bill. This prospect alarms dealers, who were already disturbed by a U.S. federal court ruling in an unusual 1989 case. The court ordered a

dealer to return four mosaics she had bought from dubious parties in an airport lounge in Switzerland to the Cypriot hierarchs who had sued for them—and she was out \$1.1 million.

Museums and private collectors worry that the accord could lead to the removal of priceless art from their walls. Museums and dealers are already keenly—and unhappily—aware of a stunning precedent: the Metropolitan Museum of Art's reluctant return to Turkey in 1994 of the Lydian Hoard—several hundred sixth-century B.C. silver treasures looted from Anatolia in the 1960s. There were special circumstances involved, Schwartz notes, but even so, “a psychological barrier” fell. For the first time, an “art-source” country had successfully laid claim to objects held in a major museum.

Dealers traditionally have been reluctant to press hard to determine the provenance of their wares. They claim, Schwartz says, that most works of art on the market “have been out of the countries of origin since well before the era when those coun-

tries started passing laws that banned all export of antique objects, and well before the era when documentation was provided or expected." Most artifacts, dealers claim, have little scientific value. (Archaeologists, however, say that is true only if the artifacts are removed from their original sites.)

The United States, virtually alone among art "consumer" nations, ratified a 1970 UNESCO convention, subsequently enacting the 1983 Cultural Property and Implementation Act. It also agreed with

Mexico to ban almost all imports of pre-Columbian artifacts. Even so, the destruction of archaeological sites in Latin America continues, as the trade, according to dealers, simply moved overseas.

Some specialists think the 1995 accord, if ratified by enough key countries, could drive the trade in undocumented objects underground. Schwartz, however, believes that tougher regulation might well prompt both dealers and buyers to behave a little more ethically.

OTHER NATIONS

The Americanization of Mexico

A Survey of Recent Articles

There is a growing division in Mexican society, and it is not along the usual regional, class, or ideological lines, reports Jorge G. Castañeda, a political scientist at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The split, he writes in *Foreign Affairs* (July–Aug. 1996), is between the expanding minority of Mexicans—perhaps one-fifth to one-fourth of the country's 95 million people—who are "plugged into the U.S. economy" and the majority who are not. "It has become the most significant rift in Mexico's society," he believes.

The millions of migrant workers "who toil in the fields, valleys, and sweatshops of California and Florida and the restaurants and flower shops of New York and Chicago" are on the U.S. side of this divide, he notes, and more than 10 million Mexicans live directly off the nearly \$4 billion these workers send home every year. Then there are the Mexican businesspeople, workers, accountants, and lawyers involved in the rapidly growing export sector. The *maquiladoras* (border factories) employ more than 600,000 Mexicans, and the automobile industry more than 500,000. Other export industries—steel, garments, cement, mining, and glass—are thriving, too. The tourism industry employs an additional 600,000 Mexicans. And countless other Mexicans have various other ties to the U.S. economy.

Enough Mexicans are benefiting from American ties, and enough others are hoping, "however unrealistically," to benefit, Castañeda says, to make a second Mexican

revolution (the first occurred in 1910) virtually impossible. These fortunate Mexicans, he believes, are becoming "isolated from much of their country's economic tribulations and relatively complacent about its political travails."

Nora Lustig, author of *Mexico: The Remaking of an Economy* (1993), writing in the *Brookings Review* (Spring 1996), is more sanguine. Since the peso's collapse in December 1994 plunged the country into crisis, the economy has stabilized and even recovered somewhat, she observes. The forecasts for this year are for a modest growth in output of two to three percent. President Ernesto Zedillo "has repeatedly stated, and taken initial steps on, his commitment" to encourage a separation between the government and the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), turn more power over to state and local governments, and strengthen the traditionally weak congress and courts. He appointed a member of the main opposition party as attorney general. Zedillo also has indicated he intends to break with tradition and not handpick his successor. Mexico's congress is discussing political reform.

"I think the emergence of civil society in Mexico has been the driving force" behind the push toward democratization, Peter M. Ward, director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, told journalist Suzanne Billelo.

The 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, which toppled hundreds of buildings and

crushed or buried more than 10,000 people, proved “a watershed for civil society,” Bilello writes in *Current History* (Feb. 1996). The disaster overwhelmed the government. In the aftermath of the quake, many neighborhood associations, environmental and human rights organizations, and “good government” groups sprang up.

The emergence of “ever more independent voices, pressure groups, and grass-roots organizations,” according to Daniel Franklin, Washington bureau chief for the *Economist* (Oct. 28, 1995) is “one of the most significant things happening in Mexico today.” It has received added impetus, he says, from the anger of the majority of Mexicans who are neither the extremely wealthy (“usually white and living behind guarded walls”) nor the extremely poor (“people with next to nothing, mostly rural and Indian”). The Mexicans in the middle, he says, “aspire to the sorts of things middle-class people want everywhere: safe streets, clean air, a decent education for their children, a chance to get ahead.” But they are not well-off, their incomes have fallen in the last 15 years, and they are seething with anger at the government.

“Mexicans are becoming increasingly

intolerant of the abuses of one-party rule,” Franklin writes. “They are insulted by the electoral fraud and indignant about the repeated crises. In particular, they are fed up with the pervasive corruption which they think lies behind much of Mexico’s current mess.”

Recent Mexican presidents, most notably Carlos Salinas (now living in self-exile, under a cloud of suspicion of having been involved in various shady dealings), have been technocrats favoring economic reform without political change. “This will no longer do: the one-party edifice is crumbling at the foundation,” Franklin says.

Mexico is indeed becoming more like the United States, he believes, and, without losing its “Mexicanness,” it must keep on doing so—by proceeding along the path of reform. “In economics, it means keeping faith with the market and, through [the North American Free Trade Agreement], integrating more closely with America. . . . In politics, it means reform leading to full democracy and to a Mexican constitution that begins to work in practice more like the American one it resembles on paper.”

The Ulster Obstacle

“. . . And Ulster Will Be Right,” by Peregrine Worsthorne, in *The National Interest* (Summer 1996), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Whether peace comes to Northern Ireland, many people seem to think, is up to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British government. Not so, argues Worsthorne, a columnist for the *Sunday Telegraph* (London). It is mainly up to Ulster’s Protestants. “IRA terrorism gets all the publicity,” he points out, “which makes it seem as if Southern Irish nationalism is the irresistible force and Ulster nationalism the moveable object.” The reverse, he says, is nearer the truth.

For the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, Worsthorne says, “the thought of being governed by the Republic of Ireland is more than flesh and blood can be expected to bear.” This state of mind is deeply rooted, he says, going back to the royal establishment in 1609 of a self-consciously Protestant settlement in Ulster whose loyalty could be relied upon if the Catholic powers of France and Spain tried to use Ireland to force Britain back into the arms of Rome. Eighty-one years

later, the Catholic powers did try to use Ulster as a base, helping Britain’s deposed Catholic king James II to land an army there—but the Ulster Protestants heroically held his forces at bay for more than 100 days, until the fleet of Britain’s new king, William III, arrived. “Many nationalisms rest on less glorious folk memories than those of Protestant Ulster,” Worsthorne observes.

Unification would suddenly introduce into the Republic of Ireland, which today is “a happy, tranquil society, at ease with itself as it has never been before,” one million “alien and hostile” Ulstermen, Worsthorne points out. “The only result of pacifying the IRA, by giving them a united Ireland, would be to produce an Ulster National Army which would bomb Dublin and Cork instead of—as is the IRA’s way—Belfast, Londonderry, Birmingham, and London,” he argues.

Most Irish have abandoned the cause of a united Ireland, Worsthorne says, and do not

support the outlawed IRA, which is a smaller minority today than it was in 1920 when Ireland (except for Ulster) gained its independence from Britain. "Only the American Irish, far enough away to escape the bloody consequences, feel inclined to carry on banging the drum."

But what of Ulster's half-million Catholics, subjected for decades to discrimination? Worsthorne contends that in the quarter-century since Catholic grievances exploded into violent demonstrations and direct British rule of the province was reimposed, reforms have brought an end to discrimination. The Ulster Catholics now get "a square deal," he says, and are better off economically than they would be as citizens of the Irish Republic.

Yet unification remains the official aim of the Irish government, which, Worsthorne says, "does precious little" to control the IRA terrorists. As long as influential Irish Americans continue to beat

the drum for unification, he believes, there is little chance of any Irish government "daring to sound more muffled."

A Revolution's Victims



Thousands of photographs, including the one above and others published in see (1996, Issue 2:1), have been discovered at a Phnom Penh prison where "enemies of the state" were taken during Pol Pot's reign of terror in Cambodia. In some cases, says Australian writer David Chandler, the prisoners in the photographs had just had their blindfolds removed. "As they stare at their captors, they have no idea where they are, who is taking their picture or what will happen to them. None of them ever were released."

Tears for Liberia

"Madness in Monrovia" by James F. Joyce, in *Commonweal* (June 1, 1996), 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038.

Hailed for more than a century as Africa's only democracy, Liberia now is in the grip of a seemingly interminable civil war. Since 1990, some 150,000 lives have been lost in a land of only 2.5 million. The historical roots of the conflict lie in the country's flawed practice of democracy, argues Joyce, a Jesuit who has worked in the capital of Monrovia and with Liberian refugees in Guinea and Ivory Coast.

Initially settled in 1821 as a colony for

freed and fugitive U.S. slaves—a project carried out by antislavery groups such as the American Colonization Society, with the aid of the U.S. government—Liberia became a republic, with a constitutional, democratic government, in 1847. Ironically, Joyce writes, "a government run by redeemed slaves evolved into a society that repressed its 'second-class citizens,' the indigenous ethnic groups of the interior." These include the Krahn, one of the larger groups; the Kpelle

and Mandingo, found both in Liberia and Guinea; and the Gio, Mano, and Kru, who live on both sides of the border with the Ivory Coast. Although vastly outnumbered, the Americo-Liberians held power. One political party, the True Whig Party, prevailed; others were declared illegal.

In 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel Kenyon Doe, a member of the Krahn, overthrew the government of William Tolbert, Jr., the last Americo-Liberian president. The coup was popular at first, Joyce says, “but Doe’s decade of leadership was marked by mistakes and atrocities.”

Doe’s worst mistake, Joyce contends, was “ethnicizing” the armed forces, replacing the Americo-Liberians who had dominated the upper ranks with Krahn people. “The armed forces . . . behaved more like a faction than a national army,” Joyce says. “Doe divided ethnic groups as never before.” After a failed

coup attempt in 1985, his armed forces slaughtered thousands of ethnic rivals.

The nation descended into chaos. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia—largely composed of indigenous Gio and Mano people, and led by Charles Ghankey Taylor, an Americo-Liberian—was the first group to rise against Doe. It swept through the interior and was poised in 1990 to take Monrovia. But a West African peacekeeping force, composed of troops from Nigeria, Ghana, and four other nations, was then deployed to secure the capital. Despite its presence, a breakaway rebel leader, Prince Yeduo Johnson, and his followers captured Doe and tortured and executed him.

Since then, despite at least seven peace accords, fighting among the eight warring factions has continued. “Many observers,” writes Joyce, “believe that the violence will continue until only one warlord is left standing.”

The End of the Iranian Dream?

“Dateline Tehran: A Revolution Implodes” by Robin Wright, in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1996), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037–1153.

Seventeen years after the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has fallen on hard times. Indeed, argues Wright, author of *In the Name of God: The Khomeini Decade* (1989), “the Islamic regime can no longer hope to survive over the long term under the economic and political system established after the 1979 revolution.”

Iran’s population has almost doubled since the revolution—from 34 million to nearly 65 million. Oil revenues have dropped about two-thirds, driven down by falling prices. The country’s oil industry is badly in need of modernization, Wright says, as is industry in general. While the regime poured billions of petrodollars into the military during the 1980–88 war with Iraq, it left industry to stagnate. Today, up to two-thirds of Iran’s factories run at limited capacity because they lack raw materials, spare parts, and new equipment. Unemployment has climbed to 30 percent, and among those aged 15 to 24, it is twice that.

“Three groups vital to the regime’s survival—the young, the middle class, and the *mostazafin*, the oppressed in whose name the revolution was undertaken—have soured on the revolution,” Wright says. Many *bazaaris*

(merchants), while traditionally religious, are also disenchanted. Taxi drivers in Tehran “often refuse rides to the clergy, and some even run fingers across their throats to show contempt,” Wright observes. The mullahs are the butt of many jokes.

Abdol Karim Soroush, the country’s leading philosopher and an early supporter of the revolution, has argued, Wright says, for “an Islamic democracy not imposed from the top but chosen by the majority of the people, both believers and nonbelievers.” He also contends that the clergy should have no special rights. “Soroush has such a large following that leading Iranian officials now openly attack his ideas in public speeches,” Wright notes.

Iranian president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, elected after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s death in mid-1989, made efforts at economic and other reform during his first four-year term, but has been thwarted since by a conservative Majlis (parliament), led by Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri. He is one of three conservatives seeking to succeed Rafsanjani next year. None of the candidates, Wright adds, are talking about the kinds of changes needed to reverse Iran’s slide.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions
**“Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing
Crime in Our Communities.”**

Free Press, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020. 305 pp. \$25.00

Authors: *George L. Kelling and Catherine M. Coles*

Dialing 911 to summon police in an emergency has come to seem almost as natural as turning on a car’s windshield wipers when it rains. But 911 policing is the product of a failed conception of police work, contend Kelling, a criminologist at Rutgers University, in Newark, New Jersey, and Coles, a lawyer and anthropologist.

That conception has its deepest roots in the professionalization of police work in the early 20th century. No longer were the police adjuncts of political machines; they were “professional crime fighters,” focusing on serious crime. Police work was centralized and organized along Taylorist lines. By midcentury, police had largely abandoned foot patrols for radio-equipped cars that could be centrally dispatched to deal with reported crimes.

After the advent of computers in the 1960s, this rationalization of police work was carried even further with the installation of 911 systems. The management of police departments was completely revamped to focus on the efficient and rapid response to calls. At first, 911 was supposed to be used not just in emergencies but for all crime-related calls—and rapid response was promised. But police in most cities were soon overwhelmed with calls, as people persisted in calling about “minor” neighborhood problems. The public did not accept the idea that police work should be limited to “professional crime fighting.”

Moreover, crime fighting was not much enhanced by the 911 approach. A study of rapid response in Kansas City during the mid-1970s found that it led to an arrest for only three percent of the serious crimes reported. The main reason, Kelling and Coles say: people usually wait 20 to 40 minutes before reporting a crime. (Some go into shock; others are reluctant to turn in a friend or family member; some frightened people want to be sure that the criminal is gone.) Studies of rapid response in four other cities confirmed the Kansas City finding.

Starting in the late 1970s, police departments reacted to these problems by limiting 911 to emergency calls and responding imme-

diately only to the more serious ones. Even so, despite some dramatic exceptions, it appears that the change made little difference.

Police leaders now widely acknowledge the failure of the “reform” strategy, Kelling and Coles say. It “ignored a broadly based demand for the restoration of order, a demand growing louder in the face of increasingly outrageous street behavior by the mentally ill, chronic drug and alcohol abusers, prostitutes, and many youths.” As Kelling and political scientist James Q. Wilson argued in their well-known “broken windows” thesis in the early 1980s, even relatively trivial signs that conditions are out of control, such as graffiti, are disturbing to the law-abiding, and inviting to those bent on crime. This, the authors observe, may explain why, even in places where the incidence of serious crime levels off or declines, people’s fear of crime does not.

The reactive 911 style of policing, the authors say, keeps officers from getting out of their cars and taking time to “connect” with citizens and their neighborhoods. Such “community policing” is essential to creating an ordered environment and preventing crime.

Drawing on the “broken windows” thesis during the 1990s, William Bratton, first as head of the New York transit police and then as police commissioner (until last April), had remarkable success. Felonies in the subways declined 75 percent between 1990 and ‘94; robberies, 64 percent. New Yorkers were less likely to be victims of violent crime in 1995 than at any time since 1970.

Kelling and Coles also describe less dramatic achievements (and some setbacks) in restoring order in public places in San Francisco, Baltimore, and Seattle. Such efforts are frequently challenged in the courts by civil liberties groups or advocates for the homeless—often with success. For example, most courts, to date, have ruled that begging is protected by the First Amendment, even though aggressive panhandling can rapidly undermine a community’s sense of security. Ultimately, the issue will have to be resolved by the Supreme Court.

“Learning to Work: The Case for Reintegrating Job Training and Education.”

Russell Sage Foundation, 112 E. 64th St., New York, N.Y. 10021. 152 pp. \$29.95

Author: W. Norton Grubb

Government job-training programs have a tortuous bureaucratic history. Inaugurated with the Manpower Development Training Act of 1962, they were consolidated in the Comprehensive Training and Employment Act (CETA) of 1973, which was succeeded a decade later by the still extant Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). There also have been various welfare-to-work initiatives, the largest being the 1988 Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program. And there are many other federal job-training programs, for veterans, refugees, and others. In all, by one reckoning, the government spent \$20.4 billion last year on 163 different programs.

Reviewing numerous studies, Grubb, a professor of education at the University of California, Berkeley, concludes that participants in many of these programs have enjoyed

very small gains in employment and earnings—not nearly enough to lift them out of poverty or free them from welfare.

The Job Training Partnership Act, which eliminated public sector jobs, was supposed to be an advance over CETA, which was widely criticized for being ineffective and subject to abuse by local politicians. But a 1994 study of 16 local JTPA programs found that 30 months after leaving the program, adult women were earning an average of \$13,417 a year, only \$1,176 more than those in a control group, while adult men were earning \$19,474, only \$978 more. Young people fared even worse.

Grubb finds such results, after three decades of experimentation, “very discouraging.” He urges that job training be integrated into broader educational programs, at community colleges and elsewhere.

“From Massacres to Genocide: The Media, Public Policy, and Humanitarian Crises.”

Brookings Institution, 1755 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-2188; World Peace Foundation, One Eliot Square, Cambridge, Mass. 02138-4952. 203 pp. \$26.95

Editors: Robert I. Rotberg and Thomas G. Weiss

The world was riveted during the 1990s by the dreadful spectacle of starvation in Somalia and then mass slaughter in Rwanda. Yet, strangely, there was little interest in the terrible suffering nearby, in Sudan. There, years of civil war, drought, and famine had taken an awful toll. As 1994 began, some 1.5 million people were at risk of starvation, four million had been forced to flee their homes, and nearly 400,000 refugees had left the country. But the fickle news media barely noticed.

Why not? asks Steven Livingston, a professor of political communication and international affairs at George Washington University and one of 11 contributors to this book. The long-simmering crisis in Sudan was, logistically, much harder for journalists to cover, he argues, and the story did not lend itself to the neat packaging possible in Somalia (“the first totally ‘failed’ state”), or Rwanda (genocidal slaughter).

However, the U.S. government’s provision of strictly humanitarian aid is usually not much influenced by the so-called CNN factor, contends Andrew Natsios, a former U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) official. It is

when the response to disaster fails and people start dying en masse that the news media, particularly TV with its appetite for graphic images, may show up. The CNN factor may then come into play. AID launched a large-scale relief effort in Somalia in January 1992—six months before the media focused on the crisis, and almost a year before President George Bush sent 28,000 U.S. soldiers there.

Natsios and other contributors favor a more aggressive U.S. response to misfortunes overseas. The news media, they believe, cannot be relied on to cover humanitarian crises consistently, fully, and accurately, or to evoke an effective response from the United States and other nations. Rotberg, of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, and Weiss, of Brown University’s Watson Institute for International Studies, say that kind of response will reliably happen only if the U.S. national interest is redefined: “We should accept the premise that the political values, moral stature, and domestic tranquillity of the United States are genuinely threatened by instability and strife wherever in the world they occur.”

THE WILSON QUARTERLY

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perity engendered by the marriage of law and work. But prosperity never made the Hong Kong Chinese love the English. Despite the horrors of the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the Tiananmen Square massacre, the Hong Kong Chinese are still managing to feel many things at once: delight at the departure of the English and resignation (mingled with dread and pride) at the prospect of reunification with China.

Thurston concludes that only with Deng Xiaoping's death will "major political reform and peaceful reunification" take place. But the equation of Deng's passing with that of Chiang's son is faulty. Even if issues magically simplify for the Beijing leadership once Deng is gone, there is no reason to believe that such an epiphany will be contagious across the straits. In fact, one could even postulate that only at that time will Taiwanese independence be genuinely considered.

Peter Rupert Lighte

*Managing Director, The Chase Manhattan Bank
Hong Kong*

No Web in Sight

I don't disagree with the point you make in "News from Nowhere" ["Findings," *WQ*, Summer '96]. You should know, however, that Biloxi is not on the World Wide Web.

I don't know about Boise or Bangor, but when I was in Mississippi in May of this year, neither CompuServe nor America Online had a local access number on the Gulf Coast. The nearest number was in Jackson, which is several hundred miles and a toll call from Biloxi.

Maybe someday the Web will reach everywhere, but not yet.

Michael Wogan

West Collingswood, N.J.

More on Fatherhood

Were we living in a sane society, David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's fine essays ["The Vanishing Father," *WQ*, Spring '96] would require no comment. Indeed, their most arresting feature lies in their being a statement of the obvious presented with an intelligence that engages the reader's attention. Thus, it might well be taken as the measure of the mounting insanity of our times that the obvious requires response, if only in the form of resounding assent.

Yes, notwithstanding widespread dissent,

children do fare infinitely better with a resident (preferably biological) father than without one. Here, tradition, common sense, and the mounting tide of evidence that documents the distress of fatherless children concur. Under normal conditions, the burden of proof would lie with those who would contest the importance of fathers to children's development, prosperity, and happiness. And it would appear no less obvious that for men to be fathers, women must be willing to be mothers.

In fact, most women do delight in being mothers and do prefer to do so in cooperation with their children's father. But the importance of mothers and fathers presupposes the unique importance of heterosexual marriage. And that offends the sensibilities of feminists and other proponents of single motherhood, same-sex marriage, and other "nontraditional"—allegedly "nonpatriarchal," "nonoppressive"—families.

Fatherhood and motherhood require something more than choosing to have a child. They require self-discipline, continuing respect for another adult, the ability to honor promises and binding obligations, in a word, a measure of sacrifice. Societies that view future generations as their own highest realization have always understood as much and have accordingly honored heterosexual marriage and responsible fatherhood and motherhood as sacred norms. Today we are learning, to our children's incalculable cost, that societies that regard self-realization and an illusory personal liberation as their highest realization demonize fatherhood and motherhood as illegitimate fetters on individual happiness and fulfillment.

The figures of myth and literature, from Narcissus to Dorian Gray, abound with reminders of the likely outcome of such a project. But the ultimate irony remains that in sacrificing children to men and women's liberation from fatherhood and motherhood, the principal casualty may yet be men and women themselves.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

Atlanta, Ga.

Correction

In "Posterred and Mugged" ["At Issue," *WQ*, Summer '96], our author reported that the Library of Congress "has begun to lease portions of its collections to commercial vendors, who will digitize and package the materials and make them available to distant publics—for a price." The Library informs us that this is incorrect. We regret the error.

Credits: Cover, composite of three images. The background is a 19th-century lithograph created for the cover of a collection of sheet music. The foreground image is a colorized version of a Chris Carroll photograph. Mr. Carroll operates a web site at www.trend1.com/~ccarroll. The other two figures are from a photograph by James and Daniel Wojcik that appears in *Punk and Neo-Tribal Body Art* (1995). Daniel Wojcik is also the author of the forthcoming *The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (N.Y.U. Press). Page 8, AP/Wide World Photos; p. 13, Susan Merritt, American, 1826–1879, *Picnic Scene*, watercolor and collage on paper, c. 1853, 66x91.4 cm, gift of Elizabeth R. Vaughan, 1950.1846, Photograph © 1996, The Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved; pp. 14–15, Courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; p. 17, *The Sargent Family*, Anonymous, c. 1800, Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, © 1996 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington; p. 18, from Thomas E. Hill, *Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms: A Guide to Correct Writing* (1884); p. 21, Reproduced from the collections of the Library of Congress; p. 22, *Church Supper* (1935) by Paul Sample, oil on canvas, 40x48 in, Courtesy of the James Philip Gray Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA; p. 25, Copyright © 1996 Hiroji Kubota, Magnum Photos Inc.; p. 27, UPI/Corbis-Bettmann; p. 36, Descartes as Faust. Frontispiece to Descartes, *Opuscula Posthuma* (Amsterdam, 1701), from Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (1995); p. 39, La Flèche. 17th-century engraving by Pierre Aveline, from Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (1995); pp. 42, 44, 46, The Bettmann Archive; p. 47, *Going to Market* (1985) by Dede Eri Supria, Photograph courtesy of Astri Wright; p. 49, AFP Photo; p. 51, *Wayang Puppet* by Sagio, Courtesy of the Collection of the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology; p. 55, AFP Photo/John MacDougall; p. 57, Copyright © 1989 Abbas, Magnum Photos, Inc.; p. 60, Copyright © 1994 Stuart Franklin, Magnum Photos, Inc.; p. 63, Courtesy of Astri Wright; p. 64, Copyright © 1996 Fred Mayer, Magnum Photos, Inc.; p. 65, *George Washington*, portrait by Gilbert Stuart, Courtesy of The New York Public Library; p. 69, From George Washington Papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, The New York Public Library; p. 73, AP/Wide World Photos; p. 75, Courtesy of Alex Gibney; p. 79, Courtesy of The National Archives; pp. 81, 85, Courtesy of The Mark Twain House, 351 Farmington Ave., Hartford, CT 06105; p. 87, *Adam and Eve* (1504) by Albrecht Dürer, Giraudon/Art Resource, NY; p. 93, Sovfoto; p. 95, Drawing by Mark F. Maglio, Reprinted by permission of the artist; p. 97, Archive Photos; p. 98, Reuters/Corbis-Bettmann; p. 102, Scala/Art Resource, NY; p. 113, "If This Thing Grows Much Bigger I May Have to Drop It" (1924) by John C. Conacher, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; p. 117, AP Photo/U.S. Navy, Wayne W. Edwards; p. 124, UPI/Corbis-Bettmann; p. 128, Copyright © Paul Kolsti, Courtesy of Pen Tip International®; p. 131, Copyright © Leonard; p. 135, Courtesy of David Chandler, Professor of History, Monash University, Australia.

FROM THE CENTER

In our national preoccupation with the outcome of the impending presidential election, our attention has been diverted from a scarcely less significant electoral result that is already known—and has been for months. Nearly half of the senators whose terms expire with the 104th Congress—14 of 33—have declined to run for re-election. Although the 14 are not divided equally between Republicans and Democrats, enough of both are included to justify characterizing this as a truly bipartisan movement.

The reasons given by the senators for declining to run seem perfectly persuasive. Bob Dole's justification is obvious. I also believe that Mark Hatfield is genuinely eager to return to teaching at Willamette University and to his beloved Pacific Northwest, that Nancy Kassebaum wishes to spend more time with her children and grandchildren, and that Claiborne Pell's health problems are real. Nor do I have any reason to doubt the explanations given by the other legislators.

Nevertheless, the sheer number of departures, many of them by senators who were virtually assured of re-election, makes it impossible to believe that what we are seeing is simply the coincidence of an unusually large number of purely individual and unrelated decisions.

Although they differ in party affiliation and other attributes, most of the 14 share two characteristics that clearly are not unrelated. They are, by and large, centrists, and they have been, by and large, extraordinarily effective members of the Senate. Their number includes many of the most respected chairs and ranking minority members of the important committees and subcommittees. Beyond that, and often beyond the reach of even the seemingly omnipresent media, they have contributed far beyond their numbers (only 14 percent of the Senate, after all) both to the level of discourse in the Senate and to the often complex and arcane process by which it conducts its business.

To say that I personally will miss the presence of many of these senators is of little interest to anyone but me. To say that the

Senate, the government, and the nation will miss them is quite a different matter. And to listen to the explanations of those who speak of their decisions in institutional as well as personal terms is to understand the reason why. All of them dwell upon changes in what was once proud to call itself the world's greatest deliberative body: changes in the quality of debate that diminish the power of argument to influence votes; changes in the willingness of colleagues to seek accommodation and compromise to achieve desirable results that fall short of fulfilling all their wishes; changes in the feeling of comity and collegueship that bridged even wide ideological chasms; changes in the sheer amount of time that senators spend together, formally and informally, in what was once called the world's most exclusive club. It should, in sum, not be surprising that so many able and decent members should have decided simultaneously to bid farewell to an institution that they perceive to have grown at once less civil and less effective.

Even if the voters should be clever or lucky enough to replace each of these senators with a person of equal ability and character, the institution itself will nevertheless be changed and impoverished. The new members will be precisely that: freshmen lacking the indispensable attributes of seniority and mastery of the complex and often baffling ways of the institution. While there is much to be said for an infusion of new blood, the loss of the wisdom, expertise, and decency of such veteran chairmen as (to remain bipartisan) Mark Hatfield and Sam Nunn is something that one cannot contemplate with equanimity.

It will be instructive to watch the new Senate next January, regardless of which party is in the majority, but meanwhile I can only hope that many of the 14 retirees will continue their distinguished careers of public service in other ways, perhaps even in some cases by once again seeking elective office.

Charles Blitzer
Director



The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas

Bruce G. Trigger and
Wilcomb E. Washburn, Editors

This book provides the first comprehensive history of the Native Peoples of North America from their arrival in the Western Hemisphere to the present. It describes how Native Peoples have dealt with the environmental diversity of North America and have responded to the different European colonial regimes and national governments that have established themselves in recent centuries. It also provides a comparison not found in other histories of how Native Peoples have fared in Canada and the United States.

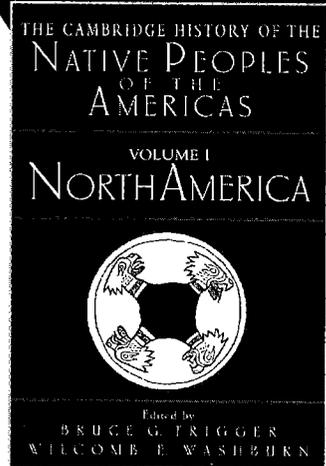
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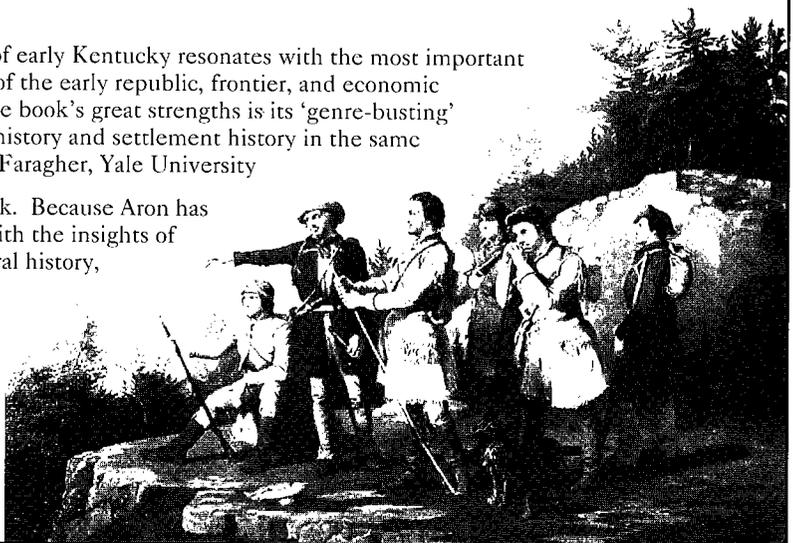
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The American Dream?

Color Conscious

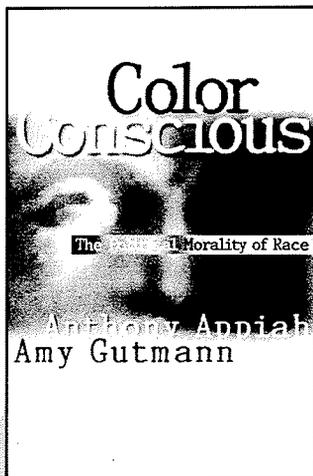
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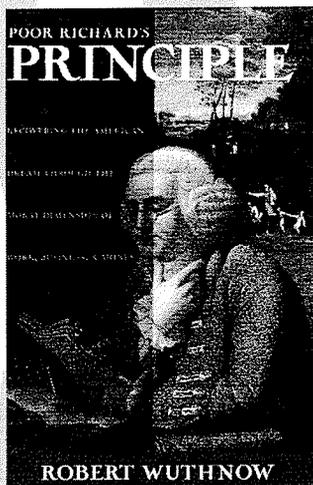
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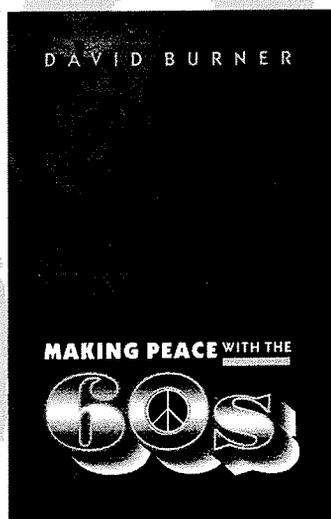


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