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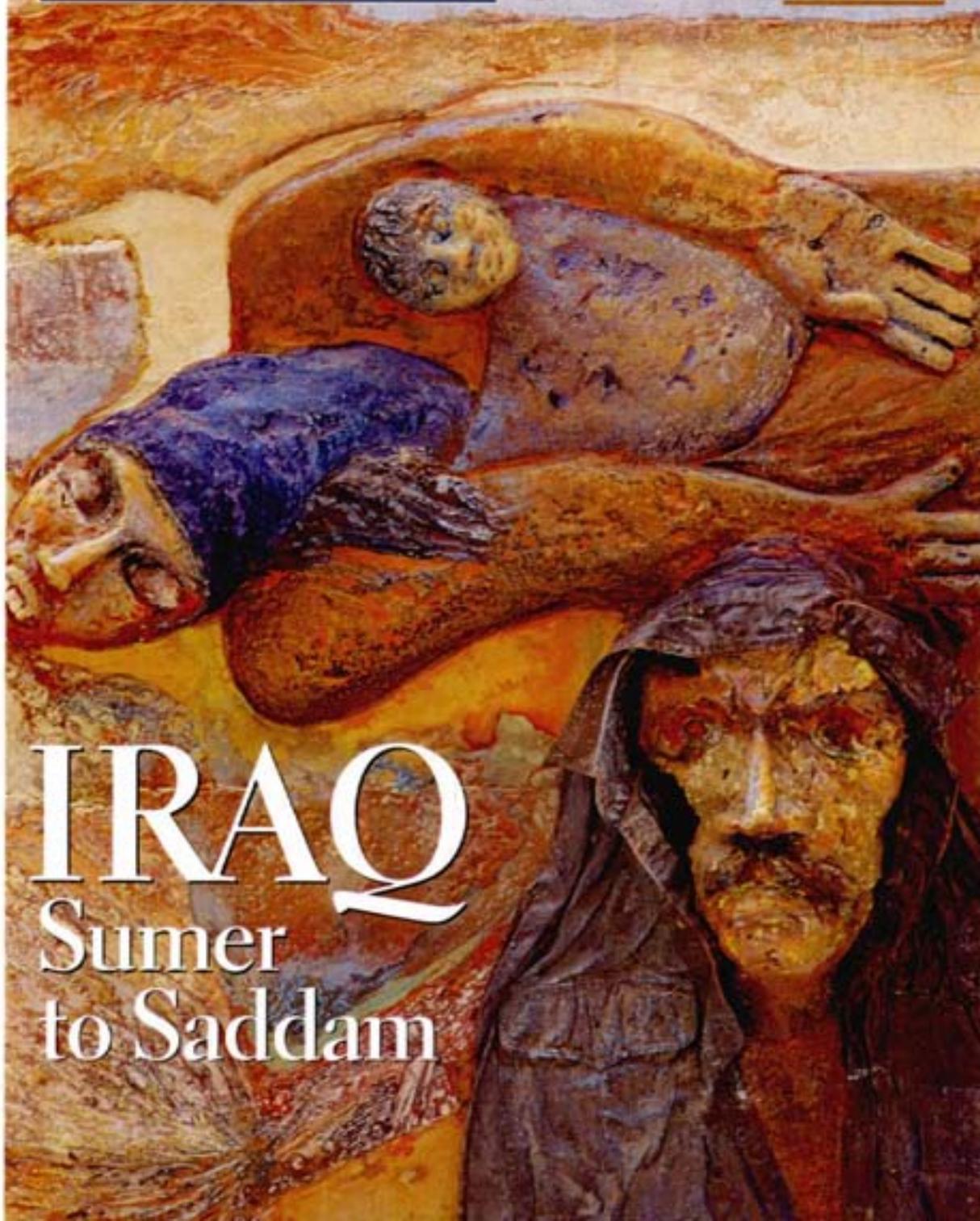
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## Editor's Comment

**Y**ou wouldn't have known it from reading the daily press and opinion magazines this past winter, but Iraq has a history. It was dismaying to watch as Americans debated every nuance of the pro- and antiwar positions almost entirely without troubling to consult history, except occasionally to document what all agreed were the evils of Saddam Hussein's regime.

There were passing references to Saddam's invocation of the Mongol invader Hulagu and other figures from the distant past, but about the substance of that past and what it might mean to the Iraqi people we heard virtually nothing. What of the Baghdad caliphate that once ruled the entire Muslim world, or the long years of Ottoman domination? Even though Britain, America's strongest ally in the drive to disarm Saddam, was essentially the creator of modern Iraq and had served as its colonial ruler after World War I, scarcely a word was said about that experience or its relevance. And what were we to make of those casual news media asides that Iraq has—or had before Saddam—the largest and most sophisticated middle class in the Arab world? How was the Iraqi middle class made? What distinguished Iraq from other Arab countries?

In this issue, we venture some answers to these and other questions. As we go to press, coalition forces are approaching Baghdad. Our essays speak of Saddam's regime in the past tense, reflecting our profound hope that events will make the words true before they appear in print. In any event, Americans will be involved in an effort to remake a post-Saddam Iraq—and perhaps the region as a whole—along more liberal, democratic lines. It's well past time we began to understand this place whose future has become so intertwined with our own.

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## Gene Testing

I would disagree with Carl Elliott's implication in "Adventures in the Gene Pool" [WQ, Winter '03] that the genetic test offered by my company would contribute somehow to racial disharmony. After learning results from our test, many racists might need to rethink their positions. Rather than giving a "scientific imprimatur to race-based discrimination," tests such as ours show that most of us reside along a continuum of ancestry and do not easily fit into fixed racial groups. Scandinavians and Russians often show a small amount of East Asian admixture (through contributions from the Lapps), and most African Americans harbor detectable Indo-European ancestry. Is it accurate to call someone "black," as our census and admissions forms invite, simply because that person is of partly African ancestry? If so, what is the percentage cutoff and who gets to decide?

The argument that admixture can be quantified in populations but not individuals is neither accurate nor logical. As anyone with experience in population genetics knows, there are very strong connections between measures in individuals and populations. Not only is it possible to determine biogeographical ancestry admixture ratios within individuals, but this measurement constitutes the core of a very powerful and effective method that geneticists use to discover genes linked to disease.

Politically, as Elliott suggests, there is definitely an undercurrent against tests such as ours. This is often the case for technological advancements, however, as we are rightly fearful of our own power and skeptical of our ability to learn without destroying that from which we learn. Many of the geneticists Elliott refers to as skeptical of our test in fact deny the biological basis for race—which flies in the face of common sense we derive from our own two eyes. Many other geneticists feel, however, that the search for the truth, whatever it may be, distinguishes science from politics. Our test is

based on good, validated, and theoretically sound science. Rather than denying that a heritable basis for race exists, or suggesting that it cannot be measured, perhaps we should just recognize, celebrate, and cherish our diversity and complexity as a species.

Tony Frudakis  
CEO, DNAPrint Genomics, Inc.  
Sarasota, Fla.

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## Allies à la Carte

"Transatlantic relations," surmises Samuel F. Wells, Jr. ["Transatlantic Ills," WQ, Winter '03], "will be improved only by the most judicious mix of pragmatism and patience." Alas, it isn't so—not after the transformation of the international system from bipolarity to unipolarity in the past decade. In 1991, the Soviet Union committed suicide by self-dissolution, and, after the 9/11 attacks a decade later, the United States demonstrated not only a surfeit of military power but also a capacity for self-sufficient action the world has never before seen.

Hence, the current crisis is not one of diplomatic adaptation but of structural transformation. In Europe, the defining change is the liberation from strategic dependence on the United States. On the other side of the Atlantic, it is the unprecedented concentration of military (plus economic and cultural) power in the hands of a single state. Here is a telling illustration: When George W. Bush asked for a supplemental defense appropriation in early 2002, the sum of \$48 billion represented twice the annual defense expenditure of Germany or Italy. If the buildup proceeds as projected, the United States will spend in 2006 *as much as all the rest of the world combined*.

The rise of U.S. power has had great consequences. They are nicely expressed by the Rumsfeld Doctrine, according to which the mission determines the coalition, not the other way round. In other words, the United States will pick its allies à la carte, and thus the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as we have



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known it, is dead. The Europeans have responded—ever so subtly—by beginning to balance against Mr. Big. Shorn of its lofty verbiage, Europe's insistence on the sanctity of the ABM Treaty (constraining America's offensive options by limiting its defensive ones) or on adherence to the International Criminal Court (circumscribing America's freedom to intervene abroad) are clearly instances of implicit balancing against Number One. Europe's opposition to the Iraq war, particularly its demand for United Nations legitimation, was at heart a quest for a veto over U.S. military action.

The name of the new game is counter-hegemonialism, for the international system abhors imbalances of power. "Pragmatism and patience" might limit the fallout, but they cannot undo the raw realities of unipolarity. Still, there is an upside to this tale of bipolarity lost. The Europeans will not organize formal alliances against Mr. Big because this new Behe-moth, unlike the Hapsburgs and Hitlers, is not out to ravage and conquer. But within the bounds of manifold interdependence, the Europeans (and America's other rivals) will do their subtlest best to countervail America's clout in the 21st century—until the balance is restored or a common strategic threat arises again.

*Josef Joffe*  
*Editor, Die Zeit*  
*Hamburg, Germany*

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## *Church and State*

Hugh Heclo ["The Wall That Never Was," *WQ*, Winter '03] is certainly correct that religion in the earlier periods of the Republic was considered a proper adornment of "the public square." Americans, in fact, for all their boastings about church-state separation, managed to generate a powerful, albeit nonconstitutional, religious establishment. A large number of European visitors commented on this unusual situation, and many even admired it. A team of British Congregationalists in the 1830s, for example, mar-

*Continued on page 7*

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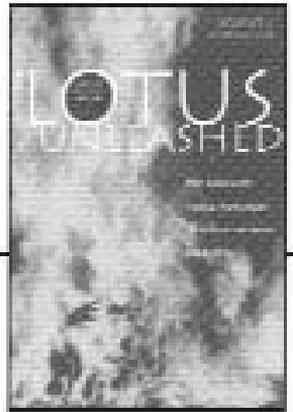
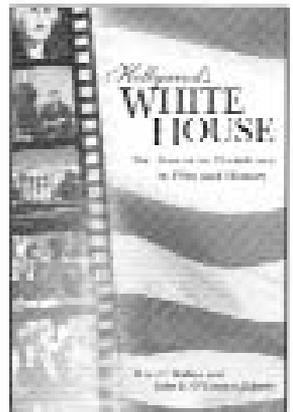
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Woodrow Wilson believed that bold thinking was essential to effective policy, that new problems demanded new approaches, and that no challenge was beyond the reach of solution. Every day at the Wilson Center, I see those beliefs applied. The Center does not pursue an ideological agenda; our mission is to understand the world, not to create "spin." To our resident scholars, we offer an opportunity to expand their knowledge and teaching skills. To the broader community, we offer a forum where people from all walks of life can engage one another in a spirit of intellectual freedom. Through all its research, conferences, meetings, and media outreach, the Center works toward a resolution of differences and an advancement of the public dialogue.

Consider just a handful of the Center's many recent activities. At a Conflict Prevention Project session weeks before the outbreak of war in Iraq, U.S. military officials and civilian relief organizations prepared to coordinate their efforts to get food, water, and medicine to the Iraqi people. On February 25, the Center's West European Studies program gathered a group of German government officials and business leaders to meet with their American counterparts to assess the tattered state of the German-American relationship—and to consider how the historic friendship between the two countries can be sustained through and beyond the current differences over Iraq.

Speakers in our Director's Forum series, which brings prominent figures to the Center, have included former president Bill Clinton, former

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and the foreign and defense ministers of Bulgaria. In March, before an audience that included African diplomats, scientists, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations, Gordon Conway, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, outlined a vision for a new Green Revolution to fight hunger in Africa. This "doubly Green" revolution must learn, he argued, from the errors of the first Green Revolution, in the 1960s, even as it uses biotechnology and other resources to surpass the successes of that earlier effort. "For every one of us," Conway declared, "the changed understanding of our place in the world—our inescapable interdependence and mutual vulnerability—makes the problem of world hunger more urgent."

African development is a specific focus of two

Center efforts, the Africa Project and the Environmental Change and Security Project. The marriage of science and policy more generally is a concern of the Center's Foresight and Governance Project, which recently convened a seminar on the rapidly maturing science of nanotechnology. "Nanotechnology is often seen as science fiction," said project director David Rejeski, "a perception that could leave both the policymaker and the public unprepared to take advantage of the opportunities these technologies will offer." At the March seminar, corporate executives, scientists, and policymakers surveyed applications of nanotechnology—in antiterrorism, computers, even clothing—that are already changing not just the way we do business but the way we live, and they looked ahead to the profound changes yet to come.

Our redesigned website, [www.wilsoncenter.org](http://www.wilsoncenter.org), includes a wealth of detail about these and other events at the Center, and about the people who are the Center's lifeblood. As an institution, we remain committed to dialogue that engages the public, challenges the scholar, and aids the policymaker. I am confident that the energy and resolve that have made the Center an intellectual haven in our capital city will serve us well through these trying times.

*Lee H. Hamilton*  
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## Islam in a Globalizing World

THOMAS W. SIMONS, JR.

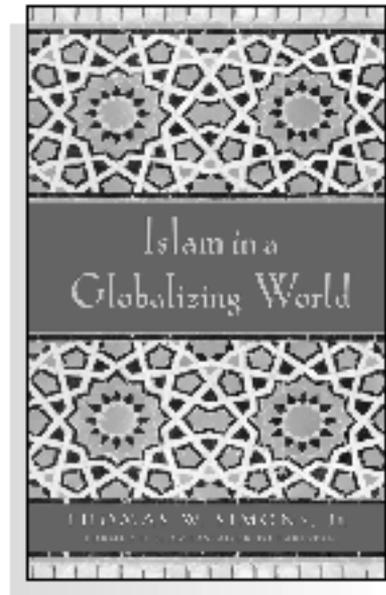
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—Richard W. Murphy, Senior Fellow in Middle East Studies,  
Council on Foreign Relations; former U.S. Ambassador to  
Mauritania, Syria, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia; former  
Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs

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veled that although the United States had “no law for the regulation or observance of the Sabbath . . . public sentiment secures its sanctification better with them than with us.”

I think, however, that Hecló’s astute analysis tends to understate the importance of at least two elements in the later history of our non-established establishment. One of these is the degree to which the “secularization” of the 1870–1950 era was what might better be called (were it not such a mouthful) an attempted “de-Protestantization.” The new scientific intellectualism and the fairly new facts of American demographics joined forces not so much against “religion” as against the extraordinary and persisting dominance of a Protestant establishment in American society and culture. Religion’s partial retreat from the public square, the phenomenon that most interests and puzzles Hecló, is better understood

if we see it as a retreat on the part of the only ones who had been there in the first place.

But can one make any generalizations at all about an alleged “decline of religion” after 1870? Whether we’re speaking of secularization (and I do think there’s a place for that term) or of a partly effective protest against Protestant hegemony, we need to distinguish between what was happening among admittedly powerful, important elites on one hand and a larger public on the other. Among the latter, despite the secularizing influences conveyed through their schools and newspapers, church and synagogue membership rose from about 15 percent to more than 35 percent over the course of the 19th century. In the first six decades of the 20th century it continued this upward course, to over 60 percent.

Even allowing for the probability that a good many 19th-century folks attended churches without joining them, and for the sad reality that religious professions and attach-

## Correspondence

ments are frequently about as genuine as a three-dollar bill, we still need to be wary of some elements of conventional wisdom that Hecló appears to buy into. He seems to rely, for example, on the common but historically dubious idea that American society in the heyday of the Protestant establishment was somehow more “coherent,” religiously and morally, than it was to become in the course of the 20th century. (Can you say “slavery”? Can you say “temperance”?) Is it really true, or in any way demonstrable, that Americans of the Jacksonian period did not pick and choose, as they’re said to do now, when it came to churches, moral imperatives, and grossly conflicting Scriptural interpretations?

Carrying this a bit further, I wish we could set aside the presumption—one voiced several times in the Hecló article—that the championing of a “neutral” public-policy stance amid differing forms of faith is somehow an indication that the actor or mediator lacks all conviction, and that he or she expects others to shed their convictions. To be sure, “neutrality” can be another word for indifference or nihilism. Far more often, however, an operational neutrality signifies just the opposite. It is part and parcel of a determination that strong and specific convictions of nearly all kinds—one’s own convictions definitely included—are to be recognized, valued and, yes, brought to bear in the resolving of public-policy issues.

*William Hutchison  
Harvard Divinity School  
Cambridge, Mass.*

Hugh Hecló indulges in a bit of ax grinding. How can he suggest that the Founders intended the Constitution to “be essentially silent on matters of religion and God,” when the very last substantive provision of the Constitution proper reads, “[N]o religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States,” not to mention the more famous establishment clause of the First Amendment? Maybe he has forgotten Benjamin Franklin’s eloquent argument for daily prayers in the Constitutional Convention, noting that such invocations were standard during the Revolution. His motion was not voted down, but neither was it

passed. The Founders knew what they were doing when they simply allowed it to die. They seem, moreover, to have done a pretty good job of writing our charter even though they had to forgo the services of a paid preacher.

*Dudley Duncan  
Santa Barbara, Calif.*

Hugh Hecló assumes that the Founders operated out of a Christian consensus and overlooks the religious pluralism and division of the early Republic. In 1787, religion divided rather than united Americans. The fastest-growing sects—Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists—protested government-supported establishments that favored Congregationalists in New England and Episcopalians in the South. To them, history was filled with unholy alliances when, in the words of Baptist minister Isaac Backus, “church and state were confounded together.”

To James Madison, America’s many competing religious sects were special-interest groups, each insisting that it represented “true” Christianity. What these sectarians shared, as Hecló points out, was the insistence on free exercise. The solution, in Madison’s eyes, was a competitive marketplace of ideas where persuasion, not coercion, prevailed. It was in that public arena, free from government control, that people of faith could attempt to shape society’s moral values and responsibilities. Several years after ratification, Madison declared “the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States” to be the surest guarantee of “the sacred principle of religious liberty.”

America’s religious marketplace continues to flourish. Evangelicals, in particular, take full advantage of communication technology, especially cable television and the Internet, to broadcast political as well as theological messages. For Hecló, that is not enough; he wants “traditional” religion to have more influence. It is unclear if he is lamenting the failure of “serious religious faith” to prevail in the marketplace of ideas or advocating control of that marketplace to ensure a desired outcome.

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# Findings

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## Death Knells

April may not be the cruelest month, but it's up there. American suicide rates peak in spring and summer, according to figures assembled by psychologist John McIntosh of Indiana University South Bend, then decline the rest of the year. Notwithstanding the hullabaloo about seasonal affective disorder, the month with the shortest, darkest days actually records the fewest American suicides. The biggest month-to-month jump generally occurs from December to January, and the biggest such spike in recent years came as 2000 dawned—millennial letdown.

Suicide—which kills 75 percent more Americans each year than homicide—may be driven in part by cranial chemistry. According to *Scientific American* (Jan. 13, 2003), the brains of suicide victims evince, on average, more of the brain stem enzyme that synthesizes serotonin, more of the receptors that feed off it, and fewer of the transporters that reabsorb it—together, marks of serotonin starvation. Serotonin receptors also show up in the bloodstream, raising the possibility of a blood test to gauge suicide risk. A genetic test may someday be possible, too. Signaling the influence of genes, one suicide leads to another in 13 percent of identical twins, but in only 0.7 percent of fraternal twins.

Severe depression is a long-familiar augury of premature death. But severe cheeriness? In a study summarized in the *British Medical Journal* (Oct. 5, 2002), researchers assembled data on 1,216 men and women who were first examined as children in 1922. Those described by parents and teachers as particularly cheerful children tended to die earlier. As adults, they were more likely to smoke, drink, and engage in risky hobbies, and less likely to take care of their health. But these behav-

iors account for only part of the disparity; the rest remains a mystery. Happy-go-not-so-lucky.

Correlation, of course, isn't causation—a truism well illustrated by Michael Fitzpatrick, the author of *The Tyranny of Health: Doctors and the Regulation of Lifestyle* (2000), writing in the electronic journal *Spiked* ([www.spiked-online.com](http://www.spiked-online.com)): “The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The French eat a lot of fat and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

“The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

“Conclusion: Eat and drink what you like. What kills you is speaking English.”

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## Pathological Fans

Do Beatlemania and its endless successors belong in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*?



## Findings

According to a series of studies cowritten by James Houran, an instructor of clinical psychiatry at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, people who are gaga over celebrities tend to display depression, neuroticism, anxiety, obsessiveness, and, in the most advanced stages, psychoticism and dissociation. About a quarter of the population qualifies as “celebrity worshipers,” mostly of the moderate variety. Men and women are equally at risk, though men more often follow sports stars. Older people tend to be immune, as do the better educated and those with “higher cognitive functioning.” Highly religious people—who, one might suppose, have more pressing worship obligations—prove only slightly less susceptible to J.Lo.

“Additional study of these issues,” the authors conclude in a forthcoming *Journal of Psychology* article, “might reveal a set of diagnostic criteria for the celebrity worshiper that can help guide the development of effective therapeutic strategies for use in clinical contexts.” Meanwhile, maybe it’s time for *People* to join *Penthouse* behind the counter.

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## The College Game

The Maine-based software company Digitalmill has unveiled Virtual University, a simulation that promises “the unique opportunity to step into the decision-making shoes of a university president.” Though it may not knock *Doom* or *The Sims* off the software bestseller lists, Virtual University and similar games can be adapted to imitate other complex organizations, from hospitals to national parks. As a result, administrators can “let technologies fail virtually and see what happens,” David Rejeski, the director of the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Foresight and Governance Project, told a Center workshop in February. Software engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are already working on a computer simulation for health care professionals called Biohazard.

Video game training is nothing new for soldiers. Game manufacturer Semi Logic Entertainments has created, exclusively for the military, Joint Force Employment, which offers “10 realistic scenarios” for joint task

force operations. Robert Prenskey, founder of the website *games2train.com*, reports that marines are authorized to spend duty hours playing certain commercially available games, including *Tigers on the Prowl*, a tactical simulation of ground warfare during World War II. Kids’ games have made the transition before: Flight simulators, now a staple of pilot training, got their start in amusement parks in the 1930s.

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## Small Worlds

Having boxed, acted, run for New York City mayor, and stabbed his wife, Norman Mailer thinks his fellow novelists ought to get out more. “For every good novel about a trade union that has been written from the inside, we have 10,000 better novels to read about authors and the social activities of their friends,” he observes in *The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing* (Random House).

“Writers tend to live with writers just as automotive engineers congregate in the same country clubs of the same suburbs around Detroit. But even as we pay for the social insularity of Detroit engineers by having to look at the repetitive hump of their design . . . so literature suffers from its own endemic hollow: We are overfamiliar with the sensitivity of the sensitive and relatively ignorant of the cunning of the strong and the stupid, one—it may be fatal—step removed from good and intimate perception of the inside procedures of the corporate, financial, governmental, Mafia, and working-class establishments.”

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## Luce Regard

The plunging fortunes of AOL Time Warner—it lately announced a record-setting loss of \$98.7 billion for 2002—bring to mind the last will of Time Inc. founder Henry R. Luce (1898–1967). Since Luce’s death, the company has merged with Warner Communications, Turner Broadcasting Systems, and America Online, bringing into his news empire movies, television, the Internet, and much else.

Which is not exactly what Luce had in mind. “Time Incorporated,” he wrote in

his will, “is now, and is expected to continue to be, principally a journalistic enterprise and, as such, an enterprise operated in the public interest as well as in the interest of its stockholders.”

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## Leery Laureate

Some 350 years after Great Britain created the office of poet laureate, the United States may be approaching “laureate saturation,” U.S. poet laureate Billy Collins tells *Poets & Writers* magazine (Mar.–Apr. 2003). These days, 35 states, a few cities, and even the Borough of Brooklyn boast laureates, some of whom achieve notoriety through such modes as antisemitic verse (New Jersey’s Amiri Baraka) and antifactual CVs (California’s Quincy Troupe).

Collins finds himself questioning the whole enterprise. While noting that “poetry is easier to understand if you have a head of poetry, just like a country needs a leader,” he spies something else at work behind the efflorescence. “Laureateship is part of our fascination with things British, like the Burberry trench coat,” he says. “It’s our pathetic, sad, postrevolutionary missing of all things British.”

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## Time’s Arrow

Like much else in the 19th century, time was a matter of local option. “When it was noon in Chicago it was 11:27 in Omaha, 11:50 in St. Louis, 12:09 in Louisville, and 12:31 in Pittsburgh,” Jack Beatty writes in “The Track to Modernity” on *The Atlantic Monthly’s* website ([www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)). A U.S. Senate report in 1882 declared that “it would appear to be as difficult to alter by edict the ideas and habits of the people in regard to local time as it would be to introduce among them novel systems of weights,” but, rushing in where the Senate feared to tread, the railroads announced a system of time zones to be implemented on November 18, 1883.

The impending standardization, Beatty recounts, provoked considerable anxiety. *The New York Times* reported that jewelers—the

era’s keepers of time—“were busy answering questions from the curious,” who feared that the time change would bring “some sort of disaster, the nature of which could not be exactly ascertained.” That calamity, like Y2K a century later, never came, and, even as the rest of American life grew more complex, time became simpler.

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## Panacea?

The website Medscape General Medicine ([www.medscape.com](http://www.medscape.com)) reports on what may be the world’s most venerable prescription. Dating back to A.D. 60, it won the endorsement of Dioscorides under Nero, Aretaeus of Cappadocia, and Moses Maimonides. “It has been used to treat facial pain, asthma, neurologic disorders, upper respiratory tract infections, urinary tract infections, and gastrointestinal disorders,” writes Robert Kennedy, a Medscape editor. Contraindications are few—“a hypercholesterolemic effect when ingested well beyond moderation, as well as cases of obstructive or choking difficulties”—and it’s available over the counter, in a variety of compounds, sizes, and brands: chicken soup.

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## Bird Brains

Maybe Hitchcock was on to something. In an experiment summarized in *Science* magazine (Aug. 9, 2002), a pair of New Caledonian crows confronted a straight wire atop a vertical pipe containing a bucket of food. In nine trials, one crow managed to bend the wire into a hook, maneuver it by beak, and extract the food from the pipe. A fairly remarkable accomplishment: “Purposeful modification of objects by animals for use as tools, without extensive prior experience, is almost unknown,” write Oxford University zoologist Alex A. S. Weir and two coauthors.

The avian toolmaker, the footnotes disclose, was always the female. The male rarely tried to raise the bucket, never fashioned the wire into a hook, mostly watched his mate do the work, and, on three occasions when she succeeded, stole her food.

# Body Smarts

In an age of pacemakers and microchip implants, the old nightmare vision of man melding into machine no longer seems completely far-fetched. Not to worry, says a noted observer of technology. Surprising things happen when the body interacts with technology.

by Edward Tenner

For more than 50 years, enthusiasts have proclaimed the coming of a new age of technologically augmented humanity, a somewhat unsettling era of bar-coded convicts and chip-implanted children. But technology has been reshaping the body since the very dawn of civilization. The feet of shod people, for example, are physiologically different from those of people who have always walked barefoot. Technologies as various as the thong sandal and the computer mouse have affected how we use our bodies—the *techniques* we employ in our everyday lives—and this coevolution of technology and the body has not always followed the course engineers and other designers imagined. The question now is whether mind, body, and machine will fuse in some radical new way over the next generation.

The enthusiasts themselves are far from agreement on the mechanism that might achieve such a fusion. For some, the new intimacy between humans and machines will simply involve more portable and powerful versions of devices we already take with us—computers, for example, that might be carried as we now carry cell phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs), to be viewed through special eyeglass displays. Spectacles might also transmit the emotional states of their wearers, so that a speaker, for example, could detect an audience's interest or boredom. There are already sneakers that can transmit or record information on a runner's performance, and civilian motorcycle helmets with intercoms and navigational aids built in.

Other enthusiasts scorn mere wearability. They're having sensors and transmitters surgically implanted in their bodies—as, for exam-

ple, some deaf individuals have been fitted with cochlear implants that restore hearing. The cyborg, or human machine, is an especially powerful and persistent notion, perhaps because it seems a logical next step from technological symbiosis. (Politically, the cyborg idea—which for a few enthusiasts is a movement—spans a continuum from Paul Verhoeven's original *Robocop* film in 1987 to the work of cultural scholars such as Donna Haraway and Chris Hables Gray, who see the connection between human and machine as an emancipatory strategy against rigid economic and gender roles.)

But is the body really becoming more mechanized? Is the interaction of technology and human behavior all that new and frightening? Despite the legend, George Washington never wore wooden teeth, but his last pair of dentures, made of gold plates inset with hippopotamus teeth, human teeth, and elephant and hippo ivory, and hinged with a gold spring, were as good as the craftsmen of his time could produce. Still, he suffered great discomfort, and ate and spoke with difficulty (perhaps the enforced reserve enhanced his dignity). At any rate, if the nation's first president was a cyborg, it's not surprising that one in 10 Americans had some nondental implant—from pacemakers to artificial joints—by 2002. Nor was Washington an isolated case: Benjamin Franklin's bifocals and Thomas Jefferson's semireclining work chair were giant steps in human-mechanical hybridization. One might even say that John F. Kennedy was continuing the cyborg tradition when he



became one of the first politicians to adopt the robotic signature machine, a giant and distinctively American step in the cloning of gesture.

The many amputations wounded soldiers suffered during the U.S. Civil War led to the creation of an innovative artificial-limb industry. Today, responsive advanced prosthetics, wheelchairs, vision implants, and other assistive devices exceed the 19th century's wildest dreams. (There has even been litigation in the United States over whether a teenage swimmer with an artificial leg was unfairly barred from wearing a flipper on it.) But the first choice of medicine is still the conservation of natural materials and abilities. Thus, the trend in eye care has been from spectacles to contact lenses to laser surgery, and dentistry has moved steadily from dentures to prophylaxis and the conservation of endangered natural teeth. Some dental researchers believe that adults may be able to grow replacement teeth naturally. Other forms of regeneration, including the recovery of function by paraplegics and quadriplegics, may follow.

The body remains surprisingly and reassuringly conservative, and humanity has stayed steadfastly loyal to objects that connect us with our environment. The traditional zori design—the sandal with a v-shaped thong separating the big toe from the others—

is still used for some of the most stylish sandals. Athletic shoes with the most technically advanced uppers and soles still use a system of lacing at least 200 years old. For all their additional adjustments, most advanced new office chairs still rely on the 100-year-old principle of a spring-mounted lumbar support, and recliners still place the body in the same contours that library chairs did in the 19th century; according to industry sources, interest is fading in data ports built into recliners and in other technological enhancements. The QWERTY arrangement of the keyboard has resisted all reform, and alternatives to the flat conventional keyboard are expensive niche products, partly because, in the absence of discomfort, so few users are willing to learn new typing techniques. A century after the piano began to lose prestige and markets, it remains the master instrument, with a familiar keyboard.

Computers now allow the production of advanced progressive eyeglasses without the visible seam of bifocals, but wearers still hold them on their heads with the folding temples introduced in the 18th century. The latest NATO helmet still reflects the outlines of the medieval sallet. But then, our skulls—like our foot bones, vertebrae, fingers, eyes, and ears—have not changed much. Even the automatic transmissions in our cars rely on a familiar tactile principle, a knob or handle and

## Body Smarts

lever; the seemingly more efficient push-button shifter was largely abandoned after the Edsel. And the 21st century's automobiles are still directed and controlled by wheels and pedals—familiar from early modern sailing ships and wagons—rather than by the alternative interfaces that appear in patents and experimental cars. Meanwhile, many technological professionals study body techniques that need few or no external devices: yoga, martial arts, and the Alexander technique (a series of practices developed by a 19th-century Australian actor to promote more natural posture, motion, and speech).

Even Steve Mann, the Christopher Columbus of wearable computing, has misgivings about integrating himself with today's "smart" technology. Mann, who holds a Ph.D. in computer science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was photographed as early as 1980 wearing a helmet equipped with a video camera and a rabbit-ears antenna. But in his book *Cyborg* (2001), he acknowledges being "increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of a cyborg future," where privacy is sacrificed for pleasure and convenience to a degree he compares to drug addiction.

Today's advanced cyborg technology is a harbinger of neither a utopian nor an apocalyptic future. Virtual reality helmets, often featured in scare scenarios of the future, are still not playthings; they're professional tools demanding rigorous training in physical and mental techniques if wearers are to avoid disorientation and lapses in judgment. At the other extreme of complexity, the miniature keyboards of cell phones and other devices are exerting a surprising influence at the level of everyday life. They're shifting the balance of power of the human hand from the index finger to the thumb. C. P. E. Bach elevated the role of the thumb in musical keyboarding 250 years ago, but touch-typing pioneers of the 20th century rediscovered the fourth and fifth fingers and banished the thumb to space bar duty. Now the thumb is enjoying a renaissance. It has

returned to computing with the introduction of pen- and pencil-like devices such as the styluses used with PDAs. The latest computer mouse, developed by the Swedish physician and ergonomist Johan Ullman, is gripped and moved around the desk with a pen-shaped stick that uses the precision muscles of the thumb and fingers and doesn't twist the hand and tire the forearm. Even thumb-dependent pencils are resurgent, their unit sales having increased by more than 50 percent in the United States in the 1990s.

The biggest surprise is the thumb's role in electronics. In Japan today, so many new data-entry devices rely on it that young people are called *oyayubi sedai*, the Thumb Generation. In Asia and Europe, users have turned technology on its head: Instead of using the voice recognition features of their phones, they're sending short text messages to friends, thumbs jumping around their cellular keyboards in a telegraphic imitation of casual speech. By spring 2002, there were more than 1.4 billion of these transmissions each month in the United Kingdom alone.

One British researcher, Sadie Plant, has found that thumbs all around the world are becoming stronger and more skillful. Some young Japanese are now even pointing and ringing doorbells with them. As Plant told *The Wall Street Journal*, "The relationship between technology and the users of technology is mutual. We are changing each other." Always attuned to social nuance, the "Style" section of *The Washington Post* also noted the ascent of the formerly humble digit. The major laboratories did not predestine the thumb to be the successor to the index finger, though they did help make the change possible; its full capacities were discovered through collaborative experimentation by users, designers, and manufacturers. The ascendancy of the thumb is an expression of the intimate relationship between head and hand described by the neurologist and hand injury specialist Frank Wilson, who speaks of the "24-karat thumb" in his book *The Hand*

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(1998): “The brain keeps giving the hand new things to do and new ways of doing what it already knows how to do. In turn, the hand affords the brain new ways of approaching old tasks and the possibility of understanding and mastering new tasks.”

But change is not without cost. We learn new body skills to the neglect of others, and humanity has been losing not only languages but body techniques. Scores of resting positions known to anthropologists are being replaced by a single style of sitting. Countless variations of the infant-feeding bottle compete with the emotional and physiological rewards of nursing. The reclining chair, originally sold partly as a health device, has become an emblem of sedentary living. The piano’s advanced development in the late 19th century prepared the way for the player piano, and ultimately for recorded music. Typewriter and computer keyboards eliminated much of the grind of learning penmanship, along with the pleasure of a personal hand (today’s children may still grumble, but rarely must they learn the full, demanding systems of the 19th-century master penmen). The helmet wards off danger even as it encourages overconfident wearers to engage in new and dangerous activities. All these devices augment our powers, but in doing so they also gain a power over us.

**T**he challenge within advanced industrial societies is to cope with a degree of standardization that threatens to choke off both new technologies and new techniques. We need a return to the collaboration between user and maker that marked so many of the great technological innovations, whether the shaping of the classic American fire helmet or the development of the touch method by expert typists and typing teachers. Research in even the most advanced technical processes confirms the importance of users. In the 1980s, for example, the economist Eric von Hippel studied change in high-technology industries such as those that manufacture scientific instruments, semiconductors, and printed circuit boards. Von Hippel found that up to 77 percent of the innovations in the industries were initiated by users. He therefore recommended that manufacturers identify and work with a vanguard of

“lead users”—as was done in the past, for example, when 19th-century musicians worked with piano manufacturers, or when the typewriter entrepreneur James Densmore tested his ideas with the court reporter James O. Clephane in developing the QWERTY layout, an efficient arrangement for the four-finger typing technique that prevailed until the victory of the touch method in the 1890s. Today’s cognitive psychologists of work are rejecting the older model of a single best set of procedures and learning from the experience of workers and rank-and-file operators how equipment and systems can be modified to promote greater safety and productivity. As one psychologist, Kim J. Vicente, has written, “Workers finish the design.”

Design should be user friendly, of course, but it should also be user challenging. The piano keyboard is rightly celebrated as an interface that’s at once manageable for the novice and inexhaustible for the expert. Information interfaces should similarly invite the beginner even as they offer the experienced user an opportunity to develop new techniques; they should not attempt to anticipate a user’s every desire or need. The practice of participatory design, introduced in the 1970s by the mathematician and computer scientist Kristen Nygaard, began with Norwegian workers who wanted a say in the development of technology in their industries and was ultimately embraced by corporations worldwide.

The keyboard that’s negotiated with a thumb is a threat to handwriting traditions, whether Asian or Western, and that’s regrettable. But adapting to its use is a mark of human resourcefulness and ingenuity. The thumb, a proletarian digit ennobled in the digital age, is an apt symbol for a new technological optimism based on the self-reliance of users. The index finger—locating regulations and warnings in texts, wagging and lecturing in person—signifies authority, the rules. The thumb, by contrast, connotes the practical knowledge men and women have worked out for themselves, the “rules of thumb.” It represents tacit knowledge, too, the skills we can’t always explain, as with a “green thumb.” And when extended during the almost lost art of hitchhiking, the thumb displays the right attitude toward the future: open and collaborative, but with a firm sense of direction. □

# Kaliningrad

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union built the pan-Soviet workers' paradise of Kaliningrad atop the physical ruins of the historic Prussian city of Königsberg. Now Kaliningrad—capitalist, impoverished, drug-ridden, and physically cut off from the rest of Russia—is struggling to build a new identity atop the political and economic ruin of its Soviet past.

*by Peter Savodnik*

**T**oward the end of World War II, Soviet troops marched into the East Prussian port city of Königsberg, exiled, raped, or murdered the remaining Germans, and, in the years that followed, made the place their own. First they renamed it Kaliningrad. Then they rebuilt it in the image of their god, socialist man. Then they sealed off the city and turned it into a fortress. Geography served the Communists well: The port could be filled with submarines and battleships.

A once-vibrant trading center founded by the Teutonic Knights in the 13th century, the city sits in the tiny oblast of Kaliningrad, the westernmost region of Russia, cut off from the rest of the country by southwestern Lithuania and northeastern Poland. During the Cold War, Kaliningrad was part of a sprawling workers' paradise. The people who moved there were defined by their Sovietness, not their ethnicity or religion or their connection to any particular landscape. But when the Soviet Union lost control of its history, Kaliningraders' nationality was swept away in the rapids, and suddenly all the naval officers and fishing captains and the hundreds of thousands of proletarians who had built their lives in the postwar murk were forced to rethink who they were, now that they were no longer Soviets.

The women have been better at this than the men. They're the first thing you notice in Kaliningrad—all the beautiful girls, all the decidedly post-Soviet femmes fatales milling

around outside the bars and bistros on Mira Prospekt or in Kalinin Park, or wandering past Immanuel Kant's tomb or the House of Soviets ("the Monster," as locals call it). When the Red Army occupied the oblast in April 1945, it erased all forms of prewar life, blew up the castles and cathedrals, and repopulated the whole fallow swatch of farms and fisheries with Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Georgians, Uzbeks, and tens of thousands of other "transplant-patriots." That's why there are so many long legs, porcelain complexions, and steel-blue eyes in the region. Kaliningraders today are the beneficiaries of a grand coming together of peoples who elsewhere in the post-communist world are segregated according to ethnic, racial, and religious differences.

That, at least, was the party line—the new mythology—at the 2003 Miss Kaliningrad University Beauty Contest, where the 19- and 20-year-old contestants strode up and down a makeshift catwalk bathed in a frenetic rainbow light, to the beat of digital tom-toms and the shouts and shrieks of 500 student-comrades. "They all came together here," pageant organizer Laura Lukina explained after the show. "It was a real mix of nations." Or, as so many prefer to say of their oblast, which is separated from "mainland" Russia by more than 200 miles, "This is the United States of the former Soviet Union." True, Kaliningrad doesn't look like a place called the United States of anything. The buildings are low, boxy, and unfinished. The nightlife teems with turtle-necked thugs and



*The brooding, abandoned House of Soviets looms over a newly married Kaliningrad couple.*

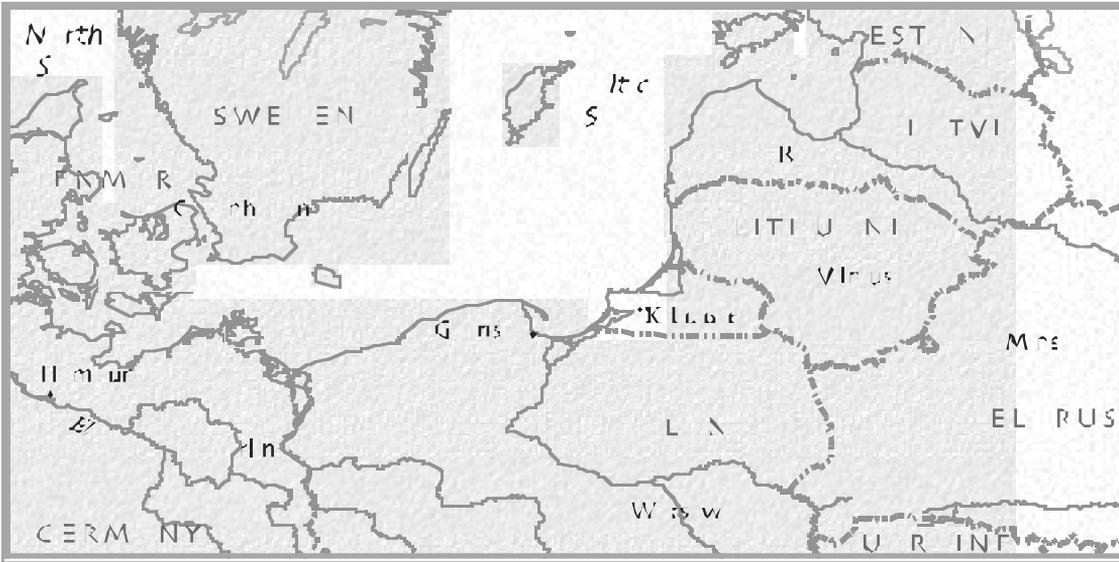
Mercedes-Benzes with tinted windows. There are taxicabs and neon signs vaguely reminiscent of Times Square, but the air smells more dangerous than full of promise. It's capitalism, but it's a sloppy kind of capitalism, a bizarre, almost adolescent pastiche of images and signposts flashing sex, food, money.

For Marxists, each step in the historical process, we're told, marks a "positing," an arrival at a higher order of political organization, and, at the same time, a "negating," a refutation of that level of organization in anticipation of the next step toward stateless utopia. Lenin, whose statue still looms over Kaliningrad's Victory Square, most definitely would not have called the Miss Kaliningrad University Beauty Contest—to say nothing of the collapse of Soviet communism and the tentative emergence of a free market—a higher order of political organization. But the Soviet planners who turned the oblast into the headquarters of the Baltic Sea fleet, collectivized its agriculture, and built sprawling apartment blocks on the periphery of the city center might have been pleased to note that present-day Kaliningraders face the same challenge they once did: building a new society atop the ruins of an old one.

Just as the Soviets sought to construct civilization from scratch, those living in the oblast today are trying to make a new life, a post-totalitarian democracy, out of the scraps of a gradually receding past. The difference between the two reconstructions—between the Soviets' "noble experiment" and the post-Soviets' drive to catch up with the rest of Europe—is illuminating. The Communists had to rebuild the physical core of Kaliningrad, which had been devastated by Soviet tanks and British bombers. Today's Kaliningraders, by contrast, must reimagine the region's entire political identity, starting with a new mythology. History has not unfolded dialectically; it appears, rather, to have repeated itself.

Reimagining identity, piecing together a semblance of connection to something larger than this small and often gray and slushy parcel of space, will be much tougher in round two. In the 1940s, Moscow simply barged ahead. The orchestrators of the much-vaunted command economy decided to build Kaliningrad anew, and so they did, although what they came up with is a pale shadow of the city's East Prussian past, farcical and crumbling. In the 21st century, the new leadership—the reformers, the capital-

## Kaliningrad



ists, the architects of the popular culture—is neither free nor able (nor, in some cases, willing) to weave its own social fabric and establish political and cultural affiliations in the vacuum of an ex-Soviet military colony.

Nothing better captures the complexity of identity building in postcommunist Kaliningrad than the recent brouhaha over Kaliningraders' right to travel freely between the oblast and mainland Russia. On a technical—that is, superficial—level, transit visas are the issue. In 2004, Kaliningrad's neighbors, Poland and Lithuania, are expected to join the European Union. The EU is worried that all the AIDS-infected heroin addicts who have descended on the oblast, as well as the drug dealers who supply them and the Russian mafiosi who run the show largely undisturbed by police, will take advantage of Europe's relatively open borders and emigrate not to Warsaw or Vilnius but to Berlin, Paris, and London. Hence, Poland and Lithuania have said that Kaliningraders should obtain visas to travel outside the oblast. But the administration of Vladimir Putin has strongly opposed forcing Russians to get visas to travel to and from Russia. In November 2002, Brussels and Moscow settled on a compromise: facilitated transit documents, or FTDs, which certainly look like visas but technically are not. Vilnius, meanwhile, remains leery of EU officials from larger and richer member-

states (such as France and Britain) cutting deals with the Kremlin that involve trains traveling through the Lithuanian countryside. So the current agreement could very well unravel once Lithuania formally "joins Europe."

More interesting and more telling than all the diplomatic maneuvering is Kaliningraders' indifference to the visas, which still generate lots of high-level bluster and closed-door summits but rarely, if ever, come up in conversation at local coffeehouses, brasseries, or Internet cafés. It's not that people are too busy building skyscrapers or tearing down monuments. The biggest thing they're building in Kaliningrad is a church behind the looming Lenin. (The oblast often looks and feels like a police state with a sense of humor.) There's a Möbius strip quality to Kaliningrad life, a life that seems to veer away from and then fold back into its former, totalitarian self. What's indisputable is that few, if any, Kaliningraders are waving the Russian tricolor and screaming about their right to free travel.

The obvious explanation is that their daily lives depend more on their European neighbors than on Russia. Most in the oblast, like most in the larger post-communist world, seem to intuit that the future lies to the west. They take far more trips to Warsaw or the Italian Alps than they do to Red Square; they rely on the "gray

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market” with Poland and Lithuania for everything from beer to cigarettes to Turkish antiques; and everyone in charge of a payroll knows that it’s easier to do business with Poles and Germans—the process is less fraught with corruption and bureaucratic knots—than with fellow Russians.

But few Kaliningraders say that Kaliningrad isn’t part of Russia. How could they? Until a few years ago, they were citizens of a vast people’s republic. Thousands of them spent all day defending that republic against powerful imperialist armies and navies. In fact, if the Warsaw Pact had ever launched a conventional assault on Western Europe—or, more likely, Kaliningraders say, if the West had ever attacked the “outer empire”—Kaliningrad would have been command central, the Soviet headquarters for World War III.



The 64-year-old governor of the oblast, Vladimir Egorov, is a near-perfect embodiment of the search for Kaliningrad’s political-spiritual-cultural whatness. Egorov must do everything he can to open up Kaliningrad’s markets to investors from Germany, Asia, and the United States; promote Kaliningrad’s cheap labor, relatively low taxes, and growing furniture-manufacturing and agricultural sectors; and keep government regulators in Moscow out of the hair of the region’s few entrepreneurs, who are his best

hope for reducing unemployment and generating much-needed revenue. In other words, Egorov has to be a free-marketeer, a democrat, and an American.

Sitting in the airy, light-filled annex to his office, surrounded by oil paintings of Kaliningrad’s main port, models of classic fishing vessels, and a ceramic-velvet collage of St. George on a white horse slaying a dragon, Egorov seems to be doing a pretty good job. He’s got plenty of glossy literature detailing all the progress the oblast has made; he soft-pedals some of Kaliningrad’s “social ills,” such as the recent explosion in AIDS cases, the drug bazaars, the widespread poverty; he talks about local businessmen building their way toward a better tomorrow. He even has recourse to a staple of Western politicians afraid of being misquoted or taken out of context: He makes sure one of his press people is in the annex to tape-record our conversation.

But Egorov is not an ideologue, and he’s not an investor or a small businessman. He’s unaccustomed to the uncertainty of polls or the nastiness of a global marketplace of big boards, analysts, computers, and corporate chieftains in New York, London, Hong Kong, a marketplace that drives consumers and voters (and the politicians who depend on them). Egorov is a manager, a “voice of honesty and goodness,” as one EU official put it, who spent more than 30 years in the Soviet navy defending the motherland against the capitalist-imperialist menace. He says he’s sorry the Soviet Union didn’t reform itself as China is doing now. He says many of the moral truths found in communist dogma can be traced to the Bible. He says that if perestroika hadn’t unleashed a velvet revolution and the Berlin Wall hadn’t come tumbling down, he’d probably still be in the military. And he says he can remember, vividly, hearing Mikhail Gorbachev announce on the radio, in December 1991, that there was no more Soviet Union. When they lowered the hammer and sickle for the last time over Kaliningrad’s harbor, Egorov was Admiral Egorov, commander of the Baltic Fleet, and he had no idea what was going to happen to him or his homeland. “A lot of people cried then,” he said. “I had tears in my eyes.”

Most of the elites shaping Kaliningrad’s future are less torn about the respective merits of socialist totalitarianism and free-

## Kaliningrad

market democracy than the governor is. Max Ibragimov, for example, almost certainly did not have tears in his eyes when the Soviet Union collapsed. It's Sunday night at Planet, and Ibragimov, 46, is celebrating the 70th birthday of the father of one of his business associates. Dinner consists of black caviar on pancakes, goat cheese, salmon and avocado salad, duck in a glazed raspberry sauce, more caviar, more goat cheese, dumplings, tangerines, and banana splits. The guests sip cognac throughout the meal, alternating with shots of Flagman, Kaliningrad's very own vodka. There are also bottles of mineral water, with and without gas.

Planet, according to Miss Kaliningrad (victorious in a larger pageant than the university's), used to be the hottest restaurant-nightclub-casino in town. But for various reasons—too many mobsters, too many Germans, too many missionaries from Salt Lake sneaking in late at night—Planet lost its sheen shortly before Christmas. Now the place to go is Zaria or Universal. Miss Kaliningrad would never go to Planet. Max Ibragimov doesn't know about all that. Nor has he ever heard of Miss Kaliningrad. All he knows is that he comes from a tiny village in Uzbekistan, spent years on a fishing ship sleeping with rats and cockroaches, and is now the sofa king of eastern Europe—and if he wants to drop 8,000 rubles (about \$250) on a fancy dinner party, so be it. Unlike Egorov, Ibragimov doesn't mist up talking about lost empires.

Nor does Svetlana Kolbaniova. The 32-year-old television reporter is a celebrity all over the oblast. When she shows up at Zaria to sip Campari and smoke a few cigarettes, she inevitably runs into a friend, a source, or some local bigwig who loved her interview with the governor, the mayor, or that movie star from Moscow who was in town promoting his new flick, the one with the American actress. Kolbaniova is fluent in German and almost fluent in English, has traveled throughout Europe and Russia, and likes to cook French country cuisine. Recently she launched her own television cooking show, which is filmed in the kitchen of her apartment. Like the apartments of lots of successful people here, hers is in a building that

looks on the outside as if it belongs in Cabrini Green or the South Bronx. But the apartment itself is warm and inviting, furnished with Italian sofas, Japanese CD players, and posters (framed and matted) of angry British rock groups. Kolbaniova says people are kinder, more tolerant, in the oblast than elsewhere in Russia.

That's what Ludmila Bogatova says, too: "That was the reason we moved here. Because Kaliningrad is like the U.S.A." Bogatova, 53, has never been to the United States. Nor has her husband, Oleg Salnikov, also 53. Both are sculptors, and both came here, they say, for the same reason people go to America: to escape persecution. Before the 1917 revolution, Bogatova says, her family moved from Russia to Uzbekistan; Salnikov's family moved there in the 1930s, when gulags, food shortages, and five-year plans threatened millions of Russians. The two met at school, fell in love, made a life together—all in Uzbekistan. Then the Soviet Union collapsed, and the Muslim authorities began arresting, beating up, and otherwise harassing Orthodox Russians, even Russians who had been there for decades. The sculptors decided they'd better move, and they landed in Kaliningrad. As Salnikov served up some *plov*, a traditional Uzbek dish of lamb, beef, diced vegetables, and fried rice, he said, "I knew immediately this would be my home."

Kaliningraders are bound together by a feeling that they are different or special, disconnected from any political-cultural center. Many came to the oblast because they were in the military, or because their fathers were fishermen, or because they had nowhere else to go. They were a mix of Soviets who created a communist exclave for themselves out of the rubble of postwar Prussia. But now that the Soviet Union is gone and the connective tissue has melted away, they're not Soviets; they're post-Soviets.

Becoming a true post-Soviet, says Dmitri Vyshemirsky, means owning up to the Soviet past. Vyshemirsky's family came to Kaliningrad when he was three, in 1961, because in the 1940s his grandfather had been labeled an enemy of the state, and shortly after that his father was labeled a child of an enemy of

the state, and by the time Dmitri, or Dima, was born, it was clear there was no future in Russia proper. “My father had the feeling that he could kind of get lost here,” Vyshemirsky said. In Kaliningrad, Vyshemirsky’s father found work as a choir conductor, his mother as a classical pianist. Vyshemirsky, who says he’s part Russian, part Ukrainian, part Polish, and part Jewish, in that order, says Kaliningrad has been good to his family. He and his wife, Inna, are happy here. This is their home, even if the streets are full of craters and it’s cold nine months of the year and thugs with flathead haircuts loiter in the hotel lobbies, cafés, and casinos. But there is something that bothers Vyshemirsky: “There’s no cultural logic here.”

What he means is that for a half-century there was a lot of pretending in Kaliningrad. The official story was that the end of the Second World War was the beginning of history in the oblast. That’s when the Red Army changed the region’s name from Königsberg and honored Soviet president Mikhail Kalinin. That’s when the great proletariat liberation began. In recent months, Vyshemirsky, who is a photojournalist, has sought to expand the official history—from

50 years to 750—through an exhibition of 30 photographs titled *Königsberg, Forgive*. As the exhibition makes clear, there are vestiges of Germanness everywhere: from Kant’s tomb to prewar patches of cobblestone to whole neighborhoods of crumbling, once-stately German mansions now converted into apartments or government offices. The building that best reflects this German “ghost culture,” and is a kind of metaphor for it, is the House of Soviets, the so-called Monster. Like so many other Soviet palaces of culture and ministries of the people, the Monster is bold, ugly, imperious, frightening—a concrete monolith meant to convey the power of Sovietism and the inevitability of worldwide communist revolution. But since the 1970s, when it was completed, no one has actually worked in the Monster. The reason? Shortly after the building was finished, construction crews discovered that it sat on a centuries-old German castle that made the foundation unstable. Today the Monster has been taken over by tumbleweeds, graffiti, and rabid dogs. The only people who venture inside are addicts and the homeless.



Ludwig Hermann’s late 19th-century painting, *Königsberg*, shows a bustling seaport that was at the heart of the Prussian empire. Kaliningraders still struggle with what some call a German “ghost culture.”



The road to Svetlogorsk, a beach community nestled against the Baltic about a 40-minute drive north of the city, is lined with linden trees. The trees were planted by the Germans during the war to help conceal their military transports from Allied bombers. Kaliningraders call the trees the Führer's last soldiers because so many drunk drivers slam into them. To mark the trees where drivers have lost their lives, family members attach wreaths. There are many, many wreaths. Driving to Svetlogorsk, Dmitry Bulatov, the curator of special programs at the Kaliningrad branch of the National Center for Contemporary Arts, heaps scorn on *Königsberg, Forgive*. He calls the exhibition, and all the hoopla surrounding it, simple-minded, parochial, pedantic, self-righteous. And on and on. "Forgive?" Bulatov asks. "Forgive who? Who forgives? And what about the Lithuanians? They were here. Why not call [the oblast] Karaljavicus? Or the Polish? Krulevec. Why not Krulevec?"

Bulatov says that naming Kaliningrad Königsberg once again, as Vyshemirsky and a small minority of other Kaliningraders have proposed, would ignore the cultural-ethnic complexity of the place. He says that forcing Kaliningraders to confront the region's Prussian past is too neat, too easy: You can't just say there were people here before my people were here, and we have to pay homage to them, and now we can move on. Bulatov says you shouldn't worry about remembering. Remembering (all by itself) is meaningless. Why? Because it suggests that something has been done, that some good—some realizable good, like greater happiness or less misery—has been achieved. Bulatov shakes his head. The danger, he explains, is that people will focus on gestures and lose sight of the whole point of remembering, which is to be better human beings—who would not permit other Kaliningrads to be created. "I think the whole of Russian people should ask forgiveness for Soviet Union," he says, laughing. Why is he laughing? "Is impossible. Is ridiculous."

Bulatov sounds like one of those communist-era novelists and playwrights who spent their lives in exile or hiding or jail writing about the absurdity of socialist totalitarianism, with its loveless love, robotic censors, and activist street

sweepers. His sentences, sarcastic bits and pieces of a half-formed English, hint at underlying meanings wrapped in hopelessness, frustration, rage. Of course he thinks it's terrible that people died. Of course he thinks people should remember. But simply entertaining the sentiments won't change things. Like wreaths attached to linden trees, he says, the memories can't undo misery. Anyway, what's the point of building a new identity for Kaliningrad out of the old? Constructing a post-Soviet sense of place? What does that mean? He hates the abstractness of it all. Then he laughs again. "Forgive me, Königsberg, forgive."



Miss Kaliningrad is bowling at Babylon, one of the city's two or three trendy bowling alleys. She's not the best bowler in town, but she does know a little about the whole visa mess, and she thinks Vladimir Egorov is a nice man. He's a friend of her parents. None of the girls at Babylon have thought much about their political or cultural affinities. Miss Kaliningrad, who has spent the past four years studying economics at the state university, says she'd like to move to Moscow as soon as possible. "Is too small, Kaliningrad," she says, shortly before bowling her one strike of the evening.

Kaliningraders are trying to rebuild Kaliningrad—to clear away the debris of a half-century of lies and obfuscation. They want to forge an identity that makes room for their Russianness, their Europeaness, and their post-Sovietness, so the rebuilding and reimagining may well include new stories or mythologies about who is a Kaliningrader. But will they succeed where the Soviets failed, and actually manage to construct an identity (not just an idea, a political thesis) that endures? Russians are attempting to do that throughout Russia, of course, but nowhere, perhaps, is their Sovietness, or their lack of Sovietness, as profoundly felt as it is in Kaliningrad, which wouldn't exist if there hadn't been a Soviet Union. As long as there are Russians, Moscow and St. Petersburg will exist, as will Minsk while there are Belarusians and Kyiv while there are Ukrainians. But what about Kaliningrad? Kaliningrad was a Soviet military colony. What will it be now? □

# IRAQ

## From Sumer to Saddam

As the world looks to Iraq's future, it must also take account of the nation's past. That past stretches back to the very origins of human civilization, embracing Baghdad's rise long ago as the home of Islam's golden age, a mid-20th-century experiment with limited democracy, and Saddam Hussein's barbarous rule. What new Iraq can be built on the foundations of the old?



*Detail from the Stele of the Vultures (Sumer, c. 2450 B.C.)*

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# The Glory That Was Baghdad

by Jason Goodwin

Baghdad has not figured so prominently in the news since the days when the caliph Harun al-Rashid earned his place in the *Arabian Nights* and Sinbad the Sailor flew to safety on a giant roc. That was 1,200 years ago, and today's city is no longer a place where Neo-Platonist philosophers lock horns with Islamic theologians and palace ladies eat off jewel-studded golden platters. But Baghdad in the age of the Abbasid caliphs was the greatest of all cities, the political and military heart of the Islamic Empire at its height. Between its founding in A.D. 762 and its destruction in 1258, the city was home to a huge advance in the breadth of human knowledge, so that it is remembered today not only as a place of pomp and luxury but as a city of scholarship and philosophy. Endowed with hospitals and mosques, adorned with palaces and gardens, the Baghdad of the *Arabian Nights* was a site of translation and transformation.

The second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur, chose to create Baghdad on the middle reaches of the Tigris River, whence a dense network of canals stretched the 30 miles to the Euphrates River. He was consciously founding a new dynasty to replace the old Umayyad caliphs of Damascus, whose authoritarian rule had led to their recent downfall, and he had taken great care in selecting the site for the city. Ten thousand years before, farming had begun on the lands between the two rivers, and there in the heartlands of old Sumer, the first cities, Ur and Ctesiphon, Babylon and Agade, had risen and decayed, littering the region with their remains and bequeathing it an intricate web of irrigation canals. The land was level, productive, and cheap. "This," said al-Mansur, "is an excellent place for a military camp," and in 762 he laid the first brick with his own hands. For the next four years, architects, carpenters, masons, smiths, and construction workers, said to have numbered 100,000, labored to turn his plan into reality. The cost—4,883,000 dirhams—was scrupulously noted by the small army of accountants whose existence was a significant feature of the Abbasid regime.

The old imperial capital, Damascus, had been a city of the desert, surrounded by Arab tribes, but Baghdad lay like a hinge between the Semitic world of the Middle East and the Turkic and Perso-Indian lands beyond, reflecting the shifting center of Islamic gravity toward central Asia. The Arabs had made repeated efforts to conquer Constantinople, center of Byzantine Christendom, but the Abbasids largely turned from the Byzantine borders. Though Arabic remained the language of the state, the new capital was less obviously an Arab city, for Islam itself had outgrown its purely Arabic origins. Baghdad mirrored



*Already past its zenith, the Abbasid caliphate under al-Mutawakkil (847–61) saw the decline of Muslim philosophy and growing persecution of Shia Muslims, Jews, and Christians.*

the growth of the new, multiracial Islam, shot through with influences from India, Alexandria, and, above all, Persia itself. Even among the caliphs, the Arab blood thinned from generation to generation. Instead of the old, rigid, tribal divisions, with their aristocracy of blood and book, pen and sword, the caliph ruled over a new class of men who lived by their wits. If Baghdad was a city of scholars, it was a city of businessmen, craftsmen, and merchants, too.

**B**aghdad stood for a new kind of imperial, Islamic unity that transcended the old racial connection between the Arabs and their faith to embrace people of many different races and backgrounds. As the home of the caliph, it was to be the center of a world that would be incorporated by degrees into the dar ul-Islam, the Realm of Peace, for which the city was first and officially named. Perhaps it was to express the notion that Baghdad stood as the point around which all the world revolved that al-Mansur first laid out his plan for the city in ashes, and revealed it to be a perfect circle.

The Round City, few traces of which remain, was a company town 1,000 cubits (about 500 yards) in diameter — a moated, gated, crenellated bastion of government, a bunker for the high command. The merchants were soon expelled beyond its walls, and the palaces of the empire's grandees crept closer to the Tigris. At the city's core lay the mosque and the first palace, known as the Golden Gate, which captured the popular imagination. Its halls were roofed in soaring domes, the largest of which was green and 130 feet high. The city walls were 40 feet wide and 90 feet high, with ramps for horsemen to reach the top; they were quartered precisely by gates high enough to let a lancer pass through without lowering his

lance, and secured by gates of iron so heavy that a company of doormen was required to open and close each of them.

Almost everyone in Baghdad was on the caliph's payroll—army men, members of the imperial family, and officials—and on their salaries the city spread rapidly. It grew toward the Tigris, incorporating the irrigation canals, throwing up palaces, mosques, bazaars, and houses for the common people. The Round City became, over the years, a city within a city, a citadel. As Baghdad grew, it ceased to be merely a bureaucratic capital and center of military power and became a city of extravagant fortune, linked to the ends of the earth by land and sea. It took rice, wheat, and linen from Egypt, glass from Lebanon, fruits from Syria, weapons and pearls from Arabia, minerals and dyes from India, perfumes and rugs from Persia, silk and musk from China, slaves from Africa and central Asia. It is still remembered as the home of that mythic traveler and trader, Sinbad the Sailor, whose story first appears in the pages of that quintessential product of Baghdad, the *Arabian Nights*.

Baghdad was a party town, and some of the most sumptuous entertainments were laid on by the Barmakids, a family whose name became synonymous with

openhanded generosity. Under the new office of vizier, a position the Barmakids monopolized for three generations, the Abbasids established a powerful bureaucratic elite to supervise the gathering of taxes and revenues. Highly literate and urbane, these officials were frequently men of Persian origin who wrote and spoke in Arabic,

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the language of the state and the Quran. Under the Barmakids' patronage, elements of Iranian thought and literature were drawn into the Islamic mainstream. The Barmakids grew fabulously rich and entertained their friends and allies in grand palaces constructed on the eastern side of the capital. They endowed mosques and built canals and established a kind of arts council to reward poets. But in 803 the Barmakids' happy reign came to a sudden—and unexplained—end. The vizier's head was struck off and his body cut in two, and the parts were displayed for a year on the city bridges.

Power, after all, lay with a single family, and it was the fourth and most famous of the Abbasid caliphs, Harun al-Rashid (ruler from 786 to 809), who set the Baghdad style. The marriage of his son al-Ma'mun to the daughter of a governor, for example, was marked by a party at which ambergris candles lit the palace, the couple sat on a golden mat studded with sapphires, and everyone of distinction received, as a going-home present, a ball of musk in which was tucked the deed to a valuable piece of land or to a slave.

But Baghdad's contribution to history went well beyond the frivolity inspired

>JASON GOODWIN is the author of several books, including *Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire* (1999). His latest book, *Greenback: The Almighty Dollar and the Invention of America*, was published earlier this year. Copyright © 2003 by Jason Goodwin.

by huge wealth. The rapid growth of the Islamic Empire brought Muslims into contact with peoples of other faiths and traditions whose intellectual culture was more refined and who presented a lively challenge to Islamic orthodoxy. Under the patronage of Harun and his son al-Ma'mun, the scholars drawn to the city began to release some of the intellectual currents of the ancient world into the mainstream of Islamic thought. Just as Baghdad was an entrepôt for the world's goods, so it became a clearing-house for the higher sciences of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, law, and astrology.

**I**n Baghdad, three of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence were established, Arabic numerals (which the Arabs, more correctly, call Hindi numerals) were adopted, and zero, that elusive concept so vital to mathematical calculation, was probably invented. Under the great Persian physician al-Razi, Baghdad's hospital set new standards for hygiene. The Muslims also took to philosophy. Al-Kindi, the first and perhaps the greatest Arab Neo-Platonist philosopher, served as a tutor to al-Ma'mun's son and heir. He was a mathematician and a physician, a musician and an astrologer, who wrote dozens of books on subjects as varied as optics and health and once used music to cure a neighbor's paralysis. In an effort to synthesize Platonic and Quranic explanations of the world, he fell back on the idea that truth was double edged: A simple religious truth brought comfort to ordinary people, and a higher, interpretive truth was vouchsafed to the learned. As one of his successors, Avicenna, remarked, "Religious law makes it illegal for the ignorant to drink wine, but intelligence makes it legal for the intellectual."

In Baghdad, Syrian scholars with a profound knowledge of Greek oversaw the translation of most of the treasures of ancient science. If not for the scholars, those treasures would certainly have been lost. Ptolemy's work on astronomy, translated into Arabic in 829 by a member of a pagan Syrian sect that worshiped the stars, became the *Almagest*; it survived in Arabic long after the Greek original had disappeared and laid down the structure of astronomy up to the time of Copernicus. The works of Euclid and Archimedes, Galen the herbalist, Hippocrates the doctor, and the philosophers Plato and Aristotle became known in translation to the Arab world centuries before they filtered to the West through Muslim Spain.

One newfangled doctrine of the period held that although the Quran was the word of God, it had been created in time and was not coeternal with him—a position suggesting that the Quran might be reinterpreted, even modified, for a new age. The later Abbasids embraced this doctrine, which allowed them considerable room for maneuver. But their religious heterodoxy added to the discontents that were already roiling the caliphate. In 836, during al-Mu'tasim's reign, the Abbasids abandoned Baghdad for a new capital at Samarra, 80 miles to the north, under the protection of an army of Turkic horsemen recruited from the steppes. In Baghdad itself, opposition to the regime was marked by the renewed veneration of Muhammad (d. 632) and a barrage of scholarly inquiry into the hadith, a compendium of his doings and sayings. Sunni orthodoxy developed out of this reaction.

The caliphs returned to Baghdad some six decades years later, after years of factional fighting and civil war had severely weakened the machinery of the state

and damaged the intricate irrigation systems on which the region's prosperity depended. Unable to match their revenues to their expenditures, the caliphs were forced to give away more and more rights and lands to the distant rulers who were nominally under their dominion. The breakup of the empire across the Muslim world was mirrored locally by the rise of warlords such as ibn-Ra'iq, who in 936 was handed complete control of Baghdad and invited to take over the administration of the empire.

The caliphate became the pawn of powerful military adventurers who reduced the Abbasids to figureheads, and the rich lands around the city fell into relative decay. Spain had slipped from Baghdad's control as early as 756, central Asia went after 820, and Egypt was lost to the rival Fatimid dynasty in 909. A century and a half after the founding of Baghdad, the basis for a single Islamic empire under Arab rule had disappeared. Baghdad itself became storied: The legendary generosity of the Barmakids, the luxury of the Golden Gate, the roving of Sinbad, the wisdom of Harun al-Rashid, the tales of the philosophers, all passed, almost in a twinkling, into the realm of memory and myth.

**I**n 1258, a huge Mongol army out of the steppe, drilled in the ways of victory and pitilessness, massed before the city gates. Baghdad was already out of shape. "This old city," wrote the Andalusian traveler ibn-Jubayr in 1184, "still serves as the Abbasid capital . . . but most of its substance is gone. Only the name remains. . . . The city is but a trace of a vanished encampment, a shadow of a passing ghost." The legacy of Baghdad's science, translations, philosophy, and religious teachings had been spread from Spain to the borders of China, and its military genius had been transmitted to the Turks, who eventually spawned the empire of the Ottomans and carried Islam not only across the walls of Byzantium but deep into eastern Europe.

Genghis Khan and his Mongols had already swept through the old Islamic cities of Bukhara and Samarkand when his grandson Hulagu opened the siege of Baghdad. There was, it seems, no one in this great military camp left to defend it. The last Abbasid caliph offered an unconditional surrender, but Hulagu refused to hear him. A breach was opened in the walls on February 10, 1258, and Hulagu's army poured into the defenseless city to slaughter everyone—the caliph and the Abbasid family, the court officials, the mullahs, and the people in the streets. The chronicles number the dead at 700,000. Libraries, houses, palaces, and mosques were set ablaze. Books that would not burn were thrown into the Tigris, whose water ran black for days. When the stench of death grew overpowering, the invaders, in classic Mongol fashion, removed themselves from the charred and ruined city—to return in the weeks that followed to cut down the survivors.

But the place continued to exist. Its shattered remains, and those who lived among them, were devastated again by Tamerlane in 1401, and for the next 500 years the town served as a minor provincial capital within the Ottoman Empire. A Frenchman who visited in 1651 drew a map of the ragged town that hardly differs from the maps the British prepared when they occupied it in 1917, but so utterly had Baghdad been forgotten in his day that the Frenchman called the place Babylon instead. □

# The Making of Modern Iraq

by *Martin Walker*

**I**n the early spring of 2003, a quarter of the British army was based in Kuwait, advancing north into familiar territory. In 1916, these soldiers' great-grandfathers had first advanced up the river Tigris, to defeat and humiliation at Turkish hands. The following year the British returned, advancing to Baghdad and beyond. With General Edmund Allenby's forces thrusting north through Palestine, aided by an Arab uprising, the British toppled the Ottoman Empire. They stayed on for another 40 years, briefly interrupted by a pro-Nazi seizure of power in Baghdad in 1941. It was a period marked by considerable social and economic progress in Iraq—and by a tangled, painful, and often bloody series of political events that demand the attention of anybody contemplating the Iraqi future.

Modern Iraq was an invention of British military and administrative convenience in the wake of World War I. The British had held no coherent view of their war aims against the Ottoman Empire, simply wanting to defeat it. During the most desperate days of the struggle, the government's Arab bureau in Cairo issued letters and proclamations promising independence under British protection to Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia (as Iraq was then called) if they would help defeat the Ottomans. British officials in India, who traditionally ran foreign policy east of Suez, were appalled, dreading the impact of such involvement in Islamic affairs.

When the war ended, the British found themselves faced with a number of facts on the ground. First, the Ottoman Empire had collapsed, and outside Turkey, the British army was in occupation. But so were the Arab allies who had fought alongside the legendary British officer T. E. Lawrence, already known to an admiring world as Lawrence of Arabia, and Lawrence encouraged them in the vision of an independent pan-Arab state, stretching from the Persian frontier to the Suez Canal. Second, the French wanted a share of the Ottoman spoils, Lebanon and Syria at a minimum, though President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and his enormously popular principle of self-determination made the establishment of an outpost of empire highly problematic. Finally, the war had also demonstrated the importance of the internal-combustion engine, and thus the high strategic value of the oil supplies needed to fuel it.

The British had to contend with an Arab civil war between the Hashemite dynasty, the original custodians of the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina, and the house of ibn Saud, adherents of the puritanical Wahhabi

sect of Islam. They bumbled their way to a solution of this crisis after the House of ibn Saud took over Arabia by force (in the process deliberately destroying as idolatrous many of Mecca's shrines and graves of the Prophet's family) and established Saudi Arabia. London compensated the Hashemites by giving Prince Abdullah the country now known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and giving Syria to his brother, Prince Faisal, who had helped wrest it from the Turks during the Great War.

Then, in the summer of 1920, the tribes of Iraq rose in revolt against the British, who had not kept their wartime pledge to grant Iraq independence. "There has been a deplorable contrast between our profession and our practice," the now-retired Lawrence wrote in a letter to *The Times* of London on August 22. He spoke for many in the colonial administration who believed that the British government should live up to its own rhetoric of Arab independence. "We said we went to Mesopotamia to defeat Turkey. We said we stayed to deliver the Arabs from the oppression of the Turkish Government, and to make available for the world its resources of corn and oil. We spent nearly a million men and nearly a thousand million of money to these ends. . . . Our government is worse than the old Turkish system. They kept fourteen thousand local conscripts embodied, and killed a yearly average of two hundred Arabs in maintaining peace. We keep ninety thousand men, with aeroplanes, armoured cars, gunboats, and armoured trains. We have killed about ten thousand Arabs in this rising this summer."

The uprising, brutally contained by British troops and bombers, erased any remaining doubts in London: The cost of direct rule was too high. A superficially neat solution was found. Prince Faisal, since evicted from Syria by the French, was available to become the monarch of a pro-British Iraq, which would be governed by Britain at arm's length under one of the new League of Nations mandates. In order to drape some sort of democratic form over Faisal's rule, Sir Percy Cox, the new British high commissioner in Baghdad, had Faisal's main rival deported—he was arrested while at a tea with Sir Percy and his wife—and arranged for a plebiscite of the adult male population. (Cox and his political adviser, Gertrude Bell, the indomitable explorer, archaeologist, and intelligence agent, also had instructions from London to require the king to acknowledge publicly the superior authority of the high commissioner; they ignored them.) Thus democratically endorsed (he won 96 percent of the vote), King Faisal took his throne, and one of Iraq's happier periods began.

**T**he country over which Faisal reigned was essentially a patchwork. Under the Ottomans, there had been for centuries three *vilayets*, or regions, in what was then called Mesopotamia. Each region was under the separate control of a governor and had little in common with the other two. The coastal province of al-Basrah included the port of Kuwait and

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*Before taking the throne of Iraq, King Faisal won fame throughout the Arab world for his role at the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference. To his left stands T. E. Lawrence.*

the “marsh Arabs,” or Ma’dan, who dwelled in the wetlands of the great delta formed by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. It was centered on the cosmopolitan culture of the trading city of Basra itself, with strong ties to lands throughout the Persian Gulf; most of this population were Shia Muslim Arabs. The central *vilayet* of Baghdad, proud but much-diminished heir to the Islamic caliphate that had crumbled centuries earlier, was home mainly to Sunni Muslims, and retained the strongest ties to the Ottoman capital of Constantinople (now Istanbul). It was also one of the main Jewish centers of the Middle East. The third *vilayet*, centered on Mosul in the north, was mountainous, remote, and predominantly Kurdish, with Assyrian and Turkoman pockets. It was only nominally subordinate to Ottoman rule and taxes.

Yet for all the many forms of identity available within Iraq, Faisal was still an outsider. To boost the Iraqi credentials he could not claim by birth, he brought in his train a number of the Iraqis who had fought with him against the Turks. Thanks to his role in the defeat of the Turks, and later his prominence at the Versailles Peace Conference, however, Faisal had unrivaled credentials as the symbol of a post-Ottoman, pan-Arab future. Arab intellectuals flocked to join him in Baghdad, including the Syrian-born Sati al-Hursi, who, from his post as education minister, propounded a sophisticated pan-Arab ideology that was to be enormously influential throughout the Arab world.

Under the treaty Cox negotiated with Faisal in 1922, Iraq was to be a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament, loosely based on the British model. But British advisers were installed in the key ministries, and important posts in the police and army were staffed by British and Indian army officers on contract. Britain ran foreign and security policy. To the irritation of Iraqis, much of the old Ottoman bureaucracy was maintained, and many lower-level jobs were filled by Indians, although the British were careful to ensure that most were Muslims from Bengal.

**T**he British mandate produced for Iraq many irrigation projects and public-health services—these, rather than education, were Gertrude Bell’s priorities—and consequently a population boom that nearly doubled the nation’s headcount between 1920 and 1932. Bell’s own archaeological studies into ancient Babylon and the medieval caliphate had convinced her that the region had once supported a far larger population with irrigation and flood control works that tamed the great rivers and put their waters to productive use. So the British built dams and restored canals that were by 1950 to triple the acreage of arable land. They also constructed railway lines, roads, and a telephone system. They inaugurated a reliable postal service (including air mail), a census, ports and customs, and a taxation system, along with commercial banks and public finances, using bonds to finance public works. They established a professional Iraqi police force and army, and training colleges for officers, engineers, and schoolteachers.

Baghdad boasted cinemas, a French café, and a racecourse. By 1925, Bell herself had founded the national museum, many of whose treasures were her own finds from the Babylonian era. Iraq between the wars was a relaxed society, in which the strict Islamic code of sharia was seldom observed. Bell records hosting a dinner party in November 1925 at which Faisal was the guest of honor: “The King was as gay as could be and the final touch at dinner was some prunes over-soaked in gin. After two of these H.M. became uproarious and insisted that we should all eat two likewise.”

But the signal achievements of the British era came with costs attached. Replacing the semidesert that was home to nomadic tribes with irrigated, arable land that needed a settled population to farm it required land reform and a social revolution that threatened the traditional power of tribal chiefs. To retain their loyalty, the sheikhs were invested with greater local administrative powers. A parallel social transformation was underway in the fast-growing cities. New rail and shipping systems and oil projects stimulated the emergence of engineering shops and a small but thriving industrial sector in Basra and Baghdad, along with an industrial work force, labor unions, and, to British dismay, an energetic local Communist party.

Under pressure from Arab nationalists and others, Britain several times modified the original treaty of 1922 in Iraq’s favor. Finally, in 1932, with the Great Depression underway and a new Labor government installed in London, the British gave up the League of Nations mandate. Iraq was welcomed into the ranks of the world’s sovereign states as a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament, a recognized legal system, and its own

armed forces (with strategically placed British officers). Still, a treaty gave Britain two large air bases in Iraq and the right to move troops across Iraqi territory; it also required “full and frank consultations between the two countries in all matters of foreign policy.” Another agreement gave Western oil companies access to Iraq’s oil fields, on very favorable terms.

The democratic credentials of the Iraqi parliament were limited. Its structure was approved in 1924 by a constituent assembly of 99 members, of whom 34 were tribal sheikhs. Following their traditional “divide and rule” practice, the British designed the system to balance the centralizing powers of the crown with the regional influence of tribal leaders, whether in Kurdish, Sunni, or Shia districts. King Faisal’s power base was essentially urban, composed largely of the ex-Ottoman army officers who had rallied to him, the pan-Arab intellectuals who had accompanied him from Syria, the remains of the old Ottoman bureaucracy, and the traditional Sunni elites of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. The British were able to deliver to Faisal a substantial rural vote by persuading the tribal sheikhs that their interests would be protected. Among other things, the sheikhs were favored with the pivotal right to collect taxes.

The constituent assembly gave the king significant powers. He could dismiss parliament, call for new elections, and appoint the prime minister—powers that others would use in future years to negate the results of elections. Moreover, the constituent assembly enacted only a limited franchise. Not until 1953 was every male adult given the right to vote; women gained the franchise in 1980.

**K**ing Faisal himself was no great admirer of democracy, or of his subjects. According to his friend Lawrence, in a 1917 report to the British high command titled “Faisal’s Table Talk,” Faisal claimed that the Iraqis were “unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any national consciousness or sense of unity, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities, receptive to evil, prone to anarchy, and always willing to rise against the government.”

The prevention of such risings was the main objective of the crown as it tried to deal with the deep divisions between Iraq’s Sunni and Shia Islamic communities and between its Kurds and Arabs. These divisions were further complicated by the presence of other minorities, including the Turkomans, who still looked to Istanbul, and the largely Christian Assyrians, who had been armed by the British as the most reliable local troops.

Although there were many Sunni tribes and nomads, in general the



Sunni had accepted Ottoman rule, gravitated to the cities, and thus dominated Baghdad and the traditional Ottoman bureaucracy and officer corps. As a fellow Sunni, King Faisal leaned ever more heavily on their support. And although there were many wealthy Shia merchants, the Shia tended to be rural, poorer and less educated, and more resentful of rule from Baghdad. Faisal's task was further complicated by the tussles for influence and government largesse between the sheikhs and landowners, between the army and the urban magnates (whose money subsidized a profusion of newspapers), and between the labor unions and the British-run oil corporation.

As the parliamentary system got under way and parties began to form, Faisal and his successors ran into a classic paradox: What promised to be the largest and most resilient party, the National Democratic Union, which should have been a force for stability, was critical of the monarchy both as an institution and for its dependence on the British. The majorities the crown could engineer in parliament seldom included parties with a popular base of support. But under the constitution, political parties could be banned at will, a power used ruthlessly in times of crisis to prevent parliament from falling into opposition hands. If parliament threatened to become difficult, the prime minister could be replaced, allowing new coalitions to form, or the whole parliament could be dismissed and new elections called.

The result was an inherent political instability. In the seven years after 1932, Iraq went through 12 different cabinets, and frustration with parliament's weaknesses helped provoke a military coup in 1936. Yet the system also contributed to an extraordinary political fertility, as new parties, associations, and other political groupings emerged and faded, to be reborn under different names and with slightly different programs. Ironically, this attempt to control politics by banning parties made Iraq in general and Baghdad in particular the most energetic center of civil society and political-intellectual life in the Arab world. Parties could be banned, but not the political ferment. This meant that the real political energy of Iraqis was expressed increasingly in extra-parliamentary activities—through the army, student groups, labor unions, and the press, or in the streets.

**K**ing Faisal, while remaining committed to the dream of a pan-Arab state, wanted to keep Iraq on the course of progress and modernization begun by the British. Very often, however, his efforts backfired. In 1931, he repealed Ottoman-era laws that suppressed the Kurds, and made Kurdish an official language in schools and law courts in the Kurdish regions. These concessions were meant to compensate the Kurds for the imposition of new taxes and the rule of law from Baghdad. The Kurds revolted anyway, and were put down only with the help of British troops and Royal Air Force bombers.

In 1932, Faisal's government enacted a land settlement law, which sought to safeguard the role of nomadic tribes, such as the Beni Lam, the edh-Dafir, and the Shammar, as irrigation and farms ate into their land. The law allowed all settled tribesmen who had been cultivating a piece of land without legal title for at least 15 years to claim ownership, under the condition that the land could never be sold outside the tribe. The goal was to safeguard

tribal land, but the real beneficiaries were the tribal chiefs and wealthy city-dwellers (who could almost all claim some tribal connection), who used their political influence and wealth to obtain deeds. Many tribal people became landless peasants, while others remained on the land as sharecroppers for the new landowners, who were, like the Iraqi government ministers and officials, overwhelmingly Sunni. To the Shia of the south and the Kurds of the north, the nominally national Iraqi government in Baghdad looked increasingly like Sunni domination.

These resentments were growing fast when Faisal died in 1933, to be succeeded by his son, Ghazi, just 21. The new king was openly anti-British and a fervent believer in the pan-Arab cause, but he had little of his father's authority over the tribal chiefs and couldn't restrain their abuse of the land reform. Ghazi had to call upon the army to put down an uprising among dispossessed tribesmen in 1935, and he also used troops against the marsh Arabs in the south and Assyrian refugees from Syria in the north. The Iraqi

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army thus became less the symbol of national independence the British had hoped for and increasingly a tool of Baghdad's repression of the regions.

One of the few things the government could do to gain wider popular support, particularly from the growing numbers of educated Iraqis, was to demand the pan-Arab state the British had promised in 1916. But because that promise had included a pledge to let France have Syria and Lebanon, a pan-Arab state was the one project the British could not accept. Britain seemed likely to keep another wartime commitment, the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and for that it paid dearly when the prospect of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine stirred an Arab revolt in 1936 and gave yet another focus to the pan-Arab cause. The large Jewish population of Baghdad, which had been an important part of King Faisal's support, began to feel a backlash. (Following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, 120,000 Iraqi Jews would abandon Iraq, virtually en masse.)

By the mid-1930s, the British design of an Iraqi nation was faltering, as the Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish regions refused to coalesce. The political dream of pan-Arabism was spreading fast, and Iraq's weak government was being further enfeebled by the Great Depression. In October 1936, Iraq experienced the first military coup in the Arab world, launched by General Banr Sidqi, a Kurd and an Iraqi nationalist. The following year, Sidqi was murdered by a group of pan-Arab and Sunni army officers. The army was now a central actor in a tangled political process that set Left against Right, the cities against the tribes, pan-Arabists against nationalists, Sunni against Shia and Kurd.

The monarch remained, however, and when King Ghazi died in an automobile crash in 1939, the British engineered a regency in the name of his infant son that left power in the hands of the regent and the pro-British

prime minister, Nuri Said. Within a year, however, the Anglophobe Rashid Ali had seized power.

Nazi Germany's military triumphs in Europe in 1940 had dramatic effects in the Middle East. The pan-Arab dream of full independence without British and French tutelage looked tantalizingly close. Along with four Iraqi generals, Rashid Ali launched a coup against the monarchy in 1941, forcing the regent and Nuri Said to flee to Jordan. Hitler's Luftwaffe sent German warplanes to support Ali, openly sympathetic to the Axis, and hundreds were killed in anti-Jewish pogroms. But the British held out at their Habaniyah air base, and reinforcements from India retook Basra and Baghdad and went on to take Syria and Lebanon from Vichy France in the name of Free France. World War I had established British authority in Iraq, and World War II reaffirmed it, this time with the solid support of Britain's wartime ally, the United States.

At war's end, little seemed to have changed in the Middle East. Britain continued to run the Suez Canal. It based troops in, and exerted massive influence on, the nominally independent states of Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. But within three years, the Middle East was transformed.

Britain's own role was radically altered by the granting of Indian independence in 1947. British rule in the Middle East had begun with the need to safeguard the route to India, but now its presence was justified by the strategic importance of oil. The second new factor, the establishment of the state

of Israel in 1948, was central. For all its influence in Baghdad, Britain was not able to prevent Iraq from joining in the doomed Arab attack on Israel immediately after independence was declared. Third, the Middle East was becoming an important battleground in the new Cold War, which gave

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the United States a vital strategic interest in the region for the first time. Fourth, the United Nations looked to be a far more authoritative body than the old League, and one with a much more critical attitude toward colonialism. Finally, the pan-Arab cause was very much alive again, thanks in no small part to Britain's pledge in May 1941, at one of its lowest points in the war, to support any proposal that would strengthen ties among the Arab states. This had led ultimately to the creation in 1945 of the Arab League, a body long on inflammatory pan-Arab rhetoric but with no institutional mechanism to make its words into deeds.

In 1948, Iraq was again swept by violence when Iraqis reacted against the Portsmouth Treaty, a new device through which the British sought to perpetuate their influence, in what came to be called the *Wabwah* (uprising). Once again prime minister, Nuri Said felt obliged to repudiate the treaty he had negotiated, a sign of weakness that only strengthened the opposition to him and to the monarchy, now seen as little more than a tool of British interests. Nuri Said's

response was to tighten political repression, closing newspapers and banning political parties, publicly hanging leading Communists, and expanding the political police. Convinced that the Iraqi Communist Party was the spearhead of the Watbah, Britain and the United States supported Nuri Said. (They were much slower to see the rising influence of the secular and pan-Arabist Baathist movement.) Britain also agreed to renegotiate the system of oil royalties, swelling the Iraqi government's coffers. Despite new urban uprisings in 1952, provoked by bad harvests and Nuri Said's refusal to hold elections, the money was spent reasonably wisely, and to far better and more widespread effect than in other oil-rich countries.

**I**n 1955, a National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq by the U.S. intelligence community (no servile observer of Britain's role in the region) reported: "Seventy percent of government annual direct oil revenue is earmarked for development programs. . . . This program is administered by the Iraq Development Board (IDB), which has a British and an American as well as Iraqi members. [But] eighty per cent of the population ekes out a meager livelihood in agricultural or nomadic pursuits." A 1957 estimate expressed more enthusiasm: "Because of its stable government, its relatively effective development program and its assured oil income, Iraq will almost certainly make more progress than any other Arab country." American approval was ensured when Nuri Said nailed his colors to the Anglo-American mast by joining the Baghdad Pact, a Cold War attempt to create a regional alliance along the lines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

By 1958, Iraq's literacy rate was 15 percent, a pitiful figure but still one of the best in the Arab world. About a third of eligible Iraqi children were in elementary school, less than a tenth were in secondary school, and 8,500 students were enrolled in higher education. Under the independent monarchy, from 1932 to 1958, the population doubled to more than seven million, a third of this number dwelling in towns and cities, and Baghdad grew to more than a million inhabitants. Iraq had the lowest infant mortality rate and the highest life expectancy in the Arab world after Kuwait.

If Iraq was Britain's showcase in the Middle East, the results were only moderately impressive. And they came at a stiff political price for Iraqis. The Nuri Said government was authoritarian and manipulative. Writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1958, the celebrated American foreign correspondent William Polk cited police records suggesting that there were as many as 20,000 secret police agents in Baghdad alone. "Virtually every educated man had a police double," he concluded. "Political opposition was a bar to professional advancement. At all levels, the younger and better educated people felt stifled under the minute observations of a paternalistic government. Political repression has been severe enough effectively to close to the opposition all peaceful means of change. Only one recent election was fairly free, and that resulted in a Parliament which Nuri dismissed after one day."

"Paternalist" is a reasonable if kindly word to describe the British-influenced government of the Iraqi monarchy. By the regional standards of the day, it achieved impressive economic and social development that laid a strong



*Near Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, a welder works on an oil pipeline in 1952. Iraq at first avoided many of the ill effects of sudden oil wealth that beset other countries.*

foundation for the future. It was brought down by its political failings, and by its continued acceptance of British tutelage even after Britain's humiliation during the Suez crisis in 1956.

Nuri Said assumed that a strong and repressive hand could control political unrest while development continued. But he was removed in a 1958 military coup by officers inspired by the Egyptian colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser's Free Officers Movement, which had staged a coup against the pro-British monarchy in Cairo five years earlier. The two leaders of the Iraqi coup soon fell out. Backed by the Baathists, one wanted to join the new (and destined to be short lived) pan-Arabist union between Egypt and Syria. Backed by the Communists, General Abd el-Karim Qasim believed in transforming Iraq first. Within the year, Qasim's rival was under sentence of death.

Ironically, this power struggle may have saved Iraq from a far worse fate. It distracted the coup leaders from their shared objective of occupying Kuwait, which Iraqis had seen as a "lost province" of Iraq since Britain established the independent sheikhdom in 1920. The British and Americans were not just prepared to go to war to preserve oil-rich Kuwait; President Dwight D. Eisenhower was ready to use nuclear weapons. He ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to "be prepared to employ, subject to my approval, whatever means might be necessary to prevent any unfriendly forces from moving into Kuwait."

Qasim's rule was brief and turbulent. In 1959, he survived a coup attempt, and, six months later, he narrowly escaped assassination by a Baathist team, one of whose members was Saddam Hussein, then 23. In 1962, with Qasim's army bogged down in a grueling and fruitless campaign to suppress a Kurdish revolt, the Baathists launched a general strike against the regime. In February 1963 Qasim fell after bloody street fighting in Baghdad, in a coup that enjoyed discreet support from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. The Baathists then launched a new terror against the Communists, and finally consolidated their power in 1968, thanks in part to the ruthless efficiency of the secret police chief, Saddam Hussein.

Through all of this, Iraq continued to make marked social progress. By the time Saddam Hussein became president in 1979, Iraq's literacy rate was 50 percent, and with a million students in secondary education and another 120,000 in universities, the country could claim to be the most developed in the Arab world. The performance might have been even better had not Iraq's rulers tripled the share of government revenues spent on the armed forces, from seven percent in 1958 to 20 percent by 1970. Beginning in the 1970s, soaring oil prices encouraged the increasingly wealthy Baathist regime to greater regional (and nuclear) ambitions; the war launched against Iran in 1980 by Saddam Hussein ground on for eight terrible years, with more than one million dead. Iran and Iraq were left impoverished.

There's a clear set of lessons to be drawn from Iraq's history of independence. (1) Social progress and development through wise deployment of oil wealth guarantee neither democracy nor stability. (2) Governments too closely identified with foreign influence, no matter how well intentioned the foreign power may be, will generate intense domestic opposition. (3) The Iraqi armed forces are both crucial and dangerous to any new government, and have hitherto been held in check only by the ruthless use of a secret police force, a remedy that has proved worse than the disease. (4) The Iraqi national identity that the British tried to foster from the 1920s remains at constant risk from the ethnic and religious tensions among the three dominant elements of Iraqi society: the Sunni, Shia, and Kurds. (5) The political stability of Iraq should never be considered in isolation but within a broader context of developments throughout the Arab world and in Iran.

**I**t is now 85 years since the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and successive attempts by the French and British, by the Soviets and their communist allies, by the Americans with their democratic instincts, and by the Arabs themselves have all failed to generate stability in the region in general, and in Iraq in particular. The pan-Arab dream, secular and modernizing in intention, never managed to overcome the suspicions of tribes, mosques, and national governments, nor did it succeed in identifying itself with the lurking counterforce of pan-Islamism. The great schism between pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism had been implicit since the bitter struggle between the Hashemites and the Saudis to control Mecca at the end of World War I. The Saudis were Wahhabites, puritanical and suspicious of modern and Western ways and receptive to pan-Arabist dreams only insofar as they helped spread the Wahhabi creed through the Muslim world. The

Hashemites in Jordan and Iraq, by contrast, believed in pan-Arabism as an ideal in itself, and as the mechanism that would enable the Arab world to modernize and develop and take its place in the great councils of the world, just as Faisal had done at Versailles in 1919.

Eighty years on, pan-Arabism has faltered, discredited by recurrent failures and authoritarian rule, and by the rivalries between the various Arab nations the British and French carved from the Ottoman corpse. Its most promising early exponent, King Faisal, initially saw pan-Arabism as a British gift rather than an Arab creation, and his monarchy was debilitated by its dependence on British support. Faisal's conception of the cause, monarchic rather than democratic, vied with the rival communist, Nasserite, and, later, Baathist versions of pan-Arabism, each of them authoritarian in instinct and ruthlessly nationalist in practice. By contrast, pan-Islam has found a generous sponsor in Saudi oil wealth and a ferocious new spearhead in Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda.

**P**erhaps the final lesson of Iraq's complex career since independence is that a secular and modernizing pan-Arabism has proved to be one of the sadder might-have-beens of history. Had the British been able to encourage it along more genuinely democratic lines it would certainly have been preferable to the succession of military coups and authoritarian rulers that marked Iraq's course, and to the aggressive and uncompromising pan-Islamic forces that now grip much of the Muslim world. It was probably the only alternative vision that could have competed with the pan-Islamic fervor. And, in years to come, a secular and democratic pan-Arabism—if those terms are not inherently contradictory—may yet be able to play that role.

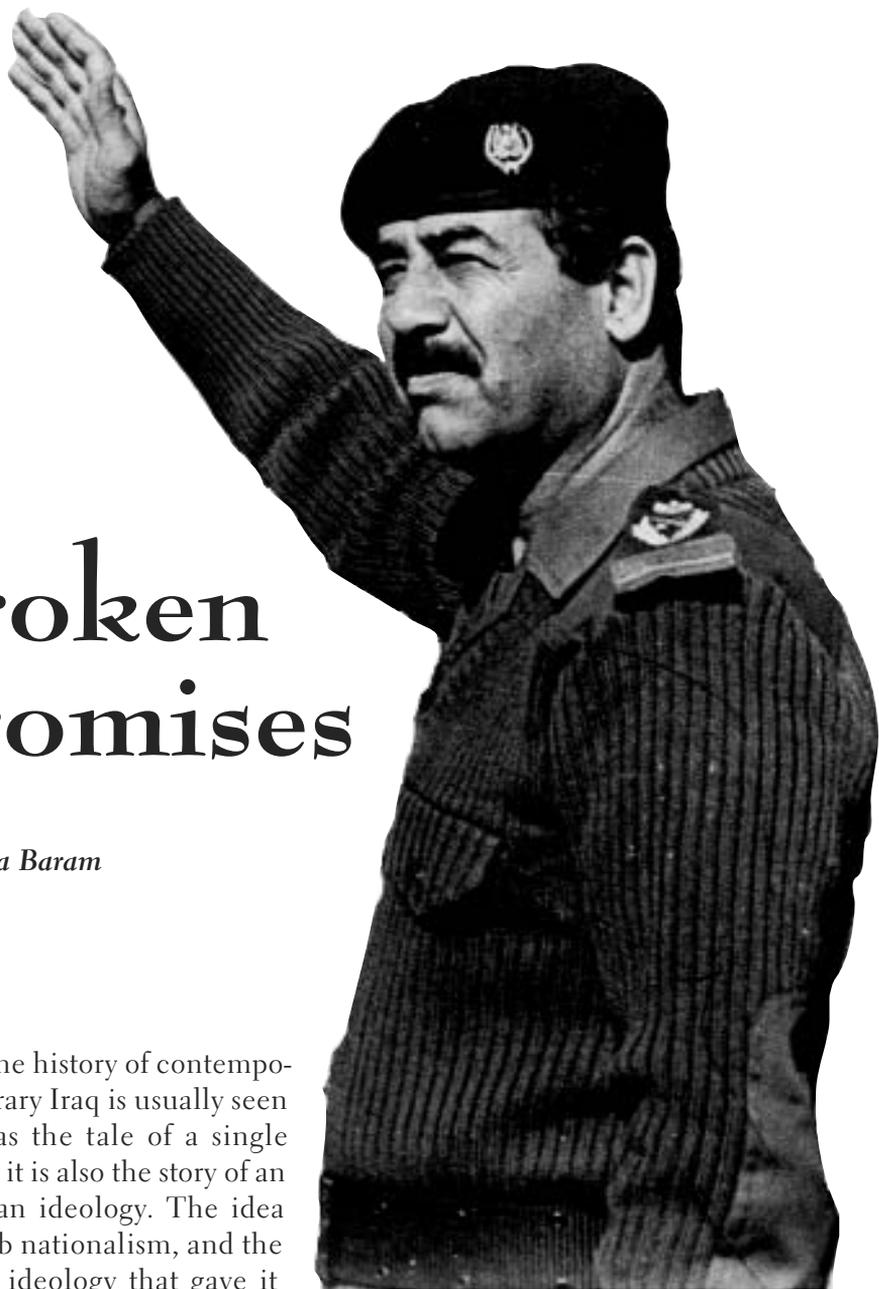
Having taken a direct hand in forging a stable and democratic post-Saddam Iraq, Americans could do worse than ponder two contrasting thoughts from Gertrude Bell, one of the foreigners who knew the Iraqi people best. The first was written in despair during the uprising of 1920: "The problem is the future. The tribes don't want to form part of a unified state; the towns can't do without it." The second, far more optimistic observation came at the end of her career a half-dozen years later, when the British mandate was proceeding reasonably smoothly: "Iraq is the only country which pulls together with Great Britain and the reason is that we have honestly tried out here to do the task that we said we were going to do, i.e. create an independent Arab state."

She may have thought so, but few Iraqis truly believed it. For all their good intentions and achievements, the British, under the strains of war, recession, and dependence on oil, were never quite able to surrender their remaining control over Iraq's independence until they were forced to do so. And by maintaining that control, the British precluded the development of a political system that might have produced a non-authoritarian regime capable of governing the unstable, improbable country they had created. But as an alternative to pan-Arabism or pan-Islamism, that hope of building an Iraqi nation based on a constitution and representative government appears to be the political goal of the American and British armies of today, just as it was of Britain's proconsuls 80 years ago. □

# Broken Promises

*by Amatzia Baram*

**T**he history of contemporary Iraq is usually seen as the tale of a single tyrant, but it is also the story of an idea and an ideology. The idea is pan-Arab nationalism, and the particular ideology that gave it form in Iraq, and in neighboring Syria, is Baathism. From its founding in Damascus by French-educated intellectuals during the 1940s, the Baath Party propounded the doctrines that would guide and inspire Syrian and Iraqi leaders, including Saddam Hussein, through decades of tumultuous and ultimately tragic history. Long before Saddam's downfall in the spring of 2003, the Baath program had betrayed and devoured its own ideals: The quest for Arab unity led to wars of conquest, freedom became oppression, and socialism descended into exploitation and poverty. Saddam Hussein may be gone, but the pan-Arab and Baath legacies remain forces with which anyone contemplating the future of Iraq must reckon.



During the 1930s, when they were still young high school teachers in Damascus, Michel Aflaq (1910–89) and Salah ad-Din al-Bitar (1912–80), the two men who would go on to create the Baath Party in 1940, had few fully formed ideas. One idea, though, was as unambiguous as it was powerful: the need to unify all the Arab lands into one political entity. In what would become the party’s holy trinity of principles—Unity, Freedom, Socialism—unity would be by far the most cherished.

Much like the German romantic nationalist ideologue Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814),

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whom they admired, Aflaq and Bitar saw language as the basis of national identity. All Arabic speakers, they argued, must go through a mental revolution, forsake all selfishness, and dedicate themselves to the great Arab national cause. This would bring about a “resurrection” (*baath*) that would awaken the Arab nation from its slumber and lead to the birth of a united Arab state stretching from the

Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf. Through such a state, and only through it, the Arabs would be able to end their long decline, retake their rightful place among the nations, and carry “an eternal message” to humanity.

There’s no reason to doubt the genuine commitment of these teachers and their early disciples to the goal of Arab unity. Indeed, when Syria experienced political turmoil in late 1957 and early 1958, Syria’s Baath party, with Bitar in the post of foreign minister, pushed the rest of the country’s political elite toward unification with Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Egypt. It wasn’t only ideological zeal for Arab unity that inspired the Baath. The political crisis in Syria threatened them, and they believed that Nasser would provide them with protection, while they would provide him with ideological guidance. Yet their commitment should not be underestimated. When the Egyptian president demanded a fully integrated Arab state rather than the federal one they preferred, the Baath leaders immediately consented. When Nasser insisted that he serve as the sole president, they agreed. They even volunteered to disband the Baath Party and integrate it into Nasser’s mass political organization. A deal was struck in 1958, but the resulting United Arab Republic had a short and stormy life, lasting only until 1961. Yet when it dissolved,

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Aflaq, still fully wedded to the ideal of unity, refused to sign the secession document, and Bitar, who did sign, later regretted his decision.

The sediment of failure left by the dissolution of the United Arab Republic turned into a poison that killed every subsequent attempt at unification. The self-interest of the party and its leaders became paramount. When Baath regimes came to power in Baghdad and Damascus within a month of each other early in 1963, both again turned to Cairo with hopes of unification. But the discussions very quickly became acrimonious. The three countries did sign a unification protocol on April 17, 1963, but the marriage was never consummated. Not even the two Baath states, Iraq and Syria, would ever be able to unite.

**T**he Iraqi Baath regime was driven from power later in 1963 by General Abd as-Salam Arif, a Nasserist with no interest in unification with the Syrians, and when the Baath regained control in 1968 under Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, Baghdad and Damascus made some halfhearted attempts to forge unity. But these efforts soon gave way to growing hostility, brought on in part by each regime's meddling in the other's country. Despite their pan-Arab rhetoric, both Baath governments were minority regimes. The Iraqi leadership was essentially Sunni Arab (though it did include some Shia) in a majority-Shia land, while in Damascus, a few Sunni Arabs notwithstanding, the Baath Party was rooted in the small Alawite Arab minority. Neither regime could resist the temptation to appeal to the disgruntled majority across the border in the name of "true" pan-Arabism. For a time, the necessity of presenting a united front against Anwar as-Sadat's Egypt after the 1979 Camp David agreements did bring the regimes closer together, but unity talks again failed miserably.



*Michel Aflaq*

Meanwhile, the Iraqis began introducing major changes in Baath ideology, especially after Saddam assumed the presidency in 1979. The party's founders had envisaged a united Arab state, founded on egalitarian principles, with all earlier Arab states and people dissolved into one homogenous superstate. But the Iraqi Baath began moving toward an Iraqi-centered, imperial pan-Arab concept. The Iraqi people, Saddam and his court ideologues argued, would never dissolve and disappear. The Iraqi nation had been born many thousands of years ago; it had established the earliest and greatest civilizations on earth, starting with Sumer and Akkad, through Babylon, Assyria, Chaldea, and the Abbasid caliphate, and culminating in the Baath regime. Iraq was destined for greatness—it would lead the whole Arab nation. For the foreseeable future, therefore, it would be more important to pursue Iraqi interests than to sacrifice Iraq

on the altar of Arab causes. Naturally, the new theory did not have much appeal to other Arab states.

By the time the Iran-Iraq War broke out in 1980, relations between the Baath governments in Iraq and Syria had deteriorated to such an extent that Syria sided with non-Arab Shia Iran. During the Kuwait crisis of 1990–91, the Syrians went so far as to send troops to Saudi Arabia to oppose the Iraqis. By the late 1990s, relations between the Baath twins saw some improvement, but mutual mistrust still prevailed. And in fall 2002, Syria joined all 14 other members of the United Nations Security Council in endorsing Resolution 1441, which called on Iraq to disarm (though Damascus opposed the U.S.-led invasion that followed).

During the entire period since the founding of the Baath movement, only one form of unification in the Arab world has met with any success: unification through military force. In 1976 Syria conquered Lebanon, which it still occupies (but hasn't annexed). And in 1990, Iraq briefly swallowed and annexed Kuwait—a step Saddam justified partly in pan-Arab terms. Even a unification project that at first seemed very successful, the

1990 union of North and South Yemen, led within four years to rupture and war. Reunification did occur, but only through conquest.

Sixty years after the birth of the Baath Party, the pan-Arab promise it embodied has yielded bitter fruit. The mirage of Arab unity sucked

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Baath Iraq and Syria and Nasserist Egypt into very costly political adventures—a failed unification, chronic meddling in one another's domestic affairs—and a variety of military adventures against other Arab states. Pan-Arab aspirations also led these regimes to promise complete salvation to the Palestinians and the total destruction of Israel, promises they could not keep. These assurances not only led the three Arab nations into disastrous wars against the Jewish state, they also kept the Palestinians waiting for the promised redemption, and prevented them from reconciling themselves to the idea of a compromise solution.

The Baath were no different from others in the Arab world in bitterly opposing Israel, but they were different from some others in propounding an ideology that was, at least in the beginning, notably secular. As it was formulated by Michel Aflaq in the 1940s, Baath thought committed the party to the principle of a secular state. Aflaq's own origins as a Christian Arab had something to do with his notion of a language-based Arab nation committed to secularism—how else could he ensure his acceptance as an equal by his Muslim compatriots? In the 1940s, however, these ideas were also popular among educated young Muslims who were the product of the state's secular school system and who saw in them a way to marry their Arab-Islamic identity to the modern spirit.

“Islam,” Aflaq told his disciples, is “equal to other religions in the Arab State,” thus excluding the possibility that there would be any official religion. A secularized state would “free religion from [the influence of] political circumstances” and enable it to flourish and exert a positive moral influence on people. The state should be “based on a social foundation, Arab nationalism, and a moral one: freedom.” There’s not a single explicit mention of Islam or religion in the text of the party’s founding constitution.

But Aflaq also needed to make sure that his fledgling movement would take root in the larger community, where Islamic history and heroes had great meaning even to those who were not deeply religious. No wonder, then, that he called upon all Arabs to admire Islam and the Prophet, because of Islam’s “important role in shaping Arab history and Arab nationalism.” Aflaq also insisted that the Baath movement opposed atheism, and that “it is impossible to separate [Baathism] from religion” —an equivocation that would later catch up with him.

**W**hen the Baath Party returned to power in Iraq in 1968, it walked a tightrope between its traditional secularism and popular opinion. In arenas that had been regulated along fairly secular lines under the monarchy (1921–58)—education, entertainment, and even alcohol consumption—it adopted similar policies. Its campaign to trumpet the greatness of the pre-Islamic “Iraqis” (ancient Mesopotamians) and Arabs was another sign of its secularism. But the regime also paid lip service to Islam. In two early constitutions, Islam was identified as the “state religion.” The main all-Islamic festivals and holidays were brought under the government’s umbrella, as were some specifically Shia ones. Minimal restrictions were imposed on public activities that might infuriate Islamic traditionalists, such as blatant public breaking of the fast during Ramadan. In other words, the regime adopted a populist and pragmatic (or opportunistic) policy of allowing the secular public—perhaps a majority of the population—to continue its unorthodox way of life, while keeping the more orthodox circles reasonably happy.

It became much harder to straddle the secular-religious divide after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini rose to power in Tehran in 1979. The Iranian leader and Shia holy man made very effective use of religious rhetoric, accusing Baghdad of rejecting Islam and embracing atheism. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88), Saddam worried that members of Iraq’s Shia majority might side with their coreligionists in Iran, and his regime tried to portray Khomeini as a Persian heathen who had nothing to offer Iraq’s Arab Shia. Increasingly, Baghdad tried to wrap itself in the colors of Islam. One of the oddest manifestations of this strategy came in June 1989, when Baghdad announced the death of Michel Aflaq. A party communiqué announced that just before his death Aflaq had “embraced Islam as his religion.” In death, the old ideologue’s equivocations finally overtook him.

As the 1990–91 Kuwait crisis deepened, Saddam increasingly turned

to Islam, no doubt hoping to rally Iraqis and to shore up Islamic support in the international arena. The Iraqi president portrayed himself as the leader of the Arab nation and the Islamic world, and he even started portraying himself as the bearer of the message to humankind. On January 14, 1991, one day before the deadline set by the United Nations for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, Saddam commanded that Iraqis add the slogan *Allahu Akbar* ("God is great") to the national flag.

With the defeat in Kuwait, a Shia uprising (brutally suppressed in March 1991), and the increasing deterioration of the economy, Saddam took more steps to Islamize Iraqi institutions. Beginning in 1994, a host of sharia laws transformed the Iraqi penal code. Eventually, he even prohibited the public consumption of alcohol—reversing an 80-year-old policy. Robbery and car theft were now punished by amputation of the right hand at the wrist. "In case of repetition the left foot should be amputated at the ankle," said the official decree. Iraqi television dwelled on the offenders and their blood-drenched limbs—Islamization had the added benefit of providing the regime yet another means of terrorizing its fear-stricken population.

**A**fter unity, freedom was the Baaths' most important ideal. At first, it had two different meanings: liberation from foreign occupation, and internal democracy. After the French left Syria and General Abd al-Karim Qasim toppled Iraq's pro-British monarchy in 1958, internal party democracy took on greater importance. And the principle was reasonably well observed. Before the Egyptian-Syrian-Iraqi unity talks in 1963, Baath spokesmen even provoked Egyptian wrath by speaking with disapproval of Nasser's "dictatorial" rule. This, an angry Nasser later informed his Baath interlocutors, was one reason the talks failed.

The 1947 Baath Constitution is full of provisions that sound like genuine commitments to Western liberal-democratic principles. Aflaq and Bitar, having been educated in French-run Syria and graduated from the Sorbonne, were well acquainted with Western European democracy. The document declares that the "freedom of speech, assembly, [and religious] belief is sacred, and no authority can undermine it." It also says: "The judicial authority will be independent. It will be free from interference by other authorities and enjoy total immunity." There are many similar provisions. But the constitution also left a small escape hatch in Article 20: "The rights of citizenship are granted in their totality" only to the citizen "devoted to the Arab homeland and who has no connection to any racist [or factious] organization."

In any event, days after the party came to power in Iraq for the first time in February 1963, its leaders began a massacre of their political rivals. Hundreds of real and suspected communists were murdered during the first days, and arrests, murders, assassinations, and executions continued until General Arif removed the party from power in November 1963. When the Iraqi Baath came to power again in 1968, the government promptly

conducted a mock espionage trial and public hanging of nine young Jews in Baghdad's Liberation Square. As foreign minister Tariq Aziz noted a few years later, the public hanging of the Jews was a matter of expediency; many Iraqis believed (correctly, it seems) that the first Baath regime had come to power with the support of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, and their successors felt compelled to demonstrate their determination to "eradicate the espionage networks." By 1968, the Iraqi Baath's internal security czar was a young, little-known man from the town of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Nasiri al-Tikriti. Arrest, torture, and, occasionally, the assassination of suspected communists and other enemies were now the order of the day. Iraq had become what was probably the most coercive police state in the Middle East (which is saying a lot).

After Saddam jailed, executed, murdered, or drove out of the country many real and perceived enemies of the party, he turned against his own rivals within the Baath. The lucky ones lost only their jobs. In 1979, he became president by forcing his elderly relative, President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, to resign. Then Saddam initiated a sweeping purge. He began his campaign at a session with scores of the party's most senior officials by conducting a witch-hunt that would have been the envy even of Joseph Stalin. As the scene was recorded on videotape, members of the highest party and state bodies, many in a state of shock, were dragged out of the hall to face party firing squads. Eventually, hundreds of party officials and senior army officers were executed.

**A**ny shred of respect for human rights or other democratic values that had survived the earlier years of Baath Party rule now disappeared. Party membership was made compulsory for many Iraqis in responsible positions. By joining, they accepted severe political and security limitations, including some that promised a death sentence if violated. By 1989 the number of party members had swelled to 1.5 million, but the privileged rank (one of four ranks of membership) remained strictly controlled, not exceeding 25,000. Interviews with ex-members suggest that the last vestiges of internal party democracy soon vanished.

After Ayatollah Khomeini's triumphant return to Tehran in 1979, Iraq saw a wave of pro-Khomeini demonstrations by its own Shia citizens. The Baath regime responded with severe repression. By the autumn of 1980, hundreds had been executed—including an ayatollah, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr—and thousands jailed. Tens of thousands of Shia were forced to cross the border into Iran. As if not to be outdone in brutality, Saddam's Baath counterpart in Damascus, President Hafiz al-Asad, in 1982 ordered his special forces to bombard the city of Hama, where the Muslim Brotherhood had been active. At least 20,000 residents were killed. Baghdad did not lag behind in brutality for very long. In an operation named "War Booty," launched in response to a Kurdish revolt in the north in 1987 and 1988, Saddam's troops murdered between 50,000 and 100,000 Kurds, many of them women and children. And when Iraqi

## Iraq

*An aggrieved majority: Shia Muslims gather before Baghdad's Imam Musa al-Kazim mosque to honor a holy man who died more than a thousand years ago in a Sunni prison.*

Shia in the south revolted in March 1991, after the Persian Gulf War, the army slaughtered another 30,000 to 60,000 people. These massacres were beyond anything the party's founders could have imagined in their worst nightmares.

Despite these unrelenting horrors, the Baath regimes in Baghdad and Damascus carefully maintained all the trappings of democracy. Since 1980 Iraq has had an elected parliament, which is of course a rubber stamp. When the people went to the polls in 1995, more than 99 percent voted in support of Saddam's presidency; he got precisely 100 percent of the vote in 2002. By the beginning of 2003, both Iraq and Syria could boast presidential and parliamentary elections, along with a variety of newspapers, magazines, broadcasting outlets, labor unions, and other organizations. But the two most dictatorial regimes in the Arab world were, in this order, those of the Baath in Baghdad and Damascus.

In the economic realm, the Baath vision was inspired by the theories of the Fabian Society, the genteel and highly influential socialist intellectual movement of early-20th-century Britain. The state would control big industry and transport, banks, and internal and external trade. It would direct the course of economic development, and, of course, it would provide a guaranteed minimum standard of living for all.

Almost as soon as they came to power in Iraq and Syria, the Baath regimes embarked on major socioeconomic reforms and development projects. In 1969, Baghdad made a bid for support in the countryside, especially in the Shia areas, by substantially expanding the land reform that had been launched under General Qasim in 1958. It also created an extensive system of farm cooperatives (designed in part to give it greater control over the peasantry). The cooperatives, however, were an economic failure and had to be disbanded. After it nationalized the oil industry in





1972 and began reaping the benefits of the oil price boom of 1973–74, the regime started investing huge sums in heavy industry, roads, and water and electrical systems in the countryside. Health, education, and other government services took a quantum leap, and for the first time urban workers enjoyed something of a social safety net.

But this petrodollar-financed largesse for the common people was accompanied by a burst of semiofficial corruption on a very large scale. A stratum of new millionaires emerged, most of whom had made their fortunes through patron-client relationships with the regime's luminaries. Some had amassed their wealth by gaining monopolies on prize agricultural land, establishing thriving farms that enjoyed substantial state subsidies. Others had prospered thanks to lucrative contracts with the state. Still oth-

ers had enriched themselves by taking kickbacks from local and foreign companies.

From my own sources, mainly interviews, I have concluded that Saddam Hussein's family probably spearheaded the large-scale corruption in Iraq. When General Hussein Kamil, Saddam's son-in-law and paternal cousin, defected to Jordan in 1995, he was believed by well-informed Jordanian circles to have brought with him no less than \$30 million, which he could hardly have saved from his salary. By early 2003 Saddam's wife, Sajida, his elder son, Uday, and his half-brothers Barazan, Watban, and Sib'awi were multimillionaires in their own right. Most conspicuous, of course, was Saddam's own wealth, notably his many private palaces, some boasting huge proportions and exquisite appointments.

It's often said, incorrectly, that Saddam's corruption was no different from that of his predecessors. But the Hashemite monarchs who ruled from the 1920s to the 1950s had only two palaces. Their successor, General Qasim (1958–63), did not even have a home of his own. He spent his nights either at his mother's modest home or sleeping on a mattress on the floor of his office at the Ministry of Defense. And another of Iraq's dictators, Abd ar-Rahman Arif, worked for 20 years as a hotel manager in Turkey after he was toppled by the Baath because he had no other source of income. The Baath corrupted the Iraqi state more grievously than any other regime in the country's history.

After three decades in power, the Baath regime of Iraq and its twin in Syria managed to fulfill none of their founding principles—unity, freedom, or socialism. Some progress toward the last of these might be claimed, if socialism meant a limited social safety net, nationalization of the country's main economic assets, and a modest narrowing of the income gap between people in the capital city and those in the countryside. (There was also, one must point out, some improvement in the status of women.)

Yet in Iraq, two wars and more than a decade of international embargo—all the result of the Baath's deviation from their original ideals—destroyed the economy. By early 2003, most Iraqis were dependent on food rations received through the United Nations oil-for-food program. Syria's economy is in deep trouble, and despite some economic liberalization, the private sector is still very depressed. Corruption has been an enormous drain in both countries. These societies, in which state-sponsored violence has been ubiquitous, along with bribery, semiofficial smuggling, extortion, and kickbacks, fall far short of any meaningful socialist ideal.

**B**oth Baath states built huge bureaucracies employing educated people who, under a different socioeconomic system, would have become entrepreneurs in small and midsize enterprises and helped build the national economy. The only way out of this situation seems to be to end the state's stranglehold over the economy, to introduce reforms that ensure transparency, and to encourage private enterprise by offering loans on an equitable basis. None of this can happen without the removal of the Baath ruling elites.

As for Arab unity, the dream once seemed within reach, but by the 1960s, and especially the 1970s, it was no longer a realistic program. The Baath regimes continued to invoke pan-Arab nationalism in the service of their parochial interests. It served as rationalization for intervention, military and otherwise, in the affairs of rival Arab states and regimes. Thus, Syria's 1976 occupation of Lebanon and Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in 1990 were justified in part as necessary steps to save the Arab nation from its enemies. Far from fostering unity, the pan-Arab idea has helped destabilize the Arab world.

Freedom? Because pan-Arabism failed to bestow legitimacy on Saddam and his Syrian counterparts, both employed extremely harsh security measures—harsher than those in most other Arab states—making a mockery of the Baath promise of freedom.

**H**istory shows that pan-Arabism is a dangerous ideology, embraced by the most extreme, adventurous, and brutal dictatorships in the Middle East and too readily cited as a rationale for domestic and foreign aggression. Arab identity and culture are one thing, a pan-Arab political agenda quite another. In the future, it would make sense to lay the emphasis on local patriotism, be it Iraqi, Syrian, Egyptian, or Jordanian, accompanied by a mild and tolerant form of Arab solidarity. Leaders who speak the language of pan-Arabism have too strong a tendency to speak over the heads of local leaders to the populations of neighboring countries. That is a recipe for long-term international instability.

State patriotism also holds some promise of easing the tensions between Kurds and Arabs in Iraq (and in Syria, too, though Kurds are a small minority there), and between the main Muslim groups. Arab nationalist ideology was used as a veneer to conceal the rule of minority groups—mostly Sunni Arabs in Iraq and Alawite Arabs in Syria. Few of Iraq's Shia were ever attracted to the pan-Arab cause. They realized that it served to legitimize the rule of a Sunni Arab minority in Iraq, and that in a larger pan-Arab nation they would be drowned in a Sunni Arab majority. But in Iraq they would be a majority. Iraqi patriotism is not a perfect solution to the Shia-Sunni split, but perhaps it can help mitigate the conflict.

There's good reason, however, to believe that in the future Iraq will be able to avoid the tide of Islamization that has beset its neighbors in the region. When a regime in an Arab-Islamic country does not enjoy reasonable legitimacy, it's not uncommon to appeal to Islamic sentiment in times of stress. Egypt and Syria tilted toward the Islamization of public life in the 1990s. Iraq leaped. In a post-Saddam Iraq, the state will need to show respect for Islam, but most of the measures adopted by the Baath regime will have to be reversed. A more legitimate regime will easily be able to do this. A complete or near-complete separation of mosque and state seems far-fetched, but Iraq has always been a relatively secular state, and there is no reason why it should not return to its tradition. □

# What's Natural?

What do tummy tucks and Viagra have to do with the brave new world of genetic technology and wonder drugs?

In today's debates over relatively commonplace medical matters, we can see the outlines of tomorrow's titanic clashes over technologies that promise to alter human destiny.

*by Andrew Stark*

**D**eborah Fuller was proud of her “long, brown ringlets” when she was a child. But as an adult she suffers from alopecia areata, an ailment that causes substantial, often total, hair loss from the scalp. Testifying before a state legislative committee in New Hampshire in 1992, Fuller asked whether she might remove her wig: “If it would not upset anyone,” she said, “I would like to demonstrate what it looks like to have alopecia.” The committee was considering whether the state should require private health insurers to pay for wigs for such patients. The question in New Hampshire and other states has been: Are wigs in such cases a “medical necessity”?

Yes, they are, Fuller argued. “There are people who consider suicide because of [alopecia]. I didn't because I am a strong person, but I will tell you that this,” and she pointed to her wig, “replaces a shrink in a minute.” The problem is that a proper wig can cost up to \$3,000, and many patients cannot afford them without help from their insurance companies. Yet it could cost as much as \$6 billion to provide wigs for the estimated two to three million women in the United States who suffer from the disease.

No one, including spokespersons for the insurance industry, would deny that cancer care or hip replacements are medical necessities and warrant insurance coverage—unlike, say, a visit to a spa in order to relieve stress. But between the poles of the clearly necessary and the plainly not, the terrain grows ever more contested, with patients arguing for medical necessity where insurers see none.

Indeed, what used to be a cold war has recently turned hot. During the past decade, legislatures in every state have considered bills that would mandate insurance coverage of everything from Viagra to abortion to wigs for alopecia patients. The amounts of money involved can be substantial. Viagra, which came on the market in 1998, now racks up \$1.5 billion in sales every year. Infertility, a growing phenomenon in this age of delayed marriages, afflicts around 6 million American women and their partners; the cost of treatment ranges anywhere between \$10,000 and \$40,000, depending on the number of rounds needed. And in addition to legislative hearings, 40 states in the past few years have established external appeals panels: rosters of independent physicians who arbitrate disputes between patients and their health maintenance organizations (HMOs), making decisions—thousands of them annually—as to what's medically necessary in particularly hard cases.



*Are today's new drugs and medical procedures restoring patients to their natural state, or are they doing something else? And what, after all, is a person's true "natural state?"*

In the future, as researchers perfect medical treatments that are little more than dreams now—genetic and cellular manipulations to increase IQ or lifespan, advanced generations of human growth hormones or mood-altering drugs—debates over the meaning of medical necessity will grow even louder, and the answers will have much profounder implications for the human future. Insurers, unwilling to pay for these techniques, are going to deny that they are even remotely medically necessary, consigning them to the realm of “personal enhancement.” That, however, is unlikely to sit well with people who feel they desperately need them.

Insurers sometimes claim to be agnostic about the medical necessity of the contested procedures. Their real concern, they say, is that each new covered service drives up the price of insurance. But if cost were the only issue, they would be covering contraceptives, which they don't, but not cancer care, which they do. In fact, insurers employ an arsenal of arguments in their struggle with patients in order to draw the boundary of medical necessity so as to exclude or

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include various conditions. One of their weapons of choice is analogy: The insurers liken a proposed procedure to one that anyone would concede lies beyond the realm of medical necessity. If insurers were required to cover wigs for alopecia sufferers, what would be next? Would they have to cover wigs for male pattern baldness? Or long-sleeved shirts for eczema sufferers? Patients counter with analogies of their own: Since insurers cover ointments for alopecia, they have acknowledged that alopecia—unlike male pattern baldness—is a real medical condition. And since insurers cover wigs for chemotherapy patients, they have acknowledged that wigs—unlike long-sleeved shirts—are a genuine medical treatment. So how can insurers deny wigs for alopecia?

Another favorite tactic of both sides is to call attention to inconsistencies. Insurers will pay for a psychotherapist to deal with the suicidal thoughts that alopecia provokes, but not for a wig to deal with the physical hair loss. They'll cover the costs of depression associated with infertility, but not the costs of in vitro fertilization to remedy the infertility itself. Yet the same insurers who want to cover only the mental consequences of certain physical conditions also want to cover only the physical aspects of mental conditions such as bipolar disorder and attention deficit disorder. Insurers have fought hard, at the state level, to be required to cover mental conditions only to the extent that they have an immediate biological cause, something that doctors can attack with drugs rather than with Freud. But if the insurance industry pays for mental conditions only insofar as they are really physical, and physical conditions only insofar as they are mental, doesn't its position risk collapsing under the weight of the inconsistency?

**W**e need to derive from the debate some coherent principles that may help us to locate the boundaries of medical necessity. As it turns out, legislators focus on whether a particular service is a necessity, not on whether it qualifies as medical. After all, legislators are not doctors but politicians, who are used to having to distinguish between genuine needs and mere desires. In contrast, appeals panels, because they are composed of physicians, tend to be uniformly sympathetic to what they view as a sea of undifferentiated need and, instead, make their distinctions by focusing on whether the service at issue qualifies as genuinely medical. The battle, in other words, has two theaters—one that focuses on the meaning of *necessity*, the other on the meaning of *medical*—and to understand what's at stake, you must spend time in each of them.

Much of the debate in state legislatures has been over whether it should be mandatory for insurers to cover prescription contraception for fertile couples, in vitro fertilization for infertile couples, and wigs for alopecia patients. But these debates inevitably lead those involved to consider the relative medical necessity of three other procedures: abortion, breast reconstruction after a mastectomy, and treatment with Viagra.

In most states, insurers generally don't have to pay for contraception, but they do pay for Viagra. They steadfastly resist covering in vitro fertilization for infertile couples who want kids, but a substantial majority of them cover nonthera-

>ANDREW STARK, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is a professor of strategic management at the University of Toronto and the author of *Conflict of Interest in American Public Life* (2000). Copyright © 2003 by Andrew Stark.

peutic abortion for women who don't want kids. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1998 that about "70 percent of health plans will pay for abortion, but only 17 percent will pay for in vitro," and there's no reason to think the figures have changed dramatically since. Finally, insurers, with the exception of those in Minnesota and New Hampshire, have not been mandated to pay for wigs for alopecia sufferers. But they have been mandated, in every state, to pay for breast reconstruction after a mastectomy. The seeming disparity prompted this response from Judy Horton of Nashua, New Hampshire, at a legislative hearing: "I hope this is not a cheap shot, but let's pretend . . . that each one of us women in this room has one breast and is wearing a breast prosthesis as well as a scalp prosthesis. Given a choice that you had to remove one and walk down Main Street today, which would you rather remove?" By Horton's measure, insurers appear to have their priorities backwards.

Is there a common principle at play in the patients' complaints? Consider the criterion that Norman Daniels, a philosopher at the Harvard School of Public Health, offers in *Just Health Care* (1985), the first—and still the most influential—philosophical treatment of these questions. Daniels defines our "important [medical] needs" as whatever is "necessary for maintaining [the] normal functioning" of human beings viewed "as members of a natural species." He argues that a "necessity" is whatever medical treatment "it is reasonable for persons to choose in a given society"—that is to say, it's what most of us would choose if we found ourselves faced with a certain health condition.

Daniels's natural-functioning criterion would overturn current private insurance practice on the grounds that it has indeed gotten things exactly backwards—on abortion, for example. Daniels

has said that he would require insurance coverage of infertility treatment, because bearing children is part of our natural functioning. But he would not require coverage of abortion, because "unwanted pregnancy is not a disease" and miscarrying is not part of the natural functioning of our species.

When it comes to Viagra, which insurers widely cover, and contraceptives, which they do not, you might expect Daniels's natural-functioning approach to uphold the status quo. After all, Viagra aids the natural procreative functioning of the male, while contraception thwarts the natural procreative functioning of the female. But suppose we view "natural" sexuality in recreational, not procreative, terms. Since "most Viagra users are men aged 50–75, hardly peak biological years for procreation," a writer in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* pointed out a few years ago, "the specter of 'recreational' use is hard to ignore." Viagra users are not fulfilling their natural functioning but thumbing their noses at it. After all, as Robert Scheer wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, "Isn't sexual impotence God's gentle way of saying to a 75-year-old man, 'You've had enough?'" Contraception, by contrast, enables a woman "to enjoy sex," Paige Shipman of Wisconsin Planned Parenthood told me, precisely by "eliminating a direct threat to her natural functioning: the ravages on her body that would result from having to bear 12 to 15 children."

VIAGRA USERS ARE NOT  
FULFILLING THEIR NATURAL  
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## *What's Natural?*

So if sex is understood in procreative terms, Viagra promotes natural functioning and contraception thwarts it. If it's understood in recreational terms, Viagra frequently mocks natural functioning and contraception protects it.

Daniels suggests another way of establishing the meaning of natural functioning: Observe what most members of our species would choose to do when faced with a particular condition. It turns out that only 15 percent of American men over age 50 who suffer from impotence choose to seek treatment, while fully 90 percent of sexually active couples in their fertile years choose one of the five major reversible contraceptives. According to the natural-functioning approach, then, the status quo, in which insurers cover Viagra far more often than they do contraception, assigns precisely the wrong priority.

Daniels's natural-functioning criterion would also favor wigs for alopecia patients over breast reconstruction for mastectomy patients. Wigs serve a physiological function, in that hair and hair prostheses protect against loss of body heat from the head. But a reconstructed breast does not serve its natural function. According to Jay Mahler, an alopecia activist from Ann Arbor, Michigan, almost all women with total scalp hair loss would wear wigs if they could afford them. By contrast, the proportion of women who choose breast reconstruction after a mastectomy is estimated at between 15 and 40 percent.

Daniels's natural-functioning criterion suggests that there is something fundamentally perverse about the way the boundary of necessity is located under current insurance practice. There is, however, another principle, every bit as appealing as Daniels's, that could explain why the line is drawn where it is. This principle considers not how many people eligible for a particular procedure would choose to have it, but how many choices an eligible person would have *without* it. The principle assumes that necessity emerges as choice diminishes, and that a person can be said to need something because he or she has no alternatives to it.

**T**he couple who lack access to Viagra have fewer choices in the pursuit of sexual gratification than the couple without access to prescription contraception. The couple without Viagra, says Tom Bruckman of the American Urologic Foundation, are "barred from engaging in a wide variety of mutually satisfying sexual activities." The couple without prescription contraception, by contrast, are barred "from only one kind of sexual activity—intercourse without the risk of conception," and even then, the risk can be controlled by non-prescription methods of contraception. Since "sex is impossible in the absence of virility, but not in the presence of fertility," Bruckman observes, there is a "significant ethical and moral difference" between the use of Viagra and the use of contraception.

Oddly enough, Bruckman's point has been made effectively, if unwittingly, by some advocates of contraceptive coverage. During hearings on a contraceptive mandate bill in New Hampshire in 1999, legislator Martha Fuller Clark, one of the bill's proponents, declared that it was "about choice"; her colleague, Candace White Bouchard, said she supported the bill "because women do not have real choices." In describing contraception as a choice, Clark and Bouchard used language very close to the rhetoric wielded by their main opponent, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of New Hampshire, whose spokesperson at the hearings dis-

missed contraception as a “lifestyle choice,” unlike something that’s clearly a necessity, such as insulin.

The legislators’ comments were an acknowledgment, and a revealing one because unintended, that sex with prescription contraception is but one of a number of choices for sexual expression or gratification available to a couple. Sex with Viagra, however, is far more often the *only* choice—which is why it’s impossible to find anyone who argues for insurance coverage of Viagra on the grounds that it represents “a man’s right to choose.”

True, insurers cover abortion, and abortion is famously described as the fulfillment of “a woman’s right to choose.” But that happens in debates about abortion’s legality, not in discussions of its subsidization through health insurance. Indeed, as independent scholar Rickie Solinger points out in *Beggars and Choosers* (2001), before *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, advocates of access to abortion rarely spoke of it in terms of choice; they spoke rather in terms of rights. If necessity is the opposite of choice, then there is an argument for insurers’ covering Viagra, which is more of a necessity for sexual expression, even if they don’t cover contraception, which is less of one.

**I**s it possible to justify the evident willingness of insurers to cover abortion but not in vitro fertilization? If we define a procedure as a necessity when those eligible for it enjoy few alternatives, it might seem that in vitro fertilization is actually more of a medical necessity than abortion. After all, one of the principal alternatives to in vitro—adoption—is usually not preferred to having a child of one’s own through the fertilization process. When a pregnant woman who does not want a child considers her alternatives, putting the baby up for adoption would seem a more worthy choice than having an abortion. But it’s also a tougher thing to do, as opponents of abortion are the first to acknowledge. Ed Rivet of Right to Life Michigan has said that “women indeed find it more emotionally wrenching to give up a child through adoption than undergo an abortion” because “they will have bonded with it and there’s a real physical presence.”

When it comes to infertility, adoption can actually be a more emotionally accessible alternative to in vitro fertilization. Jennifer Gosselin, spokeswoman for the Maine chapter of the national infertility-rights group Resolve, told me that she is glad that her in vitro was unsuccessful because the little girl she then adopted “was what was meant to be.” In fact, many state bills mandating in vitro fertilization would require insurers to cover adoption expenses if in vitro failed—testimony to the relative ease with which adoption can be contemplated as an alternative to in vitro.

To say this, of course, is to say nothing about whether abortion represents the taking of life. But as long as the procedure is legal, an argument can be made that abortion is a greater necessity for women who do not want a child than in vitro fertilization is for women or couples who do.

Can one make an argument that breast reconstruction for mastectomy patients, which insurers cover, is more of a necessity than wigs are for those afflicted with alopecia? It’s hard to dispute that most women would rather appear in public without a breast reconstruction than without a wig. In public situations, the sense of sight is dominant, so while the torso is clothed, the head is visible;

hence, a wig becomes more of a necessity than a reconstructed breast. There may be alternatives to wigs—hats, scarves—but they are neither as numerous nor as effective as the sartorial alternatives to a reconstructed breast.

But what about private situations, where the sense of touch may take precedence over the sense of sight? Susan Scherr of the National Coalition for Cancer Survivors, whose members often suffer both loss of a breast from cancer and loss of their hair from chemotherapy treatments, says that “in the privacy of a person’s home, the first thing that comes off at the end of the day is the wig. In the intimacy of your own bedroom, having a normal body image is more important than hair on your head.” When you touch a reconstructed breast in intimate situations, you touch a woman; when you touch a wig, you do not. In private settings, there is no alternative to the reconstructed breast, while the wig is no alternative at all to real hair.

**W**e have found two possible criteria, then, for defining the meaning of necessity in tough cases. One criterion looks to natural functioning; as the philosopher Norman Daniels argues, a procedure is a necessity to the extent that most people eligible for it would choose to undergo it. The second criterion is the argument that a procedure is a necessity to the extent that people eligible for it would have fewer choices without it.

It’s hard to deny the appeal of the natural-functioning principle as an argument for covering certain of the procedures in question: contraception, which nearly all eligible couples choose and which protects the natural functioning of a woman’s body from the “ravages” of serial pregnancy; in vitro fertilization, which a substantial percentage of infertile couples pursue and which serves the purposes of the natural reproductive function; wigs for alopecia sufferers, which nearly all eligible women would choose and which fulfill the natural function of retaining body heat. And yet, natural functioning doesn’t manage to encompass all that

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we commonly understand by necessity. For if necessity is viewed instead as arising when a person eligible for a particular procedure would have no other choices without it, then it does indeed extend to other items in question: abortion, the use of Viagra, and breast reconstruction

after a mastectomy. The fact is that *each principle*—the one based on natural functioning, the other on absence of choice—contributes something important to our understanding of necessity in the border zone.

But the critical term *medical necessity* consists of two words, not one. What about “medical”? After all, we can concede that breast reconstruction belongs in the category of necessity and still ask whether it’s a medical necessity or rather merely a cosmetic one. As it happens, the question of what constitutes a “medical” procedure gets debated most ferociously in the other theater of battle: independent physician appeals panels that render decisions when patients challenge an insurer’s denial of coverage for a particular procedure.

A relatively small number of conditions figure prominently in the cases these panels hear: scars, the disfiguring birthmarks known as port-wine stains, the shape and size of breasts, the apron of abdominal skin known as the panniculus that develops after gastric bypass surgery for obesity. In each case, insurers try to push the condition from the domain of the medical into the domain of the cosmetic.

**I**n rendering judgment, external reviewers are likely to invoke the criterion of natural functioning. If, in other words, these surface imperfections are impeding natural functioning—port-wine stains, for example, can be associated with abnormal blood-vessel development—appeals boards will deem their correction a medical matter and force insurers to cover it. But if such conditions “impair no functioning” or “constitute [no] functional deficit” (to quote some recent decisions), then treating them is deemed not a medical but a cosmetic matter, and the patient’s claims are denied.

But two recent cases involving this “natural functioning” approach induce a sense of unease. In May 2001, a Massachusetts boy who had suffered severe lacerations on the left side of his face in a skiing accident appealed his insurer’s refusal to pay for the necessary scar-revision surgery on the grounds that it would not be a medical procedure. “In the absence of any functional deficit,” the physician-reviewer declared, “the insurer’s decision to deny coverage is upheld.” In July 2001, another physician-reviewer turned down a Massachusetts girl’s request for laser surgery to deal with a large port-wine stain that extended from her left arm to her upper chest. The insurer defined the surgery as “cosmetic,” designed to “improve appearance, not to restore bodily function,” and the physician-reviewer agreed, noting that the stain posed no “functional impairment.” Both judgments force us to ask whether natural functioning may be too dogmatic a criterion. And if it is, what other might we invoke?

The boy’s facial scars were the result of a trauma visited upon him. His skiing accident diverted him from a personal state of normality—which means that we know what it would take to restore him to his old self. A port-wine stain, on the other hand, is congenital. It hasn’t diverted the girl from some previous state of personal normality; it *is* her state of normality. The girl can offer no notion of what she, as an individual, would have been like without the stain. But although there’s no personal norm, there’s a social norm to which she can refer—the norm of what most people are like—on the basis of which she can ask for a medical correction.

If our intuitions lead us to sympathize with the boy and the girl, it’s because we have been influenced by certain moral principles. When someone suffers a disease or trauma—in the boy’s case, facial lacerations—that deflects him from a state of personal normality, we want to restore him to that state. When someone is deprived congenitally or developmentally from achieving the social norm—in the girl’s case, by the port-wine stain—we want that norm to be hers. Unlike the external reviewers, most of us would consider these cases to fall properly within the realm of legitimate *medical* need.

Embracing these two principles would still exclude from the domain of the medical a good many procedures on the surface of the body. In particular, it would mean a thumbs-down on procedures that mix modes. Consider, for example, a

## What's Natural?

case involving a 50-year-old Connecticut woman who underwent gastric bypass surgery for obesity, a procedure that removes or closes off part of the stomach. Her insurer paid for the operation because obesity, by heightening the risk of cardiac disease or diabetes, directly threatens natural functioning. The woman lost 125 pounds but was left as a consequence with a fold of loose abdominal skin, as is often the case after major weight loss. There was no impairment to natural functioning, no health-threatening abdominal-wall strain, and no rash—the woman just very much wanted to have the skin removed.

The requisite procedure is called a panniculectomy or, more colloquially, a “tummy tuck.” In this particular patient’s case, the procedure would have mixed modes. Even if her obesity was congenital, the bothersome tummy was not. It resulted from a trauma inflicted on her—the invasion of her body by a scalpel—that diverted her from a previous state of personal normality, just as the Massachusetts boy’s lacerations resulted from a trauma that diverted *him* from a previous state of personal normality. But unlike the boy, the woman seeking a tummy tuck was not asking to be restored to her own personal state of normalcy. She wanted, rather, to have her abdomen fashioned according to the social norm. As Sacramento plastic surgeon Jack Bruner says, the “kid with lacerations is trying to be restored to what he was before,” while the tummy tuck is a “cosmetic case; she would have been obese to start with.”

Now consider mode mixing of another kind. A woman, for congenital developmental reasons, has breasts she considers too small. Like the girl with the port-wine stain, she can invoke no state of personal normality to which she might be restored. Indeed, she hasn’t departed from her personal norm. All she can ask, as did the girl with the port-wine stain, is that she be brought to a social norm. But breast implants, as distinct from the removal of a port-wine stain, would not bring the woman seeking them to a social norm. Some might

### WHY DO SO MANY BATTLES OVER MEDICAL NECESSITY HAVE TO DO WITH SEXUAL ATTRACTIVENESS OR ABILITY?

say that’s because there’s no such thing as normal breast size, but another reason is that a sac of silicon gel or saline solution or even transplanted abdominal fat isn’t normal breast tissue. Implants might constitute this

particular woman’s personal view as to how she would like her breasts to be, but an implant is not a normal breast. She has a congenital developmental issue, but she’s asking, as the girl with the port-wine stain is not, to be refashioned according to her personal view of what’s desirable. The correct verdict: no insurance coverage.

What about breast reduction for women who believe their breasts are too large? In the absence of functional issues such as back strain, appeals panels usually deny coverage. Yet as Dr. Elvin Zook, chair of plastic surgery at Southern Illinois University, acknowledges, there’s no question that “people are more sympathetic to claims for breast reduction, even when there’s no impairment of function, no rash or spinal issue, than to breast enlarge-

ment.” The procedures for both reduction and enlargement respond to congenital developmental discontents, and with neither of them can the woman point to a personal norm from which she has been deflected. But in the case of breast reduction, there is an achievable social norm. What remains after a breast reduction, and not after a breast enlargement, is a body part that corresponds to the social norm of a breast: Breast tissue has been removed, but nonbreast tissue hasn’t been added.

We are also more sympathetic to insurance coverage for breast reconstruction after a mastectomy than to coverage for breast enlargement. We regard the reconstruction as both a necessity—because other options don’t exist—and legitimately medical. But why so? After all, in both enlargement and reconstruction procedures, nonbreast tissue is generally added. But in the case of reconstruction, the woman has been subjected to a trauma, breast surgery, that diverted her from a personal norm that had existed previously. If, in her own view of what it means for her to be normal—to be restored to herself—breast implants are required, then that should be her call. When a Massachusetts woman seeking insurance coverage for a breast enlargement in 2001 declared that she was simply asking for “surgical correction of the same nature as that required by mastectomy patients,” the physician-reviewer turned her down—and rightly so, for the analogy does not hold.

**A** few years ago, the nation was transfixed by Oregon’s attempts to reshape Medicaid, the public insurance program for lower-income people. After much passionate debate, what tended to be deemed less medically necessary were treatments that have little impact on a condition, such as certain kinds of back surgery, some transplants, or some end-of-life care, and conditions that resolve themselves on their own, such as measles, viral sore throats, and minor bumps on the head. America’s debate over private insurance cuts much closer to the bone. Impotence, facial scars, and infertility are not conditions that will resolve themselves without treatment. And Viagra, revision surgery, and in vitro fertilization do not fall into the class of treatments that will have little or no impact on these conditions. Precisely for that reason, the debates surrounding them come closer to really grasping the nettle—to calling forth our deepest understandings of *necessity* and of *medical*.

What’s notable about so many of these battles waged on the borders of medical necessity is that they have to do with matters of sexual attractiveness or ability. Why is that? Perhaps it’s because, as Sigmund Freud famously observed, we’re creatures who work and love. What’s medically necessary for work is now taken care of by workers’ compensation and workplace disability laws (which have generated their own prodigious debates). Now that the workplace has been attended to, love has become the frontier where the fiercest contention occurs over the meanings of *medical* and *necessity*. We’re evolving richer understandings of both words, and it’s time that those new insights modified the natural-functioning criterion. For no matter what the philosophers and the physician-reviewers may say, natural functioning and medical necessity by no means always coincide, and they are even less likely to do so as new genetic, hormonal, cellular, and pharmaceutical therapies develop.

## What's Natural?

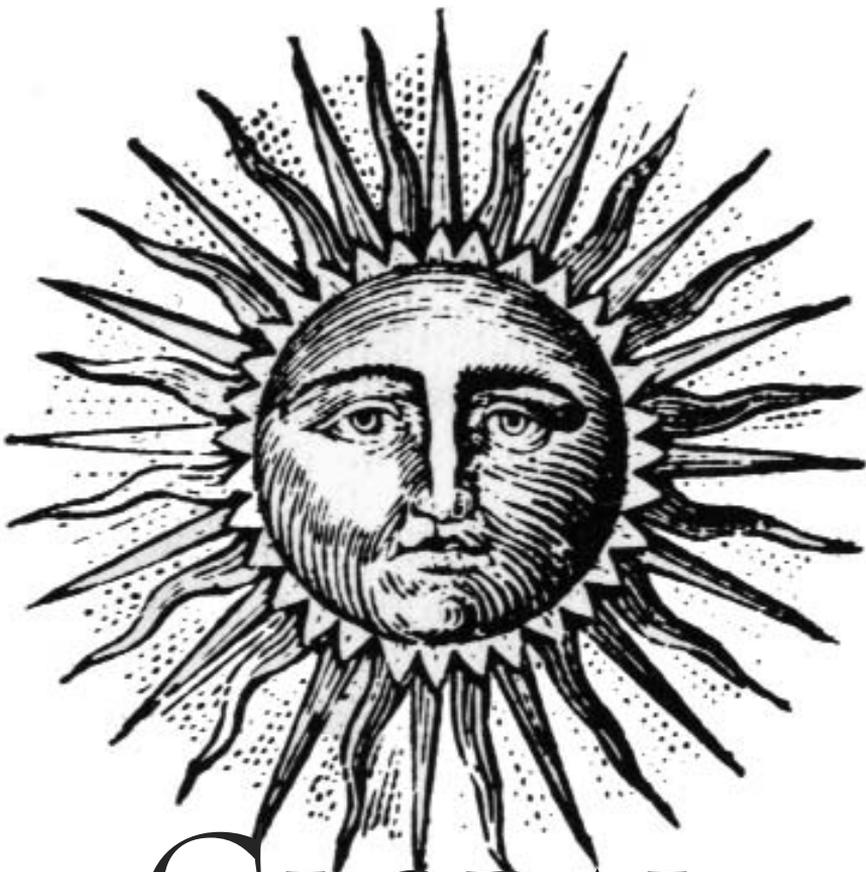
Imagine a new super-Prozac designed for individuals who are not clinically depressed. Suppose that—like today's ordinary Prozac—this super-Prozac is not a “happy pill” that makes people euphoric. Instead, suppose that it would simply do unerringly what Dr. Peter D. Kramer, in his best-selling *Listening to Prozac* (1993), says that Prozac currently does only in a hit-or-miss way: substitute completely for psychotherapy. People with self-punishing neuroses—those who erroneously believe that everything they do is doomed to failure—would, by taking super-Prozac, lose their diffidence. Those with ego-protecting neuroses, who deludedly believe that all's right with them and their world, would shed their complacency. This imagined super-Prozac would simply present reality to us unencumbered by neurotic baggage. More than that, it would allow us to cultivate the capacity for acceptance that comes from a non-neurotic ability to acknowledge failure. And it would foster the trait of humility that comes from a non-neurotic capacity to embrace success.

Could this drug be a medical necessity? From the natural-functioning perspective, the answer would be no. After all, everyone is neurotic in some way. And so super-Prozac would seem to extend or enhance natural functioning, not preserve or restore it.

But since insurers are reluctant to pay for extended psychotherapy, many people might enjoy no alternative to super-Prozac; so in that sense super-Prozac could well be a necessity. And it would, arguably, be a *medical* necessity for all those whose neuroses result from a trauma that diverted them from a personal norm. But what about the rest of us garden-variety neurotics, who just grew up that way—whose neuroses weren't caused traumatically but developmentally?

**H**ere, we would need to embark on a public conversation about what the social norm really is. Normal neurosis, as many have pointed out, has its good points as well as its bad. A neurotic fear of failure often leads to great artfulness; a neurotic belief in one's own infallibility frequently induces surpassing boldness. Those are valuable things. But boldness is not as valuable as strength, and strength is what gets cultivated when we face our failures in a non-neurotic way. Nor is artfulness as valuable as imagination; yet imagination is what we develop when we embrace our successes in a non-neurotic way, knowing that we will then have to find a way to transcend them. To aim for strength and imagination instead of boldness and artfulness is not, necessarily, to alter the social norm. It may be to realize that norm more fully.

There are no ready answers to many of the questions that confront us. Yet it's helpful to see and contemplate ahead of time the kind of public conversation about moral psychology that super-Prozac and, in their own way, other new genetic, cellular, and pharmaceutical treatments could induce. It's a conversation that would be precluded by the natural-functioning approach that's come to dominate so much contemporary thinking. But as the wisdom emerging from America's current grass-roots debates in hearing rooms and legislative chambers over the borders of medical necessity amply demonstrates, we would be the worse for not engaging in it. □



# GLOBAL WARMING

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## Both Sides

The debate about global warming has grown ever more intense in recent years and become as much political as it is scientific. There's no doubt that Earth is warming—the scientific evidence shows that the planet's temperature has been rising for the past century and a half. But there's disagreement about the extent to which humans are responsible for the change. How alarmed should we be by the warming and by the forecasts of its potentially disastrous consequences?

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and Tim P. Barnett

# Rushing to Judgment

by Jack M. Hollander

**I**s Earth warming? The planet has warmed since the mid-1800s, but before that it cooled for more than five centuries. Cycles of warming and cooling have been part of Earth's natural climate history for millions of years. So what is the global warming debate about? It's about the proposition that human use of fossil fuels has contributed significantly to the past century's warming, and that expected future warming may have catastrophic global consequences. But hard evidence for this human contribution simply does not exist; the evidence we have is suggestive at best. Does that mean the human effects are not occurring? Not necessarily. But media coverage of global warming has been so alarmist that it fails to convey how flimsy the evidence really is. Most people don't realize that many strong statements about a human contribution to global warming are based more on politics than on science. Indeed, the climate change issue has become so highly politicized that its scientific and political aspects are now almost indistinguishable. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), upon which governments everywhere have depended for the best scientific information, has been transformed from a bona fide effort in international scientific cooperation into what one of its leading participants terms "a hybrid scientific/political organization."

Yet apart from the overheated politics, climate change remains a fascinating and important scientific subject. Climate dynamics and climate history are extraordinarily complex, and despite intensive study for decades, scientists are not yet able to explain satisfactorily such basic phenomena as extreme weather events (hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts), El Niño variations, historical climate cycles, and trends of atmospheric temperatures. The scientific uncertainties about all these matters are great, and not surprisingly, competent scientists disagree in their interpretations of what is and is not known. In the current politicized atmosphere, however, legitimate scientific differences about climate change have been lost in the noise of politics.

For some, global warming has become the ultimate symbol of pessimism about the environmental future. Writer Bill McKibben, for example, says, "If we had to pick one problem to obsess about over the next 50 years, we'd

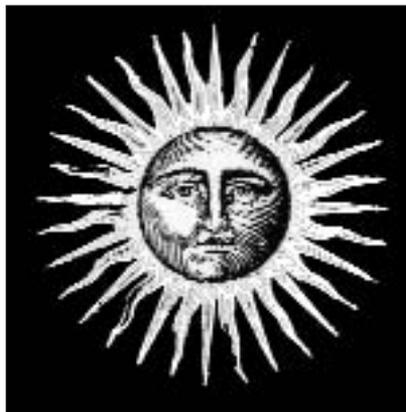
do well to make it carbon dioxide.” I believe that we’d be far wiser to obsess about poverty than about carbon dioxide.

Fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) are the major culprits of the global warming controversy and happen also to be the principal energy sources for both rich and poor countries. Governments of the industrial countries have generally accepted the position, promoted by the IPCC, that humankind’s use of fossil fuels is a major contributor to global warming, and in 1997 they forged an international agreement (the Kyoto Climate Change Protocol) mandating that worldwide fossil fuel use be drastically reduced as a precaution against future warming. In contrast, the developing nations for the most part do not accept global warming as a high-priority issue and, as yet, are not subject to the Kyoto agreement. Thus, the affluent nations and the developing nations have set themselves on a collision course over environmental policy relating to fossil fuel use.

The debate about global warming focuses on carbon dioxide, a gas emitted into the atmosphere when fossil fuels are burned. Environmentalists generally label carbon dioxide as a pollutant; the Sierra Club, for example, in referring to carbon dioxide, states that “we are choking our planet in a cloud of this pollution.” But to introduce the term *pollution* in this context is misleading because carbon dioxide is neither scientifically nor legally considered a pollutant. Though present in Earth’s atmosphere in small amounts, carbon dioxide plays an essential role in maintaining life and as part of Earth’s temperature control system.

Those who have had the pleasure of an elementary chemistry course will recall that carbon dioxide is one of the two main products of the combustion in air of any fossil fuel, the other being water. These products are generally emitted into the atmosphere, no matter whether the combustion takes place in power plants, household gas stoves and heaters, manufacturing facilities, automobiles, or other sources. The core scientific issue of the global warming debate is the extent to which atmospheric carbon dioxide from fossil fuel burning affects global climate.

When residing in the atmosphere, carbon dioxide and water vapor are called “greenhouse gases,” so named because they trap some of Earth’s heat in the same way that the glass canopy of a greenhouse prevents some of its internal heat from escaping, thereby warming the interior of the greenhouse. By this type of heating, greenhouse gases occurring naturally in the atmosphere perform a critical function. In fact, without greenhouse gases Earth would be too cold, all water on the planet would be frozen, and life as we know it would never have developed. In addition to its role in greenhouse warming, carbon dioxide is essential for plant physiology; without it, all plant life would die.



A number of greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide and water vapor occur naturally in Earth's atmosphere and have been there for millennia. What's new is that during the industrial era, humankind's burning of fossil fuels has been adding carbon dioxide to the atmospheric mix of greenhouse gases over and above the amounts naturally present. The preindustrial level of 287 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased almost 30 percent, to 367 ppm (as of 1998).

THE ACTUAL TEMPERATURE  
RECORD DOES NOT SUPPORT  
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BEEN STEADILY WARMING  
OVER THE PAST CENTURY.

Few, if any, scientists question the measurements showing that atmospheric carbon dioxide has increased by almost a third. Nor do most scientists question that humans are the cause of most or all of the carbon dioxide increase. Yet the

media continually point to these two facts as the major evidence that humans are causing the global warming Earth has recently experienced. The weak link in this argument is that empirical science has not established an unambiguous connection between the carbon dioxide increase and the observed global warming. The real scientific controversy about global warming is not about the presence of additional carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from human activities, which is well established, but about the extent to which that additional carbon dioxide affects climate, now or in the future.

Earth's climate is constantly changing from natural causes that, for the most part, are not understood. How are we to distinguish the human contribution, which may be very small, from the natural contribution, which may be small or large? Put another way, is the additional carbon dioxide humans are adding to the atmosphere likely to have a measurable effect on global temperature, which is in any case changing continually from natural causes? Or is the temperature effect from the additional carbon dioxide likely to be imperceptible, and therefore unimportant as a practical matter?

Global warming is not something that happened only recently. In Earth's long history, climate change is the rule rather than the exception, and studies of Earth's temperature record going back a million years clearly reveal a number of climate cycles—warming and cooling trends. Their causes are multiple—possibly including periodic changes in solar output and variations in Earth's tilt and orbit—but poorly understood. In recent times, Earth entered a warming period. From thermometer records, we know that the air at Earth's surface warmed about 0.6°C

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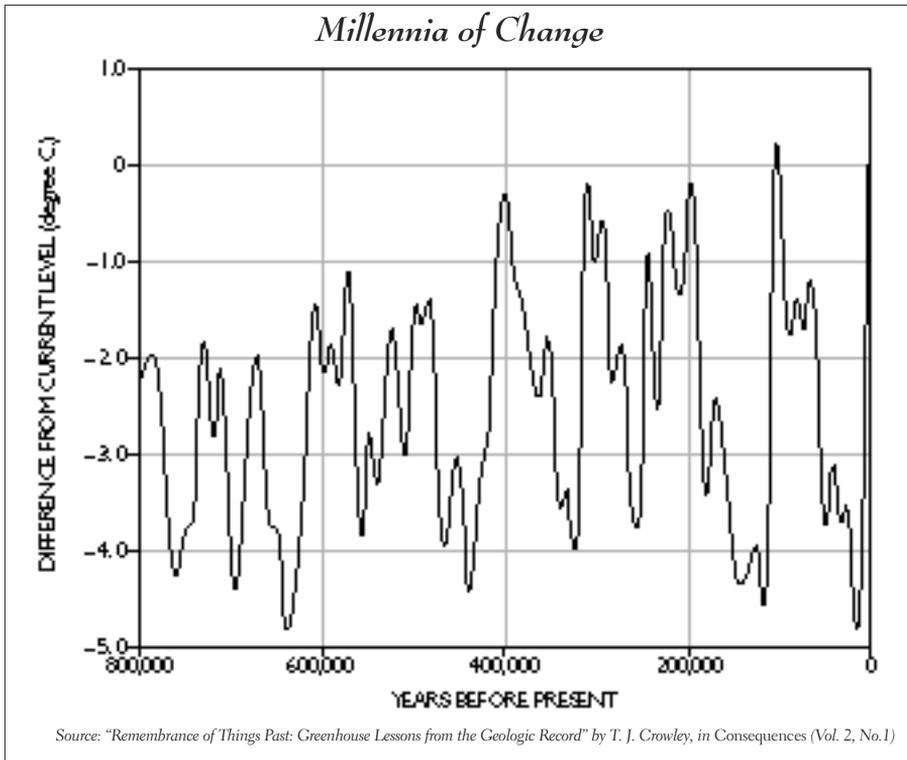
over the period from the 1860s to the present. The observed warming, however, does not correlate well with the growth in fossil fuel use during that period. About half of the observed warming took place before 1940, though it was only after 1940 that the amounts of greenhouse gases produced by fossil fuel burning rose rapidly, as a result of the heavy industrial expansions of World War II and the postwar boom (80 percent of the carbon dioxide from human activities was added to the air after 1940).

Surprisingly, from about 1940 until about 1980, during a period of rapid increase in fossil fuel burning, global surface temperatures actually displayed a slight cooling trend rather than an acceleration of the warming trend that would have been expected from greenhouse gases. During the 1970s some scientists even became concerned about the possibility of a new ice age from an extended period of global cooling (a report of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences reflected that concern). Physicist Freeman Dyson notes that “the onset of the next ice age [would be] a far more severe catastrophe than anything associated with warming.”

Earth’s cooling trend did not continue beyond 1980, but neither has there been an unambiguous warming trend. Since 1980, precise temperature measurements have been made in Earth’s atmosphere and on its surface, but the results do not agree. The surface air measurements indicate significant warming (0.25 to 0.4°C), but the atmospheric measurements show very little, if any, warming.

**B**riefly, then, the record is this: From 1860 to 1940, Earth’s surface warmed about 0.4°C. Then Earth’s surface cooled about 0.1°C in the first four decades after 1940 and warmed about 0.3°C in the next two. For those two most recent decades, temperature measurements of the atmosphere have also been available, and, while these measurements are subject to significant uncertainty, they indicate that the atmosphere’s temperature has remained essentially unchanged. Thus, the actual temperature record does not support the claims widely found in environmental literature and the media that Earth has been steadily warming over the past century. (A new study that may shed more light on this question—one of a number sure to come—has been circulated but is being revised and has not yet been published.)

For the probable disparity between the surface and atmospheric temperature trends of the past 20 years, several explanations have been offered. The first is that large urban centers create artificial heating zones—“heat islands”—that can contribute to an increase of surface temperature (though one analysis concludes that the heat island effect is too small to explain the discrepancy fully). The second explanation is that soot and dust from volcanic eruptions may have contributed to cooling of the atmosphere by blocking the Sun’s heat (though this cooling should have affected both surface and atmospheric temperatures). In the United States, despite the presence of large urban areas, surface cooling after 1930 far exceeded that of Earth as a whole, and the surface temperature has subsequently warmed only to the level of the 1930s.

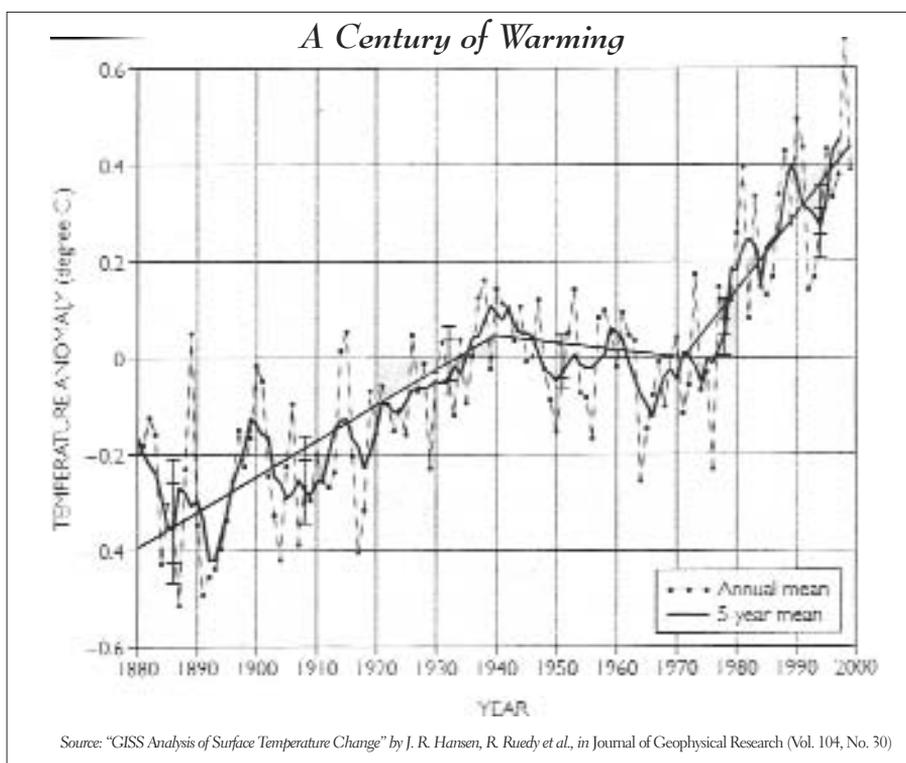


*Wide fluctuations in surface temperatures have been the norm in Earth's history. These estimates are derived from oxygen-isotope ratios in fossilized plankton from the ocean floor.*

It's frequently claimed that the recent increases in surface temperature are uniquely hazardous to Earth's ecosystems because of the rapidity with which they are occurring—more than 0.1°C in a decade. That may be true, but some past climate changes were rapid as well. For example, around 14,700 years ago, temperatures in Greenland apparently jumped 5°C in less than 20 years—almost three times the warming from greenhouse gases predicted to occur in this entire century by the most pessimistic scientists.

Whatever the current rate of surface warming, there is little justification for the view that Earth's climate should be unchanging, and that any climate change now occurring must have been caused by humans and should therefore be fixed by humans. In fact, as noted earlier, changing climate patterns and cycles have occurred throughout Earth's history. For millions of years, ice sheets regularly waxed and waned as global heating and cooling processes took place. During the most recent ice age, some 50,000 years ago, ice sheets covered much of North America, northern Europe, and northern Asia. About 12,000 years ago a warming trend began, signaling the start of an interglacial period that continues to this day. This warm period may have peaked 5,000 to 6,000 years ago, when global ice melting accelerated and global temperatures became higher than today's. Interglacial periods are thought to persist for about 10,000 years, so the next ice age may be coming soon—that is, in 500 to 1,000 years.

Within the current interglacial period, smaller cyclic patterns have emerged. In the most recent millennium, several cycles occurred during



*Scientists know that mean global surface air temperatures have been rising for a century, but they don't know for certain why—nor why temperatures fell between 1940 and 1980.*

which Earth alternately warmed and cooled. There's evidence for an unusually warm period over at least parts of the globe from the end of the first millennium to about 1300. A mild climate in the Northern Hemisphere during those centuries probably facilitated the migration of Scandinavian peoples to Greenland and Iceland, as well as their first landing on the North American continent, just after 1000. The settlements in Greenland and Iceland thrived for several hundred years but eventually were abandoned when the climate turned colder, after about 1450. The cold period, which lasted until the late 1800s, is often called the Little Ice Age. Agricultural productivity fell, and the mass exodus to North America of many Europeans is attributed at least in part to catastrophic crop failures such as the potato famine in Ireland.

A plausible interpretation of most or all of the observed surface warming over the past century is that Earth is in the process of coming out of the Little Ice Age cold cycle that began 600 years ago. The current warming trend could last for centuries, until the expected arrival of the next ice age, or it could be punctuated by transient warm and cold periods, as were experienced in the recent millennium.

**A** great deal of global warming rhetoric gives the impression that science has established beyond doubt that the recent warming is mostly due to human activities. But that has not been established. Though human use of fossil fuels might contribute to glob-

## Global Warming

al warming in the future, there's no hard scientific evidence that it is already doing so, and the difficulty of establishing a human contribution by empirical observation is formidable. One would need to detect a very small amount of warming caused by human activity in the presence of a much larger background of naturally occurring climate change—a search for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Still, understanding climate change is by no means beyond science's reach, and research is proceeding in several complementary ways. Paleoclimatologists have been probing Earth's past climatic changes and are uncovering exciting new information about Earth's climate history going back thousands, and even millions, of years. This paleohistory will help eventually to produce a definitive picture of Earth's evolving climate, and help in turn to clarify the climate changes we're experiencing in our own era. But we are far from knowing enough to be able to predict what the future may hold for Earth's climate.

Mindful of the limited empirical knowledge about climate, some climate scientists have been attempting to understand possible future



changes by using computer modeling techniques. By running several scenarios, the modelers obtain a set of theoretical projections of how global temperature might change in the future in response to assumed inputs, governed mainly by the levels of fossil fuel use. But like all computer modeling, even state-of-the-art climate modeling has significant limitations. For example, the current models cannot simulate the natural variability of climate over century-

long time periods. A further major shortcoming is that they project only *gradual* climate change, whereas the most serious impacts of climate change could come about from *abrupt* changes. (A simple analogy is to the abrupt formation of frost, causing leaf damage and plant death, when the ambient air temperature gradually dips below the freezing point.) Given the shortcomings, policymakers should exercise considerable caution in using current climate models as quantitative indicators of future global warming.

Scientists have long been aware that physical factors other than greenhouse gases can influence atmospheric temperature. Among the most important are aerosols—tiny particles (sulfates, black carbon, organic compounds, and so forth) introduced into the atmosphere by a variety of pollution sources, including automobiles and coal-burning electricity generators, as well as by natural sources such as sea spray and desert dust. Some aerosols, such as black carbon, normally contribute to heating of the atmosphere because they absorb the Sun's heat (though black carbon aerosols residing at high altitudes can actually cool Earth's surface because they

block the Sun's rays from getting through to it). Other aerosols, composed of sulfates and organic compounds, cool the atmosphere because they reflect or scatter the Sun's rays away from Earth. Current evidence indicates that aerosols may be responsible for cooling effects at Earth's surface and warming effects in Earth's atmosphere. But the impacts of pollution on Earth's climate are very uncertain. The factors involved are difficult to simulate, but they must be included in computer models if the models are to be useful indicators of future climate. When climate models are finally able to incorporate the full complexity of pollution effects, especially from aerosols, the projected global temperature change could be either higher or lower than current projections, depending on the chemistry, altitude, and geographic region of the particular aerosols involved. Or, it could even be zero.

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In addition to pollution, other physical factors that can influence surface and atmospheric temperature are methane (another greenhouse gas), dust from volcanic activity, and changes in cloud cover, ocean circulation patterns, air-sea interactions, and the Sun's energy output. "The forcings that drive long-term climate change," concludes James Hansen, one of the pioneers of climate change science, "are not known with an accuracy sufficient to define future climate change. Anthropogenic greenhouse gases, which are well measured, cause a strong positive forcing [warming]. But other, poorly measured, anthropogenic forcings, especially changes of atmospheric aerosols, clouds, and land-use patterns, cause a negative forcing that tends to offset greenhouse warming." And as if the physical factors were not challenging enough, the inherent complexity of the climate system will always be present to thwart attempts to predict future climate.

**I**n view of climate's complexity and the limitations of today's climate simulations, one might expect that pronouncements as to human culpability for climate change would be made with considerable circumspection, especially pronouncements made in the name of the scientific community. So it was disturbing to many scientists that a summary report of the IPCC issued in 1996 contained the assertion that "the balance of evidence suggests a discernible climate change due to human activities." The latest IPCC report (2001) goes even further, claiming that "there is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities." But most of this evidence comes from new computer simulations and does not satisfactorily address either the disparity in the empirical temperature record between surface

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and atmosphere or the large uncertainties in the contributions of aerosols and other factors. A report issued by the National Academy of Sciences in 2001 says this about the model simulations:

Because of the large and still uncertain level of natural variability inherent in the climate record and the uncertainties in the time histories of the various forcing agents (and presumably aerosols), a causal linkage between the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the observed climate changes during the 20th century cannot be unequivocally established. The fact that the magnitude of the observed warming is large in comparison to natural variability as simulated in climate models is suggestive of such a linkage, but it does not constitute proof of one because the model simulations could be deficient in natural variability on the decadal to century time scale.

These IPCC reports have been adopted as the centerpiece of most current popularizations of global warming in the media and in the environmental literature, and their political impact has been enormous. The 1996 report was the principal basis for government climate policy in most industrial countries, including the United States. The IPCC advised in the report that drastic reductions in the burning of fossil fuels would be required to avoid a disastrous global temperature increase. That advice was the driving force behind the adoption in 1997 of the Kyoto protocol to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the near future.

In its original form, the protocol had many flaws. First, it exempted developing countries, including China, India, and Brazil, from the emission cutbacks; such countries are increasingly dependent on fossil fuels, and their current greenhouse gas emissions already exceed those of the developed countries. Second, it mandated short-term reductions in fossil fuel use to reach the emission targets without regard to the costs of achieving those targets. Forced cutbacks in fossil fuel use could have severe economic consequences for industrial countries (the protocol would require the United States to cut back its fossil fuel combustion by over 30 percent to reach the targeted reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by 2010), and even greater consequences for poor countries should they ultimately agree to be included in the emissions targets. The costs of the cutbacks would have to be paid up front, whereas the assumed benefits would come only many decades later. Third, the fossil fuel cutbacks mandated by the protocol are too small to be effective — averting, by one estimate, only 0.06°C of global warming by 2050.

**T**he Kyoto protocol was signed in 1997 by many industrial countries, including the United States, but to have legal status, it must be ratified by nations that together account for 55 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. As of June 2002, the protocol had been ratified by 73 countries, including Japan and all 15 nations of the European Union. These countries are responsible, in all, for only 36 percent of emis-

sions, but the 55 percent requirement may be met by Russia's expected ratification. Nonetheless, the treaty is unlikely to have real force without ratification by the United States. The Bush administration opposes the treaty, on the grounds of its likely negative economic impact on America, and has thus far not sought Senate ratification. Even the Clinton administration did not seek ratification, despite its having signed the initial protocol, because it was aware that the U.S. Senate had unanimously adopted a resolution rejecting in principle any climate change treaty that does not include meaningful participation by developing countries.

With the United States retaining its lone dissent, 165 nations agreed in November 2001 to a modified version of Kyoto that would ease the task of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by allowing nations

to trade their rights to emit carbon dioxide, and by giving nations credit for the expansion of forests and farmland, which soak up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. A study by economist William Nordhaus in *Science* magazine (Nov. 9, 2001) finds that a Kyoto treaty modified along these lines would incur substantial costs, bring little progress toward its objective, and, because of the huge fund transfers that would result from the practice of emissions trading, stir political disputes. Nordhaus concludes that participation in the treaty would have cost the United States some \$2.3 trillion over the coming decades—more than twice the combined cost to all other participants. It does not require sympathy with overall U.S. climate change policy to understand the nation's reluctance to be so unequal a partner in the Kyoto enterprise.

Though the political controversy continues, the science has moved away from its earlier narrow focus on carbon dioxide as a predictor of global warming to an increasing realization that the world's future climate is likely to be determined by a changing mix of complex and countervailing factors, many of which are not under human control and all of which are insufficiently understood. But regardless of the causes, we do know that Earth's surface has warmed during the past century. Although we don't know the extent to which it will warm in the future, or whether it will warm at all, we can't help but ask a couple of critical questions: How much does global warming matter? What would be the consequences if the global average temperature did actually rise during the current century by, say, some 2°C?

Some environmentalists have predicted dire consequences from the warming, including extremes of weather, the loss of agricultural productivity, a destructive rise in sea level, and the spread of diseases. Activists press for international commitments much stronger than the Kyoto protocol to reduce the combustion of fossil fuels,

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and they justify the measures as precautionary. Others counter that the social and economic impacts of forced reductions in fossil fuel use would be more serious than the effects of a temperature rise, which could be small, or even beneficial.

**A**lthough the debate over human impacts on climate probably won't be resolved for decades, a case can be made for adopting a less alarmist view of a warmer world. In any event, the warmer world is already here. In the past 2,500 years, global temperatures have varied by

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more than 3°C, and some of the changes have been much more abrupt than the gradual changes projected by the IPCC. During all of recorded history, humans have survived and prospered in climate zones far more different from one another than those that might result from the changes in global temperatures now being discussed.

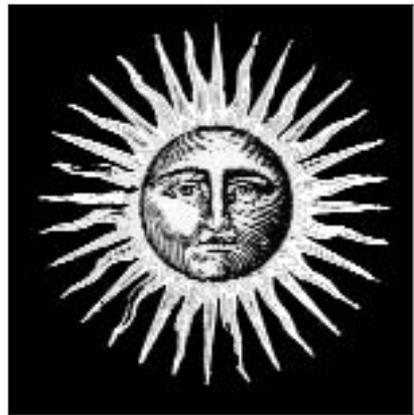
Those who predict agricultural losses from a warmer climate have most likely got it backwards. Warm periods have historically benefited the development of civilization, and cold periods have been detrimental. For example, the Medieval Warm Period, from about 900 to 1300, facilitated the Viking settlement of Iceland and Greenland, whereas the subsequent Little Ice Age led to crop failures, famines, and disease. Even a small temperature increase brings a longer and more frost-free growing season — an advantage for many farmers, especially those in large, cold countries such as Russia and Canada. Agronomists know that the enrichment of atmospheric carbon dioxide stimulates plant growth and development in greenhouses; such enrichment at the global level might be expected to increase vegetative and biological productivity and water-use efficiency. Studies of the issue from an economic perspective have reached the same conclusion: that moderate global warming would most likely produce net economic benefits, especially for the agriculture and forestry sectors. Of course, such projections are subject to great uncertainty and cannot exclude the possibility that unexpected negative impacts would occur.

As for the concern that warmer temperatures would spread insect-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and yellow fever, there's no solid evidence to support it. Although the spread of disease is a complex matter, the main carriers of these diseases — which were common in North America, western Europe, and Russia during the 19th century, when the world was colder than it is today — are most likely humans traveling the globe and insects traveling with people and goods. The strongest ally against future disease is surely not a cold climate but concerted improvement in regional insect control, water quality, and public health. As poverty recedes and people's liv-

ing conditions improve in the developing world, the level of disease, and its spread, can be expected to decrease. Paul Reiter, a specialist in insect-borne diseases, puts it this way:

Insect-borne diseases are not diseases of climate but of poverty. Whatever the climate, developing countries will remain at risk until they acquire window screens, air conditioning, modern medicine, and other amenities most Americans take for granted. As a matter of social policy, the best precaution is to improve living standards in general and health infrastructures in particular.

One of the direst (and most highly publicized) predictions of global warming theorists is that greenhouse gas warming will cause sea level to rise and that, as a result, many oceanic islands and lowland areas, such as Bangladesh, may be submerged. But in fact, sea level—which once was low enough to expose a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska—is rising now, and has been rising for thousands of years. Recent analyses suggest that sea level rose at a rate of about one to two centimeters per century (0.4 to 0.8 inch) over the past 3,000 years. Some studies have interpreted direct sea-level measurements made throughout the 20th century to show that the level is now rising at a much faster rate, about 10 to 25 centimeters per century (4 to 10 inches), but other studies conclude that the rate is much lower than that. To whatever extent sea-level rise may have accelerated, the change is thought to have taken place before the period of industrialization.



Before considering whether the ongoing sea-level rise has anything to do with human use of fossil fuels, let's examine what science has to say about how global temperature change may relate to sea-level change. The matter is more complicated than it first appears. Water expands as it warms, which would contribute to *rising* sea level. But warming increases the evaporation of ocean water, which could increase the snowfall on the Arctic and Antarctic ice sheets, remove water from the ocean, and *lower* sea level. The relative importance of these two factors is not known.

**W**e do know from studies of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet that it has been melting continuously since the last great ice age, about 20,000 years ago, and that sea level has been rising ever since. Continued melting of the ice sheet until the next ice age may be inevitable, in which case sea level would rise by 15 to 18 feet when the sheet was completely melted. Other mechanisms have been suggested for natural sea-level rise, including tectonic changes in the shape of the ocean basins. The theoretical computer climate models attribute most of

## Global Warming

the sea-level rise to thermal expansion of the oceans, and thus they predict that further global temperature increase (presumably from human activities) will accelerate the sea-level rise. But because these models cannot deal adequately with the totality of the natural phenomena involved, their predictions about sea-level rise should be viewed skeptically.

The natural causes of sea-level rise are part of Earth's evolution. They have nothing to do with human activities, and there's nothing that humans can do about them. Civilization has always adjusted to such changes, just as it has adjusted to earthquakes and other natural phenomena. This is not to say that adjusting to natural changes is not sometimes painful, but if there's nothing we can do about certain natural phenomena, we do adjust to them, however painfully. Sea-level rise is, most likely, one of those phenomena over which humans have no control.

**S**ome environmentalists claim that weather-related natural disasters have been increasing in frequency and severity, presumably as a result of human-caused global warming, but the record does not support their claims. On the contrary, several recent statistical studies have found that natural disasters—hurricanes, typhoons, tropical storms, floods, blizzards, wild-



fires, heat waves, and earthquakes—are not on the increase. The costs of losses from natural disasters are indeed rising, to the dismay of insurance companies and government emergency agencies, but that's because people in affluent societies construct expensive properties in places vulnerable to natural hazards, such as coastlines, steep hills, and forested areas.

Because society has choices, we must ask what the likely effects would be, on the one hand, if people decided to adjust to climate change, regardless of its causes, and, on the other, if governments implemented drastic policies to attempt to lessen the presumed human contribution to the change. From an economic perspective at least, adjusting to the change would almost surely come out ahead. Several analyses have projected that the overall cost of the worst-case consequences of warming would be no more than about a two percent reduction in world output. Given that average per capita income will probably quadruple during the next century, the potential loss seems small indeed. A recent economic study emphasizing adaptation to climate change indicates that in the market economy of the United States the overall impacts of modest global warming are even likely to be beneficial rather than damaging, though the amount of net benefit would be small, about 0.2 percent of the economy. (We need always to keep in mind the statistical uncertainties inherent in such analyses; there are small probabilities that the benefits or costs could turn out to be much greater than or much less than the most probable outcomes.)

In contrast, the economic costs of governmental actions restricting the use of fossil fuels could be large indeed, as suggested by the Nordhaus study cited earlier on the costs of compliance with the Kyoto treaty. One U.S. government study proposed that a cost-effective way of bringing about fossil fuel reductions would be a combination of carbon taxes and international trading in emissions rights. Emissions rights trading was, in fact, included in the modified Kyoto agreement. But such a trading scheme would result in huge income transfers, as rich nations paid poor nations for emissions quotas that the latter would probably not have used anyway—and it's not reasonable to assume that rich nations would be willing to do this.

Taking into account the large uncertainties in estimating the future growth of the world economy, and the corresponding growth in fossil fuel use, one group of economists puts the costs of greenhouse gas reduction in the neighborhood of one percent of world output, while another group puts it at around five percent of output. The costs would be considerably higher if large reductions were forced upon the global economy over a short time period, or if, as is likely, the most economically efficient schemes to bring about the reductions were not actually employed. Political economists Henry Jacoby, Ronald Prinn, and Richard Schmalensee put the matter bluntly: "It will be nearly impossible to slow climate warming appreciably without condemning much of the world to poverty, unless energy sources that emit little or no carbon dioxide become competitive with conventional fossil fuels."

**S**ome global warming has been under way for more than a century, at least partly from natural causes, and the world has been adjusting to it as it did to earlier climate changes. If human activity is finally judged to be adding to the natural warming, the amount of the addition is probably small, and society can adjust to that as well, at relatively low cost or even net benefit. But the industrial nations are not likely to carry out inefficient, Kyoto-type mandated reductions in fossil fuel use on the basis of so incomplete a scientific foundation as currently exists. The costs of so doing could well exceed the potential benefits. Far more effective would be policies and actions by the industrial countries to accelerate the development, in the near term, of technologies that utilize fossil fuels (and all resources) more efficiently and, in the longer term, of technologies that do not require the use of fossil fuels.

If climate science is to have any credibility in the future, its pursuit must be kept separate from global politics. The affluent nations should support research programs that improve the theoretical understanding of climate change, build an empirical database about factors that influence long-term climate change, and increase our understanding of short-term weather dynamics. Such research is fundamental to the greenhouse gas issue. But its rewards may be greater still, for it will also improve our ability to cope with extreme weather events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, whatever their causes. □

# Experimenting with Earth

by V. Ramanathan and Tim P. Barnett

In 1827, the French physicist Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier made a remarkably prescient assertion: “The question of global temperatures, one of the most important and most difficult in all natural philosophy, is composed of rather diverse elements that should be considered under one general viewpoint.” Nearly 200 years later, climate scientists are still trying to develop this “general viewpoint.” We now recognize that the problem is every bit as complicated and formidable as Fourier presumed—and perhaps even more important. Global temperatures are regulated not just by chemical, physical, and dynamical processes (the latter comprising convection and large-scale circulation) but by human and other biological processes as well. Fueled by growing scientific concern that human activities may significantly alter the world’s climate—if they have not already done so—major national and international efforts have been launched to explore and analyze the diverse elements of the climate system.

The fundamental energy source for Earth’s climate system is solar energy. The planet absorbs only about 70 percent of the incoming solar energy and, in turn, emits infrared energy into space to offset the solar heating. Over the long term, climate is governed by the balance between the incoming solar heating and the cooling associated with the outgoing infrared energy.

Atmospheric gases, such as water vapor and carbon dioxide, absorb infrared energy emitted by the planet’s surface that would otherwise escape into space. These gases also emit infrared energy into space, but because the surface of the planet is, on average, much warmer than the atmosphere, the eventual result is a net trapping of infrared energy within the atmosphere. (Atmospheric gases absorb some incoming solar radiation as well, but this has only a negligible impact.) This reduction of the outgoing infrared energy by atmospheric gases is what we call the *greenhouse effect*.

Water vapor, carbon dioxide, and clouds are the major contributors to the natural atmospheric greenhouse effect, with water vapor the dominant greenhouse gas. (Some of the major gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, such as nitrogen and oxygen, do not contribute to the greenhouse effect.) Advances in atmospheric gas sampling have revealed a significant increase all over the globe in the concentrations of several atmospheric gases—especially carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other halocarbons used as refriger-

ants and propellants, nitrous oxide from fertilizers, and lower-atmosphere ozone. For a long time, the prevailing view with respect to anthropogenic (human-generated) sources was that carbon dioxide was the only one of concern. The importance of the dozens of other greenhouse gases (including CFCs, methane, and ozone) was not recognized until the mid-1970s, when it was found that one molecule of CFC-11 ( $\text{CCl}_3\text{F}$ ) and CFC-12 ( $\text{CCl}_2\text{F}_2$ ) can have the same greenhouse effect as 10,000 molecules of carbon dioxide. The CFCs and other anthropogenic greenhouse gases besides carbon dioxide currently contribute about 40 percent of the total anthropogenic greenhouse effect.

The observed increases in greenhouse gases have added infrared energy equal to about 2.5 watts per square meter ( $\text{Wm}^{-2}$ ) of Earth's surface to the planet since the 1850s. That's equivalent to increasing the energy from the Sun by one percent. To put it another way, it's equivalent to burning one 250-watt electric light bulb for every 100 square meters of Earth's surface continuously every second of the day throughout the year. How does the planet deal with this sudden (in terms of geologic time) excess of energy, which it must somehow get rid of to maintain a stable climate?

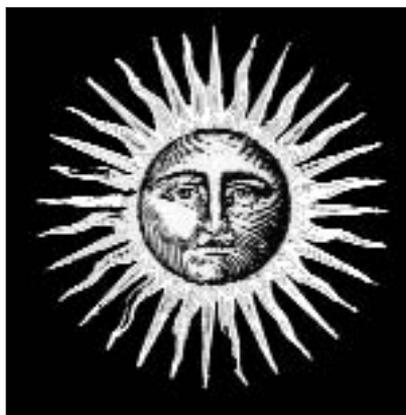
Let's conduct a thought experiment.

Consider the planet before humans started adding greenhouse gases in substantial quantities. It was in equilibrium, with the absorbed solar radiation balancing the infrared energy exiting into space. Enter James Watt, who ushered in the industrial era with his invention of the modern steam engine in 1784. Nobel Prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen has argued that this development jolted Earth into a new geological era he calls the *Anthropocene*, with human beings profoundly influencing the environment.

Greenhouse gases begin to accumulate in the atmosphere, and, as a consequence, more infrared energy is trapped and the amount of infrared leaving the planet to balance the solar heating is reduced. (However, because scientists lack suitable measurements from space, this reduction has not been confirmed.) Earth warms until the excess infrared energy is finally radiated into space to reach a new equilibrium that is warmer than the preindustrial climate. *In sum, the warming of the planet in response to a buildup of greenhouse gases is indisputable; it's based on fundamental and well-tested laws of thermodynamics and physics.*

The important practical issue concerns the magnitude of the warming. How great is it? In answering this question, one must combine the deductions from fundamental physics and thermodynamics that we've discussed with results from climate-modeling efforts. Although we still have a long way to go in developing the models, they have improved a great deal in the past decade.

Feedback effects are one of the greatest imponderables in these models. The ultimate source of water vapor in the atmosphere is evaporation from the oceans. More moisture will evaporate from a warmer ocean. Basic water vapor



thermodynamics dictates that the amount of moisture the atmosphere can hold increases exponentially with temperature. (This explains why winters outside the Tropics tend to be dry and summers humid—the colder winter air simply can't hold as much moisture as the warm summer air.) As a result, the greenhouse warming of the atmosphere increases the amount of water vapor, which, in turn, can further amplify the warming. A conceptually simple model incorporating these deductions has been built, and it, along with many of its variants, suggests that

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the increase in greenhouse gases since the 1850s should have committed the planet to a warming of about 1°C. (Without the positive water vapor feedback, the estimated warming would be smaller by about 30 to 50 percent.)

However, because of the strong links among the atmosphere, the cryosphere (ice and snow), the oceans, and the land, the predicted warming is not uniform, but varies significantly with latitude, longitude, altitude, and season. The temperature and pressure gradients that result from the non-uniform warming patterns can alter the general circulation of the atmosphere and the oceans and perturb the variables that depend on the circulation—namely, clouds, water vapor, ice sheets, and vegetation. These changes exert a feedback effect on global warming because they influence the absorbed solar and outgoing infrared energy.

To sort out these feedbacks, we must turn to more sophisticated climate models than the one with which we began. The most advanced and detailed four-dimensional global climate models (incorporating altitude, latitude, longitude, and time) suggest that the committed warming should have been between 1.5°C and 2°C, instead of the 1°C warming we estimated earlier. Feedbacks among the warming, ice and snow cover, and clouds lead to the amplification.

It's important to recognize that the extent of global warming is not fully and immediately reflected in Earth's surface temperatures. Because of the "thermal inertia effect" of the oceans and their large heat capacity, a lot of heat is stored in the depths of the oceans. Through a process of convective overturning, the oceans transport infrared energy to their deeper layers. Basically, the oceans sequester the additional heat, delaying the full impact of greenhouse warming. Only much later will the heat stored in the ocean depths warm the oceans and the atmosphere. "Later" could mean anything from a few decades to a few centuries. Thus, the *realized* warming will always be smaller than the *committed* warming. Our best understand-

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ing of climate feedbacks and the rate at which heat is stored in the oceans suggests that the realized warming during the 20th century should have been about 50 percent to 75 percent of the committed warming.

**T**o see how well all of these deductions and model predictions square with reality, we can compare them with real-world observations.

*a. Taking into account the thermal inertia of the oceans, the realized warming we should have observed from 1850 to 2000 is about 0.5°C to 1.5°C. (These figures refer to the global average of surface temperatures, over land and sea.) The 0.5°C is based on the simple model's result of 1°C committed warming and a 50 percent value for the realized warming. The 1.5°C warming is obtained by using the upper range of value for the more sophisticated model's estimate and the upper range of 75 percent for the realized warming.*

In fact, global surface temperature records reveal a warming trend of about 0.6°C (give or take 0.15°) between 1850 and 2000. That's certainly within the range predicted by the models, though it's less than half of what the more sophisticated model predicts. Some or most of this discrepancy can be accounted for by the cooling effect of sulfate particles of anthropogenic origin (which we'll describe later). In addition, natural causes contributed to the observed climate changes during this period.

About half of the observed warming occurred between 1900 and 1940. After that period, the global mean temperature went into a cooling trend until the mid-1960s, followed by a larger warming trend that has continued to the present day. Warming induced by greenhouse gases cannot, by itself, explain these swings. Natural variations in the energy output of the Sun, cooling due to the scattering of solar energy back to space by sulfate aerosols from volcanic eruptions (in addition to sulfates from anthropogenic emissions), and non-linear climate dynamics account for some of the warming trend until the 1940s and the cooling trend from the 1940s to mid-1960s. But none of these other factors can account for the large warming trend of the latter part of the 20th century. At least a half-dozen global climate model studies show, to a high degree of statistical certainty, that greenhouse gases are the dominant contributor to this warming.

*b. Because some of the excess infrared energy is stored in the oceans, the amount of heat stored in the oceans should be increasing with time.*

Records of ocean temperatures down to a depth of about 3,000 meters stretch back to the 1950s. A recent study demonstrates that the heat content of all the world's oceans has increased steadily during the past 50 years. The rate of increase matches very closely, with a high degree of statistical significance, the model-simulated increase attributable to greenhouse gases.

*c. The water vapor content of the lower atmosphere should be increasing with time.*

The vertical distribution of water vapor is gauged by humidity-measuring instruments flown on balloons, but the measurements are few and far between. Nevertheless, available records do show that the amount of water vapor in the lower atmosphere (up to five kilometers from Earth's surface) has increased during the past 50 years.

*d. The warming should be greater at higher latitudes because the brighter ice and snow reflect more radiation.*

This is also happening. Alaska, for example, is experiencing a significant warming, along with ecosystem changes.

*e. The snow cover on land, especially glaciers, and the sea ice cover should be retreating toward the poles.*

It's been shown that arctic sea ice has thinned by about 45 percent over the past 30 years, and landlocked glaciers such as those in the Himalayas are in retreat in most parts of the globe. If the warming continues, it's estimated that the Asian glacier field, the third largest collection of ice on the planet after the Antarctic and Greenland icecaps, will vanish during this century.

**I**n short, there's compelling evidence to conclude that the observed warming over the past 50 years is attributable largely to anthropogenic increases in greenhouse gases.

Jack Hollander's main reason, in his essay elsewhere in this issue, for skepticism about the role of anthropogenic greenhouse gases in global warming is the 20-year record (1979–98) of satellite-based estimates of atmospheric temperature change. As he points out, these estimates seem to show that Earth's atmosphere has not warmed very much, or may even have cooled slightly, while the surface has warmed. If that's true, it's a major setback for the particular climate models we now have—though not necessarily for predictions of global warming. Two independent groups have examined the same satellite data, and they've come to conflicting conclusions. Hollander relies on an analysis by John Christy and his colleagues in 2000. An analysis by Frank Wentz and several colleagues in 2002, using exactly the same data employed in the Christy study, reveals a warming of the atmosphere in closer agreement with greenhouse models.\*

By the beginning of the next century, the global population is expected to reach about nine billion, and many people in the developing world will be striving to match Western standards of living. Their efforts will entail enormous additions of atmospheric pollutants, alterations of the landscape, and other environmental stresses. Atmospheric carbon dioxide is expected to double, at least, from its preindustrial value of 280 parts per million by the next century. The infrared energy added to the planet by greenhouse gases will amount to at least  $4 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$ . According to our best understanding of the system, that could warm the planet by another 1.5 to 4.5°C (3 to 8°F), depending on the competing effects of aerosols in the atmosphere and the feedback effects of clouds and the cryosphere. But averages don't tell the whole story: The regional changes and impacts are expect-

\*The fact that two reputable studies can produce such a disagreement should not be surprising. The temperatures they report are not obtained directly from thermometers but indirectly through devices called microwave sounder units that operate from polar-orbiting satellites. To derive temperature figures from the data these devices provide, researchers must run the data through computer models, a process that introduces several large degrees of uncertainty. In addition, the instruments were not designed to estimate temperature trends on the order of what's being examined—a tenth of a degree per decade.

ed to be much larger than global mean changes. The atmosphere and the planet, it would seem, are headed toward uncharted territory.

**U**ncertainties surround any attempt to predict climate changes. Changes in clouds, for example, have effects on climate change that are very difficult to measure. For decades, models predicted that clouds would be shown to have a net cooling effect, and those predictions were confirmed in 1989 by data from the Earth Radiation Budget Satellite Experiment, a project of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The data reveal that solar radiation reflected by clouds exceeds the infrared greenhouse effect by a significant 15 to 20  $\text{Wm}^{-2}$ . In other words, clouds have a cooling effect about five times larger than the warming effect from a doubling of carbon dioxide. The great unknown, however, is what will happen in the future, after all possible feedbacks are considered, if cloudiness increases or decreases. It's possible that cloudiness could lessen future warming—and possible, too, that it could increase warming.

Another uncertainty has been introduced by human activities, such as the release of sulfur dioxide from coal combustion, that have altered the sulfur cycle. Anthropogenic emissions of sulfur dioxide, which converts into sulfate particles in the atmosphere, exceed those from natural sources, such as volcanic emissions, by more than a factor of two. Sulfate particles exert a cooling effect in two ways: directly, by scattering incoming sunlight back into space, and indirectly, by nucleating more cloud drops and increasing the brightness of clouds. These direct and indirect effects may have counteracted as much as 30 to 75 percent of the greenhouse warming the planet might otherwise have experienced.



Carbonaceous aerosols created by fossil fuel combustion and biomass burning have become another major source of particles. They're an ingredient in the complex chemical soup called "brown cloud" now seen in Los Angeles and many other urban regions around the world. Brown cloud is not just a phenomenon of cities; it can span an entire continent or ocean basin. A disturbing example is the so-called Asian brown cloud, a blanket of aerosols, ash, soot, and other particulates, perhaps two miles thick, that is concentrated over much of southern and eastern Asia.

Aerosols have a much larger effect on the regional radiative heating of the planet than greenhouse gases do. They cause a large reduction in the amount of sunlight reaching Earth's surface, a corresponding increase in solar heating of the atmosphere, changes in atmospheric temperature structure, suppression of rainfall, and less efficient removal of pollutants. These aerosol effects can lead to a weaker hydrologic cycle and global drying, outcomes that can compete with the effects of global

warming on precipitation. Researchers have linked sulfate aerosols and the brown clouds to droughts in recent decades in the Sahara, eastern China, and southwest Asia.

The key issue with respect to clouds and aerosols is the extent to which the solar radiation reflected by the planet is out of equilibrium with its pre-Anthropocene values. Accurate radiation-budget measurements from space were begun only in the 1980s, and we need to continue them to document this major human impact.

**I**n spite of the complexities surrounding it, global warming caused by greenhouse gases will be the most important environmental challenge facing the world during the 21st century, and possibly the 22nd century as well. There's a simple reason for this: The greenhouse gases we're now adding to the atmosphere have very long lifetimes—on the order of centuries. (Aerosols, in contrast, survive only for weeks.) Put in simple terms, about 10 to 30 percent of the carbon dioxide we release from our cars today will still be circling the globe 100 years from now, contributing to conditions on the planet our great-grandchildren will inhabit.

For every decade that passes without action to cut the emission rate of greenhouse gases, we're committing the planet to an additional warming of about 0.1 to 0.2°C. In effect, we're making the next generation's climate now, and there will be nothing they can do about it! Or worse still, the next generation may be forced to resort to engineering the climate *advertently* to offset the *inadvertent* changes caused by greenhouse gases.

The time to act is now. It's particularly important to recognize that the use of global averages in discussions of global warming's impact masks much more marked changes that are likely to be seen at the regional level. These localized changes can produce a vast number of major practical problems. In the western United States, for example, winter snow is likely to melt earlier than in the past, posing new difficulties for those attempting to manage the West's scarce water resources. (On the whole, it should be noted, poorer nations will probably suffer the most from climate change.)

The experienced climate scientist concerned today about global warming is like a ship's engineer who hears disturbing noises in the boiler room and warns the captain of impending danger. But the captain, determined to make port on schedule, pays no attention, insisting on absolute proof. The planet is undoubtedly making disturbing noises: To the list we've already enumerated we would add worldwide changes in biota (coral reefs, pests, and disease vectors) and glacier surges following the collapse of ice shelves on the Antarctic Peninsula and rising sea levels. Our observational records and models are far from perfect, and it may take decades to make them sufficiently conclusive to convince everyone. By then the deed will have been done. As we continue to ignore or debate the issue, the question we must ask ourselves grows ever more urgent: How much risk do we want to take before slowing down the experiment human beings are performing on the planet? □

# THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

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## *Without Fear or Favor?*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

The mainstream news media may or may not have the liberal bias that conservatives have long decried, but when it comes to shouting about the news on TV and radio, liberals have found it hard to get a word in edgewise.

The latest liberal talker to succumb to ratings anemia is Phil Donahue, whose MSNBC cable-TV show attracted, during one recent month, an average of only 439,000 viewers, compared with conservative rival Bill O'Reilly's 2.7 million, over at Fox.

That liberals such as Donahue face an uphill battle with the cable audience is evident from a June 9, 2002, report on a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press ([www.people-press.org](http://www.people-press.org)). Only 16 percent of the regular viewers of MSNBC identify themselves as liberals, while 40 percent self-identify as conservatives. Thirty-eight percent call themselves moderates. The ideological breakdown for regular CNN viewers is the same as for those watching MSNBC, but at CNBC the conservative percentage rises to 44, and at Fox News Channel to 46. The call-in radio audience is also about 46 percent conservative.

Some wealthy Democrats are seeking to bankroll a radio network of liberal talkers to combat conservative talk king Rush Limbaugh and his kind, *The New York Times* (Feb. 17, 2003) reports. But those millionaires are wasting their

money, suggests *Washington Post* columnist Marc Fisher, writing in *Slate* (Feb. 21, 2003). "For 20 years now, good libs have been conducting their very own *American Idol* talent search. They tried Mario Cuomo, and that fiery Jim Hightower, and that nice man Bill Press, and all those other *Crossfire* refugees. Not a one of them clicked."

Leftist Michael Moore has "clicked," however, both on the big screen (*Bowling for Columbine*) and on the bestseller lists (*Stupid White Men*). He and Limbaugh, and their respective loudmouth brethren in the media, have something in common, according to William Powers, media critic at *National Journal* (Feb. 28, 2003): They pretend to seek political power, but what they are really after is money—and for that, the opposing ideologues desperately need each other. "Without his liberal foils, Rush Limbaugh would be an obscure Midwestern disc jockey. Without his conservative foils, Michael Moore would be an obscure Midwestern filmmaker."

The rise of the conservative commentariat now seems to lend support to the long-standing *left-wing* charge of *right-wing* corporate media bias. "Take a look at the Sunday talk shows, the cable chat fests, the op-ed pages and opinion magazines, and the radio talk shows," urges Eric Alterman, author of *What Liberal Media? The Truth about Bias and the News* (2003). Writing in *The Nation* (Feb. 24,

2003), he points to the vast flock of conservatives darkening the commentarial skies, from veterans such as George Will and Robert Novak to newcomers Ann Coulter and Tucker Carlson. “Liberals are not as rare in the print punditocracy as in television, but their modest numbers nevertheless give the lie to any accusation of liberal domination.”

Conservatives no longer much inveigh against news commentators, as Vice President Spiro Agnew used to do; they now concentrate their fire on the mainstream purveyors of straight news—the TV networks’ nightly news programs and the national newspapers and newsmagazines. The conservative commentators “openly, cheerfully acknowledge their biases”—and they’re not members of “the ‘news’ media,” which do indeed have a liberal bias, argues L. Brent Bozell III, president of the Media Research Center, writing in *National Review Online* ([www.nationalreview.com](http://www.nationalreview.com), Feb. 5, 2003).

Bruce Bartlett, a senior fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis, agrees. “A survey of the pressroom in any major newspaper, newsweekly, or television network will show overwhelming support for abortion on demand, restrictive gun control, and severe limits on campaign contributions. Any candidate espousing such views will generally get positive press coverage.” Yet that, he argues in *The Weekly Standard* (Nov. 25, 2002), may work to conservative Republicans’ advantage. “To the extent that [Democrats] pay attention to their media coverage, they are cut off from the mainstream of society without even realizing it, implicitly believing that Peoria thinks like *The New York Times*.”

Some conservatives, however, have hinted that the “liberal bias” charge is exaggerated. In 1996, Patrick Buchanan, the conservative commentator-turned-presidential-candidate, said that he had received “balanced coverage, and broad coverage—all we could have asked. For heaven sakes, we kid about the ‘liberal media,’ but every Republican on earth does that.”

If the mainstream media outlets are guilty of liberal bias, it can’t be because they are pandering to the audience. Among regular viewers of the networks’ nightly news programs, the Pew researchers found, 41 percent are moderates, 37 percent are conservatives,

and a mere 17 percent are liberals. The ideological breakdown is much the same for regular readers of newspapers and newsmagazines.

But the mainstream news media *are* pandering to their viewers and readers, or at least paying very close attention to their likes and dislikes, many observers point out. “The dirty little secret of network newscasts, and of most major newspapers, is not that they are manned by liberal proselytizers,” says Neal Gabler, a senior fellow at the Norman Lear Center at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication, “it is that they are trying to attract the widest possible viewership, or readership, and that doing so necessitates that they be as inoffensive as possible.” Though the fare they offer may seem “like liberalism to conservatives and conservatism to liberals,” he writes in *The Los Angeles Times* (Dec. 22, 2002), it really reflects “a strategy to keep people watching.”

The news media are a lot less “uniformly liberal” than they were in the Nixon-Agnew days, contends Timothy Noah, a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly* (Mar. 2003). It’s true, he observes, that “outside the pundit class reporters and editors remain predominantly liberal.” According to a 1996 survey, nearly 90 percent of Washington bureau chiefs and congressional correspondents voted for Bill Clinton in 1992. But because of the criticism they’ve received, journalists “tend to overcompensate.” That helps to explain “why, during the 2000 election and the ‘long count’ that followed, Bush got more favorable coverage from political reporters than Gore did.”

Among news organizations today, Noah writes, there remain only a few “liberal bastions,” such as *The New York Times*. But Gabler maintains that the *Times* lately has become more openly partisan, “with its crusade against the exclusion of women members at Augusta National Golf Club” and its apparent use of news columns to discourage a U.S. war against Iraq. In his view, the important news-media struggle today is not between liberals and conservatives, but between “two entirely different journalistic mindsets: those who believe in advocacy, and those who believe in objectivity—or, at the very least, in the appearance of objectivity.” At stake, he believes, is “the idea that the chief obligation of the press is to tell it the way it is without fear or favor.”

## *The Power of the Post-Presidency*

“The Contemporary Presidency: Postpresidential Influence in the Postmodern Era” by Thomas F. Schaller and Thomas W. Williams, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Mar. 2003), 1020 19th St., N.W., Ste. 250, Washington, D.C. 20036.

When Bill Clinton left the White House at age 54 in 2001, he entered that curious twilight zone in which the powers of the presidency have vanished but the afterglow remains. Thanks to today’s increased longevity, the afterglow often lasts a lot longer than it used to, and it also burns a little brighter.

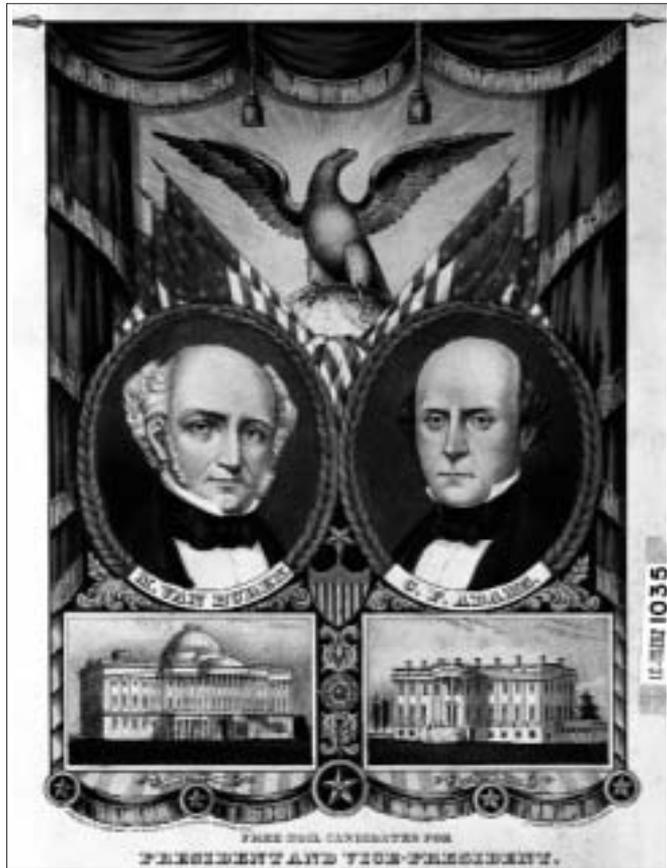
Clinton’s nearest Democratic predecessor, Jimmy Carter, has made his 22-year “post-presidency” outshine his presidency, most recently winning the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to promote peace and human rights around the world, note Schaller, a political scientist at the University of Maryland, and Williams, a research analyst for a private firm. Some of Carter’s post-presidential ventures have been controversial, such as his freelance trip to North Korea during the 1994 crisis over Pyongyang’s nuclear efforts.

Carter, who left office in 1981 at age 56, has had the fourth-longest post-presidential term of all the 33 chief executives who lived to have one. He may soon overtake John Adams, who died in 1826, a little more than a quarter-century after he left office. Carter’s immediate predecessor, Gerald Ford, is currently in second place in post-presidential longevity and may wind up ahead of Herbert Hoover, whose “term” lasted more than 31 years.

Hoover perhaps needed all that time to refurbish his reputation after the Great Depression. He wrote more than two dozen books, coordinated a U.S. relief effort in Europe after World War II, and headed gov-

ernment reform commissions during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

Early ex-presidents “mostly retired to their homes and plantations,” note Schaller and Williams. But the sixth, John Quincy Adams, is still reckoned among the most influential of former presidents. After leaving office at age 61 in 1829, he served with distinction in the House of Representatives for 17 years. He opposed slavery and the



*The first ex-president who tried to regain the office, Martin Van Buren (1837–41), failed miserably in his 1848 run on the Free Soil Party ticket.*

Mexican War, and helped establish the Smithsonian Institution.

Another middling president who had a very influential post-presidential career was William Howard Taft. Defeated for reelection

in 1912 (thanks in part to the third-party candidacy of his erstwhile mentor, ex-president Theodore Roosevelt), Taft went on to teach law at Yale University and then to serve from 1921 to 1930 as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Abraham Lincoln faced a different kind of challenge from a predecessor when he took office: After trying to mediate the North-South conflict, John Tyler (1841–45) won a seat in the first Confederate congress. But

Tyler died before taking office and openly confronting Lincoln.

Tyler was one of five ex-presidents still living when Lincoln took office, a number that was matched only when Bill Clinton moved into the White House. As lengthening lifespans and voracious mass media expand the powers and the number of ex-presidents, it's not hard to imagine that some future presidents will look back on Tyler's timely expiration as a precedent that more should follow.

## *A Despotic Supreme Court?*

“Lincoln on Judicial Despotism” by Robert P. George, in *First Things* (Feb. 2003), Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Ave., Ste. 400, New York, N.Y. 10010.

Nearly everyone today accepts the idea that the Supreme Court has the final word on what the Constitution permits and forbids. But Abraham Lincoln, and before him, Thomas Jefferson, held a very different view: They feared that judicial supremacy meant judicial despotism. And their fear was well founded, argues George, a professor of jurisprudence at Princeton University.

In *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), which invalidated the Judiciary Act of 1789, the Supreme Court, according to most scholars, established the Court's power of judicial review over acts of Congress and the president. Jefferson condemned the ruling and later said that the claimed power would have the effect of “placing us under the despotism of an oligarchy.”

The next time the Court declared an act of Congress unconstitutional was in 1857, in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*. In a 7 to 2 decision, the Court ruled that slaves were personal property under the Constitution, so the (already repealed) Missouri Compromise, which outlawed slavery in federal territories, was unconstitutional. The Court not only sent Scott back into slavery but held that blacks could not be citizens. Most scholars today think that the *Dred Scott* case further polarized the country and made the Civil War “almost inevitable,” George says.

Lincoln denounced the ruling repeatedly in his 1858 senatorial campaign, and

also in his presidential campaign two years later. The evil, in his view, was not merely the expansion of slavery but judicial supremacy. Supreme Court rulings must be binding on the parties immediately involved, and treated with respect in parallel cases by other branches of government, he conceded in his 1861 inaugural address. But if government policy in vital matters “is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court” the instant they are made, he said, then “the people will have ceased to be their own rulers.”

In office, George notes, Lincoln refused to treat the *Dred Scott* decision as binding on the executive branch. His administration issued passports to free blacks, thus treating them as citizens, and he signed legislation putting restrictions on slavery in the western territories.

Ironically, nearly a century later, in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Supreme Court, in ruling school desegregation unconstitutional, acted to advance racial equality and civil rights. And in a ruling four years later upholding that desegregation order, the Court unanimously asserted, for the first time, that “the federal judiciary is supreme in the exposition of the law of the Constitution.”

Though the Court's stance in *Brown* is widely approved today, George says, the grave danger perceived by Jefferson and Lincoln, and exemplified by the *Dred Scott* decision, remains.

# A Vote for the Electoral College

“The Electoral College and the Development of American Democracy” by Gary Glenn, in *Perspectives on Political Science* (Winter 2003), 1319 18th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-1802.

Though campaigning for the next presidential election has already begun, it's not too late to clear up a few illusions left over from the last one. Contrary to what you may have heard, Al Gore did *not* win the popular vote in 2000. And the Electoral College, far from being a fiendish anachronism thwarting the popular will, is actually *more democratic* than any practical alternative.

Yes, when the Florida dust had settled, Gore had almost 51 million votes, and George W. Bush about a half million fewer. But that's the

*national* popular vote, and, constitutionally, there's no such thing, notes Glenn, a political scientist at Northern Illinois University. Under the Constitution, there are 51 separate elections, and the candidate who assembles enough popular-vote victories in them to get a majority of Electoral College votes is the winner. That's the *federal* method of counting popular votes, and it's akin to the way the winner of the World Series is determined—by winning four out of seven games, not by scoring the most total runs in seven games.

## EXCERPT

### *Invisible Footprints*

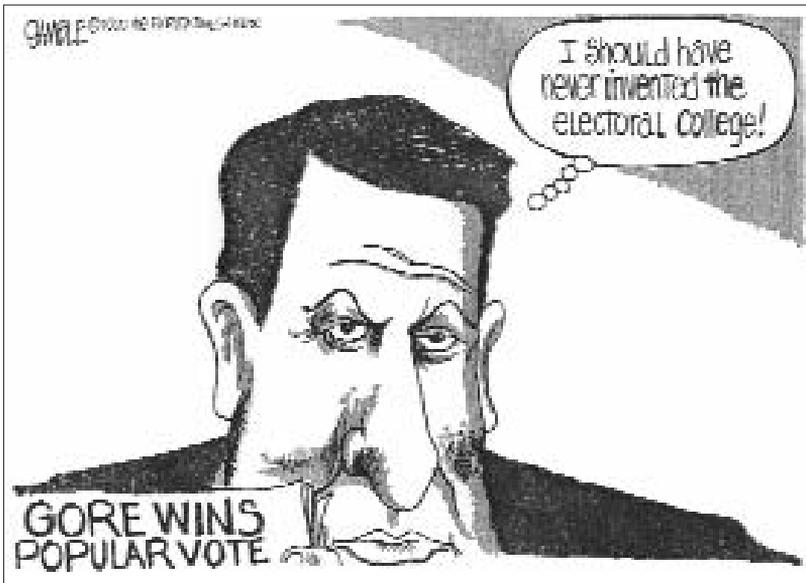
*Ironically, the effect of increased executive branch prosecutions, the Freedom of Information Act, and similar laws has often been the opposite of their intention. By forcing surrender of documents, they have often provoked presidents and those who serve them to commit less and less revealing information to paper. . . .*

*Some executive branch officials in recent years have invented subterfuges that, they hoped, would prevent their private words from being suddenly wrenched into public view. Some dictated reminiscences to private lawyers, hoping that they could be shielded, if ever necessary, by lawyer-client privilege. Others took notes in their own indecipherable hieroglyphics or asked friends or family to “interview” them about their job from time to time, with a tape recorder running. Still others rolled the dice and compiled journals at home, vowing that if ever asked under oath whether they kept a diary, they would say no, seeking dubious refuge in the intention to say, if the documents were ever discovered, that what they were writing were not diaries but “personal notes.”*

*In recent administrations, high officials have sometimes bucked the system by inventing bizarre new classifications, instead of well-known ones like “SECRET” or “TOP SECRET,” that the courts or Congress would not know to ask about. Some reserve their most sensitive (and often, ultimately, most important for history) communications for furtive notes exchanged outside the official system, which will stay out of official files and will never go to the National Archives. Top appointees sometimes brief their colleagues on important matters only after exacting a pledge that no notes be taken. Others write memos that deliberately falsify the record in case they are ever leaked or subpoenaed.*

*All of this is bad for executive decision making, which often depends on knowing exactly who did what and said what two weeks earlier. It is far worse for historians, who may be losing the basic sources that tell us what we most want to know about a presidency.*

—Michael Beschloss, a presidential historian, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (December 2002)



In the 2000 election, Al Gore won 50,999,897 popular votes against George W. Bush's 50,456,002, but the Electoral College vote went 271 to 266 in Bush's favor.

The Founders were not hostile to popular election of the president, Glenn says. But they feared that the concerns of small states would get short shrift if popular majorities could be formed chiefly from the populous states and big cities of the Northeast. They deliberately devised the Electoral College system to favor candidates “who made broad appeals to all parts of the country and across the inevitable small state–large state, rural–urban, and agricultural–commercial conflicts of interest,” Glenn notes. Though the country is more urban now, the basic conflicts remain.

Even so, how can the existing system be more democratic? Because with a direct national popular vote, says Glenn, anyone with a sufficiently large following—including not only governors of large states but movie stars,

rock musicians, ethnic partisans, and assorted others—would be tempted to run. “The reason is that 15 percent, 30 percent, or even five percent might win.” Many proposed schemes for reforming current practice provide for a runoff if no candidate gets at least 40 percent. But the existing system “already consistently gives us winners with more than that,” Glenn points out, and runoffs, as France has shown, usually attract fewer voters because disappointed followers of excluded candidates stay home. By forcing serious candidates to assemble popular majorities in the states, he says, the Electoral College encourages—and usually produces—greater voter support behind the eventual winner. “This makes democracy more broadly representative, more consensual, and hence more governable.”

#### FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## *Now, America the Imperial?*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

On one thing, at least, advocates and opponents of war in Iraq can agree: The conflict has momentous implications for America and its place in the world.

Michael Ignatieff, director of the Carr Center at Harvard University's Kennedy

School of Government, writing in *The New York Times Magazine* (Jan. 5, 2003), describes war in Iraq as “an imperial operation that would commit a reluctant republic to become the guarantor of peace, stability, democratization, and oil supplies in

a combustible region of Islamic peoples stretching from Egypt to Afghanistan. A role once played by the Ottoman Empire, then by the French and the British, will now be played by a nation that has to ask whether in becoming an empire it risks losing its soul as a republic.”

Backers of the war envision America’s enthusiastically taking on the imperial role in the Middle East and elsewhere for many decades. Columnist Charles Krauthammer, who in 1990 proclaimed America’s “unipolar moment” in the world, now sees that moment stretching into a “unipolar era,” in which the United States uses its unrivaled dominance to advance democracy and to preserve peace in “every region” of the globe. Successfully managing the threat posed by Iraq and other rogue states with weapons of mass destruction, he writes in *The National Interest* (Winter 2002–03), requires “the aggressive and confident application of unipolar power rather than falling back, as we did in the 1990s, on paralyzing multilateralism.”

But critics see an America that’s misguided and on the road to ruin, shortsightedly destroying the very international system it did so much to build up over half a century. Tony Judt, director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, writing in *The New York Review of Books* (Mar. 27, 2003), calls it “a tragedy of historical proportions that America’s own leaders are today corroding and dissolving the links that bind the U.S. to its closest allies in the international community.”

The likely result of that wreckage, adds David C. Hendrickson, a political scientist at Colorado College, writing in *World Policy Journal* (Fall 2002), will be “a fundamental delegitimation of American power.” And once lost, “the aura of legitimacy,” which required “years of patient labor” to achieve, will be “very difficult to regain.”

The “revolutionary” reorientation of U.S. foreign policy since the terrorist attacks of 9/11—toward “the acceptance of preventive war and the rejection of multilateralism”—runs counter to “fundamental values in our political tradition,” Hendrickson argues. The doctrine that unbounded power is a menace is as old as Western civilization: “In

thought and experience, resistance to universal empire is coeval with the history of civil liberty.”

Yet Lawrence F. Kaplan, a senior editor at *The New Republic* (Mar. 3, 2003), contends that the reorientation is squarely in the liberal tradition of Woodrow Wilson—“the Wilson that pledged to make the world safe for democracy and vowed that America would ‘spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness.’” That tradition, Kaplan writes, “was passed down from generation to generation—from Harry Truman . . . to John F. Kennedy—before being put to rest in the jungles of Vietnam.” Now it’s being revived by conservative George W. Bush.

In adopting a strategy of preventive war, however, argues Jack Snyder, a professor of international relations at Columbia University, America may well learn the same lesson as earlier imperial powers: that the preventive use of force was counterproductive “because it often sparked brushfire wars at the edges of the empire, internal rebellions, and opposition from powers not yet conquered or otherwise subdued.” Fearful of America’s great power, weak states “may increasingly conclude that weapons of mass destruction joined to terror tactics are the only feasible equalizer,” Snyder warns in *The National Interest* (Spring 2003).

Given America’s past reliance on relationships with military rulers and autocrats in the region, observes Fouad Ajami, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, few Arabs in Iraq and neighboring lands are likely to greet the American effort as “a Wilsonian campaign to spread the reign of liberty in the Arab world.” Nevertheless, he writes in *Foreign Affairs* (Jan.–Feb. 2003), America’s great power “can help tip the scales in favor of modernity and change in the region.” There need be no apologies for U.S. “unilateralism,” says Ajami. “The region can live with and use that unilateralism.”

Ignatieff believes that a war on Iraq will oblige the United States to take on “the reordering of the whole region” and “stick at it through many successive administrations. The burden of empire is of long duration, and

democracies are impatient with long-lasting burdens—none more so than America.”

And there may be the rub, says Krauthammer. How long the “unipolar era” lasts “will be decided at home. It will depend

largely on whether it is welcomed by Americans or seen as a burden to be shed. . . . The choice is ours. To impiously paraphrase Benjamin Franklin: History has given you an empire, if you will keep it.”

## *Hiroshima Revisited*

“A Score of Bloody Okinawas and Iwo Jimas’: President Truman and Casualty Estimates for the Invasion of Japan” by D. M. Giangreco, in *Pacific Historical Review* (Feb. 2003), 487 Cramer Hall, Portland State Univ., Portland, Ore. 97207-0751.

Is an end finally in sight to the controversy over the motivation behind President Harry Truman’s decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945?

Looking back on that fateful decision, Truman said he had been advised that an invasion of Japan might mean up to one million Americans dead or wounded. Revisionist historians have scornfully dismissed that and similar statements as *ex post facto* rationalizations, unsupported by archival evidence. They charge that Truman’s decision was based on a combination of racism and crass strategic calculation—an assertion that caused a national controversy in 1995 when curators at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum planned to incorporate it into a special exhibit on the *Enola Gay*. But a wealth of documentary evidence supporting Truman’s assertion has recently been discovered at the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, reports Giangreco, an editor at *Military Review*.

It’s long been known that former president Herbert Hoover wrote a memo for Truman in May 1945, based on secret Pentagon briefings, warning that an invasion could result in 500,000 to one million American deaths. Those figures implied total casualties of two to five million. Historian Barton J. Bernstein has maintained that there’s no proof Truman ever saw the memo.

The newly unearthed documents show that the president not only read the memo, says Giangreco, but “ordered his senior advisers each to prepare a written analysis before coming in to discuss

it face to face. None of these civilian advisers batted an eye at the casualty estimate.”

At a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on June 18, Truman heard the participants come at the question another way—by examining the ratios of Americans to Japanese killed in recent operations (1 to 2 for the Okinawa campaign, for example). They used these ratios, Giangreco says, to suggest “how battle casualties from the much larger Japanese and U.S. forces involved in the first of the two lengthy invasion operations on Japanese soil might play out.”

Admiral William Leahy, Truman’s chief of staff, said the U.S. casualty rate on Okinawa had been 35 percent, and “that would give a good estimate of the casualties



*New evidence supports the view that President Harry S. Truman dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima after he was told that up to one million Americans would die in an invasion.*

to be expected” in the opening invasion of the southernmost Home Island, Kyushu. None of the others at the meeting disputed Leahy’s view. General George C. Marshall, army chief of staff, reported that 766,700 U.S. troops (not counting replacements for losses) would be needed during

the first 45 days of the invasion. With the war then projected to last through 1946, the longer-term implications were clear to Truman and the others present: Unless some means other than invasion were found to end the war, hundreds of thousands of Americans would die.

## ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

# *Is Global Inequality Rising?*

“Inequality Among World Citizens: 1820–1992” by François Bourguignon and Christian Morrisson, in *The American Economic Review* (Sept. 2002), 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

There’s a growing effort among economists to measure global economic inequality, but it’s been hampered by the scarcity of reliable data and other factors. Bourguignon and Morrisson say there’s another problem: Economists have, in effect, been barking up the wrong tree.

It doesn’t make much sense, they argue, to look at the problem strictly in terms of inequality among countries, as most other economists have done. (Bourguignon is an economist at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris, Morrisson at the Sorbonne.) Pretending that everybody in, say, Costa Rica, takes in the nation’s median income of \$4,040 doesn’t give a very accurate picture of the world. So the two men set out to measure trends in inequality over the long term—from 1820 to 1992—by incorporating measures of inequality *within* countries as well as among them. Their results are a kind of bad-news, good-news package: Earlier studies “clearly” underestimated the amount of global inequality in the past, yet it appears that the long-term rise in inequality “almost leveled off” around 1950.

From 1820 to 1950, according to the authors, global economic inequality increased almost continuously, though the pace slowed after World War I. Social scientists use something called the Gini coefficient to measure inequality; a Gini coefficient of 1.0 represents maximum inequality. The world’s Gini coefficient grew from 0.5 in 1820 to 0.61 in 1914, and to 0.64 in 1950. By 1992, it had reached 0.657. This is a high degree of inequality—even today’s more inegalitarian countries have Gini coefficients below 0.6, the authors note. (However, the post-1950 rise is partly offset by positive develop-

ments in other income indicators: Between 1980 and 1992, for example, the poorest of the poor actually increased their share of the world’s total income for the first time since 1820.)

Rising global inequality after 1820 did not mean that the poor were getting poorer. On the contrary, say Bourguignon and Morrisson, “the extreme poverty headcount fell from 84 percent of the world population in 1820 to 24 percent in 1992.” The rich simply got richer faster.

The authors’ biggest innovation comes in identifying the sources of inequality. In 1820, within-country inequality accounted for 80 percent of the world’s inequality. In other words, there wasn’t a great rich-poor disparity among countries, but there was *within* each country. By 1950, however, within-country inequality accounted for only 40 percent of the global total.

What happened? Through 1950, the “dominant” drag on equalization was Asia’s slow economic growth, particularly in China and India, the two demographic giants. Asia’s economies grew “some 4.5 times slower than the world average and 6 times slower than the average for the Western European region, including its offshoots.” (It’s an interesting illustration of the perils of such studies that Asia’s “little dragons,” by jumping so far and so fast after World War II, actually contributed to an *increase* in at least one measure of global inequality.)

Remarkably, there doesn’t seem to be much connection between population growth and global inequality. One reason is that the relative size of regional populations hasn’t changed that much. And to the degree that, say, poverty-stricken Africa’s population has grown rapidly

in recent decades, economic gains in China have offset the effect.

“The burst of world income inequality [since 1820] now seems to be over,” the authors conclude. “There is comparatively lit-

tle difference between the world distribution today and in 1950.” What should worry us now, they say, is that poverty is becoming increasingly concentrated in Africa and a few other parts of the world.

## *Feel the Pain*

“Pricing and the Psychology of Consumption” by John Gourville and Dilip Soman, in *Harvard Business Review* (Sept. 2002), 60 Harvard Way, Boston, Mass. 02163.

What’s the last thing the Amalgamated Sprocket Company wants its customers to think about? The price of its sprockets, of course. But Amalgamated and many other companies may be making a big mistake.

The reason is elementary, say Gourville and Soman: “A customer who doesn’t use a product is unlikely to buy that product again.” And the more a consumer remains aware of what he paid for a product, the more likely he is to use it.

When the two professors—Gourville at Harvard Business School, Soman at the School of Business and Management at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology—studied ticket sales at a Shakespeare theater festival, they found that people who bought tickets to individual plays had a no-show rate of less than one percent. Those who paid in advance to attend all four plays had a

no-show rate of 21.5 percent.

The pattern shows up again and again. Health club members who pay annual fees pump a lot of iron in the months immediately after they write a check, but before long they’re back in their easy chairs. Monthly dues payers go to the gym on a more regular basis.

Gourville and Soman think their no pain—no gain principle can be applied in many fields. To get their customers to come in for regular checkups and immunizations, for example, health maintenance organizations can itemize costs within the regular flat fee. That would make customers more aware of what they’re paying for. The principle can also be used to minimize consumption. Country club managers who want to reduce the summertime throngs on the links would be shrewd to make club members pay up long before, in the cold, dark days of winter.

## *Defending the IMF*

“The IMF Strikes Back” by Kenneth Rogoff, in *Foreign Policy* (Jan.–Feb. 2003), 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), which provides short-term loans to distressed member-nations, has become a favorite target of anti-globalization protesters and other critics. Rogoff, economic counselor and director of the research department at the IMF, rises to its defense.

One common criticism is that the fund imposes harsh economic policies on governments, crushing the hopes and aspirations of their people. But from Peru in 1954 to South Korea in 1997 to Argentina today, governments in developing countries have sought IMF aid because they were already in

deep financial trouble. The IMF steps in where private creditors fear to go and offers loans at low interest rates. The fund doesn’t create the austerity, says Rogoff, it *lightens* it: “The economic policy conditions that the fund attaches to its loans are in lieu of the stricter discipline that market forces would impose in the IMF’s absence.” Even so, he adds, politicians—including those whose economic mismanagement often helped to bring on the crisis—find in the IMF “a convenient whipping boy” when they must finally impose austerity.

To be sure, the IMF insists on being

repaid, Rogoff says, but the repayments “normally spike only after the crisis has passed.” If IMF loans were never repaid, there would eventually be *no* funds to provide to developing countries—unless the industrialized countries were willing to replenish the IMF’s coffers continually.

Critics also accuse the IMF of pushing countries to raise domestic interest rates and tighten their budgets during recessions, the

precise opposite of Keynesian policies to stimulate the economy. The IMF does encourage the Keynesian approach “where feasible,” Rogoff counters, but it isn’t feasible with “most emerging markets,” which find it very difficult to borrow during a downturn. The IMF “can only do so much for countries that don’t [build] up surpluses during boom times—such as Argentina in the 1990s—to leave room for deficits during downturns.”

## SOCIETY

### *Loves of an Anarchist*

“Emma Goldman and the Tragedy of Modern Love” by Rochelle Gurstein, in *Salmagundi* (Summer–Fall 2002), Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866.

Anarchist Emma Goldman didn’t leave many of the great issues of her day untouched. She was an impassioned crusader for labor and revolution and an unabashed advocate of “free love” who wrote openly of her erotic yearnings and numerous love affairs. That openness was too much for the feminists of

her day, but it was catnip to their successors in the 1960s and 1970s. To them, Goldman seemed a feminist foremother.

As feminist scholars began to delve into Goldman’s life (1869–1940), however, doubts soon set in, and the reasons are revealing, says Gurstein, the author of *The Repeal of Reticence* (1996). The change of heart began with a 1984 biography by leading Goldman authority Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman*. Drawing on a newly discovered trove of Goldman’s passionate letters to her longtime lover, Ben Reitman, Falk found a tumultuous “secret” life that was hard to square with the standards of late-20th-century feminism. The letters revealed a woman who was full of jealous rage at her lover’s rampant promiscuity and also seemed willing at times to abandon all of her political commitments for the sexual ecstasy she found in Reitman’s arms.

To latter-day feminists, this discovery was a terrible disappointment, revealing a woman who was willing to endure great humiliation and who expressed her love for Reitman in words that were dismayingly “romantic, almost melodramatic,” as Falk put it. But



Emma Goldman, shown here in a 1906 photograph, was both true to her principles and passionate about her lover, Ben Reitman.

Gurstein argues that the modern feminist conviction that “the personal is political” leads these writers astray. They fail “to realize that the impassioned words that one utters to a lover in private to make a particular impression are an entirely different thing from a considered statement of one’s political commitment.” In fact, Goldman never did sacrifice her principles for Reitman: “She went to prison, was deported . . . spoke the truth about the brutality of Soviet Russia, and was a pariah among her former comrades for the rest of her life.”

The tormented love letters, Gurstein says, shouldn’t have led biographers to ask what’s wrong with Emma Goldman, but what’s wrong with the ideal of free love.

For all of her outspokenness, Goldman never spoke publicly about her innermost agonies and yearnings. She retained, in other words, a sense of privacy and intimacy. That her private feelings now seem merely clichéd and incomprehensible to contemporary critics, Gurstein says, is a measure of how much our appreciation of the private and the intimate has shrunk.

## *What Drives Wives to Murder?*

“Until Death Do You Part: The Effects of Unilateral Divorce on Spousal Homicides”  
by Thomas S. Dee, in *Economic Inquiry* (Jan. 2003), Texas A&M Univ.,  
Dept. of Economics, College Station, Texas 77843-4228.

Between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, a majority of states changed their divorce laws so that one spouse could end a marriage despite the other’s objections. The intent, in part, was to let women with violently abusive husbands escape their domestic prisons. But the reforms, argues Dee, an economist at Swarthmore College, had a perverse result: Some wives whose husbands wanted to leave them—and now could—became so desperate to avoid divorce and the consequent economic hardship that they resorted to homicide.

Between 1968 and 1978, an average of 17 men (and 19 women) died at the hands of their spouses in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Nearly 42 percent of the murders took place when “unilateral” divorces were allowed. When other possible influences, such as the unemployment rate, are taken into account, Dee finds that the

introduction of unilateral divorce had “no detectable effect” on the level of lethal violence by husbands. But it boosted by 21 percent the incidence of wifely homicides, and the slayings were concentrated in states where laws on the distribution of marital property do not favor wives.

Do the findings mean that making divorce more restrictive would save some men’s lives? Not necessarily. Women today may have adjusted to “the new realities of the weakened marriage contract,” Dee speculates, and taken steps to ensure that divorce would not leave them economically bereft. So they have less reason to resort to murder. Even so, he suggests, “a stronger marriage contract” could enhance women’s bargaining power within marriage and help them obtain, when necessary, adequately generous divorce settlements. And that, he notes, would benefit their children as well.

## *The IQ Obstacle*

“IQ and Income Inequality in a Sample of Sibling Pairs from Advantaged Family Backgrounds”  
by Charles Murray, in *The American Economic Review* (May 2002),  
2014 Broadway, Ste. 303, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

How much more egalitarian would America be if every child grew up in an intact two-parent family, free of the modern-

day plagues of illegitimacy, poverty, and divorce? Not that much, claims Murray, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and

coauthor of the controversial *Bell Curve* (1994).

From the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, which began in 1978, Murray carved out a “utopian sample” of 733 sibling pairs. Their parents were married and stayed together for at least the first seven years of their children’s lives. They were also relatively affluent (median income \$64,586, in year-2000 dollars). In other words, these children enjoyed major advantages. Only one significant difference divided them. In each pair, one sibling had “normal” intelligence (an intelligence quotient between 90 and 109), while the other had an IQ outside that range, either higher or lower.

By the time the siblings reached their thirties, Murray found, there were big differences in income. Those with “normal” intel-

ligence had a median family income of \$52,700, while their “bright” brothers and sisters had a household income of \$60,500 and the “very bright” ones (120 IQ or higher) \$70,700. The “dull” siblings (80–89 IQ), meanwhile, had a household median of only \$39,400, and the “very dull” ones (below 80 IQ) just \$23,600. These differences are only likely to widen over time, Murray adds.

These findings could point in several directions, toward policies that seek to equalize incomes or toward an acceptance of intractable inequality as the price one pays for freedom. But it won’t do for scholars to “live in a Lake Woebegone world where everyone can be above average,” says Murray. Inequality in abilities is “a driving force behind inequality in the distribution of social and economic goods.”

#### PRESS & MEDIA

## *A Plague of Lawyers*

“The Heroic Media Attorney: An Endangered Species” by Willy Stern, in *AAN News* (Feb. 11, 2003), Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, [www.aan.org](http://www.aan.org).

*Lawyers, lawyers, lawyers.* Everywhere investigative reporters turn these days, there seems to be an attorney. As a result, the media watchdog has lost some of its bite, says Stern, an investigative reporter for the *Nashville Scene* who teaches at Vanderbilt University.

Investigative reporters, who may spend months on a single story, are a tiny fraction of working journalists. As corporate ownership has supplanted family ownership in recent decades, many newspapers have become “far more reluctant to undertake lengthy, expensive, and high-profile investigative reporting projects,” Stern notes. Such efforts may win journalism awards, but they also generate angry letters and lawsuits—which are anathema to publishers intent on maximizing profits and pleasing shareholders.

The libel lawyers employed by family-run newspapers to vet investigative stories typically had “a bias to publish” and would work with journalists to get the hard-hitting exposés out. Corporate media attor-

neys today typically prefer to play it safe. Increasingly, “the lawyers, and not the editors, are calling the shots,” says Joel Kaplan, a former investigative reporter at *The Chicago Tribune* who teaches at Syracuse University.

At many newspapers and television stations, Stern says, investigative teams have been replaced by “project teams,” which turn out exhaustive but safe features, with no “bad guys” exposed. Some investigative efforts avoid risk by eschewing anonymous sources and relying upon computer-assisted reporting to reveal disturbing trends or problems. This can be valuable, but it is not investigative reporting, at least in the eyes of traditionalists.

When newspapers or TV stations do undertake traditional investigative reporting, news media attorneys increasingly get involved early on, advising reporters, for example, whether they can go undercover or secretly record conversations. This can be helpful, but it reduces the reporters’ prized independence.

When investigative reporters approach, many people now “lawyer up” quickly. “As a result,” Stern says, “instead of interviewing people, many investigative reporters spend hours upon hours preparing ques-

tions, which are faxed to attorneys . . . [who] then send back carefully worded responses.” That’s not much fun, and it’s another significant restraint on the media watchdog.

## *A Newshounds’ Utopia*

“Imagine” by Liz Cox, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (Jan.–Feb. 2003), Journalism Bldg., Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. 10027.

At many newspapers, it is, or once was, a hallowed tradition for spirited young reporters to gather after hours at a nearby bar to talk about their stories, gripe about their editors, and imagine how much better their paper could be. Updating this custom for the Age of Focus Groups, *Columbia Journalism Review* recently persuaded 67 young journalists from 18 papers around the country to get together in small groups to discuss their “Dream Newspaper.”

Meeting over half-priced beers on Chicago’s North Side, or in places such as the Elvis Room at Mama’s Mexican Kitchen in Seattle, the twentysomethings decided that one thing they don’t want is more “news” about J.Lo and Ben. “Newspapers assume our generation wants nothing more than fluff, 24–7 entertainment,” said one participant. “That is flat-out wrong.” Even so, the Chicago bunch, along with many others, want their Dream Newspaper “entertainment-heavy, but not at the expense of news.”

Some of the journalists’ ideas were fairly predictable. They would like more freedom to express their own viewpoints (“When

something is just blatantly one-sided or wrong, it would be nice to point it out,” said Anand Vaishnav, a 27-year-old *Boston Globe* education reporter), to be more “smart assed,” even more foul mouthed (“We’re a foul-mouthed generation,” argued Andisheh Nourae, a 29-year-old columnist for *Creative Loafing*).

But one desideratum advanced by the Dream Teams is quite surprising: more international coverage. “As it turns out,” writes Cox, an assistant editor at *Columbia Journalism Review*, “the young people in our groups—far from being disengaged or self-involved, as the prevailing wisdom goes—see themselves very much as part of a global community.” Along with breaking foreign news and diplomatic coverage, they would like more stories about foreign folk—“people who could be here, but just happen to be there,” as Leslie Koren, a 30-year-old writer for *The Record*, in northern New Jersey, put it. An example of what she craves: a *Boston Globe* story about local rock bands emerging in Afghanistan after the defeat of the Taliban.

### RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

## *Socrates’ Last Words*

“Have We Been Careless with Socrates’ Last Words? A Rereading of the *Phaedo*” by Laurel A. Madison, in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (Oct. 2002), Department of Philosophy, Hunter College, 695 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021.

If all of Western philosophy is footnotes to Plato, then Socrates’ best lines are the epigraphs: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” “He is wise who knows he knows not.” “All of philosophy is training for death.” What to make, then, of his not-so-

quoteworthy final words: “Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; make this offering to him and do not forget”?

This apparent “trivial concern with Crito’s unreliable memory,” as Madison, a doctoral student at Loyola University,

Chicago, puts it, concludes the *Phaedo*, the last of the trial and execution dialogues, rather oddly. In this beautiful—and frustrating—dialogue, Socrates speaks hopefully about the afterlife, admonishing his friends not to worry about death and explaining why they should even look forward to it. And so, Madison writes, “the sheer banality of Socrates’ last words pleads for the reader to search for their deeper significance.”

In the standard view, Socrates is deep—deeply gloomy. Asclepius is the god of healing; Friedrich Nietzsche thus imagines Socrates moaning, “O Crito, *life is a disease*,” the cock serving as remittance for the cure by death. Most philosophers concur. Socrates always talks up the life of the ascetic. The body hampers the mind and soul with its petty wants, needs, debilities, and imperfections.

That the founder of Western philosophy “denigrates our earthly existence and urges us to deny and repress our passions, instincts, desires, and drives” gives many an excuse to write him off. It doesn’t help that Socrates’ bathetic turn—seemingly pro-suicide—follows a spate of disturbingly unconvincing arguments. Had the barefoot philosopher OD’ed on hemlock sooner than we thought?

Madison thinks Socrates deserves more credit and suggests two ways to redeem the

passage. First, don’t read it literally. Socrates uses “death as a metaphor for conversion to philosophy.” The soul and the body are “metonyms for higher and lower ways of life.” Socrates calls for rejection not of the flesh but of what the flesh stands for. Instead of yearning for death and knowledge of the afterlife, he yearns for “a life characterized by justice, purity, and understanding”—a philosophical life. The appeal to Asclepius is to heal us of the bodily distractions from philosophy, so that we may attend to Socrates’ prized “care of the soul.”

Second, instead of translating the last words as “and do not forget,” Madison suggests “and do not be careless.” This makes sense: Socrates had worried most not about his friends’ memory but about “the lack of concern people showed for the state of their soul, and the careless way in which they allowed themselves to be consumed and corrupted by their baser desires and interests.”

So Socrates was no morbid, otherworldly type. He loved his family, his friends, the little pleasures of daily life, says Madison: “The life he calls us to is not a diminished life of denial and denigration, but an enriched and enhanced life—a noble life that is its own reward . . . for which we should give thanks.” A fitting start to any good philosophy.

EXCERPT

## *A Day for Rest*

*Whenever I dream of living in a society with a greater respect for its Sabbatarian past—a fantasy I entertain only with anxiety, since Sabbatarians have a long history of going too far—I think of something two rabbis said. Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, best known for his tales of the golem, pointed out that the story of Creation was written in such a way that each day, each new creation, is seen as a step toward a completion that occurred on the Sabbath. What was Creation’s climactic culmination? The act of stopping. Why should God have considered it so important to stop? Rabbi Elijah of Vilna put it this way: God stopped to show us that what we create becomes meaningful to us only once we stop creating it and start to think about why we did so. The implication is clear. We could let the world wind us up and set us to marching, like mechanical dolls that go and go until they fall over, because they don’t have a mechanism that allows them to pause. But that would make us less than human. We have to remember to stop because we have to stop to remember.*

—Judith Shulevitz, a *New York Times* columnist, in *The New York Times Magazine* (March 2, 2003)

## Secularists for Jesus

“Jefferson, Emerson, and Jesus” by Richard Wightman Fox, in *Raritan* (Fall 2002), Rutgers Univ., 31 Mine St., New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

What a strange dance the religious and the secular do in America! “Just as religious faith has been molded by secular commitments, so secular faith has been shaped by religious loyalties,” observes Fox, a historian at the University of Southern California. A prominent case in point: the beliefs of Thomas Jefferson and the Transcendentalist poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In the early 19th century, when Baptist and Methodist evangelism was at flood tide, these two leading anti-clerical secularizers claimed, in effect, that they were only following in the footsteps of someone greater—Jesus himself, pre-eminent sage and teacher.

“I am a Christian,” Jefferson (1743–1826) wrote during his first term as president, “in the only sense in which [Jesus] wished any one to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines, in preference to all others; ascribing to him every human excellence, and believing he never claimed any other.”

Running for reelection in 1804, and “again under attack as a French-leaning infidel,” says Fox, “he let friends circulate the news that he wished to ground the republic upon the wisdom of Jesus—purged of the supernatural accre-

tions that had piled up over the centuries of ‘mystery-mongering’ by the churches.” In 1820, in retirement at Monticello, Jefferson recovered the “authentic” Jesus: “He simply took scissors to the Scriptures, removing any passage that implied or claimed that Jesus was divine, and pasting what remained into a blank book bound in red Morocco leather.”

For Emerson (1803–1882), writing in the 1830s and 1840s, when many Americans had become disenchanted with Jeffersonian rationalism, there was no wall of separation between divinity and humanity. “God was within each person not as an ingrained moral sense (Jefferson’s belief), and not as a personal spirit (the claim of many Christians),” writes Fox, “but as the ever flowing source of one’s self-renewal.”

In Emerson’s view, the veneration of Jesus was keeping people from imitating his quest for the divine within. He persuaded many Protestants “that they could become more deeply religious by becoming more secular, more truly devoted to Jesus by abandoning the conventional worship of him,” says Fox. For Emerson and Jefferson, as for the preachers they opposed, Jesus remained indispensable.

### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

## The Dangerous Indoors

“Indoor Air Pollution: The Quiet Killer” by Vinod Mishra, Robert D. Retherford, and Kirk R. Smith, in *AsiaPacific Issues* No. 63 (Oct. 2002), East-West Center, 1601 East-West Rd., Honolulu, Hawaii 96848–1601.

Indoor air pollution in homes and offices may seem like the last frontier of environmental improvement in the West, but in the poorer nations it is, or ought to be, a frontline health issue. That’s because so many people—nearly half the world’s households—use wood, animal dung, and other unprocessed biomass fuels for their cooking and heating. Long-term exposure to the smoke “contributes to respiratory illness, lung cancer, and blindness,” according to the authors, who are researchers at the East-West Center in Honolulu. Worldwide, according to the World Health Organization, indoor air pol-

lution ranks fifth as a risk factor for ill health—behind malnutrition, AIDS, tobacco use, and poor water and sanitation.

It’s not entirely clear how smoke causes all this harm. It can contain many different potentially harmful compounds, from carbon monoxide to benzo[a]pyrene, which can suppress the immune system. Particulate matter “has been shown to induce a systemic inflammatory response.”

If the precise causes are difficult to specify, the effects are not. In India, where millions are afflicted by tuberculosis, a 1992–93 survey of



*A cloud of smoke swirls around a Mexican woman cooking a meal in Chiapas.*

some 89,000 households found that adults were 2.6 times more likely to suffer from active TB in homes where the cooking was done with wood or dung than in homes where cleaner fuels were used. In India's rural areas, cooking smoke is blamed for three-fifths of all TB cases. A Mexican study produced similar results.

The India survey also showed that women in households using biomass fuels were 27 percent more likely to be partially or completely blind.

In India alone, according to the authors, several hundred thousand women and children die prematurely each year because of indoor air pollution.

Health education and stepped-up efforts to supply rural folk with better cookstoves could reduce the impact of indoor air pollution, the authors say. But ultimately, only economic development—creating, ironically, Western-style outdoor air pollution—will do the trick.

## *Why Drugs Cost So Much*

"America's Other Drug Problem" by Arnold S. Relman and Marcia Angell, in *The New Republic* (Dec. 16, 2002), 1331 H St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

To hear the pharmaceutical industry tell it, the sky-high prices for brand-name prescription drugs merely reflect the high costs of discovering and developing new treatments for disease. And the huge net profits the firms make are a necessary incentive for the risky and arduous research they undertake. Baloney! say Relman and Angell, both former editors in chief of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Big drug companies spend far more on marketing and advertising than they do on research and development (R&D), the authors point out. The industry's trade asso-

ciation reports that its member firms in the United States and abroad spend about \$30 billion on R&D annually—less than half their reported expenditures on marketing and administration. (Prescription drugs are a \$170 billion business, accounting for more than 10 percent of health care spending.) And despite all their expenses, the 10 American drug firms on the 2001 *Fortune* 500 list had an average net return on revenues of 18.5 percent—compared with a median net return for other industries of only 3.3 percent. Drug prices "could be lowered substantially," Relman and Angell

argue, “without coming close to threatening the R&D budgets of drug companies, much less their economic survival.”

Nor are the pharmaceutical industry’s R&D resources devoted mostly to scientific discovery, they say. The vast majority of “new” drugs coming to market these days are really just “me-too” drugs—“variations on older drugs already on the market. The few drugs that are truly innovative usually are based on taxpayer-supported research done in nonprofit academic medical centers or at the National Institutes of Health.” According to an unpublished NIH document, for instance, only one of the 17 key scientific papers leading to the discovery and development of the antidepressant Prozac and the four other top-selling drugs of 1995 came from the pharmaceutical industry.

Despite the free-market rhetoric the industry uses to fight unwanted government involvement, say Relman and Angell, it is critically dependent on “government-granted monopolies,” in the form of patents and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for exclusive marketing.

“Stretching that privileged time by a variety of stratagems is arguably the most innovative activity of today’s drug companies.” In the case of the blockbuster antihistamine Claritin, Schering-Plough won FDA approval last November to change it from a prescription drug to an over-the-counter product, thus preventing generic competitors from jumping into the prescription market when its patent expired in December; meanwhile, the firm pushed prescription Clarinex, a supposed “improvement” that consists, say the authors, of nothing more than “the molecule into which the body converts Claritin, which accounts entirely for the action of the drug.”

The pharmaceutical industry “uses its wealth and its political clout to influence all who might check or monitor its activities—including physicians, professional and academic institutions, Congress, and the FDA,” say Relman and Angell. The needed reforms—from tightened patent laws to a more aggressive role for physicians’ professional organizations in educating their members about drugs—won’t come easily.

## *Fear of Flying?*

“Flying and Driving after the September 11 Attacks” by Michael Sivak and Michael J. Flannagan, in *American Scientist* (Jan.–Feb. 2003), P.O. Box 13975, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709–3975.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many travelers decided it would be safer to drive to their destinations than to fly. Not a good choice, it turns out.

Driving becomes more dangerous as the miles traveled mount, note Sivak and Flannagan, researchers at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute. The risk in flying, in contrast, increases mainly with the number of takeoffs and landings. Out of 7,071 airline fatalities worldwide between 1991 and 2000, 95 percent occurred either during takeoff and ascent or during descent and landing.

Using U.S. National Transportation Safety Board data on domestic flights (including the four in which 232 passengers lost their lives on September 11), the two researchers calculate that the risk of death for airline passengers was about 78.6 in one bil-

lion *per nonstop segment traveled*. (The risk roughly doubles when an intermediate stop is added, triples with two such stops, and so on.)

To gauge the risk in driving, the researchers looked at traffic deaths on the very safest roads in America, its rural interstate highways. The resulting risk of death: 4.4 in one billion *per kilometer traveled*.

That means, the authors calculate, that one would have to drive only about 18 kilometers (or 11.2 miles) to equal the risk of flying one nonstop segment on an airliner.

What if September 11 has ushered in a new era of terror in the skies? “For flying to become as risky as driving” during the 10-year period they studied, the authors write, “disastrous airline incidents on the scale of those of September 11th would have had to occur about once a month.”

## *Painting History, Badly*

“Narrative Trauma and Civil War History Painting, or Why Are These Pictures So Terrible?”  
by Steven Conn, in *History and Theory* (Dec. 2002), Blackwell Publishing,  
350 Main St., Malden, Mass. 02148.

Most American schoolchildren can instantly identify the painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, although even grownups might struggle to come up with the name of its creator (Emanuel Leutze) or the year of its creation (1851). But why did the Civil War—which arguably played an even greater role than the Revolution in forging the American national character—never produce similarly iconic canvases? Art historians have pointed to many factors, including the advent of photography and the more mundane—though hard to dispute—explanation that there simply weren’t a lot of good artists around in the post-Civil War period. Conn, a historian at Ohio State University, suspects two other culprits, one rooted in the conventions of narrative history painting, the

other reflecting changes in the larger American society.

With his famous painting, Leutze was able to evoke a powerful shared historical experience—just as John Trumbull did in his earlier *Resignation of General Washington* (1822–24) and *Declaration of Independence* (1818). These artists were working within a well-defined painterly tradition, which may have reached its pinnacle with the monumental works of Jacques David in France, and often carried echoes of the classical past to suggest parallels with a contemporary event. But by the time of the Civil War, says Conn, such narrative conventions seemed inadequate in “describing or explaining the mass, destructive phenomenon that was the Civil War.” In fact, wars in the United States and Europe after the mid-



*William Washington's Jackson Entering the City of Winchester (1863) exemplifies much of the Civil War's historical painting: an irrelevant subject, badly rendered.*

19th century produced many monuments, but few paintings of real quality.

The history painters' task was further complicated by confusion over the meaning of the Civil War itself. Just as historians have struggled to define the true cause of the conflict—was it fought over slavery? states' rights? economic principles?—so artists of the time found it impossible to identify symbols that would have universal, and lasting, meaning.

Artists still tried to capture significant moments on canvas. Virginian William Washington latched onto Stonewall Jackson's arrival in Winchester, Virginia, as a subject in 1863, but even before the painting was finished, Jackson had died, and, as Conn points out, the artist simply "guessed wrong" about the incident's importance to the outcome of the war. The resulting work, *Jackson Entering the City of Winchester*, is so crammed with theatrical elements, Conn says, that it makes the Confederate general appear "as

if he had just performed a horse trick to a cheering audience."

Other changes were afoot that further doomed history painting, says Conn. "Advances in science and technology, which helped to distance the past from the present, contributed to Americans' enthusiastic embrace of a progressive view of history" and rendered the classical past seemingly irrelevant. Conn sees echoes of such changes in one of the few significant paintings to emerge after the Civil War, Winslow Homer's *The Veteran in a New Field* (1865). Many critics have viewed the painting—which depicts a returning soldier, his back to the viewer, mowing a field of wheat with a scythe—as a symbolic beating of swords into plowshares. But taking into account its deliberate break with the conventions of grand-manner history painting, Conn believes that the work should be viewed as an "act of mourning," not just for the soldiers who died in the Civil War "but for a way of life, the Jeffersonian nation of yeoman farmers."

## *Bye-Bye Beauty?*

"The Abuse of Beauty" by Arthur C. Danto, in *Daedalus* (Fall 2002),  
136 Irving St., Ste. 100, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Just about anything now can be called art: a blank white canvas, a six-foot-high comic strip, a cross-sectioned cow. The artist plays to the viewer's sense of the sublime, the absurd, or the abject. But needn't the artist also evoke the sense of beauty?

Not necessarily, argues Danto, professor emeritus of philosophy at Columbia University and longtime art critic at *The Nation*. And in some circles, it's thought that the artist *shouldn't* evoke that sense. What some consider necessary to a work of art was really just a fad. Great art's fixation on the beautiful had a limited run—in Europe from the Renaissance to the early 1900s. But because of the continuing influence of that era's theorists of art, such as Immanuel Kant and John Ruskin, people don't realize that beauty has run its course.

During the reign of the Beautiful, moreover, looking good came to imply being good. G. E. Moore, the early-20th-century philosopher, thought the beauty of art could be so

enriching that "every valuable purpose which religion serves is also served by Art."

With World War I, however, the ideal of beauty came to be seen as hypocritical. As the German surrealist Max Ernst wrote, "We had experienced the collapse into ridicule and shame of everything represented to us as just, true, and beautiful." From the ashes rose the Dada movement, which defined art, as Danto writes, "as an expression of moral revulsion against a society for whom beauty was a cherished value." Marcel Duchamp wasn't just kidding around when he famously drew a mustache on a postcard of the Mona Lisa in 1919.

Art history shows the ends of art to be more diverse than beauty, according to Danto. Pre-Renaissance cathedrals were designed not to be beautiful but to draw a faithful, awed congregation. Paintings of *vanitas*—rotting fruits, skulls—were meant to humble, not inspire, spectators.

The Dadaists were not the first to show that the theorists were wrong about art. A few decades before them, Roger Fry and other formalist painters and critics demonstrated that a painting need not be a representation of something beautiful or meaningful to be itself beautiful or meaningful. Art asserts the “paramount importance of design, which necessarily places the imitative side of art in a secondary place,” Fry announced. People should evaluate the form, not the content, of the work. The pop art movement of the 1960s discarded yet other necessities, such as the originality, “excellence,” and heroism typical of 1950s abstract expressionism. It replaced those traits with parody of mass culture, primitivism, and photorealism.

In a last-ditch effort to explain how people can appreciate, and esteem as art, grisly paintings such as Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937), some theo-

rists have argued that at times the beauty is hidden and can’t be seen without adequate training. That’s sometimes true, Danto allows, but sometimes there’s simply no beauty to be found.

Danto, a friend of much that is new in the art world, is known for his austere formula that “x is an artwork if it embodies a meaning.” Anything goes.

Yet he believes that the 20th-century backlash against beauty may have gone too far. Some in the avant-garde now see beauty as *antithetical* to art—even the scandalous photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe seem in some eyes “too beautiful to qualify for critical endorsement.” Beauty, Danto concludes, “is one mode among many through which thoughts are presented in art to human sensibility”—one that deserves to be readmitted to the realm of art.

## Looking Downward

“Bellamy’s Chicopee: A Laboratory for Utopia?” by John Robert Mullin, in *Journal of Urban History* (Jan. 2003), Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91320.

It may strike some as strange that Edward Bellamy’s 1888 utopian novel, *Looking Backward*, was the second-best-selling novel of 19th-century America (after *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*). After all, its idealized vision of Boston in the year 2000, with citizens organized into a compulsory industrial army and living a blissfully regimented life, would seem an unlikely candidate to capture the hearts and minds of Bellamy’s putatively individualist American readers. No less strange is that the novel was the work of a quiet, polite sometime-newspaperman and former lawyer who had spent most of his life in Chicopee, Massachusetts.

His experience in Chicopee, most critics agree, was central to Bellamy’s vision of the future. But according to Mullin, a professor of urban planning at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, it wasn’t the town they think it was. Bellamy (1850–98) said he saw his boyhood hometown transformed from a New England village where “everyone who was willing to work was sure of a fair living” into something very different. But that can’t be true, Mullin says. Following the mill town model that had transformed Waltham,

Lowell, and Holyoke, the Boston Associates company began to build an array of vast textile mills along the Chicopee River in 1822, nearly 30 years before Bellamy was born. By 1885, when he began working on his famous novel, Chicopee had become the sixth largest town in Massachusetts.

Bellamy wrote *Looking Backward* in his 15-room Greek Revival house on a hilltop overlooking the mills. “His involvement with local citizens was, at best, minimal,” writes Mullin. He seemed to live the quiet life of a country squire. (Yet in Boston, which he visited frequently, his debates and discussions were “renowned.”) The son of a Baptist minister whose downtown landholdings yielded a comfortable income, Bellamy had had a short-lived career as a lawyer, and then as a reporter for *The New York Evening Post*. He returned to Chicopee by the time he was 22, worked for a local newspaper, and eventually cofounded the local *Daily News*.

Bellamy’s hilltop perch put him in the perfect position to “be a dispassionate reporter and observer of the community,” Mullin says. What he saw was social upheaval—the spread of wretched tene-

ments, outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, and other diseases, and shocking examples of intemperance by the immigrant population. Those who were without work lived in hovels, barely staving off starvation. The 1870s saw a steady series of “strikes, booms, panics, recoveries, and depressions.”

Yet Bellamy also found himself fascinated both by the awesome extent of the mill complex, with its rationally designed streets and production processes, and by the military-like discipline of the workers as they changed shifts, walking to and from their nearby homes “in virtual lock step.” It is here, speculates Mullin, that “one can see the precursor

of his concept of an industrial army.”

Bellamy was not alone in trying to predict what would emerge from America’s industrial turmoil; the same period saw other utopian works from Mark Twain, Ignatius Donnelly, and William Dean Howells. But Bellamy’s vision captured the nation’s imagination like no other. This quiet man living on a Massachusetts hilltop was widely seen as a prophet—his ideas helped inspire the Populist Party, whose candidate won more than a million votes in the 1892 presidential election. Bellamy, however, would not live to see the new century. Tuberculosis claimed him at his Chicopee home in 1898.

## OTHER NATIONS

# *The Shanghai Illusion*

“Asia Minor” by Joshua Kurlantzick, in *The New Republic* (Dec. 16, 2002),  
1331 H St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

“China’s economic development is just mind-boggling,” says an enthusiastic Chinese-American executive based in Beijing, and many other foreign businesspeople agree. So do publications such as *BusinessWeek* and *Forbes*. But Kurlantzick, *The New Republic’s* foreign editor, says the emperor has no clothes.

“The country’s growth rates are vastly overstated, the result of cooked books and massive deficit spending,” he writes. “Companies selling to the Chinese market—foreign and domestic alike—are struggling just to break even. The economy is plagued by persistent deflation and a useless banking system.”

Yes, China has made some impressive strides since 1978, when it began to open its economy to the outside world. Shanghai, then a drab metropolis of Mao-suited servants of the state, is now “a vibrant city boasting dozens of European fashion outlets.” The Chinese middle class—less than 10 percent of the country’s population—has experienced a sharp rise in affluence.

But Shanghai and other flourishing coastal cities are the glittering exceptions. The government claims that the overall economy has grown by seven to 10 percent a year for the past two decades. But except for the “economic bright spot” of exports, Kurlantzick says, “the government’s numbers do not add up.” The offi-

cial, Soviet-style statistics are gathered from provincial data, and local officials are under intense pressure to meet targeted goals. In 2001 alone, the government itself said there were more than 60,000 reported falsifications.

Over the past five years of supposedly break-neck growth, points out economist Thomas Rawski of the University of Pittsburgh, China has experienced deflation, rising unemployment, and declining energy use. He calculates that the actual annual rate of economic growth between 1998 and 2001 was only four percent—not enough, with millions of peasants leaving the farm, to keep the rural jobless rate from exceeding 15 percent, according to several Chinese economists.

Foreign companies that use China as a place to manufacture and export goods are doing well, but Joe Studwell, editor of the *China Economic Quarterly*, and other leading specialists figure that less than 10 percent of the foreign companies that sell to Chinese markets are making profits. “Major Chinese companies often are doing even worse,” according to Kurlantzick. Smaller domestic firms can’t get loans because “China’s indebted banking system remains focused on propping up state-owned enterprises backed by the Communist Party.” As its recent five-year fall from 21st to 31st on the World Competitiveness Scoreboard

shows, “China’s economy is becoming less efficient and competitive.”

“Ultimately, China’s economic façade

probably will crack,” Kurlantzick concludes. “And, when it does, the consequences may be disastrous.”

## Qaddafi’s Muslim Problem

“Qaddafi and Militant Islamism: Unprecedented Conflict” by Yehudit Ronen, in *Middle Eastern Studies* (Oct. 2002), 75 Lawn Rd., London NW3 2XB, England.

Move over, America. One of the more surprising targets of jihad in recent times has been the regime of Libyan strongman Muammar al-Qaddafi.

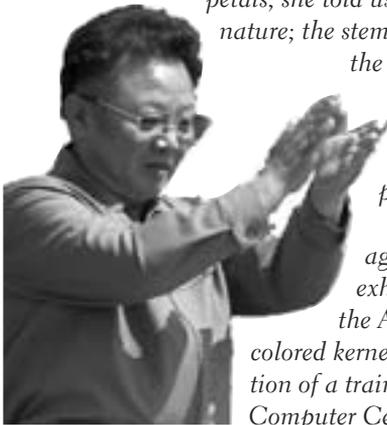
Other Middle Eastern governments have faced threats from Islamists, of course, but Qaddafi’s case is different. Unlike neighbors such as Algeria, Egypt, and Sudan, “Libya has never experienced eco-

nom ic collapse, demographic crisis, desperate mass poverty, or acute socioeconomic and cultural gaps,” observes Ronen, a research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University. Qaddafi has remained an unrelenting foe of Israel, and he has emphatically avoided the ties to Western powers that have complicated the

### EXCERPT

## By Any Other Name

*The weeklong celebration [of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il’s 60th birthday on February 16, 2002] began with the ceremony at the Kimjongilia Exhibition in the Grand Peoples’ Study House, presented by the Korean Kimjongilia Federation. The young guide, shivering in her flimsy lilac hanbok (Korean traditional dress), explained that the Kimjongilia, an oversized red flower that resembles a poinsettia, was the creation of a Japanese horticulturalist named Kamo Mododeru. The red petals, she told us, symbolize the Great Leader’s passionate nature; the stem can grow to one meter, straight and fearless like the Great Leader; the heart-shaped leaves celebrate the generous heart of the Great Leader; the slight downward angle of the petals evokes the way the Great Leader always watches over his people.*



*Over 14,300 Kimjongilias were lined up against the walls of the four floors of the exhibition hall. Our guide led us from a display of the Agricultural Committee’s handpicked 216 red-colored kernels of grain to the Ministry of Railways’ illustration of a train in which the Great Leader once rode. The Computer Center presented the portrait of Kim Jong Il on a flat panel screen, with Kimjongilias arranged as a keyboard.*

*Wearied from seeing the same name everywhere, I stared at the ceiling only to find it plastered with slogans. A quote by Kim Jong Il read, “The one believing in the people will be given healthy medicine but the one betraying the people will be given poison.”*

—Suki Kim, a South Korean-born American novelist, in *The New York Review of Books* (Feb. 13, 2003)

lives of some other regional leaders. His regime has “wrapped itself in the banner of Islam” ever since he seized power in 1969. Yet still the Islamists have attacked.

Because of the paucity of reliable information, it’s hard to say how serious the Islamist threat has been. In 1987, the government staged televised executions of nine alleged members of the Islamic Jihad organization (three of them soldiers), accusing them of treason and sabotage. Two years later, after riots and other disturbances in Tripoli, the regime made many arrests and “secretly executed” 21 Islamists. The Islamist threat, warned Qaddafi, was “more dangerous than cancer and AIDS, even more than war with the Israelis or the Americans.”

Qaddafi was preoccupied with other matters during the early 1990s—the Persian Gulf War and its fallout, Anglo-

American accusations of responsibility for the 1988 explosion of a Pan American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, and the resultant United Nations sanctions against Libya. Then, in 1995, Militant Islamic Group activists clashed with authorities in the northern city of Benghazi. The Islamic Martyrs Movement claimed responsibility for an attack on the Egyptian consulate in Benghazi in 1996. The two main Islamist groups each claimed to be behind a 1998 attempt on Qaddafi’s life.

Thanks to the regime’s “uncompromising repression” and the loyalty of the army, Ronen says, the Islamist threat receded by the end of the decade. Economic optimism after the end of UN sanctions in 1999 also helped Qaddafi’s cause. Now, after a remarkable 34 years in power, the Libyan dictator seems “firm in the saddle.”

## *Vietnam’s Favored Sons*

“Son Preference in a Rural Village in North Vietnam” by Danièle Bélanger, in *Studies in Family Planning* (Dec. 2002), Population Council, One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

In the space of only two decades, Vietnam has seen a drastic decline of more than 60 percent in its fertility rate, sped along by a two-child policy implemented in the late 1980s. As recently as 1979, women bore an average of six children; by 1998, the average had dropped to 2.2. Vietnamese women generally enjoy more rights than their counterparts in China. But instead of further advancing female equality in this land of 81 million, the lessened childbearing has increased the pressure on women to have sons.

Unmarried girls in rural Vietnam traditionally have helped their mothers “cultivate the land, cook, clean, and care for siblings, particularly their brothers.” But with fewer siblings in need of care, and land holdings shrunken in recent decades by the need to divide them among an ever-growing population, such contributions are not needed as much as they were in the past, according to Bélanger, a sociologist at the University of Western Ontario. Her conclusions are based on close study of an unnamed village of 6,000 people near Hanoi.

Decades of communist rule have failed to

eradicate the strong preference for sons, even among professional women. Sons are prized because they are responsible for caring for their parents in old age and the afterlife. Only sons can conduct the rituals in the cult of ancestors, which is at the center of family life. And since the rituals “must be carried out in the physical space where the ancestors’ souls live,” Bélanger notes, the parental home can be passed on only to a son.

Sex-selection abortion, which is common in China, with its one-child (or in some cases two-child) policy, doesn’t seem to be common among the Vietnamese villagers, though there’s some evidence of it in nationwide census and hospital data. The two-child policy is unevenly enforced. Fines are substantial in some rural areas, but not for the female farm workers in the village Bélanger studied. Female government workers, however, face job-related sanctions as well as fines. A 33-year-old teacher with two daughters told Bélanger’s research team that she planned to have another child in hopes that it would be a boy, even though a third child would cost her her job.

# CURRENT BOOKS

*Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction*

## *Bringing Up Baby*

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*TOILET TRAINED FOR YALE:*

*Adventures in 21st-Century Parenting.*

By Ralph Schoenstein. Perseus. 161 pp. \$20

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*RECLAIMING CHILDHOOD:*

*Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society.*

By William Crain. Holt. 271 pp. \$25

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*PARANOID PARENTING:*

*Why Ignoring the Experts May Be Best for Your Child.*

By Frank Furedi. Chicago Review Press. 233 pp. \$14.95 (paper)

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*RAISING AMERICA:*

*Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children.*

By Ann Hullbert. Knopf. 436 pp. \$27.50

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*Reviewed by Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn*

Throughout history, expert advice on raising children has fluctuated wildly, with each new approach diametrically opposed to what came before. A number of new books suggest that we now find ourselves in an era of parenting overdrive. Thanks in no small part to the preceding cycle of expert advice, we have succumbed to “paranoid parenting,” “hyperparenting,” and “push-parenting.” Today’s parents, it seems, are creating problems for their children simply by trying too hard.

Egged on by recent brain science findings, for instance, many parents go to great lengths to enhance the cognitive development of the zero-to-three crowd. In the light-hearted *Toilet Trained for Yale*, Ralph Schoenstein, the ghostwriter behind Bill Cosby’s best-selling books, exposes “the scary

new world of push-parenting,” from the notion that prenatal exposure to classical music heightens chances of future academic success (the so-called Mozart Effect) to the videotapes and books on how to teach a months-old baby to read. Beneath the humor, Schoenstein is plainly horrified by this frantic mission to create the “American Superkid” who, between violin and gymnastics lessons, tutoring in foreign languages, and car-seat tests with flashcards, is sure to end up at Yale.

In *Reclaiming Childhood*, psychologist William Crain offers a more thoughtful and engaging argument against hard-driving parenting. When he publicly lectures about the “charm of childhood”—having to do with children’s unique abilities and expressions in art, drama, language, poetry, and nature

## Current Books

appreciation—his audiences often seem restless, he reports. What these parents really want to know “is how to help their children get into a prestigious college and become highly successful adults.”

In Crain’s view, our treatment of children from birth onward is skewed by a focus on their potential achievements as adults. Drawing on scholarly studies as well as children’s drawings and poems, he suggests that the emphasis on future success leaves us unable to appreciate childhood on its own terms. The instrumentalist notion of education as an aid to social mobility and prosperity, Crain argues, obscures the wonders of childhood and fosters styles of teaching that crush children’s spirits and natural abilities. Particularly insightful are his observations about children’s interest in nature and their tendency to see unity between human and nonhuman worlds. Crain’s antidote is the child-centered approach of such reformers as Maria Montessori, who believed that children should learn largely at their own pace and in their own fashion.

Unfortunately, he doesn’t seem to recognize how such an approach can go awry. For instance, he contends that the “standards” movement in elementary and secondary education is an enemy of spontaneity in learning. But one could argue that the sad state of our schools is rooted in misconceived versions of the “learning-by-doing” approach pioneered by Montessori and John Dewey, which slighted classical liberal arts training. While rightly questioning the recent obsession with standardized testing, Crain fails to see the distinction between the stultifying overteaching of young children and the academic rigor necessary in middle school and high school.

When advocating an approach toward children’s verbal expressions based on the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers, Crain similarly loses the thread. He favors the well-known therapeutic formula “active listening,” in which the parent “mirrors the child’s feelings.” If the child calls someone a jerk, the parent might respond, “You’re feeling angry.” Even as he derides parenting by didactic manipulation, Crain seems to endorse parenting by emotional manipulation.

Given his adoption of a therapeutic version of child centeredness, Crain’s dismissal of television and computers—favorite pastimes of many children—comes as something of a surprise. Here, he advocates a firmer approach to keep children from wasting away in “indoor environments dominated by TVs, computers, and video games.” If for no other reason, Crain’s book should be read for this eloquent exposition.

Sociologist Frank Furedi is also concerned with the urge to control children. In his searing indictment, *Paranoid Parenting*, he contends that a “culture of fear” has caused the older “nurturing” style of parenting to be displaced by one revolving around “monitoring” children. He notes that today’s experts commonly promote infant and parent “determinism”—the notions that the first few years of life can make or break a person’s future, and that the parents’ role is all-important. (Like Furedi, Judith Harris raised doubts about the determinist view in her 1998 book *The Nurture Assumption*.) Imbibing the experts’ warnings, many parents panic. Where children once enjoyed long periods of unsupervised play, now their lives are tightly circumscribed by watchful adults. Furedi sees this constant surveillance as a threat not only to children’s spontaneity and creativity but to their courage and willingness to take the risks required for learning.

The experts aren’t the only culprits, according to Furedi. We no longer have close-knit communities in which neighbors help look out for children. Adult authority has lost some measure of legitimacy. And moral clarity, or at least moral consensus, seems to have diminished. As a result, many parents feel uncomfortable with traditional discipline. Surveillance offers the “illusion of retaining control without having to confront the issue of discipline.”

Furedi questions whether all of this focus on children is genuine. In his view, the exaggerated attention to kids results from adults’ misdirected search for self-actualization. In an unstable social world of divorce and separation, the only bond that lasts is the one between parent and child—we may have ex-spouses but not ex-children—which makes



parents even more apprehensive about safeguarding their offspring.

The book is filled with examples of parents' disproportionate worries, covering everything from school shootings and kidnappings to the effects of television and the possible risks of the Internet. But there's a problem here: Given a social world that, as Furedi acknowledges, lacks any stable consensus about morality, maybe we *should* worry. His closing advice to parents is all well and good—let go, embrace a “positive vision of humanity” instead of anxiety and fear, cultivate help from other adults, and recognize experts' advice for the mere prejudice that it is—but it conveys a certain complacency about the very real dangers facing children. Until we can make society more conducive to children's freedom and independence, it hardly seems logical to drop our guard.

Furedi generally depicts the trend of invasive parenting as universal. But for many African American families, as sociologist Orlando Patterson and linguist John McWhorter have shown, the problem is hardly an overemphasis on academics. And no doubt many working parents would relish the opportunity to lavish undue supervision on their children instead of packing them off to daycare.

Furedi lumps fretfulness about daycare with the other sources of paranoia, but perhaps it plays a deeper role. Little wonder that

we see a parenting style with more focus on supervising than on nurturing, when society has embraced daycare as a solution to the disjuncture between full-time work, consumerism, and family life. At the same time, anxieties about daycare and the hours spent apart may fuel parents' oversolicitousness once they are reunited with their children. While not ideal, overcompensation is certainly preferable to the outright neglect that sometimes befalls children in truly strapped families.

**I**n her beautifully written and engaging study, *Raising America*, Ann Hulbert displays a sense of balance and proportion often lacking in discussions of child rearing. Hulbert, the author of *The Interior Castle: The Art and Life of Jean Stafford* (1992), presents a detailed and masterly history of ideas about parenting from the late 19th century to the present. She finds that child rearing advice nearly always falls into one of two camps, the “hard” or the “soft.” Advocates of a hard, or parent-centered, approach tend toward a “sterner and more masculine” attitude toward child rearing. They believe that nurture counts more than nature, so strict discipline is required. By contrast, advocates of the soft, or child-centered, approach, more “empathetic and effusive,” seek to encourage children's natural development through parental love and bonding.

The struggle between hard and soft par-

enting has been ceaseless. Luther Emmett Holt prescribed a strict-feeding and cry-it-out regimen for infants in *The Care and Feeding of Children* (1894), the same year G. Stanley Hall spoke of children's need for flexibility, freedom, and open discussions of sex in *Adolescence*. After World War I, behaviorist John Broadus Watson promoted rigorous habits established in infancy while developmental psychologist Arnold Gesell encouraged parents to raise children "naturally." After World War II, Benjamin Spock presided first as a soft advocate, seeking to dispel parents' anxieties, and then later as his own hard counterpart, warning against permissiveness, "parental hesitancy," and child centeredness. In our own time, experts such as James Dobson, Gary Ezzo, and John Rosemond face off against the likes of T. Berry Brazelton, Penelope Leach, and Stanley Greenspan.

As Hulbert recounts how child rearing ideas have evolved dialectically over time, with one side losing and the other gaining favor, she illuminates the dubious triumph of the experts. Though their authority has been premised on the value of scientific empiricism, their theories rarely have had scientific or statistical grounding. Spock, Hulbert writes, got his ideas "out of his own head." She also juxtaposes the experts' advice against minibiographies of their own family lives, demonstrating that many of the most successful parenting authorities were dismal failures as parents.

One wishes for more of Hulbert's own ideas and less of the experts', whose inadequacies she shows with such skill. The closest she comes to asserting her own views is when she points out what she sees as a central irony: The hard camp, despite its strictness, often paved the way for a more liberating ethos for both parent and child by encouraging habits of self-control. The soft camp, while urging love and encouragement of children's natural development, prescribed a regimen of constant observation and attentiveness. This created a vast new role for parents (in practice, mainly mothers), who came to feel responsible for their child's every emotional state, however fleeting.

Both camps of experts, Hulbert writes, "seemed to have forgotten the impulsive, intuitive give-and-take between big and small humans, struggling to understand each other and often failing, which is what actually makes a family a moral arena like no other." The experts must forget these things; they remember only at the cost of their own careers. Furedi similarly observes that experts have transformed parenting "from an intimate relationship that depends on emotion and warmth into a skill involving technical expertise," when in fact the parent-child relationship "is a qualitative one that cannot be improved by the application of a technical formula."

In attacking professional expertise in general and the recent vogue of intrusive parenting in particular, these books ask us to reconsider what raising children is all about. But, as has been the trend for the last hundred years, we may fall into the trap of formulating a new approach merely by upending what came before. We should be careful not to replace "paranoid parenting" with an overly laissez-faire approach to children's learning and discovery, such as the modern advice that anybody can be a "good enough" parent if left alone.

The problem is not guidance itself but the sources to which we turn for it. We might look elsewhere for wisdom that could help us more than the putatively scientific experts' counsel. For instance, we might pay more attention to social critics who raise real questions about how children can be properly socialized, given the overbearing influence of the "virtual world" of TV and computers, consumerism and celebrity culture, the erosion of moral authority, and the collapse of families and communities. Whatever we do, it is time to forsake the ministrations of those self-appointed experts who myopically see only one side of the balance that, as good parents have always known, must be struck between love and discipline.

>ELISABETH LASCH-QUINN, a professor of history in the Maxwell School at Syracuse University and a former Wilson Center Fellow, is the author most recently of *Race Experts: How Racial Etiquette, Sensitivity Training, and New Age Therapy Hijacked the Civil Rights Revolution* (2001). She is writing a book about debates over the family in contemporary America.

# Now, Voyagers

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## TRAVELS WITH A TANGERINE:

### *Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah.*

By Tim Mackintosh-Smith. Welcome Rain. 351 pp. \$30

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## THE STONE BOUDOIR:

### *Travels through the Hidden Villages of Sicily.*

By Theresa Maggio. Perseus. 288 pp. \$25

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## FATHER/LAND:

### *A Personal Search for the New Germany.*

By Frederick Kempe. Indiana Univ. Press. 339 pp. \$17.95 (paper)

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## THE BEST AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITING 2002.

Edited by Frances Mayes. Houghton Mifflin. 351 pp. \$13 (paper)

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*Reviewed by Lis Harris*

Is travel, as Mark Twain assures us, “fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness?” For Twain, it probably was. You have only to read his astonishingly adulatory essay about Versailles to grasp the mental gymnastics that must have gone into his peons-bedaunted appreciation of the place. But the record shows that it is not travel per se but the traveler who creates a view of the world. Herodotus’ account of the wars between the Greeks and Persians, for instance, is rife with confirmations of the author’s prejudices. War may be a special case—the individuality of the enemy must be wiped from a soldier’s mind if he is going to kill. But even in less charged circumstances, I’ve had as many prejudices confirmed as dispelled in foreign places. Yet the power of travel to amaze, distract, solace, refresh, jumpstart the imagination, and transform Weltschmerz into Weltkitzel (world tickle) remains incontrovertible.

But travel writing is another matter. Travel writers often seem like spiders spinning out their lives from a constantly extruded thread of likes and dislikes. The genre has more in common with autobiography than other forms of writing, so no matter where your guide transports you, you soon grasp that you are not so much in any real Walla Walla as in a particular person’s Walla Walla—a place you might or might not find congenial.

A recent engagement with a spate of travel books only rarely induced in me a desire to pack up and seek out any of the mountain eyries, Saharan sands, or exotic bazaars described, even when they were lyrically evoked. When the caliber of the writing was high, however, I did sometimes find myself thinking that the writer would be good to know and that a conversation at a café in one of his or her favorite destinations would be rewarding.

One of the most congenial travel narrators of the recent crop is Tim Mackintosh-Smith, whose erudite and droll *Travels with a Tangerine: A Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah* follows the first leg (from Tangiers to Constantinople, now Istanbul) of a famous voyage undertaken by the great 14th-century traveler (and Tangerine, or person from Tangiers) Ibn Battutah, who supposedly traversed a distance three times that traveled by Marco Polo. IB, as the author refers to him, produced a lively account of his journey, which Mackintosh-Smith juxtaposes with his own observations of life nowadays along the sites of IB’s pilgrimage. A youngish Brit who studied classical Arabic at Oxford University, Mackintosh-Smith, like his mentor, headed east to the Arab world when he was 21; his first, much-admired book was *Yemen: The Unknown Arabia* (2000).

Sometimes the best traveling companion is a dead one, as the flap copy points out. Mack-

intosh-Smith provides a wealth of amusing quotations from IB, bringing to life his adventures in the Egyptian desert, at Syrian castles, in the Kuria Muria Islands of the Arabian Sea, and in urban centers of medieval Islam. IB traveled more than 25,000 miles by foot, mule, ox wagon, dhow, and raft, and his encounters with nearly every illustrious person of the age, as well as with shipwrecks, pirates, court cabals, and the Black Death, occupied 29 years of his life. Though the time frame of Mackintosh-Smith's journey is unspecified, he thinks of it, he tells us, as "a sort of Proustian inverse archaeology. Instead of recreating past lives by examining objects and places, I would start with a life—IB's—and go off in search of its memorabilia, fragments of existence withdrawn from time." His 14th-century model, a kind of scholar-gypsy, was more interested in people than places and was apparently blessed wherever he went by favorable receptions from sultans and sheiks (which was especially good when you consider what unfavorable receptions might have entailed). He rarely left a city without having bestowed upon him a camel or two, a horse, an extra travel guide, or a beautiful robe.

The tone of Mackintosh-Smith's journey is considerably grottier, to use one of the Britishisms that not-too-intrusively pepper the text. Instead of reading about the distinguished sultans, poets, geographers, and astronomers encountered by IB, we are treated to a wonderfully odd assortment of booksellers, mullahs, everyday Arab folk, eccentrics, and elderly keepers of shrines, tombstones, and the Islamic flame. Forewarned about the dangers of a certain body of water or political climate, he shortcuts his itinerary and travels by plane. But he never loses sight of his quarry's footprints, and when he comes upon the familiar-looking outline of a hill or the shell of a monastery wall or a medieval fragment incorporated into a mosque that he has read about in IB's narrative, he is exultant: 14th and 21st centuries in perfect confluence.

Though we are constantly at the author's side as he clammers over walls and tromps through rock-strewn fields, we nonetheless finish the book knowing very little about his background or the general shape of his life. This somewhat severe reticence results in occasional peculiar passages—for example, when a

generous and friendly older scholar asks if he is aware of the power of a certain aphrodisiac popular in the Arab world, Mackintosh-Smith replies that he wouldn't know since he isn't married. In a book with fewer acute observations and less depth, this Apollonian reserve might grate. Here, one merely notes it and pushes forward to the next magnificent citadel.

**T**heresa Maggio's *The Stone Boudoir: Travels through the Hidden Villages of Sicily* is a more familiar sort of narrative. The author, an American of part-Sicilian descent, seeks out long-lost relatives, falls in love with the remote mountain towns of her ancestors, and settles in for longish sojourns far below the tourist stratum. Her status, somewhere between besotted amateur ethnographer and tolerated foreign intruder with blood ties, grants her special privileges. Unlike most of her cloistered female relatives, who even today remain shuttered in houses or in narrowly prescribed jobs, Maggio is allowed to jump on motorcycles and venture, pencil in hand, wherever curiosity takes her.

If Mackintosh-Smith's delight in the sights and sounds of the desert and the metropolises, however genuine, is secondary to his pleasure in romping around in his own mind, Maggio lingers longer with people, displaying so much affection that she all but effects a chromosomal exchange with them. Still, her narrative remains informative and extremely well written. She is best at capturing the locals, particularly those who live on the slopes of Mt. Etna, and their hard life, ancient superstitions, and strong customs, such as assuming that everyone has a right to *prendere cinque*, or "take five," which conveys, in local parlance, that once a day anyone can totally lose it and let off steam.

Arriving at Polizza Generosi, she remarks that it "felt like an old-growth forest: silent living things with deep roots." The tiny town is high up a sheer cliff, and just as she repairs to a local bar to take in the view, a cloud envelops the mountain and she is "lost in luminous mist." Most of the places she visits are a lot earthier, and so are the people, such as the relative who insists on teaching her, on the first day of her visit, the nonsense verse "*Meroda friottai alla baraobai di chi l'ha scriotta*." Take out all the o's, he tells her, and you have: "Fried shit on the beard of him who wrote this."

The new tension between the travel writer's rather anarchic mission to sniff out the curious and compelling, wherever it lurks, and our increasingly disturbing global perils, does not necessarily change the imperatives of the genre. But it does make a book such as Frederick Kempe's *Father/Land: A Personal Search for the New Germany*, which is not exactly a travel book but rather a thoughtful memoir and meditation on the new and old Germanys, particularly welcome. Kempe, an American editor and associate publisher of *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, instructively interweaves his family history (his parents were born in Germany) with a kind of spiritual voyage around Germany and among Germans, young and old, to learn how modern history has affected the county and how the past provides some sense of the nation's future. Kempe's strong reportorial skills and firm grasp of the historical background make this a fascinating book.

Perhaps the excellent *Best American Travel Writing 2002* features two essays explicitly dealing with the events of September 11 out of its editor's concern that, without them, the anthology might appear to be ignoring the tragedy. One of them, by Scott Anderson, about his experience as a volunteer grunt near the World Trade Center, is cliché-free and moving; the other, by Adam Gopnik, aestheticizes the day's events to no apparent purpose. Neither, however, has any real claim as "travel" writing. But the collection does include nearly every sort of true travel writing: high culture, low culture, adventure stories, spiritual quests, political journeys, and on and on, demonstrating that the field for good writing in this genre is no longer, as it was for a very long time, monopolized by the British.

André Aciman's "Roman Hours," a celebration of the deep satisfactions of his own private Rome, nicely elucidates what every site-dazed traveler has eventually learned—that "despite untold layers of stucco and plaster and paint slapped over the centuries on everything . . . despite the fact that . . . so many buildings are grafted onto generations of older buildings, what ultimately matters here are the incidentals, the small elusive pleasures of the senses." "Postcards from the Fair," by Kevin Canty, provides a funny, warm appreciation of Mississippi's Neshoba County Fair, the world's

largest and oldest campground fair—part family reunion, part old-fashioned carnival with rides, part six-day drinking party, part political stumping ground, and part Wagnerian barbecue pig-out. In "Forty Years in Acapulco," Devin Friedman renders homage to the travel customs of a passing cadre, those elderly, sun-worshipping folks "not of the SPF generation." Friedman wittily and affectionately describes the gear and routines—30 pairs of new swim trunks with matching tops, five pairs of white shoes, an insistence on staying in the same room every year—of his 89-year-old grandfather, Mort Friedman (otherwise known as Mort the Sport, the Window King of Cleveland), Mort's elderly girlfriend, and their *copains*, they of the deep tans, flowing pool gowns, and \$100 trays of salami and pastrami.

D. H. Lawrence complained three-quarters of a century ago about the galloping herd of travelers who had the most superficial grasp of where they had been: "Poor little globe of earth, the tourists trot round you as easily as they trot around the Bois or round Central Park. There is no mystery left, we've been there, we've seen it, we know all about it. We've done the globe and the globe is done." The more we know horizontally, he suggests, "the less we penetrate vertically." Lawrence believed that earlier generations, with their capacity to feel awe before new sights, were really better off. The *Best American* collection would have heartened him, however: There's awe here aplenty, and such essays as Kathleen Lee's lyric, beautifully pared-down explorations of Hanoi and Saigon, "The Scent of Two Cities," and Edward Hoagland's "Visiting Norah," which sensitively reveals the world of an elderly Ugandan woman and the five orphaned grandchildren in her care, sink heart and soul into their subjects.

These essays, like much of the best travel writing—and unlike the handful in the collection that are either Byronically self-romanticizing, unfocused, or spiritually pumped up—remind us of the world's vastness, of what we can't possibly know except firsthand. They also bring home the reality that we're as likely nowadays to scrutinize the headlines for itinerary guidance as our grandparents did their Baedekers.

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## CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

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*BEING AMERICA:  
Liberty, Commerce, and Violence in an  
American World.*

By Jedediah Purdy. Knopf.  
337 pp. \$24

Chinese university students protest against the United States by day and apply to American graduate schools by night. Violent Mexican guerrillas mail teddy bears to journalists, hoping to spark international coverage of their cause. And multinational companies attract environmentally savvy customers with anticonsumerist, antimaterialist marketing campaigns.

Welcome to the surreal world of globalization politics, the subject of this ambitious but uneven second book by Jedediah Purdy. In *For Common Things* (1999), he examined the state of U.S. politics and found it sterilized by irony and disaffection. Now, this 28-year-old social critic casts his earnest gaze toward the rest of the globe and finds it grappling with tradeoffs between violence and liberty and caught in a love-hate relationship with the United States.

In the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas, Purdy spoke with everyone from pro-bin Laden law students in Cairo to gay rights activists in Bombay, and those conversations are some of the most interesting and original segments of the book. Indian software mogul N. R. Narayana Murthy, for example, reveals how, in order to succeed globally, Indian business leaders feel they must adopt the prefab façade of corporate America. The headquarters of Murthy's NASDAQ-listed company, Infosys, are modeled after Microsoft's campus in Redmond, Washington, with open fields and clean roads. Murthy explains, "You will think that you have left India. . . . This is to show our foreign clients that we are serious, that we are world-class."

Unfortunately, Purdy interrupts this reportage with meandering discourses on the nature of humanity, the meaning of desire, and what "we Americans" believe. These tangents inform us that slavery is "wicked," that nationalism can lead to violence, and that the United States should refrain from invading Russia and China—truths hardly requiring Jedediah Purdy's validation. He also insists on paying incessant (and distracting) homage to his favorite writers and thinkers. Hannah Arendt,

Edmund Burke, William Shakespeare, and William Butler Yeats all take curtain calls—and that's in the first five pages. Yet he disregards contemporary thinkers who have tackled similar issues. His look at corporate branding and the "oratory of commerce," for example, clearly relates to the work of Canadian writer-activist Naomi Klein, the author of *No Logo* (2001).

But though Purdy sometimes seems to fancy himself the first person to ponder globalization, that attitude is a strength as well as a weakness, and it leads to some fresh insights and trenchant observations. For example, he deftly explains how anti-Americanism abroad is not incompatible with the global embrace of U.S. pop culture: "Emulation and resentment are the paired fruits of imperial power, and the stronger the compulsion to emulate, the more intense the resentment is likely to be."

The irony of this thoughtful, evenhanded work is that it ultimately succumbs to the sort of U.S.-centered self-involvement that so much of the world decries. In his conclusion, Purdy holds up *Federalist* 10 as a template for understanding civilization. James Madison argued that, in the face of competing economic interests, opinions, and passions, humankind would always be divided. "I believe that this view is right," writes Purdy, "and that because liberalism is the best spirit of civilization yet tried in modernity, recognizing the mixed, unstable nature of human beings is a requirement for civilization." True, perhaps. But in such cultural arrogance, however subtle or well intentioned, any American who has ever asked "Why do they hate us?" might well find the beginnings of an answer.

—CARLOS LOZADA

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*COLLISION COURSE:  
The Strange Convergence of  
Affirmative Action and Immigration  
Policy in America.*

By Hugh Davis Graham. Oxford Univ.  
Press. 246 pp. \$30

When Congress adopted the Civil Rights Act of 1964, supporters insisted it would never lead to preferences or quotas. Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.)

offered to eat the pages of the bill if that happened. And when Congress adopted the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, supporters insisted it would have little impact on the number of immigrants coming to the United States or on the nation's ethnic mix.

As it turns out, the backers of both landmark bills were wildly mistaken. The consequences of their shortsightedness include the arrival since 1965 of 35 million immigrants, with three-quarters of them immediately eligible for affirmative action preferences in hiring, university admissions, and government benefits—preferences created to remedy past American discrimination that these immigrants couldn't possibly have experienced.

How could a democratic country arrange to give preferences to newcomers—even illegal ones—over its own native-born citizens? And how will immigration and affirmative action intertwine in the future? Those are the fascinating questions tackled in this brief and brilliant work. A Vanderbilt University historian and political scientist who died in 2002, Hugh Davis Graham clearly believed—and goes a long way toward demonstrating here—that America's policies on affirmative action and immigration represent a tangled shambles of good intentions, contradictory impulses, and sometimes ludicrous outcomes.

The U.S. Small Business Administration, for instance, was besieged during the 1980s by requests to declare various ethnic groups eligible for minority set-asides in government contracting. It rejected Iranians for being “too narrow” a group and for failing to demonstrate long-term discrimination in the United States, yet approved immigrants from Bhutan, Burma, and even Tonga. The agency evidently wanted to draw the line at the Khyber Pass lest it have to make Middle Eastern immigrants eligible too. But Indonesians got into the set-aside pool despite enjoying greater affluence and education than the average American.

Graham traces government-mandated affirmative action in private-sector hiring to a Nixon administration initiative that tar-

geted discriminatory trade unions in Philadelphia. The policy was intended to undercut the power of organized labor, drive a wedge between unions and civil rights leaders, ease inflation by reducing construction costs, and allay social unrest by opening more jobs to blacks. When implemented, though, the Philadelphia plan rapidly evolved into a national system of numerical requirements for workplace “diversity” that were difficult to distinguish from quotas. Lobbyists for the beneficiaries, in turn, vigorously defended the new requirements. Affirmative action was soon ubiquitous.

Why? One culprit, Graham contends, is divided government. When different parties control the White House and Congress, interest groups can exert greater influence. Sometimes they manage to get policies adopted that nobody would dream of putting to a public referendum. The author also makes the important point that social legislation is especially susceptible to unintended consequences. Not that these consequences are invariably bad: He notes that affirmative action has helped produce a vast black middle class even as immigrants and women have come to overwhelm blacks as beneficiaries, and that mass immigration has spared America the demographic crisis facing Europe and Japan, with their low birthrates and relatively meager immigration.

American immigration policy from the outset “has oscillated between flood and drought models, and the country has paid a heavy price in the excesses associated with each extreme,” Graham writes. Sheer momentum and the proximity of Mexico suggest that heavy immigration is here to stay, even if our way of choosing immigrants—by family ties—is haphazard. But he notes that persistent terrorism or a depressed economy could force the pendulum back. He is more doubtful about the durability of affirmative action, which lacks popular support and suffers from shifting rationales. It depends, moreover, on ethnic categories that are rapidly being blurred by intermarriage in a population made ever more diverse by immigration.

—DANIEL AKST

## HISTORY

**BOYD:**  
*The Fighter Pilot Who  
Changed the Art of War.*

By Robert Coram. Little, Brown.  
485 pp. \$27.95

In an age when forgettable (and forgotten) sitcom stars get their own *Biography* segments on A&E, it's hard to believe that John Boyd hasn't been the subject of a miniseries. A bombastic fighter jock turned controversial strategist, Boyd (1927–97) was arguably the most influential military



Colonel John Boyd in the cockpit of his F-86.

thinker of the past half-century—and maybe, his supporters claim, the greatest since Sun Tzu. Yet Boyd was virtually unknown outside the military during his lifetime. Even in the air force, he was marginalized as the Mad Colonel.

But Boyd hasn't just faded away. Although he mostly remains persona non grata to the air force, his concepts have been adopted by the Marine Corps and, to a lesser degree, the army. His principles of time-based strategic thinking, codified as OODA (for observe-orient-decide-act), have become a mantra for new-millennium business consultants. Now comes Robert Coram, a journalist and novelist, with an entertaining biography—the

second book on Boyd to appear in two years. More are sure to follow.

Coram meticulously traces Boyd's painful rise from hardscrabble roots to duty flying an F-86 in MiG Alley in Korea. Although Boyd didn't score any kills there, he later earned a reputation at Nevada's Nellis Air Force Base as America's top fighter pilot. He boasted that he could defeat all comers in mock aerial combat within 40 seconds, and, according to Coram, he was never beaten. As an instructor at Nellis, he produced the nation's first rigorous study of dogfighting dos and don'ts, which the air force later adopted as its official tactics manual.

After earning an engineering degree in 1962, Boyd applied his new scientific knowledge to his dogfighting insights and achieved a revolutionary breakthrough: the first objective, quantitative tool for analyzing how and why one fighter plane is better than another in combat. Much to the chagrin of his superiors, Boyd's Energy-Maneuverability Theory accurately forecast that the F-4 and the F-111 would be outflown in Vietnam by lower-tech MiGs.

At the Pentagon, Boyd was the godfather of the so-called Fighter Mafia, lobbying for small, nimble airplanes in place of the bigger, more complex, and more expensive models favored by the air force. He was the father of the F-16—still the world's premier dogfighting machine—and a leader of the military reform movement of the 1970s and '80s. In 1991, Boyd advised then-secretary of defense Dick Cheney about tactics for the war against Iraq. According to Coram, Boyd may have been an anonymous architect of the lightning strike that ended Operation Desert Storm.

Coram is particularly good on the bureaucratic battles fought by Boyd's disciples—no surprise, perhaps, considering that these reformers were Coram's principal sources. The book is also full of wonderful material about military culture, from the testosterone-laden ambience at Nellis to the protocols of official briefings. Unfortunately, Boyd himself comes off as something of a cartoon figure. Though Coram debunks some of the more outlandish claims, his Boyd is still

scaled so much larger than life that it's hard to take him seriously. Then again, maybe this age of instant celebrity has blinded us to the qualities of a true hero.

—PRESTON LERNER

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**CAPTIVES:**

*The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How Its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy, 1600–1850.*

By Linda Colley. Pantheon. 438 pp. \$27.50

Linda Colley made her name as a highly original historian with *Britons* (1993), which explored the deliberate creation of “British” (and anti-Catholic) identity and patriotism after the Act of Union brought England and Scotland together in 1707. Her equally innovative *Captives* examines the British imperial enterprise through its less publicized failures and the experience of British citizens taken prisoner.

Whatever the anthem “Rule Britannia” might say, Britons were made into slaves with dismaying regularity. By trawling through the archives, Colley can account for at least 8,000 British taken prisoner by the North African pirate beys in the 17th and 18th centuries. And in the wars against Tippoo Sultan of Mysore starting in 1768, some 1,300 British soldiers were held captive—a strikingly high proportion of the approximately 10,000 British troops then in India. These numbers usefully challenge the orthodox narrative of endless success through British military and naval prowess. In land warfare, the British enjoyed little technological advantage once the Indian states hired or suborned European artillery specialists.

Colley places the initial British defeat in India, at Pollilur in 1780, squarely in the context of the parallel reverses suffered a world away in North America. By seeking to hold both India and the North American colonies, the empire was overstretched and humbled. In 1784, when Parliament passed new legislation to regulate the affairs of the chastened East India Company, any further attempts at imperial expansion were explicitly ruled out—“schemes of conquest and extent of dominion [are] repugnant to the wish, the honor, and the policy of this nation.”

That changed swiftly with the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars and the threat of a French alliance with Tippoo Sultan. The British concentrated naval assets in the Mediterranean to defeat the French in Egypt and sent troops to India to fight Tippoo. The outstanding Admiral Horatio Nelson and General Arthur Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington) secured India and the Mediterranean, and the reborn British Empire advanced to its most glorious and rapacious phase. Colley splendidly and readably places this triumphal comeback in the context of the nation's previous losses.

British propaganda often emphasized the interior lives of the country's captured soldiers—“the strength of their sympathy with one another,” in the words of a 1788 memoir. “Teetering on the verge of unprecedented global intervention,” Colley writes, “the British then—rather like Americans now—needed to be persuaded that they were not only a superpower, but also a virtuous, striving, and devoted people.” She goes on to draw further parallels with the U.S. response to accounts of prisoners of war in North Vietnam. Great powers whose populations are accustomed to victory, it seems, make overseas humiliations tolerable by focusing on individual suffering rather than strategic miscalls.

Colley has something in common with military historian John Keegan, who found a new and illuminating way to retell old tales by focusing on what battle did to its losers and to its wounded. But unlike Keegan, Colley brings a contemporary edge to her writing, as in that reference to the Vietnam War. Some may object to modern politicking in a book about the past, but it adds the spice of controversy and provocation to the writing of one of the most interesting historians at work today.

—MARTIN WALKER

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**DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY:**

*The Life and Legacy of Prescott Bush.*

By Mickey Herskowitz. Rutledge Hill Press. 229 pp. \$24.99

Despite having produced two presidents and a governor of Florida, the Bushes reject any suggestion that their family is a political dynasty. They insist, as George W. Bush told me in a 1995 interview, that public service is “just

part of a strong family tradition” and “much more of an inherent trait.” Or, as he later told Mickey Herskowitz: “To talk about a Bush dynasty would be an act of conceit.”

A Houston-based sportswriter and celebrity ghostwriter and biographer, Herskowitz has written a useful overview of America’s premier political family. Though not a traditional chronological biography, it focuses principally on Senator Prescott Bush (1895–1972)—father of the first President Bush and grandfather of the current one. Herskowitz credits Prescott Bush with instilling the family’s sense of noblesse oblige, “persons of privilege behaving nobly, serving unselfishly for the greater good of humanity.” Venerated by his descendants, Prescott is Herskowitz’s “founding father.”

Prescott developed properties before attaining prominence with what became the Wall Street investment banking firm of Brown Brothers Harriman. A further financial lift came from his 1921 marriage to Dorothy Walker, heir to a midwestern business later known for its flagship holding, the G.H. Walker Investment Company of St. Louis. While working and raising five children, Prescott served for decades in the town government of Greenwich, Connecticut, a training ground for his subsequent legislative career.

He ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 1950, but tried again two years later and was elected to serve out the balance of a deceased incumbent’s term. In Washington he proved to be a quintessential northeastern, internationalist, moderate Republican. He embraced civil rights, abhorred Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, and even, according to the author, quietly opposed a second term for Richard Nixon as Dwight Eisenhower’s vice president. Such positions put him at odds with party conservatives, and some Republican leaders opposed his bid for reelection in 1956. (His son’s presidency after 1990 provoked similar misgivings in the party, a lesson not lost on the current president.) Nonetheless, Senator Bush won reelection, served for six more years, and retired.

Herskowitz describes Prescott as central to the family’s political rise. Certainly the family’s endorsement of the book is unambiguous—the former president supplied a foreword and agreed to help promote it. The research, however, is thin, relying heavily on interviews with Bush family and friends and on a long oral his-

tory left by Prescott in 1966. For example, more intense work might have kept Herskowitz from saying merely that George H. W. Bush “gladly accepted” President Nixon’s offer of the United Nations ambassadorship in 1971. As now-public documents make clear, Bush lobbied for that appointment—Nixon had intended to make him just another White House assistant.

Though Herskowitz’s tribute to those dedicated to “duty, honor, country” pretty much confines itself to the official story, it constitutes a worthwhile guide to the world that helped create our 41st and 43rd presidents.

—HERBERT S. PARMET

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**PAKISTAN:**  
*Eye of the Storm.*

By Owen Bennett Jones. Yale Univ. Press. 328 pp. \$29.95

Pakistan matters, perhaps more than ever. Events have given a new urgency to a book such as this, which seeks to explain Pakistan to the general reader. Owen Bennett Jones, a BBC correspondent posted in Pakistan between 1998 and 2001, examines the nation’s tormented past and equally troubled present not in chronological fashion but through thematic chapters on Pakistani nationalism, the 1971 schism that broke the country in two and resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, the Kashmir quandary, the army, the Bomb, and the ever-present struggle between Pakistan’s civilians and military.

By carrying his account into early 2002, Bennett Jones makes the narrative relevant to today’s headlines, yet in some respects his story is already dated. Witness his opening sentence: “Pakistan is an easy place for a journalist to work.” Poor Daniel Pearl found otherwise. Or his statement that there is no evidence that Pakistan has shared nuclear secrets with North Korea. Alas, credible press reports in fall 2002 suggested that Pakistan, in exchange for Nodong missile transfers, substantially helped Pyongyang with its enriched uranium weapons program.

The storm in the book’s subtitle is not simply the one that has occurred since 9/11; Pakistan has always been turbulent. The 1947 partition of British India led to the massacre of at least a million people and triggered one of history’s largest mass migrations. The agony that accom-

panied Pakistan's birth has been followed by three or, depending on who's counting, four wars with India. No elected Pakistani government has ever completed its term of office, and no military dictator has left on his own terms. Sectarian violence, armed insurrection, ethnic and tribal animosities, secessionist movements, private armies, and a tough neighborhood have combined to fuel a profound sense of insecurity among Pakistanis.

Yet Pakistan is not a nuclear-armed rogue state, or a nation of Islamic extremists determined to destroy Western civilization. Most Pakistanis, Bennett Jones writes, have little sympathy for radical mullahs and want their country to be a moderate, tolerant, progressive state.

And what of Pervez Musharraf, the country's current military strongman? Is he a stout U.S. ally in the war against terrorism, a usurper of democracy, a liberal reformer and anticorruption crusader? Bennett Jones is not unsympathetic to the general. Musharraf, he writes, seeks to minimize the role of religion in state affairs. He is remarkably tolerant of a free and frequently adversarial press. He has a vision of a modern, liberal Pakistan.

But can he build that Pakistan? Here Bennett Jones is less sanguine. As he ruefully notes, Pakistani leaders have always been

better at declaring policies than implementing them. Two electoral events in 2002—in April, a phony referendum granting Musharraf another five years in office; in October, a rigged parliamentary vote—undercut the general's legitimacy. He has not shown a willingness to promote genuine reform if it incurs substantial political costs. The extent of his control over the country's powerful military intelligence agency is unclear. And most fundamentally, Musharraf fails to understand that the army isn't the solution to Pakistan's problem, it's part of the problem.

The West, Bennett Jones contends, has an interest in seeing Musharraf succeed. The notion of Islamic radicals with their hands on Pakistan's nuclear button is unsettling to say the least. Twice in the past 18 months, India and Pakistan have edged perilously close to war, and many experts predict new tensions as the snows melt this spring, opening the mountain passes for Pakistani infiltration into Indian-controlled Kashmir. A full-fledged war on the subcontinent could have catastrophic consequences.

The world has a stake in what happens in Pakistan. How great a stake, this book makes compellingly clear.

—ROBERT M. HATHAWAY

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## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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### *H. L. MENCKEN ON RELIGION.*

Edited by S. T. Joshi. Prometheus.

330 pp. \$29

H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) was a bigot, misanthropic elitist who ought to be sorely missed. To today's skeptics, his merciless assaults on religious belief stand as inspiration and reproach. He eschewed judiciousness. Belief in God's goodness was "evidence of an arrested intellectual development," he wrote. Creationists were simply "clodhoppers" (as were most "average" people). Evangelical churches were more interested in "getting bodies in jail" than in "saving souls." And the fundamentalist "prays as more worldly Puritans complain to the police." Of course, none of these statements was entirely true (How could Mencken have known what fundamentalists held in

their hearts when they prayed?), but his unqualified, uncensored disdain underscored the stupidity and meanness that sometimes infect popular religious movements, especially those that seek to turn sectarian preferences into law.

In *H. L. Mencken on Religion*, freelance writer S. T. Joshi has gathered an invigorating collection of magazine and newspaper columns by this gifted and incorrigible critic. They include a recounting of Mencken's own childhood brushes with religion, accounts of revival meetings, reports on the Scopes trial, and sallies against Christian Science, spiritualism, fundamentalism, Prohibition, and proselytizing (by atheists or believers), as well as his defenses of science, which often took the form of offenses against reli-

## Current Books

gion. No candidate for the Templeton Prize, he.

Defenders of the faiths will be tempted to dismiss these columns as rants, but they can fairly be called critiques, however brief and scathing. Mencken's wit and sense of rhythm made him a master of the epigram as well as the short essay. He didn't condescend to readers with pedagogy, by summarizing or underlining his points. He didn't pander. (Today's harshest critics, by contrast, attack the safest targets—peaceniks and lefties.) He didn't flatter politicians or assist them with polemics. His prose was conversational but composed, and his conclusions swift and graceful.

Mencken was a social critic, not a crusader: "I have never consciously tried to convert anyone to anything." His anger at religious belief was tempered by resignation to its tenacious appeal and appreciation of its vaudevilles. Religious mountebanks, he wrote, help us "get through life with a maximum of entertainment and a minimum of pain." But he was not merely an amused observer of the spectacle. He was engaged as well as detached, impassioned as well as ironic. He seemed genuinely worried that the rise of fundamentalism might reverse the process by which America had managed to

"get rid of religion as a serious scourge" by "reducing it to a petty nuisance."

Mencken revealed his own passions in the coda to a 1930 article, "What I Believe." An uncharacteristic lapse into didacticism, it was also redundant: His beliefs informed his essays. He was a libertarian, committed to your right to voice stupidities and his right to mock them. He had no patience for the "curious social convention" that demands respect for religious belief, and no use for the impulse to prohibit unpopular beliefs. If he regarded Christian Science (among other faiths) as dangerous nonsense, he saw greater danger in efforts to outlaw it.

Mencken flourished in early-20th-century America, during and shortly after a period of harsh political repression, when free speech was a radical idea. He was alert to thought policing: "Men are being denounced and hounded in the United States today, not because they are doing what is admitted to be wrong, but because they are thinking what is thought to be wrong. Error is converted into a felony." If we resurrected him today, he no doubt would be astonished by the miracle, but otherwise, I suspect, he would feel at home.

—WENDY KAMINER

## ARTS & LETTERS

### IN RUINS.

By Christopher Woodward.  
Pantheon Books. 280 pp. \$24

In this charming, delightfully illustrated book, British historian Christopher Woodward indulges what he admits is "a perverse pleasure" in ruins. Drawing on literature, art, landscape design, and other fields, he examines the inspiration that people both famous and obscure have found in rubble—everything from classical ruins to haunted houses, from the devastation of the London Blitz to the elaborate fake ruins constructed in 18th-century gardens. Although most of his examples are European, Woodward's range is immense. On a single page, he veers from an 1873 Gustave Doré engraving of an imaginary ruined London to the toppled Statue of Liberty in *Planet of the Apes*.

All ruins are not created equal, however: To

be deliciously evocative, a ruin must be a bit rough around the edges. Woodward can't stand ruins that get, well, ruined by excessive tidying and the addition of such desecrations as Keep Off signs, tea rooms, and gift shops. Archeologists are another pet peeve. Their excavations, he charges, have sucked the strange magic from Rome's Colosseum and rendered it "extinct."

Left to crumble poetically, ruins can summon a variety of responses. "A ruin is a dialogue between an incomplete reality and the imagination of the spectator," Woodward writes. Tracing the fixation back to the fall of Rome, he builds a case for ruins as metaphors. Whether real, imagined, or fake, they can serve as memento mori, warn of the perils of decadence, or call into question the inevitability of human progress. They can link a current civi-

lization to a past one's glory, or to its decline and fall. They can serve as war monuments that evoke an enemy's barbarity, or as picturesque garden ornaments that hint at ancient lineages. "Ruins do not speak," Woodward observes. "We speak for them."

The author is especially eloquent as he charts classical Rome's rapid transformation from Eternal City to nearly abandoned wasteland, with the Forum collapsing into cow pasture and the Colosseum converted to a quarry. "If such a colossus as Rome can crumble—its ruins ask—why not London or New York?" That's a disconcerting question, with Ground Zero still fresh in memory. Although Woodward completed his book before the September 11 attacks, what happened afterward only reinforces his point about the potency of ruins. Lest the shattered World Trade Center stand as a portent of empire lost, it was quickly transmogrified into what looks like any other neat-edged construction site.

Some may quibble with Woodward's tendency to jump from one thing to the next, and it's true that his transitions often seem arbitrary. But this merely signals his enthusiasm. Like a giddy dinner-party companion, he can't stop sharing his eccentric obsession in a breathless rush of conversation, skipping from history to travel to memoir (he recounts his boyhood fascination with a decaying manor amid "bright new Lego-like houses"). You just have to sit back and enjoy the ride.

—REBECCA A. CLAY

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**IRVING HOWE:**

***A Life of Passionate Dissent.***

By Gerald Sorin. New York Univ. Press. 386 pp. \$32.95

Even after *World of Our Fathers* (1976), a popular elegy to Jewish immigrant culture, made him rich, Irving Howe (1920–93) never abandoned his radical ideals. The cofounder of *Dissent* devoted much of his life to bril-

liant commentary on the meaning of socialism in America. His range and power of discrimination as a critic, essayist, and autobiographer won respect from opponents and reverence from allies. Among the latter is Gerald Sorin, whose biography shines with admiration even as it records the personal flaws that shadowed Howe's "passionate dissent."

According to Sorin, a history professor at



**A Preacher in the Ancient Ruins (c. 1750), by Giovanni Pannini**

the State University of New York at New Paltz, loneliness drew 14-year-old Howe to the Young People's Socialist League in 1934. Principle kept him there. Socialism, Howe found, reflected the "ethic of solidarity" pervading the Yiddish neighborhoods of his East Bronx boyhood. At the City College of New York in the late 1930s, he led Trotskyists against Stalinists and distinguished himself by "overblown rhetoric, heavy-handed sarcasm, and a seemingly unbreakable attachment to intellectual agility rather than reflection, to dialectic rather than investigation and analysis." The proletarian revolution allowed no room for nuance.

As revolution passed America by, Howe's hot-blooded socialism cooled. He stopped talking of class analysis and began calling himself a humanist rather than a Marxist. By the end of the 1950s, he was counseling radicals to vote for liberal Democrats. Lacking manifest political content, his socialism became what he termed "the name of our desire." And so it remained, unsatisfied, until his death in 1993.

Socialism might not mean utopia, but it could mean a better tomorrow, and Howe did as much as any American of his generation to identify the political legacy of socialism with democracy, civil liberties, human decency, and intellectual integrity. Yet if he was a “hero of sorts,” as Sorin concludes, his was the heroism of the believer, not of the actor. For all his knowledge of international radical politics, Howe sent barely a ripple through the realm of political action. He opposed World War II as a clash between imperialists, then recovered so much faith in American policy that he failed to see the illiberal character of the Vietnam War until 1968. By that time, the antiwar movement had grown up in spite of him, followed by the counterculture and second-wave feminism. Howe treated these with the same withering condescension he had once dispensed to enemies at City College. The “ethic of solidarity” always looks better in theory than in practice.

If Howe’s temperamental excesses weakened his political leadership, they also reflected his honest attempt to confront the dilemmas of 20th-century radicalism. He was too smart to retreat into dogmatism, too faithful to betray his beliefs. At his best, he lived by social hope. This might not have amounted to heroism. But it was no mean achievement in troubled times.

—JOHN H. SUMMERS

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**COMING OF AGE AS A POET:  
*Milton, Keats, Eliot, Plath.***

By Helen Vendler. Harvard Univ. Press.  
174 pp. \$22.95

Literary critics don’t come much more eminent and established than Helen Vendler. A beloved teacher of poetry and a principal architect of the reputations of countless contemporary poets, notably 1995 Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney, she holds not only a select University Professorship at Harvard but a poetry reviewing slot at *The New Yorker*. From these twin platforms Vendler disseminates a fairly traditional vision of poetry, one that stresses the poet’s private aesthetics and the quest for a personal language to reflect inner experience. Those who complain that postmodern and “political” approaches have taken over the study of literature would be hard pressed to

name any postmodernist whose cultural authority rivals Vendler’s.

This latest book returns to familiar territory. Of the four poets it treats—John Milton, John Keats, T. S. Eliot, and Sylvia Plath—Vendler already has written copiously about Plath and Eliot and has published a book-length study of Keats’s odes. Her concern in these essays, originally delivered as lectures at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, is to pinpoint what the four poets had to accomplish at the outset, the problems of form and diction each had to solve before writing that initial “perfect” poem, the first one to last down the years and embody the poet’s mature style. If we can understand this, she writes, “then we can begin to appreciate all that any young poet has to master in order to write a poem that will endure.”

Though this sounds like a tight focus, in practice Vendler treats her topic loosely. The poems she picks as “perfect” are, not surprisingly, very well known—Milton’s “L’Allegro” (1631), Keats’s “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” (1816), Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1911), and Plath’s “The Colossus” (1959). She uses them to discuss such disparate matters as Milton’s capacity for extending a poem in space and time, Keats’s many variations on the sonnet form over the course of his career, Eliot’s repressed upbringing, and the unfairness of criticism that questions Plath’s status as a major poet. Throughout, Vendler tracks her poets’ struggles toward adulthood, because, “for a writer, achieving emotional maturity is inseparable from achieving linguistic maturity.”

The result is a collection of pleasing if not especially striking insights into canonical poems and poets. Vendler is particularly good on how her favorite poets play with structure and how they wrestle with a poetic form—the Petrarchan sonnet, say—until it becomes theirs. Some of the close readings scintillate more than others; a few of the analyses (notably of “Chapman’s Homer”) feel a trifle shopworn, as if they have been used for years as classroom examples.

Indeed, the volume’s only real weakness is a certain wobble in its sense of the intended audience. Parts read like an introduction, for a nonreader of poetry, to some of the underlying

mechanisms that make the form tick, while others, particularly portions of the Milton essay, seem to assume an audience well versed in scholars' disputes. Since the introductory

tone predominates, this little volume is best taken as an invitation to the unversed reader to follow Vendler into wider fields.

—AMY E. SCHWARTZ

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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### *DREAMING:*

#### *An Introduction to the Science of Sleep.*

By J. Allan Hobson. Oxford Univ. Press. 170 pp. \$22

In June, sleep specialists from around the world will gather in Chicago to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the discovery of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, the state in which our most vivid dreams occur. At the University of Chicago in 1953, graduate student Eugene Aserinsky and physiologist Nathaniel Kleitman found that sleepers' eyes dart beneath closed lids roughly every 90 minutes. These episodes last only a few minutes early in sleep but close to an hour later on. People awakened during REM sleep usually report dreams with visual images and storylike narratives. Those awakened while their eyes are at rest seldom do, though they sometimes recall prosaic thoughts.

With the discovery of REM, Aserinsky and Kleitman revolutionized the scientific study of sleep. They showed that sleep is not, as previously thought, a uniform and passive state. The brain proves as active in REM sleep as in waking, sometimes more so.

Changes in the level of brain activation shape the content of our dreams, J. Allan Hobson contends in this book. A psychiatrist who directs the neurophysiology and sleep laboratory at Harvard Medical School, Hobson threw the sleep and psychoanalytic communities into a tizzy in 1977 when he and his colleague Robert McCarley proposed that dreams reflect the waking brain's efforts to make sense of randomly generated signals. This theory challenged the Freudian notion that dreams originate in disguised wishes. Hobson and McCarley were castigated for claiming that dreams lack meaning.

Not so, Hobson takes pains to emphasize here. Indeed, he maintains that dreams offer insight into our waking lives. He includes

selections from some of the more than 300 of his own dreams he has recorded in the past 25 years, and discusses the events and feelings they depict. Understanding how we create dream stories, he writes, helps illuminate the nature of consciousness, "our most interesting human attribute."

In REM sleep, brain areas that control vision and emotions turn on. Positron emission tomography (PET) scans reveal increased activity in regions that generate hallucinations. At the same time, noradrenaline and serotonin—two chemicals critical to logical thinking, focusing, and memory—turn off. Their absence renders dream stories strange, implausible, and hard to remember (most of us recall dreams infrequently, and when we do, we may retain only one or two of the four or five dreams of a typical night). In REM sleep, the brain generates motor signals but squelches our ability to act on them. We may perceive that we fight



*The Dream* (1932), by Pablo Picasso

assailants, flee from danger, or make passionate love, yet we barely twitch in our beds.

Sigmund Freud thought the bizarreness of dreams allowed sleepers to avoid acknowledging subconscious wishes. But Hobson believes that the weird stories more likely reflect the brain's astounding ability to link a profusion of tangentially related ideas, which he terms "hyperassociation." We've all had dreams in which scenes change abruptly. In one experiment, Hobson and colleagues scissored apart 10 dream reports at the point of these dramatic scene shifts. They then spliced the fragments together, restoring half to their original form and making hybrids of the rest by combining the first part of one person's dream with the second part of another's. Even skilled psychoanalysts couldn't distinguish the real dreams from the hybrids. In trying to make sense of our dreams, Hobson believes, we search for causal ties where none exist.

Why do we dream at all? Through activation of the brain in sleep, Hobson suggests, we assimilate new information, master new skills, and prune out-of-date files. Babies get much more REM sleep than adults; intense activation may foster brain development early in life.

Freud initially aspired to unite psychology and neurology. In his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), he tried to construct a model of the human mind by describing its neurobiological workings. Since the neurological techniques of his time weren't up to the task, he concentrated on psychological theories. Today, PET scans and other sophisticated imaging tools open new windows to understanding how the brain functions. Contemporary neuroscientists can mine a trove of data that Freud could only dream of.

—LYNNE LAMBERG

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**UNCERTAIN SCIENCE,  
UNCERTAIN WORLD.**

By Henry N. Pollack. Cambridge Univ. Press. 252 pp. \$25

At the end of many a scientific assessment resounds the clarion call, "More research is needed." Admirably honest

though this may be as far as science itself is concerned, it can look to outsiders like equivocation. When will the next earthquake hit Los Angeles? How fast is global temperature rising? We want answers.

Uncertainty, far from being a flaw, is an essential characteristic of science, says Henry N. Pollack, a geophysicist at the University of Michigan. Dogmatism is the enemy of progress. With the help of numerous examples, not all of them scientific (stock market fluctuations and the fabled hanging chads of Florida, among other things), Pollack illuminates the way scientists pick an often zig-zag course from ignorance to knowledge. They make guesses, judge likelihoods, evaluate probabilities. Scientific models of reality may be idealized, even simplistic, but their failings light the way ahead.

As a teacher, Pollack has a pleasant style and a light touch, though his writing doesn't always make it out of the classroom. He tends to overexplain his examples, and when it looks as if he is coming to a conclusion, he gives another example. He also has the inexplicable academic habit of ending each chapter by telling you what he just told you, and letting you know what he is going to tell you next, then starting the next chapter by—well, you know.

Still, the central chapters of the book offer an informative and enlightening account of how science works in practice and how scientists learn to be at ease in an uncertain universe. Pollack's particular concern is global warming, and in his last chapter he pulls a bit of a trick. Having convinced us that uncertainty in science is the name of the game, he argues cogently that the world needs to do something about the buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that cause global warming. How fast the planet is warming is uncertain, he contends, but that it is warming is now beyond reasonable doubt.

Pollack is right. Advocates for the petroleum industry (such as currently inhabit the White House) like to suggest that if there are doubts in scientific models of the world's climate, then maybe there is no problem after all. This is misguided at best, irresponsible at worst. As Carl Sagan used

to point out, you can't assume that ignorance is going to work in your favor. Maybe global warming actually is proceeding at an even faster pace than the scientists' best estimates.

But what to do? Here I think Pollack is guilty of naiveté. He seems to imagine that if people understood science better, they would take global warming more seriously. But there is plenty of scientific training in the oil business. The trouble is that the policy debate is run by people who think like lawyers. Given a desire on the part of the oil

industry to maintain the profitable status quo as far as possible, the lawyer's task is to make the best case from the available evidence, not to sift out the truth. To a scientist, that's intellectually dishonest.

In the arena of public policy, the rules of science don't apply, even to scientific matters. Read this book to understand how scientists think and analyze, but don't expect help on how better to incorporate science into political decision making. On that important question, more research is needed.

—DAVID LINDLEY

### CONTRIBUTORS

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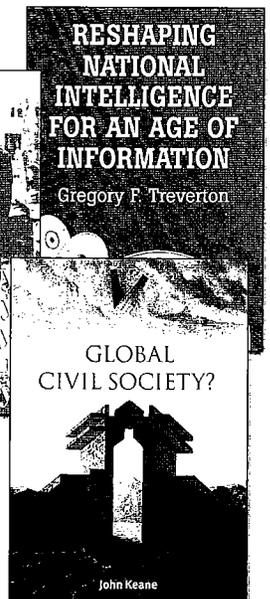
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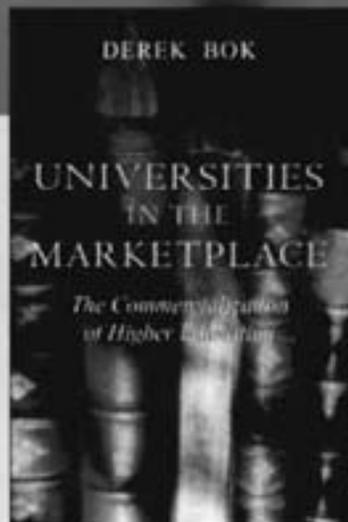
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