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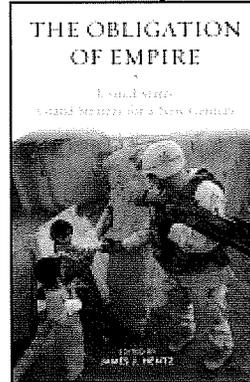
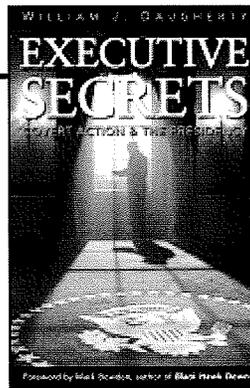
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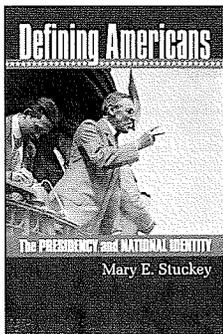


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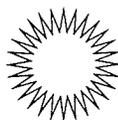


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# Editor's Comment

This year's huge crop of campaign bumper stickers resurrects the nagging quadrennial question: What do people hope to accomplish with these automotive gestures? Here's a project for the exit-pollsters: Count the voters whose minds were changed on the way to the voting booth by a Volvo for Kerry or a Cadillac for Bush.

Bumper stickers have been around for a long time, and they are worthy descendants of a long line of political bric-a-brac that probably stretches back to ancient Athens. But they are also symptomatic of something much more modern, which for lack of a more elegant coinage I'll call the politicization of almost everything. Bumper stickers are one thing, but now the cars themselves are political statements. Hybrid or conventional? Import or domestic? SUV or compact? As with cars, so with virtually everything else. We live in an age in which what you eat for dinner or watch on television can be seen as a proclamation of ideological allegiance. No wonder America is politically polarized.

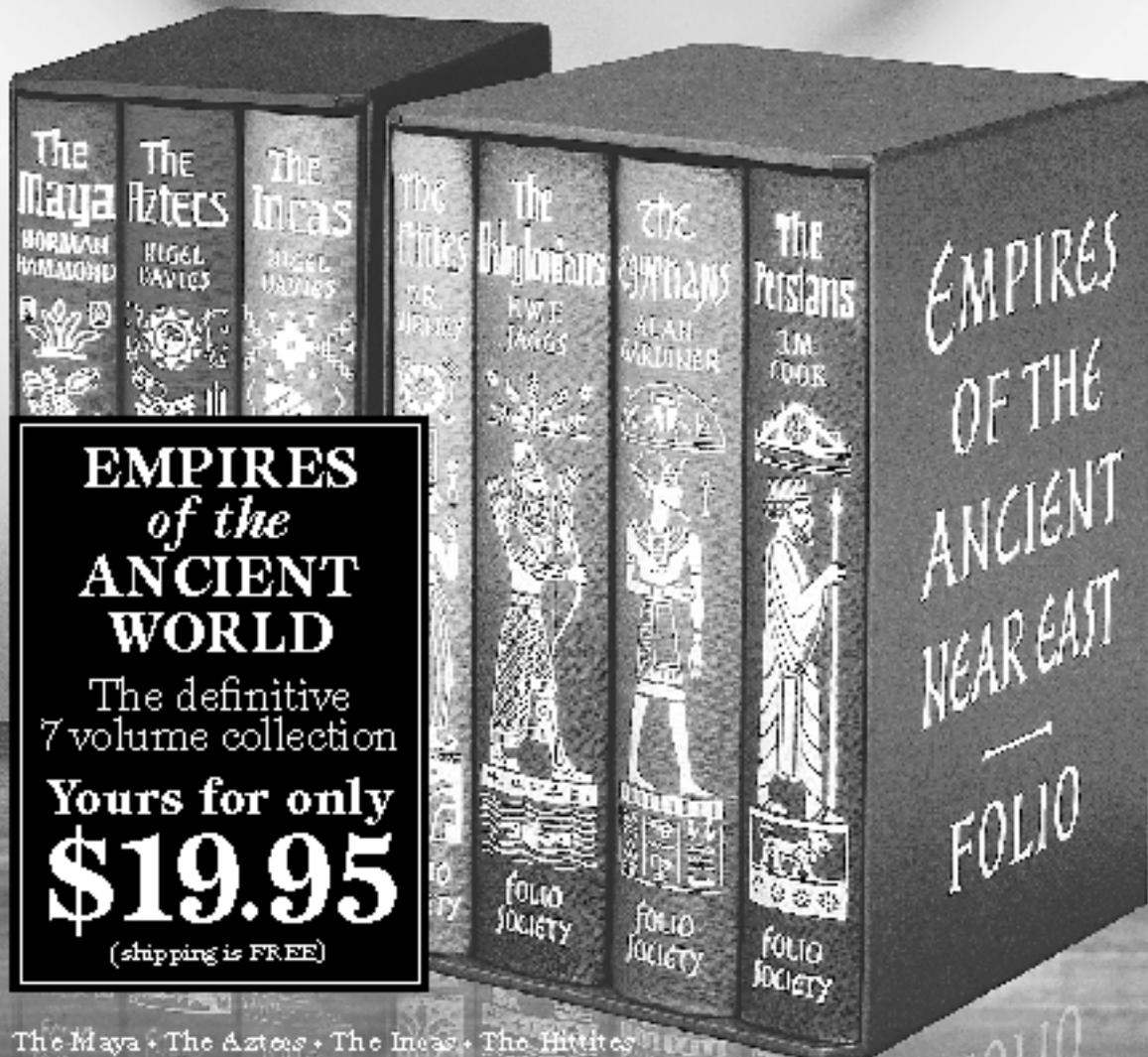
It's not just "lifestyle choices" that have been politicized. Vast areas of national life that were once thought to be remote from the political realm have been dragged into the arena. It's now expected that the informed American will have an emphatic political position on all sorts of topics that people scarcely thought about before, small subjects like the role in public life of sex, science, or God. The first used to be beneath politics, the others above it, but now all might be said to have offices in Washington.

Democracies need good political fights, and many of our current battles need to be waged, but fighting all the time and about everything is sure to be disastrous. Today's boundless political war is exciting for partisans, but numbing for many others, who seem increasingly inclined to leave the field of battle altogether and let the enthusiasts duke it out. That's a formula for polarization no single election can undo.

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## *Debating the g Factor*

Scientific interest in the nature of human intelligence began a century ago, with the pioneering works of Charles Spearman in Britain and Alfred Binet in France. Their followers created short-answer tests that yield a single figure, now called the IQ. While physics and biology underwent revolutions in the 20th century, the mainstream psychology view of intelligence has remained essentially unchanged for 100 years. This fact could mean either that Binet and Spearman got it right or that their successors have been remarkably myopic.

"Do Smarts Rule?" [WQ, Summer '04] clearly reflects the belief that the century-old view of intelligence and IQ is correct. In taking this position, the authors fail to take into account the enormous changes in the conceptualization of intellect that have emerged in recent years from the new fields of cognitive science, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence. These disciplines now recognize a multitude of intellectual capacities, each entailing its own processes and its own neural representation.

Developed over the last 25 years, my own theory of multiple intelligences (MI) attempts to incorporate findings from these and other disciplines. It posits a set of eight or more separate intellectual capacities, each of which has at least some independence from the others. The degree of autonomy is difficult to establish because we lack "intelligence-fair" measures: So long as all intelligences are assessed via identical paper-and-pencil formats, there may be an inflated correlation among them.

It is important to stress that MI theory was developed as a theory of the mind, not as an educational intervention. Yet, as Linda S. Gottfredson concedes, MI theory has had enormous influence on educational thinking and practice throughout the world. I submit that this popularity has arisen for two principal reasons: Educators know that individuals

have different intellectual strengths and profiles that should be taken into account in pedagogy and curriculum, and a belief in several intelligences holds out hope that students can be reached in different ways and can demonstrate their understandings in ways that are substantively appropriate and also comfortable for them.

In contrast, the standard psychologist's view of intelligence is a recipe for despair. It holds that there is but one intelligence and that intelligence is highly heritable. No wonder educators, faced with the challenge of helping all children realize their potential, have spurned this old-fashioned and defeatist view.

*Howard Gardner*

*Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education  
Harvard Graduate School of Education  
Cambridge, Mass.*

In "Schools and the g Factor" [WQ, Summer '04], Linda S. Gottfredson admits that g is an elusive entity: "Drawing a bead on exactly what g is and how it works remains a difficult task." It is not, Gottfredson insists, merely the sum of various abilities with which it is correlated; as she puts it, these abilities are not the "building blocks" of g. Rather, the "basic element" at all levels is g. Thus, g is unitary; it does not admit of multiple intelligences; it works in mysterious ways, and it "sits atop a hierarchy of mental abilities." Clearly, g is the intelligence researchers' God.

*Randy Robertson  
Chicago, Ill.*

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## *Higher Education*

James B. Twitchell's argument ["Higher Ed, Inc.," WQ, Summer '04] that the sorry state of higher education today can be traced to its embracing the corporate model reads as a case of "the Devil made me do it." Twitchell offers us a great example of misplaced blame. Nowhere does he suggest that the status of higher education he decries

might not be corporate at all.

Twitchell argues that the “corporatization” of higher education has led to the “dumbing down” of content in undergraduate higher education by demanding that the academy deliver “consumer satisfaction.” How quickly he forgets that this “superficial” content was introduced decades ago by concerned humanities and social science faculty in the name of greater relevancy and connection to the lives of students. Many in the academy saw this development as positive. Obviously, he does not. Further, Twitchell rails against the “corporate” for breaking up the traditional coherence of the curriculum. That break-up occurred decades before, in the great faculty culture wars and the challenge to the core Western curriculum. Again, many in the academy not only spearheaded this change but saw it as beneficial to students. Obviously, he does not. Finally, Twitchell blames “corporate” America for inspiring nonprofit colleges and universities to spend millions to outdo each other in sport and student life “palaces.” And yet, most ironically, the for-profit universities—those that are truly “corporate”—eschew any investment in athletics and student life.

Twitchell is indulging in his own form of marketing by applying the explosive term “corporate,” sure to incite faculty, to obscure his real agenda—the maintenance of a status quo for higher education that shelters it from some of the most profound and enlightened developments in the contemporary world.

*William G. Durden  
President, Dickinson College  
Carlisle, Pa.*

James B. Twitchell has it right when he talks of the non-academic ways in which leading universities compete, stressing glitzy amenities over learning. In my new book, *Going Broke by Degree: Why College Costs Too Much*, I provide empirical evidence that confirms Twitchell’s observation that undergraduate instruction is receiving diminished emphasis (although this is not as true for the community colleges and less research-oriented state universities).

I would quibble a bit with Twitchell’s intimation that tuition fees are relatively trivial revenue sources for top universities, and certainly

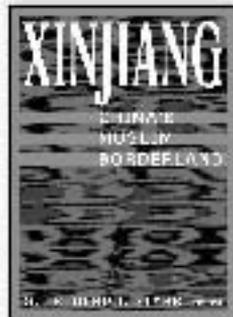
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# FROM THE CENTER

This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the most influential project in the history of the Wilson Center's Latin American Program, "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule." The project was born of a conversation between Guillermo O'Donnell and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (later president of Brazil) during a plane flight from São Paulo, where they were colleagues at the Center for Brazilian Studies, to Washington, where both were members of the first board of advisers of the Latin American Program. They soon enlisted another board member, political scientist Philippe Schmitter, won the board's approval, and set out to commission studies of how nations in Latin America and Europe were moving from authoritarian regimes to more democratic forms of governance.

The project was wildly successful. The three volumes of case studies have now been translated into six languages, and for more than a decade *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986), a fourth volume incorporating the project's conclusions, was the most cited work of social science in English. The notion of a "transition" from authoritarian rule to something else—presumably to something like democracy—soon came to dominate academic and policy discussions of what the world would look like after the Cold War. There grew up a veritable industry of "transitology," in which students of Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union all adopted the framework to explain what was happening in countries. In the policy realm, the debate was infused with an (unwarranted) optimism that a kind of organic transition from authoritarianism to democracy was inevitable—and that there were no other viable options. Advocates of globalization, for example, took for granted that democracy would spread around the world as easily as information flowed on the Internet.

The original "transitologists"—O'Donnell, Schmitter, and political scientist Laurence Whitehead, who replaced Cardoso when the latter entered Brazilian politics—have been less sanguine about the inevitability of democracy in the world. More important, they're concerned about the quality of democracy that may emerge. Even if all the countries in the world were moving toward democracy, it's not clear what that form of gover-

nance would mean for them. Is democracy defined as a just society, in which every individual enjoys human, civil, and social rights and is ready to be an active citizen? Do the new democracies have functioning judiciaries and political parties? Does the evolution toward democracy—however defined—mean that economies will become more open and more capitalistic?

None of these questions is easy to answer, but all of them are crucial to people living in the new democracies. Election irregularities such as occurred in Florida in 2000 may be brushed off in the United States as not threatening to American democracy. But were they to occur in a new democracy, they might seem a sign that the nation was unsteady in its transition to democracy, or actually slipping back to ways more authoritarian than democratic.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the "Transitions" project, the Latin American Program will launch "The Study of New Democracies in Latin America and Elsewhere." This new project will consider the current state of democracy around the world, especially in countries where it's a relatively new phenomenon. Is there something different about these new democracies? Must we assume, as positivists do about economic development, that there is a single linear mode of democratic evolution, and that if a country does not proceed as expected along that line, it is "wrong," "at fault," or somehow deficient? The simple argument about economic development was never correct, and it's likely that insisting on a single model of evolution for new democracies may be equally misguided.

The matter is absolutely vital, of course, to the people living in those societies. And it's also of enormous importance to the United States and the developed historical democracies of Europe. If we are to help the emerging democracies, we must understand what makes them democratic—and what makes them different from us. That fundamental understanding is the goal of the new Wilson Center project, and, if the project succeeds, we look forward to celebrating 25 years from now yet another milestone in the long history of the Latin American Program.

Joseph S. Tulchin  
Director, Latin American Program



Continued from page 5

with his notion that “every two weeks . . . Harvard’s endowment throws off enough cash to cover *all* undergraduate tuition.” But my major observation is that, for all the seeming emphasis on marketing and revenue maximization, university costs are rising sharply mainly because of the peculiar nature of academic institutions.

Most organizations are accountable to either markets or governments. Universities are as well, but far less so. Because universities are primarily not-for-profit institutions, university leaders, unlike private-sector business managers, have few incentives to reduce costs. There is no “bottom line” by which to judge performance: Did Stanford have a good year in 2003? Who knows? It is precisely the human craving for performance measures that makes the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings so important. As to governments, most universities, especially the very good state-affiliated and private ones, maintain a good deal of independence from the political process. Boards of trustees are notorious for their cursory oversight of university activities, which is understandable given the volunteer, part-time nature of trustees’ jobs.

Aggravating everything are growing third-party payments—government institutional subsidies, huge endowments, and, above all, assistance to students in the form of loans, grants, and tax credits. With someone else paying most of the bills (at least in the short run), students and their parents are relatively oblivious to costs, so tuition is raised to “whatever the traffic will bear,” which is more for kids from upper-income families. Where else but universities is the price of a service given to the customer only after that individual has provided the most intimate family financial information?

As state governments get squeezed by rising Medicaid and corrections costs and demands for more K-12 funding, they are increasingly “just saying no” to university requests for funds. Why should hard-working taxpayers with moderate incomes subsidize upper-middle-class kids going to country club–like institutions and hanging around several years before getting a piece of paper that will close to double the income they will receive in the future? As political support for universities declines, tuition costs rise, and alternatives present themselves (Canadian universities, the Univer-



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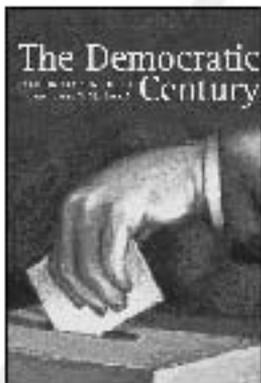
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sity of Phoenix, online education, etc.), universities—except the very top-quality ones—may start losing enrollments unless they change their ways.

*Richard Vedder*

*Distinguished Professor of Economics*

*Ohio University*

*Athens, Ohio*

In Spring 2003, I attended the graduation ceremonies of Professor Twitchell's university, the University of Florida. My grandson was graduating after six years of seemingly aimless activity, which, as far as I could tell, was not monitored in any way by the administration. At one point the dean asked all those who had graduated cum laude to stand up, and fully half of the class did so.

How disgusted I felt with a system that has so cheapened education and, in particular, with the ranks of faculty dressed up in their academic finery. I wondered if any of them felt any shame at all in their contribution to this cheapening. Assuming Twitchell was in those serried ranks, I am somewhat comforted to know that there was at least someone among them who realized what a shameful profession education has become.

*Winslow Maxwell*

*New York, N.Y.*

James B. Twitchell's "Higher Ed, Inc." paints a picture of an arms race of spending at selective private colleges and universities and flagship publics that scholars, including Gordon Winston, David Kirp, and me, have long bemoaned. In *Tuition Rising: Why College Costs So Much*, I drew the analogy between the pharmaceutical industry and higher education. Everyone acknowledges the great benefits that advances in pharmaceuticals have meant for human health; many also bemoan that drug companies spend more on marketing than on research. Competition among academic institutions in the form of increased spending to enhance quality is desirable;

many of us wish, however, that the increased spending would be on things closer to the academic mission, not on amenities and marketing.

Twitchell's focus on the elite sector of the market fails to convey a number of problems facing American higher education. Federal, state, and institutional policies have moved away from needs-based grant aid that permits access and toward subsidized loans, tax credits, and state and institutional merit-aid programs that benefit primarily students from middle- and upper-income families. Cutbacks in state funding for public institutions have led to direct restrictions on access in some states and to public tuition increases that in percentage terms rival those at the privates. As a result, college degree differentials by family income class have barely narrowed during the last 30 years, and the family income levels of students at flagship public institutions have dramatically risen. Funding at public higher education institutions has fallen relative to that at the privates, and, contrary to an impression that readers of "Higher Ed, Inc." might get, undergraduate students are increasingly being taught by part-time and non-tenure-track full-time faculty. Research suggests that, on average, this reduces the quality of the education students are receiving. Enhancing access and educational quality are among the major issues that higher education policymakers should be addressing.

Ronald G. Ehrenberg  
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### *England's Empire*

The importance of Paul A. Rahe's essay ["Empires Ancient and Modern," *WQ*, Summer '04] derives from the careful study of Montesquieu's early writings. It becomes evident that after his visit to England, between 1729 and 1731, Montesquieu consolidated his Anglo-philism, which he would cautiously deliver in his later masterpiece, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748). For Montesquieu, England's liberties, polity, and capacity for self-correction augured the advent of a new sort of empire, one based on commerce, different from previous ones

based on war and conquest—"a well-ordered Carthage such as England" rather than "Louis XIV's ill-ordered French Rome."

Certainly, the basis for the later brilliant trajectory of England in the defense of individual liberties and limited government, at least in England, receives here convincing statement. But it should be remembered that in the next generation the English liberty Montesquieu found so laudable was not exported to the imperium on the other side of the globe. Rather, the ugly trail of conquest and oppression partially resurrected the Roman model and left scars that have lasted for centuries.

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# Findings

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## Che Chic

The Spanish-language film *Motorcycle Diaries* is “wondrous . . . a stirring inspiration for all those dedicated to turning the world upside down,” raves the *Socialist Worker*. *Diaries* won a standing ovation at the Sundance festival earlier this year, perhaps no surprise for a film that Sundance founder Robert Redford produced. It’s been a hit in Havana as well, perhaps also no surprise, given that its protagonist is the young Ernesto Guevara, later nicknamed Che.



Alberto Korda’s 1960 photograph transformed Che Guevara into a revolutionary icon.

Nearly four decades after his death, Che Guevara is hotter than ever. Director Steven Soderbergh is planning another Che film, this one starring Benicio Del Toro. The front cover of *Manifesto*, a new collection of radical essays, lists Che ahead of fellow contributor Karl Marx. You can buy volumes of Che’s collected speeches, poetry, short stories, and family photos, as well as Che T-shirts, posters, jewelry, lighters, shot glasses, and bandannas (bright red, of course). Che-centric tours are offered in Cuba, site of his greatest triumph, and Bolivia, site of his greatest defeat.

Born in Argentina in 1928, Che Guevara studied medicine and Marxism, allied with Fidel Castro in Mexico, and helped overthrow Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. He went on to hold a series of positions in the Castro government, including, supposedly by mistake, president of the Cuban National Bank (when someone asked if there were any *economistas* in the room, according to one account, Che misheard the word as *comunistas* and raised his hand). But governance proved less congenial than revolution. In 1967, trying to spark a peasant revolt in Bolivia, he was captured and executed.

Many writers—including, lately, Lawrence Osborne in *The New York Observer* and Sean O’Hagan in the British *Observer*—have tried to account for Che’s enduring appeal, given certain unsavory aspects of his record. He ordered hundreds of Batista supporters executed, signed at least one letter “Stalin II,” and publicly voiced regret that Nikita Khrushchev hadn’t pushed the button during the Cuban Missile Crisis. “Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism, and a battle hymn for the people’s unity against the great enemy of mankind: the United States of America,” Che declared, in what proved to be his last public statement.

The best-known photograph—indeed, one of the most widely reproduced photos ever—shows Che, rock-star handsome, listening to a Castro speech in 1960. “He was the first man I ever met who I thought not just handsome but beautiful,” journalist I. F. Stone once said. Che looks a good deal less comely in a photo taken for a forged passport, probably in 1966. To cross borders unrecognized, he shaved his beard, plucked the hair from the top of his head, got a mouth prosthesis that filled out his cheeks, donned heavy-framed glasses, and became a Uruguayan named Adolfo Mena.

If the disguise had failed and Che had been turned back from Bolivia, he might



*A forged passport shows Guevara disguised as Uruguayan Adolfo Mena.*

now, at 76, look something like the passport photo. Perhaps an elderly Che wouldn't have made *Time's* list of 20th-century "Heroes and Icons," where he appears alongside Marilyn Monroe, Princess Diana, and other candles in the wind. Perhaps, too, he wouldn't have become such a boon to merchandisers. On one poster company's website, you can find the man the *Socialist Worker* hails as "an icon for a new generation of anti-capitalists" lodged between *Charlie's Angels* and Cheech & Chong.

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## The Watson Conundrum

"The Man with the Twisted Lip," a story in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1891), opens with Dr. Watson at home with his wife. The doorbell rings, and a female friend of the couple's enters, deeply upset. Mary Watson urges the woman to sip some wine, relax, "and tell us all about it. Or should you rather that I sent James off to bed?" No, the visitor responds; she would like "the doctor's advice and help, too."

The casual reader might assume that Arthur Conan Doyle, who once said that the very words *Sherlock Holmes* gave him "a sickly feeling," briefly forgot that he had named his character John H. Watson, not James. But that's far too simple for Sherlockians, those devotees who maintain "the gentle fiction that Holmes and

Watson really lived," Holmes scholar Leslie S. Klinger explains in his two-volume work *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (Norton). The Canon, as Sherlockians reverentially term the Holmes oeuvre, is inerrant holy writ, and seeming inconsistencies demand jesuitical scrutiny.

Mary Watson's reference to "James," Klinger notes, "has plagued students of the Canon for more than 60 years." Novelist Dorothy L. Sayers proposed that Watson's middle name, never revealed in the stories, was Hamish, the Scottish version of James, hence the nickname. One aficionado suggested that John and James were identical twins, and James recorded a few Holmes adventures when John was otherwise occupied. And two Sherlockians advanced the sinister suggestion that Mary Watson inadvertently uttered the name of an old beau who still obsessed her: Professor James Moriarty.

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## Quieting America

In the future, Thomas Edison once predicted, American city dwellers all would be deaf. Noise ranked high among urban problems in the Progressive Era, according to Raymond W. Smilor's essay in *Hearing History: A Reader* (Univ. of Georgia Press), edited by Mark M. Smith. Author William Dean Howells—who found the racket in some New York City neighborhoods the equivalent of "a crushing weight upon the head"—served as vice president of the Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise, and Mark Twain was honorary president of its children's auxiliary. Under growing pressure from citizens' groups, some cities regulated train whistles, roosters, hawking peddlers, auctions, fireworks, and nighttime piano playing, and created quiet zones around hospitals and schools.

The developments would have heartened *Nation* founder E. L. Godkin, who once said, "The progress of a race in civilization may be marked by a steady reduction in the volume of sound which it produces. The more culture of all kinds it acquires, the less noise it produces."

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## The Great Fitzgerald

As he completed *The Great Gatsby* in late 1924, F. Scott Fitzgerald was riding high. Tom Buchanan was “the best character I’ve ever done”—indeed, one of “the three best characters in American fiction in the last 20 years,” he told his editor, Maxwell Perkins. (The letter appears in *The Sons of Maxwell Perkins*, newly published by the University of South Carolina Press. Spelling—never a strength of the novelist’s—is corrected.) Fitzgerald went on to declare himself “a wonderful writer.”

Soon, though, a dark night of the soul descended. “The book comes out today and I am overcome with fears and forebodings,” Fitzgerald wrote Perkins on April 10, 1925. “Supposing women didn’t like the book because it has no important woman in it, and critics didn’t like it because it dealt with the rich and contained no peasants borrowed out of *Tess* . . . and set to work in Idaho? . . . I’m sick of the book myself—I wrote it over at least five times and I still feel that what should be the strong scene (in the hotel) is hurried and ineffective. Also the last chapter, the burial, [with] Gatsby’s father . . . is faulty.”

Disappointing early reviews, paradoxically, strengthened the author’s self-regard. “I think all the reviews I’ve seen, except two, have been absolutely stupid and lousy,” Fitzgerald wrote in May



Novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda, in 1921.

1925. “Someday they’ll eat grass, by God! . . . Both the effort and the result have hardened me and I think now that I’m much better than any of the young Americans without exception.” A month later, he recommended that ads for his next book declare that *Gatsby* “marked him as one of the half-dozen masters of English prose now writing in America.”

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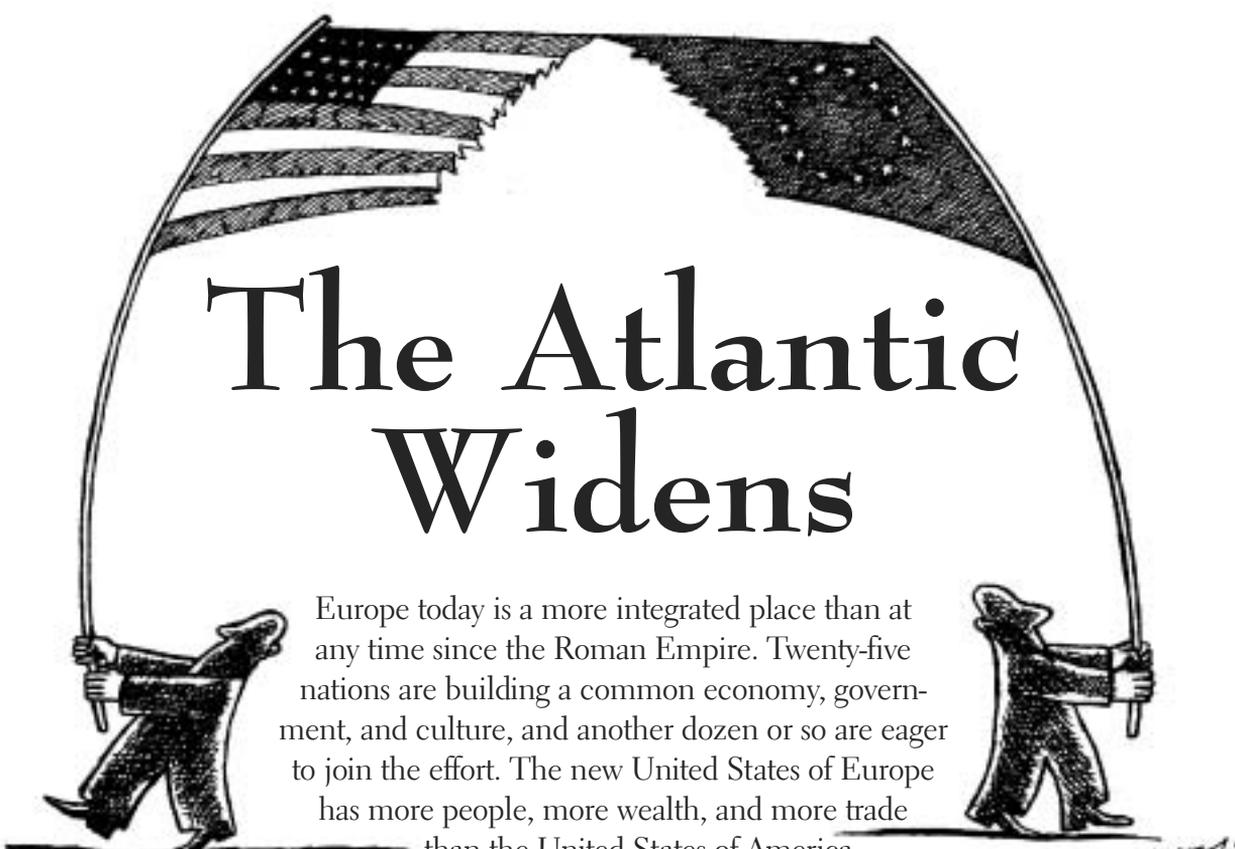
## Highway Hubris

Drivers tend to feel territorial about their parking spaces, according to John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle’s *Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture* (Univ. of Virginia Press). One study finds that the typical driver takes 32 seconds to depart from a parking spot when nobody is around—but 39 seconds when someone else is waiting for the spot.

In the book *Traffic Safety*, published by the Michigan-based organization Science Serving Society, Leonard Evans notes another behind-the-wheel quirk: 88 percent of American motorists consider themselves above-average drivers. Evans ascribes the generous self-assessment to several factors: “Reports of fatalities, rather than inducing fear, tend to confirm perceptions of driving superiority, in that it is other people who are being killed. . . . When drivers perform actions in traffic (say, driving too fast for conditions), and no undesirable consequences follow, the belief that the action is safe receives

reinforcement. . . . We notice when other drivers maintain poor lane position, or turn corners with inappropriate trajectories, or without signaling. We are unaware when others are making similar judgments about us.”

And so we judge ourselves remarkably skillful behind the wheel. Air bags, it seems, aren’t the only things in our autos capable of self-inflation.



# The Atlantic Widens

Europe today is a more integrated place than at any time since the Roman Empire. Twenty-five nations are building a common economy, government, and culture, and another dozen or so are eager to join the effort. The new United States of Europe has more people, more wealth, and more trade than the United States of America.

Yet Americans have largely ignored the change in Europe. They do so at some risk, for Europe's goal is to rival and surpass America—and one of the powerful motives urging Europeans toward that goal is the disdain many of them now share for America.

by T. R. Reid

The Lardburgers were going at it again. “Ah got no gas in mah SUV,” Stacey Lardburger screamed at her husband. “And you spent all our money buyin’ ammo for your stooooo-pid rifles. So how’m ah goin’ to git to the welfare office? Will you tell me that?” Jeff Lardburger was in no mood to take that kind of grief from a mere woman, even the woman who happened to be his fourth wife. “Button it, you slut,” he roared, hurling his beer can in the general direction of Stacey’s huge head of bleached hair. “You shet that big mouth of your’n, or ah’ll sendya to Texas and puttya in the chair.” Stacey had heard warnings like that dozens of times before,

but this time she had a comeback. “You gonna be one sorry fella when ah get finished witya,” she shouted back. “Got me a lawyer now. He says next time you threaten me like ’at, we’s gonna sue your ass bigtime.”

And thus passed another interlude of domestic bliss in the typical American home depicted on “The Lardburgers,” a regular segment on the satirical British television show *Big Breakfast*. Jeff and Stacey, both so obese that they resemble the Michelin Man, are presented for the enjoyment of the British public as the kind of couple Britons like to conjure up when they think about Americans. The Lardburgers are fat, loud, and

ignorant. They argue all the time, except when they're talking about chili cheese dogs or the death penalty, the only things they both appreciate. They constantly throw beer cans, vases, and lamps at each other, knocking over piles of the tacky knickknacks that fill their mobile home. Jeff and Stacey don't have jobs, so they spend their time looking for the lawsuit that will make them rich. Their big hero, other than George W. Bush, is the woman who sued McDonald's, and won, because her coffee was too hot.

The Lardburgers, who have never known a moment of quiet, hardly make great comedy, particularly after you've caught their one-joke act a couple of times. Still, this caricature of an American couple, offered on a morning entertainment program aimed primarily at young professionals on the way to the office, does fit into a great European theatrical and literary tradition. Making fun of Americans—those crude, overweight folks in Bermuda shorts and cowboy boots who think Birmingham is in Michigan, Rome is in Georgia, and Notre Dame rhymes with “motor frame”—is one of Europe's favorite pastimes. It is a pleasure that knows no borders. The Italians make fun of American pizza. The Norwegians make fun of American sports. The English make fun of American accents. The French make fun of Americans' French. A standing joke in French TV comedies is the American couple who swagger into a restaurant, hurriedly consult their French-English dictionary, and place their order: “Doox vine blank.” When the waitress looks back with a mystified expression, the Americans panic and switch to English: “Honey, we'll have two wot wahns.” When that draws another blank look, the American says the same thing again, only louder: “Ah said, TWO WOT WAHNS!”

**D**etermined to prove that I had the strength of character to laugh at myself, I used to go out of my way to take in this European species of comedy. As a result, I sat through a lot of dreck, such as “The Lardburgers,” or the routine of the German comedian who always portrayed the U.S.

president as a simpleton with a teddy bear in one hand and a pistol in the other. I went to a mindless student satire called *The Madness of George Dubya*, in which a bloodthirsty U.S. president leads his cabinet in a rousing musical number called “Might Makes Right.” As theater, *Madness* was basically junk, with all the subtlety of a cement truck. But it struck a chord with British audiences and sold out for weeks in the West End, London's equivalent of Broadway.

Occasionally, though, this rather masochistic habit of mine led me to some real theater—such as the hottest play on the London stage of 2003–2004, a musical titled *Jerry Springer—The Opera*. For most theatergoers, the title alone made the thing irresistible. The posters advertising this work added to the allure, promising “the classic elements of grand opera: Triumph. Tragedy. Trailer park trash.”

*Jerry Springer—The Opera* has two jokes. First, it has all the paraphernalia of grand opera—choruses, septets, lyric arias—but the singing is mainly about Jerry Springer kinds of things: violence, infidelity, weird sex. The opening chorus of the work is “My Brother's Girlfriend Used to Be My Dad.” Early in the first act, a soprano playing an American housewife named Peaches steps demurely to the front of the stage for her big aria, which begins, “The strangest thing happened last night when I went to take a leak.” The action of the “opera” is punctuated by a heroic chorus that continually bursts out in its chief refrain, “You're a loser! You're a slut!” For a while, this mockery of the operatic tradition is entertaining, but gradually the joke gets old.

The second joke in *Jerry Springer* is the same one that animates the Lardburgers and so much other European satire: a portrayal of rude, crude, boorish Americans, with all the classic stereotypes. Except for Springer himself (a native of England, as the Brits all know), every character in this “opera” is fat, stupid, prejudiced, cheating on his or her spouse, and carrying a gun. When the Springer character turns to his TV audience

>T. R. REID is a foreign correspondent for The Washington Post. His eight books include *The Chip: How Two Americans Invented the Microchip and Launched a Revolution* (2001). This essay is from *The United States of Europe, to be published in November*. Printed by arrangement with The Penguin Press, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. Copyright © 2004 by T. R. Reid.



*The Eurovision Song Contest is an important source of Europe's new sense of cultural identity—and an indication that Americans don't hold a monopoly on low cultural diversion.*

on stage and asks, “What do you want to see today?” the chorus fires right back, “Lesbians fighting! Open crotch sightings!” The story of the opera, to the extent there is one, is interrupted now and then for “commercials,” and the products being touted are right out of American trash TV: plastic surgery, Viagra, and guaranteed weight-loss programs. Just to rub it in, at the end of the first act the Ku Klux Klan dances onto the stage, complete with white hoods and pointed caps, and burns a cross.

Despite my long experience watching Europeans make fun of my country, I found *Jerry Springer—The Opera* to be debilitating. “Really, we’re not like that,” I said defensively during the intermission to the kind British woman sitting next to me. She

noticed that I was disturbed and did her best to cheer me up. “Don’t worry, dahling,” she said. “We have daft chat shows over here as well. And look on the bright side: At least this play is providing employment for a lot of really fat opera singers.”

Pancontinental America-bashing is an important mindset for Americans to understand, because the sheer pleasure that Europeans take in denigrating America has become a bond unifying the continent. Widespread anti-Americanism has strengthened Europeans’ belief that an integrated European Union should stand up as a counterweight to the American brute. Until the early years of the 21st century, a majority of Europeans reacted warily to the suggestion

## The Atlantic Widens

that the European Union should become a “superpower.” Today, Europeans have broadly embraced the notion that their united continent should be the superpower that stands up to super-America. Surveys taken in the summer of 2003, after initiation of the intensely unpopular military action in Iraq, showed that more than 70 percent of Europeans wanted the Union to become a superpower—and that more than 70 percent expected this to happen.

To a large extent, the zeal for America-bashing stems from opposition to U.S. foreign policy—and particularly the foreign policy of George W. Bush. But the sour feeling toward America among the people of Europe goes well beyond foreign-policy issues. Across the continent today, there are all sorts of things about the United States that people can’t stand, or can’t understand, or both.

As with the rest of the world, Europe’s attitude toward the behemoth across the Atlantic is not purely negative; it’s a love-hate kind of thing. American products and American pop culture are pervasive in Europe, and immensely popular. U.S. exports—*Beverly Hills 90210*, *Dawson’s Creek*, *The West Wing*, *Sex and the City*, and, yes, *Jerry*

*Springer*—fill the airwaves, often on the prestigious public networks. (*Seinfeld* has not been as successful, apparently because the jokes don’t translate to a continental setting.) Belgium is one of the countries where U.S. global policies are most bitterly condemned by the general public, but Belgium’s homegrown version of McDonald’s, a burger-and-frites chain called Quick, uses the characters from *Friends* as its drawing card, with Phoebe serving Ross a Quickburger in the ads. On European MTV, more than half of the videos feature American bands; no translation is provided, on the theory that Generation E, the young adults of Europe, can understand the lyrics as well as an American audience. The only time MTV Europe changes this pattern is each May 9, when the network celebrates Europe Day by showing only European bands. (Actually, the producers tend to cheat by claiming Madonna as a European, on the grounds that she now lives in London with her British husband. Thus, May 9 is the day to see videos of “Papa Don’t Preach” or “Miss American Pie” on European TV sets.) All over the continent, fashionable people gather at predawn parties each April to watch the Academy Awards broadcast from Los



A view of U.S.-European relations, from the Zurich-based German paper, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

Angeles. Most years, this is followed the next day with a series of angry newspaper columns complaining that, once again, the Oscar voters showed a disgraceful bias against all European movies. The one time when the voters proved they were not biased—that was 1999, when Roberto Benigni won the Best Actor award for his performance in *La Vita è Bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*)—all of Italy celebrated for a week.

To the consternation of the great continental fashion houses, American labels—Levi's, Gap, Tommy Hilfiger, Abercrombie & Fitch—are de rigueur for Generation E. For Europe's youth movement, any article of clothing genuinely "from the States" has innate value. Walking past a trendy boot store in London's Camden Town neighborhood one day, I was offered £200 on the spot for the cowboy boots I was wearing. That was \$370, more than twice what I had paid for the boots, new, back home in Colorado. When I hesitated, the shopkeeper threw in a cheap pair of trainers (that's British for "gym shoes") to get me home. I laughed all the way to the bank to cash my check.

American fast food is ubiquitous on the continent; that explains why the standard for price transparency is the "Big Mac Index." The sheep farmer Jose Bove became a national hero, of sorts, in France by wrecking a McDonald's outlet and defending himself on the grounds that "it's American, from the country that promotes globalization and industrial food production and unfairly penalizes the small French farmer." (Bove was sentenced to 20 days in jail for vandalism, which only increased the size of his following.) Still, France has more than 1,000 McDonald's outlets that do quite nicely, thank you, even when situated right next to a traditional *boulangerie*. No matter what the Bove-istes might say, it is hard to call this an American "invasion," since every one of the French outlets belongs to a French franchisee. Nobody is forcing the Belgians, the Spaniards, or the Danes to drink Coca-Cola or wear Nikes; the fact is, Europeans like American stuff. The novelist Arthur Koestler, a prominent America-basher in his day, had the intellectual honesty to admit

this point in a 1951 essay: "Who coerced us into buying all this? The United States do not rule Europe as the British rule India; they waged no Opium War to force the revolting 'Coke' down our throats. Europe bought the whole package because Europe wanted it."

Almost despite themselves, Europeans visiting "the States" often find themselves charmed by American ways. Even a lefty columnist such as John Sutherland, of London's *Guardian* newspaper, was so taken by the small graces of life in the United States that he made a list of "52 things they do better in America." Among the items that caught his eye—none of them common in Europe—were:

1. Free refills of coffee (without asking)
2. Newspaper vedomats on street corners
3. "Paper or plastic?" (what the bagger says in your friendly 24-hour supermarket)
4. Drive-through banking
5. High school graduation ceremonies, and regular class reunions
6. Free or cut-price parking at cinemas and restaurants
7. Ubiquitous 24-hour convenience stores
8. Fridges big enough for a 30-pound turkey

There is a whole genre of contemporary European literature involving people who have moved to, or spent some time in, the United States and are surprised to find themselves adopting American habits. The English novelist Zoe Heller, in an essay titled "Help! I'm Turning into an American Parent," described how she was at first appalled at the way American parents constantly praise their children: "To an English sensibility, these anthologies of praise seem mawkish. Unseemly. Deleterious to an appropriate sense of modesty." But gradually, Heller wrote, she began to see her own daughter responding positively to the endless encouragement she got at preschool in Santa Monica. "One of the things most admired about Americans is their can-do spirit, their optimism and self-belief and so on," Heller concluded. "It occurs to me that their child-rearing techniques might have something to do with that sunny outlook. . . . What, indeed, if the Americans' cossetting methods are the real reason they are a superpower?"

Europeans also appreciate some of the larger virtues of American life: the nation's youthful vigor, its open-armed acceptance of new ideas, its great universities, and the classlessness that means the American dream really works. Even the staunchest European leftists admire America's willingness to take in refugees by the millions, accept them as American, and then hold a fancy ceremony, with a judge or a senator presiding, to make their citizenship official. (In Europe, becoming a new citizen generally involves nothing more than a bureaucrat stamping a form in a cluttered office, and payment of the required fee.) Almost every European—particularly east of the former Iron Curtain—has a neighbor or cousin or grandchild who has emigrated to Milwaukee or Portland or Tallahassee. These relatives recognize the symbolic power of the Statue of Liberty and the generosity of a rich, powerful nation that embraces poor, powerless newcomers from anywhere on earth. In the beautiful old city of Riga, Latvia, I got to talking with Marie Rabinovich, whose daughter had emigrated to Denver a decade earlier. Marie told me proudly that her daughter had become an American citizen and was about to cast her first vote in the 2000 election between George W. Bush and Al Gore. "It is amazing thing," Marie told me, in decent English, "that my daughter, a peasant, is allowed to choosing the most powerful man in the world." No matter how fashionable America-bashing has become, people all over the continent still get letters every month from their cousins in Chicago urging them to emigrate to the U.S.A.

But the Europeans also know what they don't like about the United States. These views tend to be set forth in a series of best-selling books, one after another, with such titles as *Dangéreuse Amérique* or *The Eagle's Shadow* or *Pourquoi le monde déteste-t-il l'Amérique?* The depiction of the United States in these popular volumes has been summarized neatly by the American scholar Tony Judt: "The U.S. is a selfish, individualistic society devoted to commerce, profit, and the despoliation of the planet. It is uncaring of the poor and sick and it is indifferent to the rest of humankind. The U.S. rides roughshod over international laws and treaties and threatens the

moral, environmental, and physical future of humanity. It is inconsistent and hypocritical in its foreign dealings, and it wields unparalleled military clout. It is, in short, a bull in the global china shop."

Most Europeans are appalled by the death penalty. And because each American execution tends to get big play in the French, German, Spanish, and British media, Europeans think American electric chairs are used much more frequently than is actually the case. The constitutional "right to keep and bear arms," and the gun lobby that defends it, also tend to mystify the people of Europe, even those who are strongly pro-American on most issues. Once, in September 1999, when I was watching the TV news in Norway, there was a report on Hurricane Floyd, which had swept up the east coast of the United States and wreaked considerable destruction. The Norwegian correspondent on the scene was deeply impressed by the fact that some 2.6 million people—equivalent to half the population of Norway!—had been successfully evacuated from coastal areas to escape danger. On the same day, though, one of those tragic gun massacres had left seven Americans dead and a dozen badly wounded in a church (!) in Texas. "What kind of society is it," the reporter asked plaintively, "that can move millions of people overnight in the name of safety, but then expose them to crazy men wielding guns on every street?"

I was surprised to find that the open display of patriotism—something I had taken to be a universal human impulse—is widely sneered at in Europe. After all, it was a European who turned that impulse into deathless verse:

Breathes there the man with soul so dead  
Who never to himself hath said,  
"This is my own, my native land!"

But when the great Scot Sir Walter Scott wrote that in 1805, it was still an acceptable, even admirable, point of view for Europeans. Today, the way of thinking that says, "This is my native land, and I love it," is considered an American peculiarity. The Europeans, of course, are working hard to move away from their nationalistic tendencies

and toward a supranational union that eviscerates borders and traditional national rivalries, and this perhaps explains the exasperation with old-style love of country in the United States. Ian Buruma, a Dutchman living in Britain, caught this mood perfectly after seeing the American flag everywhere during a visit to New York:

To most Europeans born after the Second World War, it is a somewhat bewildering sight, this massive outpouring of patriotism. . . . Those of us who pride ourselves on a certain degree of sophistication view flag-waving with lofty disdain. It is embarrassing, mawkish, potentially bellicose. I must confess that I find the sight of grown men touching their hearts at the sound of the national anthem a little ridiculous, too. And the ubiquitous incantations of “God Bless America” seem absurdly over the top. Mawkishness and a beady eye on commercial opportunity go together in the land of the free in a way that can be quite disconcerting.

**T**he place where American patriotism seems to annoy Europeans the most is at international sporting events. Chants of “U S A! U S A!” and “We’re number one!” may seem normal fan behavior to Americans, but they drive Europe crazy. When Russian competitors lost gold medals because of disputed calls by referees in hockey, figure skating, and Nordic skiing in the 2002 Winter Olympics, President Vladimir Putin condemned the International Olympic Committee for “biased decisions and pro-American judgments at the Winter Games.” Most Americans put this down to sour grapes; almost all Europeans, however, agreed with Putin that the noisy home fans in Salt Lake City—where 93 percent of all tickets were sold to Americans—had put impossible pressure on the officials. “What the Russians are upset about,” wrote Simon Barnes, the sports columnist for *The Times* of London, when the Salt Lake games ended, “is the transformation of the

Olympic Games into yet another American Festival of Victory. The world has been treated to 17 days of whooping crowds and American athletes hysterical with their adrenalin-stoned patriotism. I’ve had many wonderful times in the States and have many good American friends. But whooping, en masse, up-yours patriotism is not endearing. . . . And so the world watched the Winter Games . . . hoping that the American in the race would fall over.”

I don’t think Barnes is overstating the case here. The Europeans really do want to see American competitors fall over and lose—and thus give the “whooping patriots” in the American cheering section their due comeuppance. Even the ever-so-proper world of golf erupts in rage again and again at the conduct of U.S. players and fans. There was the infamous (in Europe, at least) “Battle of Brookline” during the 1999 Ryder Cup, the biennial competition in which a team of European professional golfers takes on an American all-star team. With the match all even on the last hole in Brookline, Massachusetts, an American sank a long birdie putt that put the U.S. team ahead by one stroke. The fans erupted—“U S A! U S A!”—and swarmed onto the green in glee to applaud their heroes. The problem was, the match wasn’t over. A European player still had a putt to make that could have tied the score; after all the hoopla, and the crowd’s footprints covering the green, he missed. “Evidently, they care more about an American victory than they do about sportsmanship,” declared an angry European player, José Maria Olazabal of Spain. A year later, when the Solheim Cup competition—the female version of the Ryder Cup—was played in Scotland, the American team caused a pan-European furor. The Swedish star Annika Sorenstam sunk a long chip shot from off the green that seemed to sew up a European victory. But then the American captain, Pat Bradley, approached the referee and said Sorenstam’s great birdie should be disallowed, because the Swede had shot out of turn. It was a technicality—indeed, a tiny technicality—but the judges decided, once the issue had been raised, that they had to enforce the rule. In a scene played over and

## The Atlantic Widens

over on European TV news, Sorenstam broke into tears and denounced American competitiveness. “I was shocked that they took my shot away,” she said. “The entire European team is disgusted with America. We all ask ourselves, ‘Is this how badly they need to win?’”

**A**nother common grievance among Europeans is the sense—it is, indeed, conventional wisdom almost everywhere—that Americans are insular people, ignorant of and indifferent to the rest of the planet. This has been a standard European complaint for more than a century. In her 1852 best-seller *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, the British traveler Frances Trollope—aunt of the great Victorian novelist—established the theme with her conclusion about the American worldview: “If the citizens of the United States were indeed the devoted patriots they call themselves, they would surely not thus encrust themselves in the hard, dry, stubborn persuasion that they are the first and best of the human race, that nothing is to be learnt, but what they are able to teach, and that nothing is worth having, which they do not possess.” In the contemporary version of this stereotype, the paradigmatic American is that tourist on the French comedy shows who walks into a Paris café and orders “two wot wahns.” Brian Reade, a columnist for the London tabloid *The Mirror*, summarizes this widespread European belief:

They are wonderfully courteous to strangers, yet indiscriminately shoot kids in schools. They believe they are masters of the world, yet know nothing about what goes on outside their shores. Yanks . . . the people whose IQ is smaller than their waist size. People who believe the world stretches from California to Boston and everything outside is the bit they have to bomb to keep the price of oil down. When I first visited America in 1976, teenagers asked if we had cars, and, if so, how we could drive them on our cobbled streets. Two months ago, a man from Chicago asked me how often we vote for a new Queen. Only one in five Americans holds a pass-

port and the only foreign stories that make their news are floods, famine, and wars, because it makes them feel good to be an American. Feeling good to be American is what they live for. It’s why they call their baseball league the World Series, why they can’t take our football because they didn’t invent it.

As I often argued in Europe, the charge that Americans are insular is absurdly off base. No country on earth has a broader distribution of races, creeds, and nationalities than the United States, and each of the ethnic groups in America maintains a close interest in developments back in the old country. One day on the BBC’s excellent *Dateline* program, Gavin Esler, the presenter—that’s the British word for “anchorman”—was haranguing me about Americans’ ignorance of the outside world, and their inability to master foreign languages. “You know, the way Americans speak French is just to say the word in English, only louder,” he said, laughing. I know Gavin loves a good debate, so I took him on. I said that the citizenry of the United States is the world’s largest repository of language skills. “We have a couple of million Polish speakers,” I said. “We have more Estonian speakers than there are in Tallinn. We have 100,000 people in America who read a Cambodian newspaper every week. I’ll bet there aren’t 100 people in all of Britain who can read Cambodian.” Esler was undeterred by this line of argument. He responded, in essence, that America shouldn’t get credit for its formidable body of Cambodian linguistic talent because we imported it rather than teach the language in our schools.

**W**hat really annoys the Europeans is that this nation perceived to be ignorant of the rest of the world has the wealth and power to dominate much of it. The French parliamentarian Noël Mamère racked up strong sales with a book, *No Thanks, Uncle Sam*, arguing that “it is appropriate to be downright anti-American” because of this combination of strength and stupidity. “Omnipotence and ignorance,” he wrote, “is a questionable cocktail. It would be great if they saw what they looked like from over here. But they are

not interested. They think they are the best in the world, that they are way ahead of everyone, and everyone needs to learn from them.”

This mix of experiences, attitudes, and urban myths, some dating back many decades, meant that ordinary Europeans’ view of the United States was fairly critical even before the earthshaking developments at the start of the 21st century. The French polling firm Groupe CSA regularly surveys opinion across France about contemporary issues, and periodically takes a poll titled “L’image des États-Unis.” Almost every French citizen feels knowledgeable enough to answer the questions—only a tiny minority say they aren’t familiar with the details of American life—and the results are generally unflattering. The image of the United States tends to vary slightly in these polls depending on recent events—predictably, esteem for America dropped during and after the Iraq invasion of 2003—but the general pattern is fairly constant over the years. A survey taken in the fall of 2000 gives a baseline reading on French attitudes toward life in the United States. Asked the question, “As far as you’re concerned, what kind of country is the United States?” the French public gave the following answers:

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. A nation of violence                  | 50% |
| 2. A nation that uses the death penalty  | 48% |
| 3. A nation of great social inequality   | 45% |
| 4. A nation of innovation                | 37% |
| 5. A racist nation                       | 33% |
| 6. A nation where anything goes          | 27% |
| 7. A nation where anyone can get rich    | 24% |
| 8. A nation that welcomes immigrants     | 15% |
| 9. A society where religion is pervasive | 15% |
| —No opinion about America—               | 3%  |

Given those broad impressions, it’s not surprising that only 12 percent of French people surveyed said they felt “admiration” for the United States. Another 14 percent reported a generally “positive” view. In contrast to the 26 percent who held a favorable view of America, 12 percent said the United States made them worried, and 34 percent of those polled said their view of the United States was “critical.”

Other European populations were perhaps not so critical as the French, but the general pattern across the continent in 2000 would have been roughly similar to what that Groupe CSA survey found. And then came the Bush presidency, the horrific events of 9/11, and Iraq. As George W. Bush geared up for his reelection campaign at home, the gap in understanding, respect, and friendship was arguably wider than it had ever been before.



*Protesters gathered outside NATO headquarters in Brussels in June 2001 await the arrival of President George W. Bush, whom they seek to instruct in civilized (i.e., European) behavior.*

## The Atlantic Widens

At first, September 11, 2001, seemed to shrink the Atlantic. Just hours after the buildings were hit in New York and Washington, British prime minister Tony Blair assured Americans that Europe “stands shoulder to shoulder with you.” In a unanimous vote on September 12, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization invoked—for the first time in its 50-year history—Article 5 of its founding treaty, the clause that says an attack on one member is considered an attack on all NATO nations. Even that venerable organ of Euro-left anti-Americanism, France’s *Le Monde*, declared “Nous sommes tous Américains”—“We are all Americans.” On September 13, Queen Elizabeth II broke all precedent by ordering the Royal Marine Band to play “The Star-Spangled Banner” during the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. A survey two weeks after the attack by the Swiss polling company Ispublic found that the peace-minded Europeans were ready to go to war against the perpetrators of the attack, or their host nation. Asked if their own countries should support a U.S. military assault, 80 percent of Danish respondents backed the idea, as did 79 percent of respondents in Britain, 73 percent in France, 58 percent in Spain and Norway, and about 53 percent in Germany. The only European nation that resisted the idea of fighting alongside the Americans was Greece, where only 29 percent supported military action.

To be an American in Europe in those troubled, frightening days after 9/11 was to be surrounded by support, sympathy, and unsolicited words of encouragement. When people realized an American was present—usually from hearing an American accent—they would go out of their way to express consolation and friendship. On a nondescript traffic island near Grosvenor Square in London, somebody tied an American flag around an old oak tree early on September 12. Over the next few days, a mountain grew beside the tree—a mountain of flowers, flags, cards, candles, tear-stained notes, pictures, paintings, and a New York Yankees cap. This was the British people’s spontaneous tribute to the Americans who were murdered on 9/11. There were no instructions about this, no coordination. These were simply ordinary people who felt a need to

send America a message—people such as Rob Anderson of London, who left a big spray of roses with a handwritten card: “Dear America, You supported us in two world wars. We stand with you now.” Similar floral mountains went up outside the U.S. embassies in Moscow, Copenhagen, Lisbon, and Madrid. London’s largest cathedral, St. Paul’s, invited every Yank in town to a memorial service on September 14. The local paper in Ipswich devoted its entire front page on September 12 to a banner headline: “God Bless America.” Across the continent, there was an overwhelming sense that the whole of the West was under attack. We were all Americans now. We were all in this thing together.

This initial rush of good feeling was accompanied by action. The first arrests of conspirators charged with planning the 9/11 attacks were made in Germany. European intelligence agencies basically opened their files on suspected Muslim militants to investigators from the CIA and the FBI. When the United States went to war in Afghanistan a month after the attacks, European public opinion strongly supported the move; more important, nearly every NATO member sent troops, weapons, and money to help topple the Taliban. The vaunted “Atlantic Alliance” was working together more closely than at any time since the depths of the Cold War.

But over the next three years, that moment of transatlantic togetherness in the fall of 2001 came to look like a blip, a momentary aberration caused more by the sudden shock of those burning buildings than by common bonds of interest and policy. Within a year of 9/11, European government ministers, columnists, and academics were once again depicting the United States as a selfish, gun-happy “hyperpower” that had shifted into “unilateralist overdrive,” to borrow a term from Chris Patten, the European Union’s commissioner for external affairs, a man who was supposed to be diplomatic about such things. “The whole concept of the ‘West’ feels out of date now,” said Dominique Moisi, of the Institut Français des Relations Internationales in Paris, about 18 months after the attacks. “September 11 brought us together, but only temporarily. We have to realize that major differences exist across the Atlantic, and will not go away. Europe and the U.S. will have to live with

them.” The transatlantic chill stemmed in part from one man: President George W. Bush has been highly unpopular among the people of Europe. “Almost everyone on the European side agrees that the relationship is far worse since George W. Bush was elected,” Moisi said. The war in Iraq, opposed by large popular majorities in every EU country—even nations such as Britain, Spain, and Poland, which the United States counted as allies in the war—exacerbated the split. Spain’s José María Aznar, who supported Bush in Iraq, paid a high price for his pro-war stance. In the spring of 2004, in the wake of a terrorist bombing, the voters of Spain dumped Aznar’s Popular Party and handed the government in Madrid to the strongly antiwar Socialists.

**T**he process of “continental drift” driving the United States and Europe apart was also propelled by venerable European complaints about America, feelings dating back at least to Mrs. Trollope. The Bush administration strengthened all the old prejudices, and tended to confirm the old stereotypes. The new president, a pro-death-penalty oil man swaggering into the White House despite winning half a million fewer votes than his opponent, was “a walking gift to every European anti-American caricaturist.” It was repeatedly reported in the European press that America’s new leader had never been to Europe. This claim was false—Bush had made half a dozen trips across the Atlantic before he entered the White House—but it neatly fit the common perception of an American president who didn’t know the first thing about Europe. Bush fueled this European view with some unfortunate policy blunders after taking office. For example, he personally phoned European prime ministers to urge them to admit Turkey to the European Union. This lobbying mission was doomed to fail, and it did. Worse than that, the president angered the leaders on the receiving end of his calls. “How could the White House possibly think that they could play a role in determining who joins the EU?” Chris Patten later commented.

Opinion polls demonstrate how far the image of the United States has fallen since that brief moment of post-9/11 togetherness. A U.S. State Department poll in 1998 found that 78

percent of Germans had a favorable view of the United States. In 2002, a survey by the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., found that 61 percent of Germans were so inclined. Two years later, in the wake of the war in Iraq, only 38 percent of Germans had a positive feeling toward the United States, the nation that had been Germany’s strongest ally, and military defender, for 59 years. In France, positive feelings toward America fell from 62 percent in 1999 to 37 percent in the spring of 2004. “If anything, fear and loathing of the United States has increased,” wrote the Pew Center’s pollster, Andrew Kohut, a few months after the fall of Baghdad. “Even in the United Kingdom, the United States’ most trusted European ally, 55 percent see the U.S. as a threat to global peace. And in four EU countries—Greece, Spain, Finland, and Sweden—the United States is viewed as the greatest threat to world peace, more menacing than Iran or North Korea.”

**I**n a geopolitical application of Newton’s third law, the actions tending to divide the old Atlantic Alliance have sparked an equal and opposite reaction in Europe: Divisions with America have prompted the Europeans to draw closer together, to look even harder for unity among themselves. The growing sense that the United States is no longer the continent’s protector but rather a potential threat—or even, perhaps, the “greatest threat”—has strengthened the movement toward “ever closer union” among the members of the European Union. Since the Europeans can no longer trust or align themselves with the world’s only superpower, they have no choice but to build a superpower of their own. That, at least, is the reasoning of many EU leaders, including the most recent president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi. “There is a rhythm of global dominance,” Prodi observed a couple of years after 9/11. “No country remains the first player forever. Maybe this American hour will not last. And who will be the next leading player? Maybe next will be China. But more probably, before China, it will be the united Europe. Europe’s time is almost here. In fact, there are many areas of world affairs where the objective conclusion would have to be that Europe is already the superpower, and the United States must follow our lead.” □

# Living Memory

Long after the last witnesses to momentous events in the history of a nation have died, the memory of those events may continue to alter the course of the nation. What matters most is not whether historical recollection is accurate, but whether it liberates or imprisons.

*by Christopher Clausen*

On Memorial Day 2004, two days after the dedication of the World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington, a woman named Alberta Martin died in Alabama at the age of 97. So far as anyone knows, Mrs. Martin was the last surviving widow of a Civil War soldier. Newspaper stories recounted her colorful history in some detail and emphasized the appropriateness of her dying on a holiday that evolved spontaneously out of the decoration of Civil War graves. The last Civil War veteran, Walter Williams of Texas, died in 1959, thereby severing the link to actual participants in the war on the eve of its centennial. With the death of the last widow, who was born more than 40 years after her husband's service in the Fourth Alabama Infantry, another important link had gone. Although stories soon appeared of an even younger woman who had nominally married a still more ancient veteran, Alberta Martin's passing represented the disappearance of the prolonged social memory of the war embodied by those who in early life had had intimate contact with the combatants.

The urge to keep recollection alive beyond its natural span seems to be one of the most ancient and pervasive human impulses. Whether powerful memories of a historical event do more good than harm to a society's future depends on the specific circumstances. But scholarly historians will never control the past until a serum is invented that obliterates both living memory and the equally vivid myths to which its unreliability gives rise. Like other major historical events, the Civil War passed through several definable stages of

remembrance that merged indefinitely into one another before the war finally became something that could only be read about in books and the inscriptions on monuments. In the late 19th century, that conflict was the common property of every American, a familiar temporal landmark to all but the very young, a historic cataclysm but not yet history. As decades passed and the number of people who had not lived through the war increased, myths and monuments proliferated.

Between 1880 and 1910 practically every county seat in the country erected in front of its courthouse a statue of a soldier, Union or Confederate depending on the location, complete with a plaque commemorating those county residents who had served in the war. During roughly the same period, battlefield reunions of those who had fought at Gettysburg or Chickamauga established themselves as a way to dramatize national unity and reconciliation—the most obvious necessities after a bitter civil war—for a population that increasingly was too young to remember the 1860s. By the 1920s, personal recollection of the war was a prerogative of the old. The final major gathering of Civil War veterans occurred at Gettysburg in 1938, an emotional occasion on which blue- and gray-clad men in their nineties shook hands for the last time over the wall where Pickett's charge had ended in carnage 75 years earlier. The last veterans on both sides died in the 1950s. A few people who had been children during the war lingered a little longer, but by the time the centennial ceremonies ended in



*It was an event of national importance when some of the last living veterans of Pickett's charge exchanged a symbolic handshake at the Gettysburg battlefield in 1938.*

the 1960s, the event itself was outside the personal memory of anyone then living.

In the extended sense of living memory, however, the Civil War was enjoying its second wind. The not-uncommon veteran who was born in the 1840s and lived into his eighties frequently left young grandchildren who had hung on every word the old man spoke about what he had done in those four years of war. This pattern of transmission was especially common in the white South, which for a century clung to the war as a major constituent of its identity. (Obviously, black Southerners had a strikingly different set of memories.) Given good genes and reasonable luck, those grandchildren could easily live into the 1990s. When Walter Williams died in December 1959, *The Washington Post* ran an obituary that paid tribute not so much to the last veteran himself, whose wartime service was hard to document, but to all who had fought in America's bloodiest conflict. The author of the eulogy made a shrewd point about the afterlife of memory:

There is nobody living now who remembers the Confederate soldier as he was in his war years. But there are a great many middle-aged men who sat at his knee as little boys and heard from his bearded lips how it was in the great old days. There are many who saw him at his annual reunions in the hot and somnolent Southern towns, ancient and feeble, but wearing his gray uniform and brandishing his stick with an air that brought Chancellorsville back again and relegated Appomattox to the limbo where it belonged.

So in an indirect but still-vivid sense, memory of the war was prolonged to a limit of about 130 years. As one of Mrs. Martin's friends noted when she died, "She was what we call the last link to Dixie. The war hasn't been that far removed, particularly for Southerners, and she reminded us of that." In an even more attenuated form, of course, historical memory goes on for as long as its inheri-

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tors consider it important. My wife, who was not born until 1951 but who is a descendant on both sides of Civil War veterans, grew up knowing the names of the battles in which those long-dead forebears took part and the prison camp in which one of them was held near the end of the war.

For Americans whose ancestors came to these shores after 1865, the Civil War has always been someone else's history, never an intergenerational memory. Yet even—or perhaps especially—those who have no veterans in their family tree often try to establish links, connections that are no less revealing for being forced. During the past 40 years, meticulously costumed reenactors have become a conspicuous summer feature of every significant battlefield. In fact, they began to appear even before the actual veterans faded from the scene. Fantasies of reenactment, affectionately derided in Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic* (1998), are one way a nation often accused of having little sense of history makes contact with the most dramatic episodes in its past.

Along with most Americans of the 21st century, I have no ancestral memories of the Civil War. What I have instead is the memory of an epistolary contact established half a century ago between a 13-year-old Civil War romantic and one of the last participants. In 1955, I read that, of the three or four million men who wore uniforms in the Civil War, there were precisely four almost supernaturally aged survivors—three once very young Confederate soldiers and one Union drummer boy. A newspaper article thoughtfully provided their addresses. Like hundreds of other people, no doubt, I wrote in search of autographs, and possibly more. Some precocious impulse led me to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with each letter.

Two of the three veterans sent autographs. In addition, the following letter arrived from a town in Florida:

On the envelope W.A. Lundy wrote his name with out glasses no he didnt see the people you menchen in your letter but here is a couple of things he remembers.

I lived near Elba, Ala., was only 16 when the war closed. One day the Yankees was on us before we realized it. But we hit the ground and their fire went above us then we let them have it with our guns. The grones an taken on was tearble.

Then another time we was skining a beef near a house. The Yankees came in the house we left the beef went in the house & captured them. These are the thangs he rembers most he said it was tearble times then. Sure hope this is alright. You see he's not to able to read or write but signs his name lot of times for people. He can walk some but can't remember too well. I'm his son's wife he lives with us now since his baby girl died. Thank you for writing him.

The eerie sensation this letter gave me of having been present at tragic skirmishes 90 years earlier, in the person of a teenaged soldier barely older than I was, has never quite departed.

Like the memory of the Civil War decades after the event, remembrance of World War II has now advanced to the stage of grandparents telling grandchildren (or anybody willing to listen) what it was really like. Oral history is notoriously unreliable as "history," particularly when it involves great events. Even so, the narrative of any witness or widow of D-Day or the Holocaust is coming to seem infinitely precious. The whole point of these recollections is that they are personal and filled with the contingencies of life—a shrinking number of individual voices speaking out of a vast, impersonal chaos that would otherwise be recorded only in dates and official documents. It is as though once living memory has been lost, the event itself—its mixture of valor and horror, its power to warn or inspire, its sheer reality—becomes irrevocably diminished.

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PHOTO BY JUDITH S. HARRIS

*"The threat of terrorism, the war in Iraq and its aftermath, and other recent events have raised wide-ranging questions about the nature of the security challenges we face and about the ability of the multilateral system to deal with them. The meetings of the Stanley Foundation have made an important contribution to this debate and to the work of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change."*

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At Utah Beach earlier this year, a group of World War II re-enactors listen to U.S. infantry veteran John Fowler during ceremonies celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing at Normandy.

An almost feverish eagerness has been building over the past decade to get the stories down and erect the memorials while large numbers of firsthand witnesses are still capable of participating. The familiar pattern of Civil War retrospection has predictably repeated itself, including reunions and re-enactments at Normandy, as the events of World War II become part of the distant past. For a generation that prefers to get its views of history from films rather than books, *The Longest Day* and *Schindler's List* may have achieved the status of classic representations, much as *Gone with the Wind* did in its time; but unmediated individual recollection, once silenced forever, is irreplaceable even by greater arts than the movies.

As William Faulkner attested in “The

Jail” (1951) while summoning up the ghostly widow of yet another Civil War soldier from Alabama, historical memory can possess an almost magical vividness and tenacity—

so vast, so limitless in capacity is man’s imagination to disperse and burn away the rubble-dross of fact and probability, leaving only truth and dream . . . there is the clear undistanced voice as though out of the delicate antenna-skeins of radio, further than empress’s throne, than splendid insatiation, even than matriarch’s peaceful rocking chair, across the vast instantaneous intervention, from the long long time ago: ‘Listen, stranger; this was myself: this was I.’

The deaths of old soldiers and their widows are material for a poignant

tale, but a skeptical reader might ask what difference any of this really makes. Although memory and commemoration have become hot topics among historians, the inexorable passage of time beyond recall is hardly a new discovery. To be sure, the world has seen dire examples of historical memory at work over the past two decades in the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East, to name only the most obvious instances. But the obsessive conflicts between Serb and Croat, Greek and Turk, Kurd and Arab and Jew (again, to name no more) go back many centuries. Memory can either liberate people from their own time or imprison them in the anachronistic demands of another. In lands where the historical imagination is a curse and identity a dungeon, 20th-century events within or just beyond living memory merely reenacted, for the most part, ethnic and religious prejudices dating back to time out of mind. In contemporary America, where all history is comparatively recent and the manifestations of memory likelier to be sentimental than murderous, we prefer to think that our conflicts are more practical and less driven by myths, particularly by old wars that live on in the minds of aging participants, their grandchildren, or, as in the former Yugoslavia, their remote descendants.

“We have learned that you cannot live from history,” a Kosovo Serb told a *New York Times* reporter in 1999. “Americans have no history and they live wonderfully well.” Without question, a combination of luck and wise contrivance has spared the United States the worst kinds of internecine conflict, with the major exception of the Civil War. Inherited identities rarely command us to kill our tribe’s hereditary enemies. But anyone who thinks historical memory has no serious impact on our lives, that either ordinary Americans or policy-makers come to decisions about great issues solely on the basis of current interests and circumstances, is ignoring powerful evidence to the contrary. When the civil rights movement was in full flower, a period coinciding almost exactly with the centennial of the Civil War, the ideology and imagery of its segregationist opponents were heavily influenced by the memory of the Confed-

eracy. It was in the 1950s and early ’60s that Georgia incorporated the Confederate battle flag into its state flag and South Carolina began flying the conquered banner above the state capitol, thereby making its display or removal a political issue that resonates to this day.

**T**he steam went out of Southern resistance to integration—went out, in fact, of the South’s whole self-image as a conquered but defiant province—about the same time the last generation who had grown up with Confederate veterans in the family left the political scene (with a few spectacularly antique exceptions such as Strom Thurmond). This beneficent regional transformation had a variety of causes, some of them economic, but the fact that certain memories had run their chronological course should not be underestimated. While teaching at a state university in Virginia during the late 1970s, I once pointed out to an undergraduate class that when their parents were their age, the university had been racially segregated by law. Not only did many of the students not know this fact, they refused to believe it and thought I was making it up. (All of them were white.) Sometimes progress takes the form of historical amnesia.

**A** few years earlier, during the Vietnam War, it was frequently pointed out that the most influential makers of American foreign policy were of the right age to have been decisively influenced in their attitudes by the appeasement of Hitler in the 1930s and its eventual costs. Threats from dictators, they felt certain, should be forcibly resisted sooner rather than later. (The democracies’ reluctance to resist Nazi Germany had owed something, in turn, to memories of what seemed in retrospect like pointless carnage in World War I.) A great many Americans identify World War II with the treacherous attack on a negligently defended Pearl Harbor, followed by the heroism of Midway, D-Day, and Iwo Jima. But while applying the supposed lessons of history to the present may be inevitable, doing so is always perilous, for it involves the use of analogies that may, in hindsight, look

## Living Memory

wildly inappropriate. Generals are not the only people with a tendency to fight the previous war.

Voices from the past are hard to interpret and can be dangerously seductive. The self-image of Americans at war as liberators, which reached an early high point with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, was spectacularly reinforced by the liberation of Western Europe in World War II (and, later, by the outcome of the Cold War). Although historians remind us that it was not in all respects a “good war”—no war is—we understandably devote more of our attention to Pearl Harbor and D-Day than to Dresden and Nagasaki.

As nations haunted by vastly greater numbers of war graves and widows than America pass through the same trajectory of time, their own recollections of World War II can lead them to see the world very differently. Lately, disagreement about where those memories should point has been a source of conflict between the United States and several of its longtime allies, who sometimes seem to have learned precisely the opposite lessons from those that Americans carried away. For many Europeans in the past 20 years, now-distant memories of both world wars have hardened into a self-righteous conviction that peace outweighs any value that might conflict with it, almost regardless of the threat or provocation. The results can be disastrous. After four decades of vowing never again to tolerate genocide, Europeans were simply paralyzed in the early 1990s when the Yugoslav government of Slobodan Milošević began practicing it with a ferocity not seen on their continent since Hitler’s time. Intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, unconscionably delayed, would not have occurred at all without American leadership, and it remains controversial today.

Germans are probably more tied in knots by historical memory than any other people in Europe or, indeed, the world. They bear the double burden of crushing guilt and total defeat—of the Holocaust and the annihilation of German cities from the air. A number of recent books,

including W. G. Sebald’s widely popular *On the Natural History of Destruction* (1999; English-language edition 2003), have insistently reminded Germans that millions of their own civilians suffered a horrible retribution in the last years of World War II or were forcibly expelled from their homes soon after the war. For the survivors and their descendants, the war represents only a grim warning to the future; there are no monuments to the valor of Hitler’s soldiers. Not surprisingly, a country that has become a model democracy suffers acutely at times from an unresolved conflict between shame at the crimes it committed within living memory and resentment of what it refers to in some moods as its conquest by the Allies, in others as its liberation.

The passage of time—the fact that most German adults nowadays were born after the war and feel less guilt than their parents—has allowed this ambivalence to be more openly expressed. Incongruously combining disapproval of Nazi aggression in 1939 with a reawakened sense of grievance at having been victims in 1945, many Germans of all ages now reflexively identify with any country against which America and its allies consider using force. When Chancellor Gerhard Schröder announced in the fall of 2002 that Germany would take no part in a war against Saddam Hussein, even if it had United Nations approval, his popular decision was in full accord with his nation’s emotionally complicated memories of events 60 years earlier.

It goes without saying that Germans or other Europeans are no more of one mind about contemporary issues than Americans are. Nonetheless, whatever other factors come into play during the great crises of war and peace, intensely different perceptions of a traumatic past tend to dominate debate even in free and prosperous countries. Living memories, unlike more abstract assertions about interests or ethics, are by definition invulnerable to argument. As T. S. Eliot wrote in the darkest days of the London blitz, “History may be servitude, / History may be freedom.” It can take a long time to distinguish accurately between the two. □

# POLITICS AS WAR

James Madison warned about the “mischief of faction” in American political life, but he never imagined anything quite like the full-blown, media-enhanced polarization that consumes us today. Polarization transforms healthy political debate into debate without limits—extreme-boxing tactics transposed to politics. No issue is too trivial to pursue, no behavior too private and irrelevant to be the subject of partisan passion—and virtually no one seems immune to the partisan fevers. It’s a condition with roots that go much deeper than the last presidential election, and with a future that’s likely to last far beyond the next.



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# The Referendum of 2004

by Alan Wolfe

**T**he presidential election of 2004 is widely regarded as one of the most important in the past 100 years. But its importance does not derive from clear ideological differences between the candidates and the parties. For example, the two candidates generally agree about longer term goals in Iraq, however much they disagree about appointments to the U.S. Supreme Court or the rollback of tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. The election is important, rather, because the candidacies of President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry have been framed by two different theoretical understandings of the nature of American society. The victory of one or the other will go a long way toward resolving whether we are a deeply polarized nation, with little hope of reconciliation, or a fundamentally unified one, whose disagreements are not all that deep.

Never before have Americans been polled so much, subjected to so many focus groups, and broken into so many different demographic categories. And yet we still lack consensus on some of the most basic questions of political science. Take what should be a simple one to answer: Have we become more conservative? Clearly the answer is yes if we look at which party dominates the White House, holds majorities in both houses of Congress, and elects the most governors. Yet conservatives do well in politics because they have, under both Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, not only expanded the size of government—a traditional liberal inclination—but adopted policies associated with their opponents, such as Medicare reform. To further complicate the problem, the country may have become more conservative on some issues, such as distrust of government, while becoming more liberal on others, such as increased support for the principles embodied in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which many conservatives opposed), or for greater religious and moral tolerance.

To qualify as polarized, people must be divided into competing camps. Yet without a clear sense of what those camps stand for, it can hardly be surprising that social scientists have reached different conclusions about to what extent—and even *whether*—Americans disagree with one other. No one doubts that there are red states, which voted for Bush in 2000, and blue states, which voted for Al Gore. Nor can one ignore that

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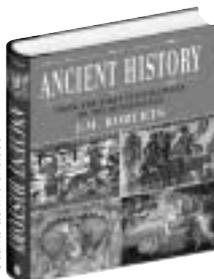


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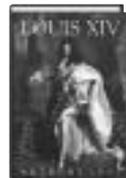
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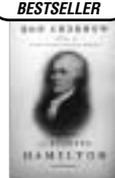
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there exist popular cable television talking heads who clash vehemently on every political issue under the sun. But there's no civil war taking place in the United States, and we may be not nearly as divided as we were when anti-Vietnam War protestors confronted supporters of the war in the 1960s and '70s. As partisan and contentious as our news media have become, by another good measure of political division—the number of Americans whose lives have been lost over political disagreements—we are at a relative low point in our history.

No wonder, then, that when political scientists examine the issue of polarization, they come up with contradictory findings. Whatever the extent of the culture war in the nation, there's deep division among those of us who take its pulse. I know this from personal experience. In 1999 I published *One Nation, After All*, which reported the findings of interviews I had conducted with 200 middle-class suburbanites in Massachusetts, Georgia, Oklahoma, and California. I concluded that, when it came to some of the deepest moral issues with which human beings concern themselves (obligations to the poor, respect for the religious convictions of people who adhere to faiths different from our own, welcoming immigrants to our shores), the people with whom I spoke had few fundamental disagreements. The culture war was alive and well inside the Beltway, I decided, but elsewhere we were one nation, struggling to find common ground. I was



*On the Left, filmmaker Michael Moore and assorted pundits, bloggers, and media firebrands keep liberal blood boiling.*

not the only social scientist to come to this conclusion. Sociologist Paul DiMaggio examined quantitative data about American public opinion and found roughly what I had found through my reliance on data from interviews. Even on the issue of abortion, which I had chosen not to study, DiMaggio concluded that there was a rough consensus that it was wrong, though allowable under certain circumstances.

**A**lthough these views about American polarization were somewhat counterintuitive for the time, events in the real world—such as the impeachment of President Bill Clinton—gave

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them considerable credibility. No doubt Republicans thought that significant numbers of Americans, believers in traditional morality, would be so shocked by Clinton's sexual escapades and deliberate lying that they would drive him from office. In fact, Americans clearly did not like Clinton's behavior, but they were also surprisingly tolerant of him and inclined to judge his harshest critics unfavorably. There really did seem to be a new morality in the United States, and it overlapped with the picture of "live and let live" morality I had drawn through my research.

On so sensitive a subject, however, there was bound to be disagreement. The distinguished historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, for one, looked at the United States and found a country very different from the one I had described. The title of her book *One Nation, Two Cultures* (1999) accurately characterized her thesis. The 1960s had left a deep divide in America, Himmelfarb argued; adherents to a culture of individual self-fulfillment had little in common with those who identified with a culture



On the Right, radio's Rush Limbaugh is the granddaddy of alternative conservative media that didn't exist 20 years ago.

of respect for rules and authority. Whatever the realm—religion, patriotism, the family—there clearly were two different American ways of life, and the hostility between them was palpable. From Himmelfarb's perspective, the failure to remove Clinton from office demonstrated not that there was no culture war but that the forces of personal liberation had the upper hand.

Himmelfarb is a conservative, but there was nothing conservative about her findings (just as I believe that, though I am a liberal, there was nothing liberal about mine). In *The Two Nations: Our Current Political Deadlock and How to Break It* (2003), Stanley Greenberg, a respected pollster with decidedly liberal political views, generally agreed with Himmelfarb's description of a moral divide, though his two Americas were riven more by politics than by cultural issues. Those who regard polarization in the United States as a serious problem in need of a remedy had their views confirmed by Greenberg's book.

The thesis that we are one nation seemed to receive empirical support from the country's mixed reaction to Kenneth Starr, even as the notion that we are two was substantiated by the stalemate in the 2000 presidential election. Who could doubt, in the wake of that

year's electoral map, that a Bible-reading, gun-toting Tennessee Christian looked at the world in radically different ways from a civil-liberties-loving Massachusetts cultural relativist? Red and blue leave little room for gray. As I watched the fierce partisan furies unleashed by the Florida voting debacle,

THE CLASSIC WEDGE  
ISSUES THAT USUALLY  
DIVIDE AMERICANS HAVE  
ALL BUT DISAPPEARED  
FROM THE POLITICAL  
RADAR SCREEN.

I began to wonder whether my research had failed me. Where were the moderate voices I had heard throughout the United States: the politically conservative Oklahomans who nonetheless distrusted the extremism of the Religious Right, the committed egalitarians in California who disliked multilingualism in schools and had serious reservations about affirmative

action? The moral world of the Americans with whom I talked in the 1990s was nuanced. The moral world of Americans as revealed by the 2000 election was not.

Still, these kinds of things come in cycles, and no sooner did the “two nations” thesis seem to get America right than the cycle began to turn. There were, of course, the attacks of September 11, 2001, which revealed a hunger for unity and a sense of common purpose in the American people. But some of the classic wedge issues that presume to divide Americans into two camps have all but disappeared from the political radar screen. The most significant of these is affirmative action, which had been widely interpreted as a clever way to divide working-class whites, who in the past had tended to vote Democratic, from liberal-leaning African Americans and their white allies. Yet after the U.S. Supreme Court essentially found a compromise position on affirmative action—targets, not quotas—politicians began to shun the issue. So too did *Roe v. Wade* become less of a rallying cry for abortion opponents when Congress voted to ban so-called “partial-birth” abortions, thereby undermining the conservatives’ claim that their voices in the debate had been silenced. (It remains to be seen whether recent court rulings overturning the law will revitalize the abortion debate.) Maybe we’re on the way to becoming one nation with one culture again.

**T**hat, at least, was the conclusion of the most exhaustive study of the issue to date, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (2004), by Morris Fiorina, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy G. Pope. Reviewing nearly all the published data, Fiorina and his colleagues found that, on a variety of supposedly hot-button issues (school vouchers, the death penalty, immigration, equal rights for women), opinion in the so-called red states was little different from attitudes in the blue ones. There was, in fact, more competition even within the red states and the blue than the polarization thesis allows: Gore

received more than 55 percent of the votes in only six states in 2000, and Bush more than 55 percent in 17 (smaller) states, meaning that all of the rest were up for grabs. Political activists, to be sure, have strong disagreements with one another, but this does not mean that ordinary Americans do, Fiorina and his colleagues decided.

They also concluded that technical features of the ways Americans conduct their politics explain why a gap exists between how politicians act and what Americans generally think. Primary turnout, for example, is traditionally low, which means that candidates have to appeal to voters with more extreme views—the ones most likely to vote—if they are to get their party’s nomination. Elections in congressional districts are increasingly noncompetitive, which reduces the incentive of politicians to move toward the center. Most important of all to Fiorina and his colleagues is a fact too often overlooked: Voters can vote only for people already on the ballot, and if the parties put more extreme politicians there, people will vote for them even if their own views have not become more extreme.

In emphasizing these technical points, Fiorina and his fellow authors paid relatively little attention to such on-the-ground realities as the growing conservatism of the South, or the anger generated by the 2000 election itself. Still, their data demonstrate conclusively that, if the views of all Americans, and not just party activists, are taken into account, the people of the United States are actually more centrist than they’ve been for some time.

**S**tudying political polarization is not like studying earthquakes; one nearly always knows when the latter occur, but scholars and commentators, often with impressive credentials, will disagree about whether the former even exists. Even those who agree that the country is divided disagree on how many divisions it contains. In perhaps the most inventive contribution to the debate, journalist Robert David Sullivan, in 2002, argued in *CommonWealth*, a Massachusetts-based public-policy magazine, that there are 10 different Americas, not merely one or two. They include El Norte (parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Southern California), the Upper Coasts (Maine on one side, Washington State on the other), the Southern Lowlands of the Carolinas, and the Farm Belt. (Sullivan had persuasive maps and figures to back up his analysis.) So split is scholarly and journalistic opinion on the question of how split we are as a nation that we either have to live with a high degree of uncertainty or find a method besides surveys and qualitative interview data to help us resolve it.

WE COULD BE ON THE WAY  
TO BECOMING ONE NATION  
WITH ONE CULTURE AGAIN.

Fortunately, we do have another tool at our disposal. In fact, it’s something not unlike the kind of natural experiment available to physical scientists. It’s called the 2004 presidential election.

Imagine that we're in a laboratory designing presidential campaigns that will tell us something about the state of American society. We might develop three possible models. The first, which was given its classic expression in Anthony Downs's *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), is an election

CAMPAIGNERS RARELY  
CONCLUDE THAT  
THE ONLY WAY TO WIN  
IS TO APPEAL TO THE  
POLITICAL EXTREMES.

in which both parties move to the center, where they hope to capture more voters. For decades, Downs's model seemed to describe an "iron law" of American politics. It applied in 1932, when Franklin Roosevelt ran as an economic conservative; in 1960, when John Kennedy and Richard Nixon barely

disagreed with each other; and in the successful campaign of George H. W. Bush against Michael Dukakis in 1988. When candidates fudge the differences between themselves and their opponents, they're in agreement that the country is unified, and that moderates in the center of the ideological spectrum best represent that unity.

A second scenario is based on the assumption that Americans are deeply divided and that politicians, rather than converge toward the center, should tailor their message to win voters at the margins. "Critical elections" of this sort are not all that common, but their number includes some of the most important in our history: the bitterly disputed contest of 1896, in which populist William Jennings Bryan ran against probusiness Republican William McKinley; the four-candidate campaign that



*Take a good look, because after Election Day, blue, latte-sipping liberals. . . .*

brought Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860. The critical-election model is based on an assumption that's the polar opposite of the assumption underlying the consensual model, but on one important point the two converge: In each model, politicians from both sides of the partisan divide agree on the sociological conditions they face, whether those conditions involve unity or division.

**R**arely in America have we had a third type of situation, one that would seem too artificial to occur in the real world. This would be an election in which one party concluded that the country was fundamentally polarized and that its best chance of winning was to appeal to the extremes, while the other party concluded the exact opposite and decided that themes of unity and solidarity would best enhance its chances of success.

It's no mystery why campaigns of this sort are so rare. Especially these days, campaigns stake a great deal on the theories they advance to guide their candidates; they raise and spend so much money that the incentives to get reality right are overpowering. The last thing one would expect is that two parties would study the same electorate and come away with radically different conclusions about what will move people to

HOW CAN TWO PARTIES  
COME AWAY WITH SUCH  
RADICALLY DIFFERENT  
CONCLUSIONS ABOUT WHAT  
WILL MOVE PEOPLE TO VOTE?



*and red, NASCAR-loving conservatives may vanish down the media memory hole.*

vote. And yet, if this third type of campaign did occur, it would tell us a great deal about the country, for whoever won the election would not only assume the presidency but would also, in the language of social science, confirm a hypothesis. If the divider wins, we conclude that the country is indeed divided; if the unifier wins, we conclude the opposite.

The election of 2004 is not quite a perfect fit with any abstract model. On some issues, the campaign between Bush and Kerry manifests similarities with the common patterns that have revealed themselves over time in American history. On the war in Iraq, as I have already noted, Kerry was slow to criticize Bush's past policies and has not distanced himself too far on the question of larger goals, a situation not unlike the one in which Kennedy and Nixon approached China or Cuba. On other issues, such as stem-cell research, both candidates have moved toward their respective extremes—Bush toward religious conservatives, Kerry toward liberals—in ways reminiscent of polarizing elections in American history. Still, there's little doubt that when it comes to assumptions about how Americans understand their political differences, the Bush campaign and the Kerry campaign have opted for very different strategies, in ways that are unusual in the American electoral experience.

Consider the two main themes developed by Republicans against Kerry: that he is one of the most extreme liberals in the Democratic Party, and that he cannot be trusted because he's a flip-flopper.

Charging someone with liberalism assumes that Americans know what liberalism is, and that they think ideologically when they think about politics. For some voters, this is undoubtedly the case. When they hear the word *liberal*, they think of a civil libertarian opposed to capital punishment, or someone who wants to raise their taxes, and they look immediately to the other candidate. But political scientists have often found that

Americans rarely think in ideological terms—especially as those terms are defined by pundits and philosophers. By trying so hard to characterize Kerry as a liberal, the Bush camp is placing its bet on one interpretation of how Americans think about politics and not another. Is the choice correct? We won't know until the returns are in.

The charge of flip-flopping also carries with it a set of assumptions about how and why people act politically. The charge is an example of negative campaigning, understood in the technical sense of a campaign strategy that focuses critically on the record of an opponent. Though America is far from facing anything like a civil war, negative campaigning assumes that people believe politics to be a rough-and-tumble human activity; one tries not only to win, but to leave one's opponent bloody and bruised. There's little talk of bipartisan cooperation, or of the need to resolve dif-

AMERICANS  
RARELY THINK  
IN IDEOLOGICAL  
TERMS.

ferences and get on with the business of the country once the election is over, or of respect for traditional rules of the game that define certain kinds of conduct as unwise or unethical. (“Gentlemen do not read each other’s mail,” former secretary of war Henry L. Stimson once said of our enemies; imagine anyone applying that rule to domestic politics today.) War is the most polarizing of all human activities, and though negative campaigning may stop well short of actual war, its reliance on martial tactics and language assumes that people believe passionately enough in winning an election to justify any means of achieving victory. Do people really hold such passionate beliefs? Once again, we don’t know. But this year’s Republican National

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Convention provided numerous examples of one party attacking the candidates of the other in exceptionally harsh terms. If the election proves those attacks to have been successful, we’ll know a lot more.

John Kerry never calls George Bush a conservative in the way Bush calls him a liberal. Of course, that may be because conservatism is more popular than liberalism, at least as Americans understand the meaning of the terms. But it’s also clear that Kerry has opted for a strategy quite different from the one chosen by Bush. Kerry did not decide to downplay ideology for moral reasons; instead, he made a tactical calculation that without votes from the center of the spectrum, he could not win the election. From a sociological perspective, his motives are irrelevant. Kerry bet that people care about things other than a candidate’s worldview when they make their voting decisions, which is one reason he surrounds himself so often with veterans and talks so frequently of values. If Kerry, who is a liberal, succeeds in winning a large number of votes from those who are not, or who aren’t sure what the term liberal means, he will have demonstrated that Americans are looking for a leader who wants to bring them together—with one another and with peoples around the world.

The situation involving negative campaigning is more complicated, for once one candidate opts to attack, the other has little choice but to respond or to be accused of wimpishness. We saw a perfect example of this in the attempts by groups close to the Bush campaign, such as Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, to attack Kerry’s war record and subsequent antiwar activities—to which Kerry eventually responded by citing Vice President Dick Cheney’s five deferments from military service during the Vietnam period.

**Y**et significant differences between the two parties remain. Kerry chose as his vice-presidential nominee John Edwards, who is strongly identified with delivering positive and upbeat messages;

even his widely publicized campaign speech emphasizing that there are two Americas was designed to make the point that there really should be only one. Bush's advertisements have focused on Kerry's record, while Kerry's advertisements have focused on—Kerry's record. Nominated by an unusually united Democratic Party, Kerry has relatively little need to fire up his base

CANDIDATES AND VOTERS  
ARE MORE FOCUSED  
ON WHO WINS, BUT  
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NAME THE KIND OF  
PEOPLE WE ARE.

with anti-Bush attacks, especially if the harsh language might turn off the centrist voters he seeks. Kerry's strategy of appealing to the Center hinges on a great unknown: the number of Americans who consider themselves undecided, and the direction they will swing if appeals are made to them. But that very unknowability is what makes the difference

between a negative campaign and a more positive one so interesting. Only in retrospect will it be clear which was more in accord with popular sentiment.

Viewing elections as a way of understanding ourselves may seem an exotic activity, of interest only to social scientists and not to the general public or the candidates, who are focused more on winning. But even in the days before regression analyses and Gallup polls, our presidential elections helped us name the kind of people we were. When politics was a more gentlemanly affair, we went through an "Era of Good Feeling." Before the Civil War broke out, war had already broken out among—and within—the political parties; Lincoln won the presidency with only 40 percent of the popular vote. There have been times in American history when partisan passions were muted, electoral campaigns uninteresting, and the winners undistinguished, and other times when campaigns fired the public imagination, invective flew, and the winners got to shape the future.

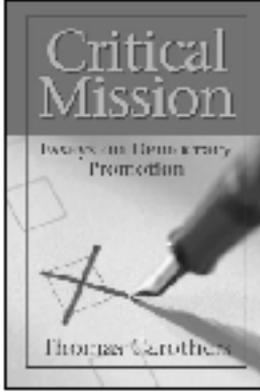
**I**n the current age, there's no doubt that politics matter greatly to those who are deeply immersed in politics. Nor is there any doubt that Americans are faced in 2004 with choices that have demonstrably important consequences for the future of their country. What's not clear is whether ordinary Americans are caught up in the passions that motivate our political and media elites. Nor are we any closer to solving the longstanding mystery of what motivates people to go to the polls and cast their ballots. But because each new election tells us a little more about who we are, we'll have a better sense, when this year's election is over, of whether the purported cultural divisions that have dominated our society for more than two decades will continue, or even be exacerbated, or whether they'll begin to recede into insignificance, in the face of all that unites us. □



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# Bring on the Mud

by Christopher Hitchens

In his classic post-World War I novel *The Good Soldier Schweik*, the Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek makes mention of “The Party for Moderate Progress within the Boundaries of Law,” the very sort of political formation the powers-that-be have always dreamed of. With such respectful parties, there’s no danger of any want of decorum, or challenge to the consensus, or spreading of misgiving about authority or institutions. Instead, or rather: “There’s much to be said on both sides of the case.” “The truth lies somewhere in between.” “Lurid black and white must perforce give way to reputable gray.”

Satire defeats itself, as usual. A political formation that could readily be considered absurd by intelligent readers in the stultified Austro-Hungarian Empire is now considered the beau ideal by the larger part of the American commentating class. What’s the most reprehensible thing

THE WORST THING A  
POLITICIAN CAN BE  
THESE DAYS IS *PARTISAN*.

a politician can be these days? Why, *partisan*, of course. What’s the most disapproving thing that can be said of a “partisan” remark? That it’s *divisive*. What’s to be deplored most at election time? *Going negative* or,

worse, *mudslinging*. That sort of behavior *generates more heat than light* (as if there were any source of light apart from heat).

The selection of these pejoratives tells us a good deal, as does the near-universal acceptance by the mass media of the associated vernacular. To illustrate what I mean, consider a celebrated recent instance. Senator John Kerry was not adopting any “issue” when he proposed himself for the presidency by laying heavy stress on his record as a warrior. (That is to say, he clearly could not have intended to assert that Democrats had been more gung-ho than Republicans during the Vietnam War.) The “issue” was his own record, and ostensibly no more. But when that record was challenged, with varying degrees of rancor and differing levels of accuracy, the response was immediate. I have in front of me as I write a full-page ad in *The New York Times* of August 27, 2004, attacking the “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth” who challenged Kerry. This costly proclamation states, and then demands: “It can be stopped. All it takes is leadership. Denounce the smear. Let’s get back to the issues.”



*The election of 1884 stirred deep partisan passions and inspired some of the dirtiest campaigning in U.S. history. It also elicited very high turnout at the polls, with Democrat Grover Cleveland winning by only 23,000 votes over Republican James G. Blaine.*

Never mind the truth or falsehood of the allegations for now. What's worth notice is that the ad does not deny their truth so much as say that nobody has the right to make the allegations in the first place. Thus, having himself raised a subject, the candidate is presumed to enjoy the right to have his own account of it taken at face value. Anything else would be indecorous. The slight plaintiveness of this is underscored by the call to "get back to the issues." But surely Kerry had made his military service an "issue." At the bottom of the ad appear the legend "Paid for by the Democratic National Committee" and the accompanying assurance that "this communication is not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee." Even the law requires us to believe these days that, for purposes of fund-raising, the organs of a party are independent of its nominee (which is why the members of the "Swift Boat" group had to pretend to be above politics in the first place, thereby leaving themselves vulnerable to the charge of being sinister proxies).

**B**ut is there any place "above politics"? Is there a subject that can avoid becoming "a political football" or a resource out of which "political capital" cannot be made? The banality of the automatic rhetoric is again suggestive here. Since every other electoral metaphor is sports oriented, from the top of the ninth to the 10-yard line to the play-

ing of “offense” and “defense,” why should there not be a ball or two in play? (Surely, to move to a market image, it’s short-term dividends rather than actual capital that one hopes to accrue.)

Opinion polling shows how far cognitive dissonance on this point has progressed. When asked, millions of people will say that the two parties are (a) so much alike as to be virtually indistinguishable, and (b) too much occupied in partisan warfare. The two “perceptions” are not necessarily opposed: Party conflict could easily be more and more disagreement about less and less — what Sigmund Freud characterized in another con-

BY DEFINITION, POLITICS  
IS, OR OUGHT TO BE,  
DIVISION.

text as “the narcissism of the small difference.” For a while, about a decade ago, the combination of those two large, vague impressions gave rise to the existence of a quasi-plausible third party, led by Ross Perot, which argued, in effect,

that politics should be above politics, and that government should give way to management. That illusion, like the touching belief that one party is always better than the other, is compounded of near-equal parts naiveté and cynicism.

The current discourse becomes odder and emptier the more you examine it. We live in a culture that’s saturated with the cult of personality and with attention to the private life. So much is this the case that candidates compete to appear on talk shows hosted by near-therapists. In so doing, they admit that their “personalities” are under discussion and, to that extent, in contention. Even I, who don’t relish the Oprah world, say, “Why not?” There must be very few people who choose their friends or their lovers on the basis of their political outlook rather than their individual qualities. Yet just try to suggest that the psychopathic element in a politician, whether Richard Nixon or Bill Clinton, is itself a consideration, and see how fast you’re accused of “personalizing” or “witch-hunting” or “mudslinging.” This charge will most often come from someone who makes his or her living as the subsidiary of a party machine and has an idealized or personalized photo or portrait of a mere human being or “personality” in a position of honor somewhere near the mantelpiece.

**B**y definition, politics is, or ought to be, division. It expresses, or at least reflects, or at the very least emulates, the inevitable difference of worldview that originates, for modern purposes, with Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine. This difference can be muddied, especially in a highly disparate society, but it cannot be absolutely obscured. So given the inevitable tendency of the quotidian, the corrupt, and the self-interested to muddy differences and make sinuous appeals

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to all sides, might we not place a higher value on those who seek to make the differences plainer and sharper?

Yet we seemingly dread controversy, almost as a danger in itself. The consequence is that there are large and important topics that the electoral “process” is almost designed to muffle or muzzle. Let me select three important topics that everybody knew in advance could not break the surface in an election year: the “war on drugs,” the death penalty, and the Pledge of Allegiance. It’s quite simply assumed, across the political class, that no candidate interested in forwarding his or her own cause would depart from the presumed consensus on all three—which is that we must persist in the “war on drugs,” come what may, that the death penalty is a necessary part of law and order, and that the pledge should recognize the Almighty. Each of these “issues” is symbolic of a greater one—the role of the state in the private life of the citizen, the posture of the United States toward international legal norms, and the boundary of separation between religion and government—and there is good evidence that the extent of apparent agreement on all three is neither as wide nor as deep as is commonly supposed. In any event, could we not do with more honest and more informed disagreement on these subjects? Is not the focus on the trivial a product, at least in part, of the repression of the serious? In much the same way, the pseudo-fight over Senator Kerry’s valor in the Mekong Delta is a distorted and packaged version of the “debate” over the conflict in Iraq, in which both parties pretend to agree with each other on the main point, while in fact not even agreeing genuinely with themselves. The general evasiveness and cowardice surely call for more polarization rather than less.

Just as hypocrisy is the compliment vice pays to virtue, so, I sometimes think, the smarmy stress on “bipartisanship” is a tribute of a kind to American diversity. A society so large and plural must depend, to a great degree, on the observance of an etiquette of “non-offensiveness”—to give this affectation the off-putting name it deserves. In fact, that very diversity demands *more* political variety rather than less. The consensus that slavery in America was too toxic and divisive an “issue” to become a political subject only postponed the evil time when it became the cause of an actual civil war.

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That reflection, on its own, puts paid to the vague, soft view that politics used to be more civil in the good old days, and that mudslinging is a new invention. Leave aside the relative innocuousness of the supposed mudslinging that now takes place; it is simply flat-out mythological to suppose that things were more polite in the golden past. Yes, there was Adlai Stevenson in the mid-20th century saying that he’d rather lose the election than tell a lie, but ear-

lier in the century there was also Ed “Boss” Crump of Memphis, Tennessee, charging that his opponent would milk his neighbor’s cow through a crack in the fence. When I was a boy, the satirical pianist-and-songster duo Michael Flanders and Donald Swann made several excellent albums. One of their hits was a rousing ditty about the basking habits of the hippopotamus. The refrain went as follows:

Mud, mud, glorious mud!  
Nothing quite like it for cooling the blood!  
So follow me, follow—down to the hollow  
And there let us wallow  
In glorious mud!

Michael Flanders’s daughter Laura is now a punchy presenter on Al Franken’s Air America station, where people can say whatever they like about Dick Cheney and Halliburton, George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden, the Carlyle Group and other elements of the invisible government.

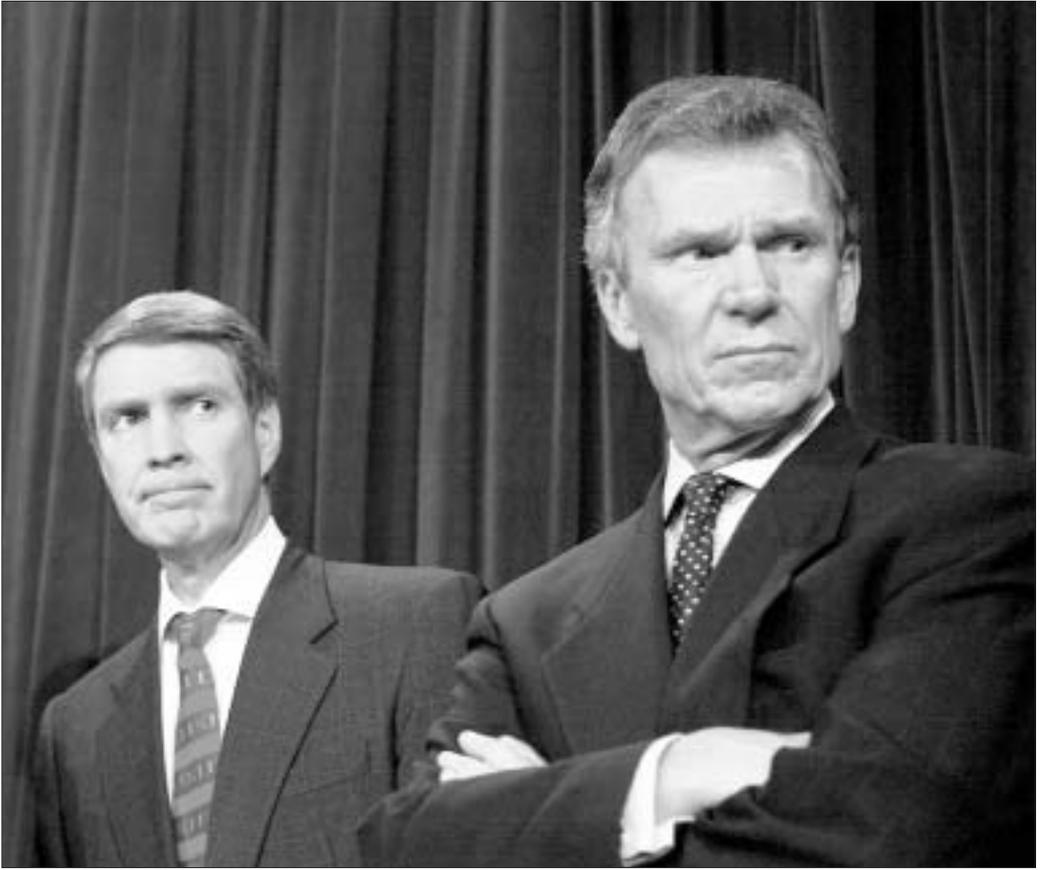
IN THE ‘GOOD OLD DAYS,’  
JEFFERSON WAS  
CALLED AN ATHEIST  
AND WHOREMASTER.

Bring it on, I say. Where would we be without the tradition of American populism, which adopted for itself the term hurled as an insult by Teddy Roosevelt—“muckraker”? What goes for muck should go for mud. Who would wish to be without that

“used-car salesman” innuendo against Richard Nixon, or the broad hint that Barry Goldwater was itchy in the trigger finger? Just let’s have no whining when the tables are turned.

**I**n the election that pitted Thomas Jefferson against John Adams, the somewhat more restricted and refined electorate had its choice between the president of the American Philosophical Society and the president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. “What could possibly have been more civilized and agreeable?” breathes the incurable nostalgic. Yet it’s worth looking up what was said, especially about Jefferson, in those days: He was called adulterer, whoremaster, atheist, even deserter in the face of the enemy. There’s no doubt that the emergence of parties or “factions” after the retirement of George Washington gave voters a set of clear and often stark choices—and a good thing that was, too.

The United States makes large claims for itself, among them the claim that the nation is the model for a society based simultaneously on democracy and multiethnicity. It’s certainly no exaggeration to say that on the success or failure of this principle much else depends. But there must be better ways of affirming it than by clinging to an insipid parody of a two-party system that counts as a virtue the ability to escape thorny questions and postpone larger ones. □



*In Congress, partisan voting has reached its highest levels in modern times. Senate majority leader Bill Frist (R.-Tenn.), at left, and minority leader Thomas Daschle (D.-S.D.) meet the press.*

# Pols Apart

*by Donald R. Wolfensberger*

**O**n April 17, 1997, shortly after I had completed my oral testimony on “civility in the House of Representatives” at a subcommittee hearing of the House Rules Committee, Chairman David Dreier (R.-Calif.) announced that he would have to suspend the rest of the hearing. Our testimony was “extraordinarily timely,” Dreier wryly observed, because a “real ruckus” had just erupted on the floor of the House over whether a member had violated House rules by engaging in personal criticism during debate: Representative John Lewis (D.-Ga.) said on the floor that the House ethics committee had found Speaker Newt Gingrich (R.-Ga.) guilty of “lying” and “bringing discredit” on the House. The members of Dreier’s subcommittee were summoned to vote on whether

to strike these personal references to Gingrich's conduct from the *Congressional Record*. On a near party-line vote of 227 to 190, the House agreed to do so.

**W**hy the poisoned atmosphere? The change in party control of Congress in 1995, when Republicans replaced the ruling Democrats, provided one explanation. According to this view, House Democrats were still in denial about their loss of power and were lashing out at Speaker Gingrich as payback not just for his successful effort to win the House for Republicans but for his role in toppling Speaker Jim Wright (D.-Texas) on ethics charges in 1989. On the surface, at least, that seemed a plausible explanation for what some were already calling “the partisan wars on the floor” and “the politics of personal destruction.”

But I think that something more was going on beneath the surface, and that it predated the Gingrich and Wright speakerships. The whole culture of the House had been changing over time, from one of governing through deliberation to one of perpetual campaigning through confrontation. As I wrote in *Congress and the People: Deliberative Democracy on Trial* (2000):

The cultural shift would not be so bad if campaigns were primarily about competing political philosophies and ideas of how best to solve our most pressing national problems. But, more and more, campaigns are driven by polls, promises, pandering, personalities, and peccadilloes. Candidates are now told by their professional managers that to wage a successful campaign they must demonize their opponent, define all issues as a choice between good and evil, avoid discussing the tough issues, oversimplify and magnify the importance of their key “wedge” issues, and attack, attack, attack.

The commonly used term for this development is “the permanent campaign,” but I prefer to call it “the perpetual campaign,” which suggests both perpetual motion and self-perpetuation—a phenomenon that grows by feeding continuously on itself.

To the extent this culture of perpetual campaigning takes over Congress and the presidency, deliberation will suffer: There will be no room for the kind of compromise that's necessary for effective governance. Yes, Congress should be political—in the sense that it should be a place where competing philosophies clash over how best to govern. But it's not a place where you must destroy your opponent in order to win, as may happen in a campaign. Unlike campaigning, governing is not a zero-sum game. It is an ongoing enterprise that requires different coalitions at different times to form a majority policy consensus. Today's opponent might be tomorrow's ally. If partisan campaign tactics and wedge issues replace genuine

>DONALD R. WOLFENBERGER is director of the Congress Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center and former staff director of the House Rules Committee. He is the author of *Congress and the People: Deliberative Democracy on Trial* (2000).

political differences and deliberation about significant issues in Congress, we can expect a steady decline in the comity and decorum that have traditionally held our legislative system together.

Congress has not yet passed a point of no return, from a culture of governing to one of perpetual campaigning. Important legislative and oversight work, of both a partisan and a bipartisan nature, is still being done. But even the most routine and necessary work, such as enacting the 13 annual spending bills needed to keep the government running and set its priorities, is becoming more and more tainted, and bogged down in partisan machinations having little to do with significant political differences or effective governance. More important, intense partisan strife and interest-group politics have made it exceedingly difficult for Congress to address matters of truly national urgency, such as the impending insolvency of Social Security and Medicare,

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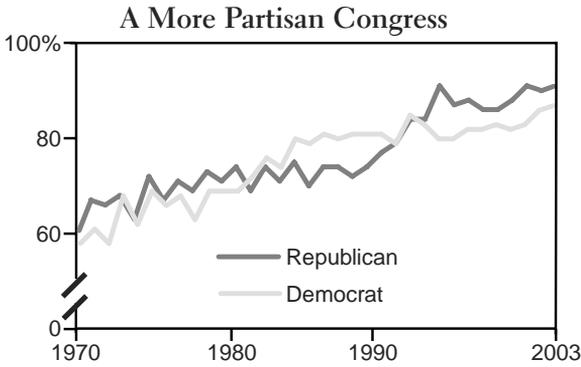
and the need for a national energy policy. The last significant reform of Social Security, for example, occurred during the 1980s, thanks only to cooperation between the Reagan administration and a leading Senate Democrat, Daniel P. Moynihan. Bipartisanship is not merely a bromide. Without it, action on issues of this magnitude, which always involves very painful costs, simply can't be agreed upon.

Meanwhile, among the American people there is puzzlement, disenchantment, and increasing disillusion with the wars on Capitol Hill. Why is Congress so partisan when fewer Americans are identifying with either political party, and when party organizations at the state and local levels are weaker than ever?

**A**ccording to Harris polls, in 1969, the first year of Republican president Richard M. Nixon's first term, 81 percent of the American people identified with one of the two major parties (Democratic, 49 percent; Republican, 32 percent), while 19 percent considered themselves independents. By 2003, only 61 percent of the American people identified with either of the two major parties (Democratic, 33 percent; Republican, 28 percent), and 24 percent of those polled considered themselves independents. (The rest gave no answer.) The Harris polls also reveal an amazing uniformity from the 1970s through today on how people describe their own political philosophy. Around 40 percent of those polled have consistently called themselves moderates, roughly 33 percent conservatives, and 18 percent liberals.

The story in Congress is strikingly different. By tracking roll call votes over time, *Congressional Quarterly* gives a good sense of partisan trends in Congress. It identifies partisan votes as those in which a majority of one party votes on the opposite side of an issue from a majority of the other party. In 1970, 27.1 percent of the roll call votes in the House were partisan; in 1980, 37.6 percent; in 1990, 49.1 percent; and in 2003, 51.7 percent. Even more revealing is the av-

erage “party unity” score of members of each party, that is, the average percentage of times members vote with a majority of their own party on contentious issues. In 1970, House Republicans did so 60 percent of the time and Democrats 58 percent. By 1980, the figures were 71 percent and 69 percent, respectively. In 1990, the party unity measure was essentially unchanged, but by 2003 Republicans were voting with their party majority 91 percent of the time, and



*The increasing partisanship on Capitol Hill is reflected in “party unity” scores in the House of Representatives. The chart shows that, in cases where a partisan issue was thought to be at stake, members voted with their own party’s majority far more often in 2003 than they did in 1970.*

Democrats with their 87 percent of the time. The clear trend has been toward greater party unity on more and more issues.

The fact that fewer Americans identify with either party, and that a plurality of Americans consider themselves moderate in political philosophy, may help explain why most members of Congress tend to downplay their party label when campaigning and

advertising in their district. They understand that, in a close race, the moderates and independents may cast the decisive votes. Members are therefore always looking for ways to reach out to independents and members of the other party. They try to convince constituents that they’ve done a good job representing and serving the district, and that constituent and district service is more important than party label. How is it, then, that these same members can be so partisan when they return to Washington for work during the week?

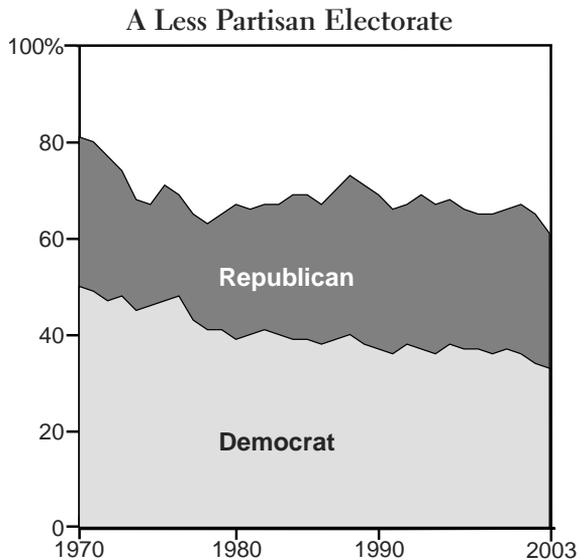
The answer, I believe, is that there are *two* perpetual campaigns, taking place simultaneously. One is the campaign by individual candidates to win seats in Congress by appealing to the broadest possible base of voters. The other is the campaign by each party’s leaders in Washington to draw sharp lines of distinction in order to motivate their base of partisan activists and allied interest groups to support the party, its programs, and its candidates in every possible way—from making campaign contributions, staging fundraising events, and volunteering for get-out-the vote activities to running independent ads and writing op-ed pieces and letters to the editor.

The two campaigns are interconnected and interdependent. Members need money and other support to run successfully for office; party leaders need members in the majority to set the policy agenda and win the votes on legislation of importance to the party’s activists and interest-group supporters. According to Campaign Finance Institute data, in 1980 the average House race cost \$153,221. By 2000, the cost had risen to \$682,952 (with \$814,507 spent by the average incumbent and \$369,823 by the average challenger). About a quarter of the average campaign budget goes to media advertising, with television ads being the most expensive item.

I trace the emergence of the culture of campaigning in Congress to the 1970s, when the institution underwent a reform revolution that had both intended and unintended consequences. The reforms were aimed at breaking the decades-old hold of conservative southern Democratic committee chairmen on the legislative agenda, offsetting the growth of the imperial presidency, and opening Congress to the people (i.e., enabling “government in the sunshine”) so that it would be more responsive and accountable. The reform movement was sparked by members of the Democratic Study Group in Congress, whose liberal agenda remained bottled up in committees. But it was joined by many Republicans, who saw opening the system to greater public scrutiny as a way of getting their message out and exposing the shortcomings of Democrats.

Committees are where most of the important work on legislation in Congress is done (or not done). The reformers recognized that those who controlled committee agendas set the agenda for Congress and the country. A “committee bill of rights” was enacted to allow the majority of a committee to schedule things its chair refused to consider, and a “subcommittee bill of rights” was made part of Democratic Caucus rules to give subunits authority and staff independent of the full-committee chair. The Democratic Caucus adopted a rule allowing separate votes to elect committee chairs, thereby breaking the long-standing seniority rule that had automatically elevated the longest-serving members to the top committee slots. House rules were adopted to make it more difficult to close committee meetings and hearings to the public and press, and committee votes were made available for public inspection.

The net effect of these reforms, however, was not what the reformers had intended. The proliferation of subcommittees did empower individual members, but it also freed them to pursue their own ambitions and agendas more vigorously. Sunshine rules opened the system primarily to those most able to take advantage of the new transparency—in particular, the organized interest groups, which established lobbying shops in Washington. With committee power giving way to a semi-autonomous subcommittee system and to a new breed of members who acted as “policy entrepreneurs” in championing particular causes, the majority Democrats soon realized that they needed to empower their elected party leaders to restore some sense of order to this democratic chaos. Beginning in the late 1970s, the Speaker was given new authority over



*The percentage of voters who identify with either of the two major parties has dropped to record lows. Last year, only 61 percent said they were Democrats or Republicans.*

committee appointments, the legislative agenda, and, as time went on, even the contents of important legislation and the ground rules under which bills would be debated and amended on the floor. The trend toward greater power for party leaders at the expense of the committee system continued when Republicans took control of Congress in 1995, under the strong leadership of Speaker Newt Gingrich (1995–98), and it persisted under his successor, J. Dennis Hastert (R.-Ill.).

Political scientists tell us that the main roles of the Speaker are *institutional maintenance*, that is, building winning coalitions to pass legislation of importance to the party and its constituencies, and *party maintenance*, or “keeping peace in the family” by making sure that members’ political needs are met (through key committee assignments, campaign fundraising assistance, and appropriations for pet projects in their districts). The Speaker is thus at the hub of the two perpetual campaigns: the campaign to secure party and interest-group support by scheduling and passing legislation that addresses the needs of partisan and interest-group activists, and the campaign to ensure continued majority control by electing new members and reelecting incumbents.

**I**n my own experience, certain institutional changes now stand out as having had a pronounced influence on moving Congress toward this new culture of the perpetual campaign. I arrived on Capitol Hill on January 20, 1969, to serve as legislative assistant to my home-district congressman, John B. Anderson (R.-Ill.). (Republicans had been in the minority in Congress, with few interruptions, for nearly 40 years.) Richard M. Nixon was being sworn in as president that day, and his political comeback was an amazing success story. As vice president in 1960, he had lost the presidential race against Senator John F. Kennedy by a whisker, or, perhaps more accurately, by a five o’clock shadow and a little perspiration during the critical first televised debate with Kennedy. Nixon vowed subsequently to master the new medium of television and, with a little help from some Madison Avenue types, was repackaged as “the

CONGRESS HAS BEEN  
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New Nixon,” a product that moved better in the fall of 1968 than the old Humphrey did, after the Democrats’ disastrous Chicago convention and the party’s deep and contentious split over the Vietnam War.

Nixon’s use of television did not stop with his election. He saw the presidency as an electronic bully pulpit, to be employed strategically in governing (at the outset of his administration, for example, he introduced his new cabinet to a national audience on live television). His dominance of the airwaves drove the Democrats nuts at a time when there were no established procedures for allowing “the loyal opposition” equal time to respond to televised appearances.

Matters came to a head on April 30, 1970, when Nixon announced on national television that he had ordered a military thrust into the “Parrot’s Beak” region of Cambodia to clean out suspected Vietcong and North Vietnamese sanctuaries. This expansion of the fighting to a country previously off limits to

## *A Brief History of Polarization*

In historical terms, today's politics of attack ads and forged National Guard documents is practically child's play. It's hard to imagine either of today's presidential candidates being reduced to tears, as President William Howard Taft was in 1912 by the harsh attacks of his leading rival—who happened also to be a member of his own party and the man who had virtually installed him in the White House, former president Theodore Roosevelt.

In the early American republic, political libel and slander were as common as whiskey and horseflies. Even the revered George Washington was vilified as a closet monarchist and worse, and his less temperate successor, John Adams, tossed some of his most vocal critics in jail. But in the annals of American political conflict, it's hard to top the events of 1804, when Vice President Aaron Burr shot and killed the leader of the opposition party, Alexander Hamilton.

The Civil War went beyond polarization, bringing politics to the battlefield. But during the succeeding decades, writes historian Mark Wahlgren Summers in *Party Games* (2004), presidential campaigns were fought like “Armageddon with brass bands,” as if victory for the other side would pitch the country into the abyss. Politics was a form of entertainment as well as a civic duty, and with massive voter turnouts of 80 percent or more and a closely divided electorate, a slight inflection of the vote here or there could make all the difference. In 1888, Republican Benjamin Harrison fought off fabricated quotations—“a dollar a day was enough for any workingman”—and a gaudy assortment of charges in the press. *The New York Herald*, stirring up fears of Chinese immigrants, screamed that “Mongolian Republicans” were bankrolling Harrison's campaign. President Grover Cleveland faced equally vicious attacks. In the end, he won the popular vote (thanks as much to voter fraud as to rhetoric) but nevertheless lost in the Electoral College.

In 1896, William McKinley's decisive victory over William Jennings Bryan tipped the longer-term balance in favor of the Republicans, helping to drastically reduce the national quotient of polarization—and to initiate a decline in voter turnout that has continued to the present. Elections were still bitterly contested in the 20th century, but the hostilities were rarely as sustained and widespread as in the past. After the election of 1932 tipped the balance back to the Democrats, a number of elections were quite close (such as Kennedy-Nixon in 1960) without being especially polarized.

Indeed, by the 1950s political scientists were complaining about the lack of real partisanship in American politics. They admired the European “responsible party” model, in which political parties offer voters a comprehensive program and compel legislators to vote the party line, and they despaired of the ideologically impure American parties produced by a system that forced liberal northerners, for example, to cohabit with conservative southerners in the Democratic Party.

The political system has evolved much as the political scientists hoped: Voters are more issue oriented, national party organizations are stronger and more ideologically coherent, and legislators are more likely to toe the party line. In *Responsible Partisanship?* (2002), edited by John C. Green and Paul S. Herrnson, a new generation of political scientists puzzles over why things still went wrong. One suggestion: Political elites are simply out of step with the more sensible citizenry. But political scientist Michael Robinson and his colleague Susan Ellis write in *The Weekly Standard* that “if the Democrats were still the majority party and still controlled Congress and the presidency, the professoriate and the press would probably consider [the current situation] to represent good, responsible government, not dreaded polarization.” It seems that polarization itself has now become a political issue.

American troops provoked massive street protests and strong opposition from many members of Congress. Lawrence O'Brien, chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), asked the three major networks to carry his reply to Nixon's Cambodia address. ABC alone did so—and then, only as part of its news coverage—while insisting it was not obliged to.

On June 11, 1970, Senator J. William Fulbright (D.-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, introduced a bill to amend the Federal

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TO FIT THE MEDIA.

Communications Act to require the major networks, as a public service, to allow representatives of the House and Senate to discuss important public issues on the air at least four times a year. Testifying before a Senate subcommittee, Fulbright said his bill was institutional and not a partisan matter: "There is nothing in the Constitution which says that, of all elected officials, the

president alone shall have the right to communicate with the American people." Still, there was no denying the presence as well of a legitimate, partisan electoral concern. As DNC counsel Joseph A. Califano, Jr., told the same subcommittee, "This nation must face up to the dominant political fact of our generation: The name of the deadly serious game of national and statewide politics in the 1970s is television. . . . We believe that the survival of the two-party system depends on access to television on some equitable basis for the party out of power."

**A**lthough Fulbright's bill never made it out of subcommittee, the networks did relent in granting some airtime to the Democrats. But the continued withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, combined with a new economic policy and diplomatic openings to China and the Soviet Union, gave Nixon a huge victory (61 percent of the popular vote and 97 percent of the electoral vote) over Senator George McGovern (D.-S.D.) in the 1972 presidential election.

A month after the election, Representative Jack Brooks (D.-Texas), chairman of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations, asked the Congressional Research Service (CRS) "to prepare a study of congressional capability for utilizing the communications media more effectively in communicating to the American people." CRS contracted with the former communications director of the DNC, John G. Stewart, to conduct the study. Stewart's final report, *Congress and Mass Communications: An Institutional Perspective*, released in early 1974, amply documented something the DNC had been hammering home for the previous four years: The television networks provided President Nixon far more coverage than they did those members of Congress who opposed his policies. It also noted that "President Nixon has made far greater use of television in prime viewing hours than any of his predecessors."

The report offered Congress numerous options. One was televising sessions



*During the 1950s, Texas Democrat Sam Rayburn (left) and Massachusetts Republican Joseph Martin were the best of friends, even though they were also the leaders of their parties in the House of Representatives.*

of Congress, so that people would better understand the vital role the institution plays in our political system. At a hearing on the report in 1974, my boss, Representative Anderson, who strongly favored that option, offered this cautionary note: “If we attribute too much power and potential to the media in the power struggle between the branches, we will be falling prey to mistaking the media for the message. And if we fall prey to that mistake, the inevitable result will be a tendency to shape the message, in this case the legislative process, to fit the media.” His words proved prophetic of the introduction of “message politics” and the perpetual campaign to Congress several years later.

**B**y the time the Joint Committee endorsed televised proceedings in October 1974, President Nixon was history, having resigned as a result of the Watergate scandal. Ironically, his demise was hastened by dramatic disclosures at the televised hearings of the Senate Watergate Committee in 1973, followed in 1974 by the televised impeachment deliberations and votes in the House Judiciary Committee. With Nixon literally out of the picture, there was not the same urgency among top Democrats to proceed with televising sessions of Congress. Nevertheless, the Joint Committee persisted and, in October 1975, issued a report, *A Clear Message to the People*. The committee said that Congress should not launch a public-relations campaign to improve

its image, and, picking up on Anderson's testimony, it asserted that "we also reject any effort to shape the legislative process to suit some media mandate." But it endorsed televising House and Senate floor sessions.

The resolution in favor of televising House floor debates was introduced by Joint Committee chairman Jack Brooks in 1975, as were alternative approaches. But after numerous hearings and votes, the proposals all died in the Rules Committee at the end of the 94th Congress in 1976, mainly because of the objections of House Majority Leader Tip O'Neill (D.-Mass.), acting on behalf of Speaker Carl Albert (D.-Okla.). But in 1977, as the newly elected Speaker of the House, O'Neill did an about-face and indicated his support for a House broadcast system—provided it was owned and operated by the House, and the Speaker controlled its cameras. By the beginning of the next Congress, in March 1979, the live broadcast signal became available to the public, and C-SPAN was born.

Tip O'Neill was responsible for another reform that would figure prominently in the rise of the perpetual campaign in Congress. In 1970, when he was Democratic whip and a member of the Rules Committee, he offered an amendment to the Legislative Reorganization Act to put members on record as voting for or against amendments offered on the House floor. Before that, only nonrecord "teller votes" were taken on amendments—that is, the number of members voting for or against was determined only by counting heads as members filed up the aisle. In offering his amendment, O'Neill said that "if the people at home knew how we actually voted [on amendments], I believe we probably would have had some different results."

Notwithstanding the new sunshine rules, many House Republicans felt that the people still were not paying attention to what was going on in Congress. They thought that their Democratic colleagues were being reelected by stressing their constituent and district service while downplaying their liberal voting records. Consequently, in the late 1970s and early 1980s the Republicans began a concerted campaign to highlight party differences by using the two innovations O'Neill had made possible—recorded votes on amendments and televised floor proceedings. Leading the charge were "young Turk" backbenchers such as Gingrich and Robert Walker (R.-Pa.). They and their colleagues began to dominate "special order" speech periods at the end of the day's legislative business, periods during which members could speak before the C-SPAN cameras, for up to an hour each, on any subject.

Republican members began to devise floor amendments that would politically embarrass Democrats—for example, to a Democratic bill establishing a new domestic program they offered an amendment that allowed no money to fund the program until a balanced budget had been achieved. The Democrats reacted to the exploitation of special order speeches by threatening to pull the plug on television coverage when legislative business for the day was completed. But in the ensuing media coverage of the controversy, they were beaten back by arguments that they were trying to trample the free-speech rights of Republican members.

In response to the Republicans' use of amendments for political purposes, Democrats asked their leaders to cut back on the number of amendments that could be offered on the House floor. (The number of recorded votes on amendments had risen from 200 during 1971–72 to 500 during 1979–80.) The Speaker

responded to his Democratic colleagues' requests by using the Rules Committee to increasingly restrict the amendment process on the House floor. Republicans complained bitterly about these "gag rules" on amendments. But after coming into the majority in the 1990s, they eventually became more restrictive than the Democrats had ever been. In the 103rd Congress (1993–94), their last as a majority, the Democrats allowed no amendments, or only one Republican substitute, to be offered on 18 percent of the major bills considered; by the 107th Congress (2001–2002), the majority Republicans were imposing such restrictions on 44 percent of the major bills.

**T**he perpetual campaign is a reality of the modern media age. Long before the coming of television, presidents recognized the nexus between the news media and public opinion. As Abraham Lincoln once noted, in a popular government such as ours, "public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed." Presidents have had the easiest time of persuading the public to support their policies because they speak with a single voice. Congress, by contrast, speaks in many tongues—it's a veritable tower of babble at times. Presidents have always been the first to adapt to new media to communicate with the people, while Congress has always been behind the curve, which helps explain why the people still don't understand how Congress works (or even *whether* it works).

When Congress finally did put aside the quill pen and spring into the modern age in the 1970s and 1980s by televising its committee and floor sessions, it was somewhat taken aback that the gesture did not improve its image. The new exposure merely magnified the people's sense of a confusing arena where squabbling adversaries thwarted clear-cut presidential wishes. Only as the two parties became more homogeneous and unified internally, and more set against each other in their policy prescriptions, were they able to gain something of the power presidents have long enjoyed in projecting coherent policy positions through the media. But the power came at the cost of reducing complex policy debates to simple messages that the media could easily interpret and the attentive elites (if not the masses) easily understand. That, in turn, meant keeping party differences sharp and distinct, rather than blurring the differences through a deliberative process that might produce a bipartisan policy consensus.

The perpetual campaign is a reality of the modern media age that's not likely to end when one party or the other gains a stronger hold on majority status. Perhaps a more resigned minority party will then accept its status, and some of the partisan bitterness and outbreaks of incivility will diminish. But don't bet on it. The best one can hope for is that the two parties will encourage the committee system to reassert its authority, thereby giving policy expertise a bigger role in the legislative process and creating more opportunities for deliberation.

In a more deliberative setting, there will still be—as there should be—legitimate partisan differences, but presumably these will lead to more thoughtful and effective policy solutions, emerging in a more civil environment. The people may continue to view Congress as an unruly sandbox, full of partisan bickering, but before dismissing the institution out of hand, they should consider the alternative. □

# Evolution's New Look

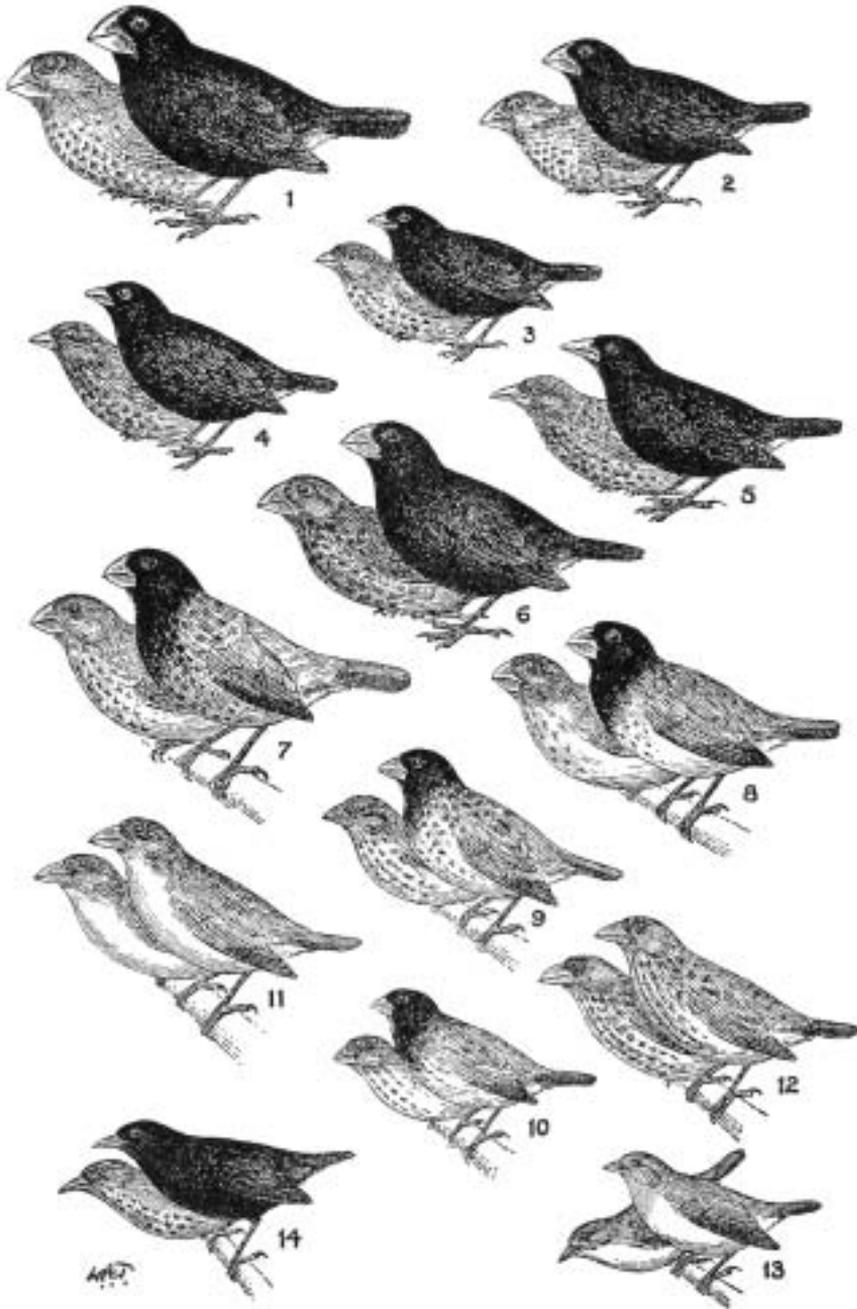
From the sudden spread of West Nile virus in the United States to the discovery that Galápagos Island finches are evolving by unexpected means, there are signs that the natural world does not function quite as we thought. A variety of scientific findings now point to the need for a radically revised understanding of the way evolution itself works.

by *Michael L. Arnold and Edward J. Larson*

**E**ver since Darwin's day, most evolutionists have envisioned the evolutionary process as a tree of life with radiating branches that never cross. The pattern appears in the only illustration Charles Darwin included in the original 1859 edition of *Origin of Species*—a rough sketch of species branching over time from a few thin lines at the bottom into many more as they move upward. Some lines terminate in extinction, but none of them ever reconnect. Darwin's most influential 19th-century disciple, German morphologist Ernst Haeckel, captured the concept in his drawing of a towering tree with many twigs emerging from broad branches and a sturdy trunk. Each twig is distinct and bears the name of a separate species, with “man” at the tree's apex.

This tree-of-life notion of evolution attained near-iconic status in the mid-20th century with the modern neo-Darwinian synthesis in biology. But over the past 15 years, new discoveries have led many evolutionary biologists to conclude that the concept is seriously misleading and, in the case of some evolutionary developments, just plain wrong. Evolution, they say, is better seen as a tangled web of long-term and extensive breeding across species lines.

What's crucial about this new model of evolution is that it incorporates an increased recognition by biologists that new species can arise through hybridization—crossbreeding between purebred individuals of two distinct kinds that results in an individual, a hybrid, that is more fit (at least in some cases) than the original, nonhybrid parents. Darwin knew that some species could interbreed, of course, but he thought that the offspring would be either sterile (like mules) or less fit than purebreds; in either case, the hybrids would die out, unless artificially propagated by humans. Darwin did not know about genes or DNA. Now that we do, biologists find examples (often involving microorganisms) of gene exchanges across species lines without the intermediate step of sexual reproduction. Viral infec-



*The finches Charles Darwin observed on the Galápagos Islands were later grouped into neatly defined species, shown here in male-female pairs. But research reveals that the birds are still evolving rapidly, and doing so by the un-Darwinian means of hybridization.*

tion or even close contact between microorganisms will do the trick in some cases. The process can resemble the laboratory techniques of genetic engineers.

The emerging new look of evolution is not merely a matter of having a better image or metaphor to explain the origin of species. It has profound consequences for our understanding of what happened in the distant past, what's happening around us today, and what's happening *to* us in the era of West Nile virus and HIV/AIDS.

The tree-of-life metaphor sometimes blinded us to important realities. It told us that lineages should diverge and keep diverging from one another, and that

genetic interactions, if they occur, should have only transient and trivial consequences. The evolutionary web metaphor points to a very different understanding. We are beginning to see that gene exchange is so rampant that every aspect of nature is affected by the shuffling and reshuffling of genomes.

Earlier this year, for example, a team of Smithsonian Institution biologists, led by Dina Fonseca, reported in *Science* that the recent outbreaks of sometimes deadly West Nile virus in parts of the United States might have result-

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ed from the rise of a new species of hybrid mosquitoes. West Nile virus incubates mainly in birds and is carried to other hosts by mosquitoes. In the Mediterranean regions of Europe and North Africa, where the virus is endemic, one type of mosquito feeds mostly on birds, while another favors mammals such as us. That interruption in the channel of transmission ensures that the virus rarely

finds its way from birds to humans. In the United States, however, the two types of mosquitoes have crossed to create a hybrid that appears to bite both birds and humans. The consequence? From the first cases reported in New York City during 1999, when seven people died, the disease has spread steadily across the continent; nearly 10,000 cases in 46 states were reported last year, and more than 250 deaths.

A branching evolutionary tree could not have produced this outbreak of disease, even if we assume that the two types of mosquitoes had a common evolutionary ancestor. The bird-biting mosquitoes should have kept diverging from the human-biting mosquitoes (like two twigs growing from a common branch) and not shared their genetic traits through crossbreeding.

Fonseca and her collaborators stumbled on the hybrid explanation for West Nile transmission only after working initially with the assumptions of the traditional model of evolution. They weren't looking for the new explanation. Indeed, when Fonseca began researching the outbreak of West Nile virus in America, she thought she was dealing with a single type of Old World mosquito long resident in the United States—the human biters. She analyzed the DNA of U.S. mosquitoes and compared it with that of both Old World types and other mosquitoes from around the world. That gave her an extensive database of mosquito DNA. Then, University of London biologist Colin Malcolm proposed that this database be used to investigate the evolutionary origin of a distinct type of pesky,

>MICHAEL L. ARNOLD, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Georgia, is the author of *Natural Hybridization and Evolution* (1997) and of more than 90 scientific articles, many of them dealing with the evolutionary role of natural hybridization. EDWARD J. LARSON, a historian of science at the University of Georgia, won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize in history for *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*. His most recent book is *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory* (2004).



human-biting mosquito that had taken up residence in sewers, subway tunnels, and other warm underground spaces of northern European cities during the past century.

Though the two traditional Old World types of mosquitoes act differently and tend to live apart, they look alike to us. The bird biter, *Culex pipiens*, inhabits an extensive portion of Europe (as far south as the Mediterranean coast) and is dormant in winter; the people biter, *C. molestus*, dominates in the Mediterranean regions of North Africa and remains active year-round. During the 1700s, scientists gave these mosquitoes different names based on their biting preferences, but their physical similarities led many later researchers to view them as two varieties of a single species and to call them both by the older name, *C. pipiens*.

Malcolm and Fonseca wanted to find out whether the human-biting underground dweller that had appeared in northern European cities in the 20th century had evolved independently out of the local *pipiens* population or represented a colonial extension of the North African *molestus*. Evolutionary biologists maintain that genetic differences increase along with the amount of time that has elapsed since divergence, so that the greater the similarity between the DNA of two types, the closer the two types' kinship will be. In the case of *pipiens* and *molestus*, Fonseca found that, though the two species look alike on the outside, each has its own distinctive DNA signature or fingerprint. The DNA of the underground mosquitoes turned out to be so similar to that of the North African type that the under-



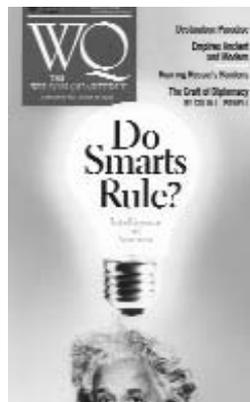
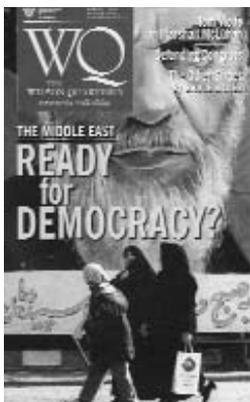
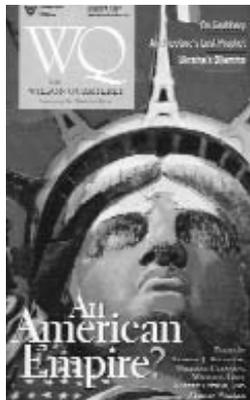
*A new species of mosquito with a taste for both birds and humans may be responsible for the recent outbreaks of West Nile virus. Not yet named, the mosquito is a hybrid of Culex pipiens (shown) and Culex molestus.*

ground mosquitoes must have come from *molestus* stock.

That finding had important implications for Fonseca's work on the outbreak of West Nile virus in America. Mosquitoes tend to spread. Transported in cargo or by other accidental means, *pipiens* and *molestus* mosquitoes now live in many places, including the United States. By studying their DNA, Fonseca discovered that, except for those living in America, the two types typically segregate in breeding. In the United States, however, she found many hybrids with a mix of DNA markers characteristic of both types of mosquitoes. Fonseca proposed that these opportunistic American mosquitoes, combining the preferences of their hybrid ancestry, bite both birds and humans, and thereby serve as a bridge carrying the virus from birds to humans, whom it can infect and kill. A disease that existed for years in Mediterranean regions, typically without any significant threat to the human population, became a dreaded killer once introduced into America. An evolutionary web of life explains this development in a way that a branching evolutionary tree could not: If the mos-



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quitoes did not crossbreed and produce viable hybrids, they would not pose any greater threat of spreading the West Nile virus in the United States than they do in Europe.

**M**ating is not the only means by which the evolutionary web is woven. Genes, and even entire genomes, can be captured by one organism as it feeds upon, infects, or otherwise associates intimately with another organism. The process, known as horizontal gene transfer or lateral gene transfer, can link species from different branches of the evolutionary tree. To the organisms involved in the transfer, the process is beneficial; to other species with which they come into contact—us, for example—the results can be innocuous, beneficial, or disastrous. As Darwin taught us nearly 150 years ago, that is how the struggle for existence operates—and nothing in the new view of evolution repeals the “law” of natural selection.

A dramatic example of horizontal gene transfer was reported this year in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The case involved an unnamed patient infected with *Bacillus cereus*, a bacterium that normally causes little more than a bad case of food poisoning. But the patient became deathly ill with a form of pneumonia associated with anthrax. No one knows how the patient was infected, but he sought medical care two days after exhibiting symptoms (chills, fever, nausea, and vomiting) resembling those suffered by victims of the 2001 bioterrorist anthrax attacks. He fought for his life during 44 days of

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mechanical ventilation, treatment with five separate antimicrobials, and the partial removal of a lung. When researchers performed an after-the-fact analysis of a *Bacillus cereus* strain isolated from the patient, they discovered that it had acquired toxin-producing genes from *Bacillus anthracis*. The acquired genes made the strain as deadly to humans as anthrax—a chance natural occurrence, apparently,

that may not pose any continuing threat. The researchers found only four suspiciously similar, but perhaps unrelated, cases in the medical literature.

There are still other ways for organisms to exchange portions of their genomes. The virus that causes influenza, one of the most devastating of all pandemic diseases to humans, exists in various forms and uses many avenues to assimilate and reassemble its genome. Pigs, chickens, ducks, and geese are among the living reservoirs within which different influenza strains are collected, and exchanges and rearrangements occur. Certain genetic combinations allow the virus to attack our species. Sometimes, as in 1918, 1957, and 1968, millions of us die, but in any severe flu season, thousands perish. The DNA fingerprints tell a tale of reas-

sortments between many players in many hosts. From ducks to chickens to geese to pigs to humans, and back again, the virus migrates and reassorts, then migrates and reassorts once more.

In 1997 and 2002, for example, deadly outbreaks of bird flu among humans in Hong Kong and southern China occurred when a previously harmless strain of the virus, long endemic in ducks, acquired gene segments from viruses in quail and geese, then jumped to chickens and, ultimately, humans. This new strain was not the product of mutations at individual DNA bases, as the classical Darwinian model would suggest, but a result instead of genetic recombinations across species lines, such as scientists perform in biotechnology labs. The sojourning and changing take place because the virus is part of the web of evolutionary interactions. In this example, the web acts somewhat like a terrorist sleeper cell: Hidden units immigrate and reassort but are destined ultimately to destroy their hosts.

**D**isease-causing insects and microorganisms are not the only species invested in—and vested by—this web of genetic interactions. For many people, British ornithologist David Lack's studies of finches on the Galápagos Islands, culminating in his landmark 1947 book, *Darwin's Finches*, captured the essence of neo-Darwinism's metaphor of a tree with never-crossing, ever-diverging branches. Lack concluded that, despite their obvious similarities, the finches fell into 13 distinct species, which would not hybridize. Distinguished mainly by their beaks, these species had evolved to eat different plant foods in the isolated, arid archipelago. A diagram in George Gaylord Simpson's influential 1957 college text *Life: An Introduction to Biology* shows these finch species diverging ever outward from a common ancestor in a classic neo-Darwinian process known as adaptive radiation, with no imaginable end to the divergence as each became ever more finely tuned to exploit its feeding niche. Similarly, a model high school biology text published in 1963 by the federally funded Biological Sciences Curriculum Study pictures Darwin's finches perched neatly on separate branches of the metaphorical tree of life. Even today's most widely used college text on the topic, Douglas Futuyma's *Evolutionary Biology*, first published in 1979 and periodically revised thereafter, depicts the evolution of these birds as an ever-branching, never-crossing tree of diversity.

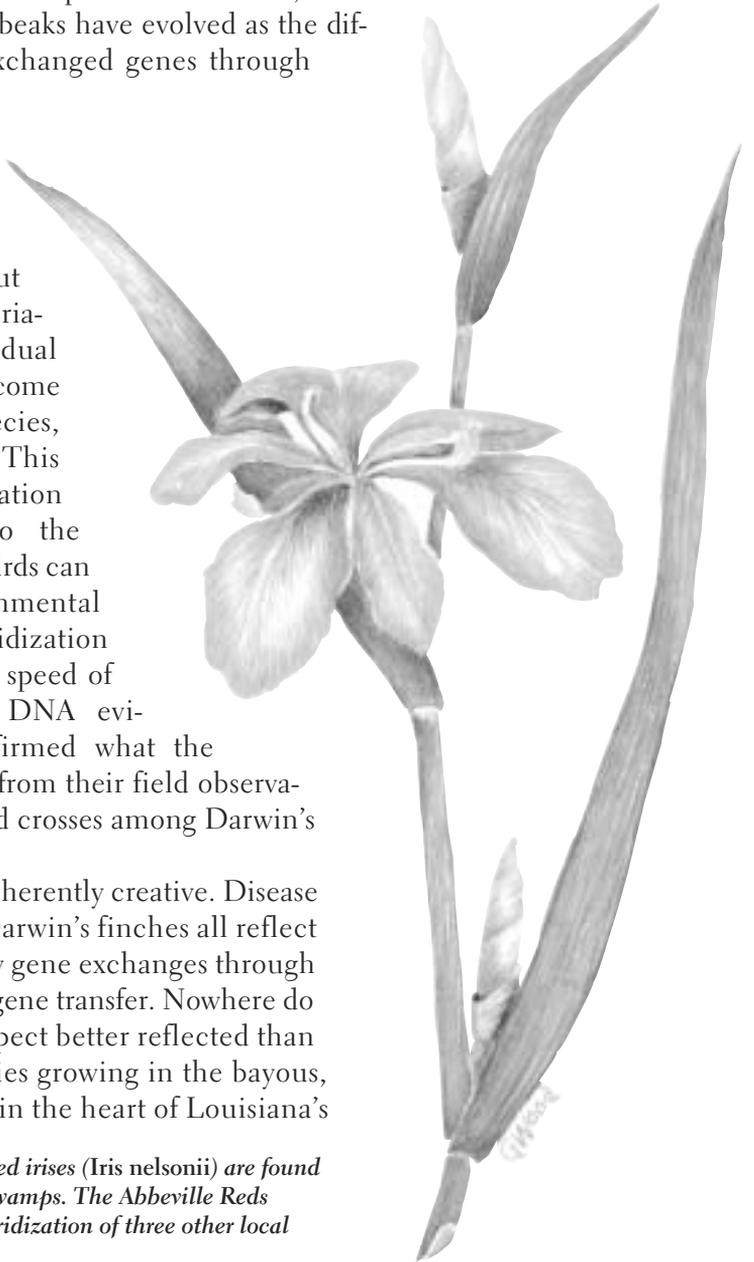
The ongoing field study of Galápagos finches by Princeton University ornithologists Peter and Rosemary Grant, made famous by the 1993 best-seller *Beak of the Finch*, paints a different picture: a tangled web of long-term and extensive breeding across species lines, with some hybrids more fit than their original, nonhybrid parents. At the best of times, the environment is harsh for the finches that inhabit the few acres of arid, cone-shaped oceanic protuberance known as Daphne Major, where the Grants have carried out the bulk of their fieldwork since 1976. In the course of the three decades the Grants have been keeping watch, marked annual fluctuations in rainfall have periodically altered the type and amount

of seeds available for the finches to eat. The evolutionary response to these severe pressures has not been the total extinction of the unsuited species. Rather, the finch species' beaks have alternately become more similar to or different from one another as the birds adapt to their available food.

The shifts are stunning in their speed—no gradual changes over millions of years here. Under the classic neo-Darwinian view of evolution, this appears to be a simple and elegant example of the effects of natural selection at work on distinct species. But according to the Grants, such a conclusion, based as it is on the tree-of-life metaphor, is simply wrong. The different finch species have not changed solely as a result of selective breeding within their own kind, with only the fittest of each species surviving, as Darwin postulated. Instead, at least in some cases, the birds' beaks have evolved as the different species have exchanged genes through hybridization. Beneficial changes have been preserved through natural selection, just as Darwin proposed, but some of the genetic variation feeding individual species' evolution has come from other finch species, not from their own. This source of added variation surely contributes to the speed at which these birds can adapt to environmental changes, just as hybridization may contribute to the speed of evolution generally. DNA evidence has now confirmed what the Grants first suspected from their field observations: successful hybrid crosses among Darwin's finches.

The web of life is inherently creative. Disease vectors, viruses, and Darwin's finches all reflect the novelty afforded by gene exchanges through matings or horizontal gene transfer. Nowhere do we see this creative aspect better reflected than in a group of iris species growing in the bayous, swamps, and marshes in the heart of Louisiana's

*Louisiana's rare Abbeville Red irises (Iris nelsonii) are found in only a few of the state's swamps. The Abbeville Reds arose out of the natural hybridization of three other local iris species.*



Cajun country. The various species, known colloquially as Louisiana Irises, cross to produce floral colorations and body forms that span the range of the parents' floral hues (lavender, blue, and red) and sizes (from flower stalks that barely rise above the forest floor to stalks that tower seven feet high). Though the creative processes at work among Louisiana Irises are not limited to gene exchanges, such exchanges had a central role in generating this wonderful plant.

The region's human inhabitants long knew about one particular, though rarely seen, type of Louisiana Iris so distinctive that they called it "Abbeville Red," after its brilliant color and only known habitat. During the 1960s and 1970s, a series of studies by botanist L. F. Randolph confirmed what local residents had tacitly recognized all along: The Abbeville Reds represented a distinct species. Yet to proclaim the Abbeville Reds a separate species, *Iris nelsonii* (named to honor Ira Nelson, a professor of horticulture who taught at what is now the University of Southwestern Louisiana), posed a problem for tradition-minded taxonomists, because the evolutionary origin of the Reds clearly involved hybrid matings. The species was declared a hybrid at a time when Darwinian doctrine still maintained that species arise from diverging branches, not from the crossing of diverging branches.

To make matters worse, Randolph concluded that his proposed species derived from hybridization between not two but three different species of Louisiana Irises, *I. fulva*, *I. brevicaulis*, and *I. hexagona*. And just to make the conclusion harder to swallow, these were not some lowly microorganisms that might be expected to interchange their genomes more easily than complex organisms such as the "higher" plants. There the story paused for a quarter-century, awaiting the merger of technological advances that would allow the fine-scale genetic dissection of the Louisiana Iris genome by a group of evolutionary biologists interested in reexamining even the most basic Darwinian doctrines. Fieldwork done by one of us, Mike Arnold, in the late 1980s, here becomes part of our larger account.

HYBRIDIZATION HAS HELPED  
GALÁPAGOS FINCHES EVOLVE  
WITH STUNNING SPEED.

**M**ike arrived in the Louisiana town of St. Martinville to meet his soon-to-be-guide to the *I. nelsonii* populations, Tim Hebert, in the Café Thibodaux. Tim quickly spotted Mike, the lone tourist, and the two headed off in Tim's pickup truck to a point some 10 miles or so from the marshes that hedge the bottom of the state. Their course led to a swamp owned by a Cajun family whose matriarch was Anna Mae Butaud. As Anna Mae smiled through her screen door, she explained that over the years many people had carted off—first in wagons, then in trucks—thousands of iris plants for use in the horticultural trade. She frowned as she said, "I just don't know if there are any Abbevilles left back there."

So it was with diminished hopes of finding the nearly mythical plant that Mike and Tim stepped through the border of brush into the twilight-tinged, moisture-filled air of a perfect bald cypress swamp. To their delight, the gray and deep green of the cypress trunks and palmetto fronds were accented by splashes of color from the large, brick-red flowers of *I. nelsonii*. Mike wondered silently whether Randolph's hypothesis was correct—that bumblebees and hummingbirds, the pollinators of

HIV/AIDS GAINS MUCH  
OF ITS VEHEMENCE FROM  
PROCESSES ASSOCIATED  
WITH THE WEB OF LIFE.

the Louisiana Iris species, had acted as the pollen vectors between *I. fulva*, *I. brevicaulis*, *I. hexagona*, and their hybrids, resulting in the evolutionary origin of the remarkable *I. nelsonii*.

Mike surfaced from his musings, and he and Tim got to work collecting fragments of leaves from a subset of the plants. This material, and specifically the DNA from the *I. nelsonii* cells, would give them the molecular clues to solve the evolutionary mystery. Several days later, as Mike stared at the DNA fingerprints from *I. fulva*, *I. brevicaulis*, *I. hexagona*, and *I. nelsonii*, arrayed side by side under ultraviolet light, he had the answer. Not only was *I. nelsonii* a hybrid species, it was indeed a tripartite hybrid species—and a profound illustration of why the web-of-life metaphor is needed to define accurately the evolutionary process.

Organisms need not be as closely related as the irises to participate in genetic exchanges that generate genomes reminiscent of a patchwork quilt. *Haemophilus influenzae*, for example, is one of the most common bacterial species in the upper respiratory tract of humans. It is normally benign. Only when it gets into the eye, causing the mild reddish irritation known as conjunctivitis, or “pink-eye,” do we commonly notice its presence. So no one suspected a role for *H. influenzae* when a novel, lethal, meningitis-like disease called Brazilian purpuric fever began to afflict Brazilian children in the 1980s; the death rate among its victims was an astounding 70 percent. Researchers began the hunt for isolates of the unknown organism causing the deadly infection, and they were initially baffled when they recovered instead “pinkeye” bacteria, species *H. influenzae*. But subsequent confirmation that this novel form of *H. influenzae*, biogroup *aegyptius*, was indeed the deadly pathogen forced researchers to the obvious conclusion that *H. influenzae* had acquired the genes necessary to yield meningitis.

As we now know, such exchanges between highly divergent microorganisms are common. The increase in pathogenicity of *H. influenzae* reflects the acquisition of a novel adaptation and is conceptually the same as the adaptation that led to the increase in ecological tolerance in Darwin's finches in the Galápagos. However, unlike what occurred with

the finches and in other cases of natural hybridization, the acquisition of a new adaptation in *H. influenzae* was a consequence of horizontal gene transfer rather than sexual recombination. Nonetheless, we are led back once again to the same conclusion: The web of life is a better metaphor than the tree of life for understanding evolutionary phenomena.

The most devastating plague of our generation, HIV/AIDS, continues to gain much of its vehemence from processes associated with the web of life. Known as SIV, or simian immunodeficiency virus, the virus that now gives rise to AIDS was originally lodged in chimpanzees and sooty mangabeys. Ancient recombination among various forms of this virus possibly contributed to the extreme variability seen in the HIV that strikes humans today. The web of genomic interactions produces an ever-changing array of virus types. There is not just one AIDS-causing virus; their number is legion, which makes fighting the disease all the more difficult. The enemy keeps changing. But so do we. That is the essence of organic evolution. It generates diversity in life, to our benefit or our detriment.

**T**hus far we've highlighted some of the frightening results—frightening for humans, that is—of gene exchanges through hybridization and horizontal transfers. But we should also mention some delightful ones. We need look no farther than the dog curled up at our feet. The ties that have bound this diverse and adaptable species to our own over thousands of years have not kept dogs from mating (or backcrossing) with their wild relatives in the canine genus—the wolf, the jackal, and the coyote. Molecular research confirms what was long suspected: Dogs are opportunistic breeders. Diverging evolutionary “trees” cannot fully account for the genome of the modern dog.

Although each canine species has a distinct and identifiable DNA fingerprint, biologist Robert K. Wayne of the University of California, Los Angeles, found that domestic dogs still carry bits and pieces of DNA imported from wolves after the supposed separation of the two species. Other geneticists have detected similar links caused by mating between dogs and coyotes and between wild canine species. Such hybrid crosses probably contributed to the extremely high level of genetic variation that has blessed dog fanciers with breeds as divergent as the French poodle, the German shepherd, the Cuban havanese, the Mexican Chihuahua, the Great Dane, the Siberian husky, and the English bulldog.

But the benefits to humans of gene flow from interspecies crosses may have been far more direct than is reflected in our appreciation of the many breeds of dogs. Interspecies crossing may also have helped to create *us*. Although their speculations remain tentative and controversial, some researchers propose that our hominid ancestors may have interbred, and

LOUISIANA'S SWAMPS YIELD A  
PROFOUND ILLUSTRATION OF  
THE EVOLUTIONARY WEB.

that the vaunted *Australopithecus robustus*, which many paleontologists place in the main line of human evolution, may itself have had a hybrid genome. More recently in our pedigree, members of the Neanderthal species may have bred with early *Homo sapiens* and passed along some of their genes to us.

Two opposing models of modern human origins have emerged within the scientific community. The “complete replacement” hypothesis holds that approximately 40,000 years ago modern humans, migrating out of Africa, displaced all archaic human populations without gene exchange. This neo-Darwinian version of the human family tree regards *H. neanderthalensis* and *H. sapiens* as separate branches radiating from the *H. erectus* trunk, incapable of crossbreeding successfully because they were distinct species. *Sapiens* then won the struggle for existence.

The “multiregional evolution” hypothesis counters that, like domestic dogs, modern humans are a hybrid between two different *Homo* species. If this hypothesis is correct, our hybrid ancestry dates from the time when immigrating *sapiens* from Africa encountered and mated with the resident *neanderthalensis* individuals living in Eurasia. In light of all the other examples we have discussed, it would be logical to conclude that a geographic and temporal overlap between modern and archaic forms of humans could have resulted in some level of gene flow through crossbreeding. That’s just what Washington University evolutionary biologist Alan Templeton concluded after examining mitochondrial and nuclear DNA fingerprints taken from human lineages. Templeton’s genetic evidence shows that there was at least some gene exchange as *sapiens* occupied *neanderthalensis* territory. The resulting hybrids were the modern *sapiens* that have spread to the uttermost parts of the earth, including back to Africa.

Fossil remains also support the hypothesis of genetic admixture between modern and archaic humans. The evidence includes individual fossils with a mixture of traits of the older and newer human forms, as well as entire populations preserved in the fossil record that appear to blend archaic and modern physical structures. Neanderthals may not have gone quietly into the night, as paleontologists long thought, but instead mated and produced children with *H. sapiens*.

**E**vidence involving various species, then, suggests that evolution is best depicted by closely or distantly related strands of a web that diverge, converge, and intersect. Yet humans are not mere passive actors caught in this web. For millennia, through crop and animal breeding, we have actively contributed to the process of hybridizing closely related species. Most recently, with the advent of genetic engineering and biotechnology, we have begun to contribute as well to the web process of horizontal gene transfer. Whether transferring “delayed ripening” genes from a disease of bacteria (i.e., a bacteriophage) into cantaloupe to prevent our breakfast from going mushy too quickly, or splicing a gene for pesticide resistance from bacteria into corn to keep insects from feeding on the plants in a field, or implanting the gene for human interferon into the DNA of chickens so that their eggs contain the pro-

tein used to battle hepatitis C, or introducing the gene for a red fluorescent protein from a sea anemone into zebra fish so that they look more attractive to us in an aquarium, biotech researchers now move genes between species so unrelated to one another that it's difficult to imagine the natural web of life ever accomplishing the same task. Yet these researchers' work perfectly represents how evolution has proceeded through the ages to produce the diversity of life on earth. Different evolutionary strands have been brought into association, either through hybridization or genetic capture, and the result has been mosaic genomes.

Perhaps there's a warning for us in the web-of-life metaphor. Before we fully accept genetic engineering, with its cornucopia of genetically modified crops and farm animals, we should consider the take-home message of the popular science-fiction movie (and novel) *Jurassic Park*, which features self-absorbed geneticists bringing dinosaurs back to life on a jungle island.

To ensure that viewers don't miss the point, one of the movie's heroes scolds the architect of this mad scheme: "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they *could* that they didn't stop to think if they *should*." Should we be as concerned that the engineered genes of transgenic corn and melon plants will make it into their wild relatives, which still grow near them throughout the cultivated world? Is it a problem that these wild relatives might become "superweeds," resistant to natural pests that previously controlled their population? "Of course it's a risk," say many scientists. Is it probable that delayed-ripening genes added to food crops might end up in their wild relatives as well — causing a lack of seed production in them and leading to the extinction of the native forms? Again, some scientists are concerned that the answer is yes. And what of the glowing zebra fish that's flushed down the toilet when its owner grows tired of its radiance? Once introduced into the novel ecosystem of a North American city's lakes or streams, will the fish threaten the resident flora and fauna? The risk, though small, is real.

If we think in terms of an evolutionary web of life, we'll be more alert to the prospect that gene transfer can cause unforeseen consequences to unfold quickly in nature — much more quickly than if evolution occurred only through the gradual accumulation of gene mutations envisioned by a neo-Darwinian tree of life. Evolution could not have produced the current diversity of life in the time available to it without employing every source of genetic variation open to it. But once we begin to radically modify the genetic systems that we know as species, the outcome may be a blessing or a bane. Only time and experience will teach us which. In many cases, the outcome is likely to be a bit of both. □

NEANDERTHALS MAY  
NOT HAVE GONE QUIETLY  
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OF MODERN HUMANS.



*A fervent Booker T. Washington takes the stage to address a crowd outside New Orleans, circa 1912.*

# Washington, Du Bois, and the Black Future

Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois were pioneers in the quest for African-American equality in America. They were also bitter rivals. What's sometimes overlooked is that their years of public confrontation were preceded by a decade of cautious mutual regard.

BY MARK BAUERLEIN

**O**n July 27, 1894, the 26-year-old William Edward Burghardt Du Bois sent a letter to Booker T. Washington, the principal of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, asking whether there was a vacancy at Tuskegee for the coming term. Du Bois had just returned from two years of study in Europe and was a “Fisk and Harvard man,” with a reference from Daniel Coit Gilman, president of Johns Hopkins University. Du Bois had been at Fisk with Washington’s wife, so he added that Mrs. Washington “knows of me.”

His training and connections were impressive, but at the time Du Bois was still an unknown figure, not yet what he was to become: a prominent public intellectual and forceful advocate of civil, political, and economic parity of blacks and whites in America. And Washington, the “Wizard of Tuskegee,” was the most distinguished black educator in the country. A month passed before Washington responded with the offer of a post teaching mathematics “if terms suit.” By then, Du Bois had been offered, and had accepted, another position: chair of classics at Wilberforce University in Ohio (with a salary of \$800 a year). He declined a subsequent offer from Lincoln Institute in Missouri (salary \$1,050) and turned down Tuskegee as well. An invitation from Washington was flattering, but ever the man of principle, Du Bois would not break his earlier commitment.

The episode set the pattern of contact the two men would have for the next 10 years. Their intellectual visions did not jibe, to be sure: Washington spread the gospel of work and managed the Tuskegee Machine, a national network of loyal graduates, donors, and lieutenants, akin to a political machine, while Du Bois executed his sociological inquiries, jumped from one research job to another, and had other expectations for his race. Yet they sometimes acted as allies, with Washington treating Du Bois as a potential follower, and Du Bois treating Washington as a discreet patron. Every few months, letters were posted and projects deliberated. It was a relationship of enticements, negotiations, tactical respect—and rising suspicion. Washington tempted Du Bois with job offers and solicited his counsel. Du Bois asked Washington for recommendations. They corresponded on legal strategies, planned conferences together, and saluted each other’s work. Each felt the other out for advantage.

The later rupture between Du Bois and Washington has obscured this decade of guarded collegiality. By 1906, the men had become open enemies, standing for polar-opposite race policies in post-Reconstruction America. Washington advocated “go slow” accommodationism, while Du Bois favored militant protest. Once Du Bois moved north in 1910 to become editor of the magazine *Crisis* at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Washington came to believe that Du Bois resented his power. And after Washington died in November 1915, Du Bois’s judgment was harsh indeed: “In stern justice, we must lay on the soul of this man a heavy responsibility for the consummation of Negro disfranchisement, the decline of the Negro college and public school, and the firmer establishment of color caste in this land.”

From 1894 to 1904, however, Du Bois felt differently. He was an ambitious young scholar/teacher eager to break into the black intelligentsia, atop which reigned Washington. The Wizard of Tuskegee could use an intellectual heavyweight such as Du Bois to spread his theory of industrial education, a curriculum stressing vocational skills, not liberal arts, and the Harvard Ph.D. craved an institution where academic inquiry might foment real social change. But Washington wanted operatives, and Du Bois prized his independence. Washington was practical and Du Bois proud. No wonder the courtship was uneasy. Trustees at Tuskegee urged Washington to dump the young professor, and militants in Boston taunted Du Bois as Washington's lackey. Only after their decade of cooperation collapsed into estrangement did the canonical Washington/Du Bois opposition emerge. To the familiar tale of their antagonism an account of their earlier collegiality makes a fitting preface.

**T**he year after Du Bois sent his letter inquiring about a job, Washington delivered one of the great speeches in U.S. history, "The Atlanta Compromise," in Atlanta's Piedmont Park. The occasion was the Cotton States and International Exposition, and Washington was on the opening-day program. In Atlanta that day, "his eyes and his whole face lit up with the fire of prophecy," a New York reporter wrote. When he was finished, *The Atlanta Constitution* marveled, "tears ran down the face of many blacks in the audience. White Southern women pulled flowers from the bosoms of their dresses and rained them on the black man on stage." It was a revolutionary moment, a black man sharing a podium with whites, shaking their hands, declaring a new social policy for the South.

But for all of Washington's force and brilliance, his speech was a modest proposal. "The wisest among my race," he assured the mixed audience, "understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly." Progress for blacks comes from a steady job, a bank account, a piece of property, not from protest and voting drives. Blacks will till fields, haul freight, and cook meals, a trusty labor force with no social aspirations and few political opinions. The higher attainments of culture and citizenship shall be deferred until blacks master the lower traits of thrift and industry. Having proved their value as employees and consumers, they may join U.S. society as equals, for "no race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized."

Moderate blacks and whites loved the Atlanta Compromise. Clark Howell, a leading white voice in the South, called it "a platform upon which blacks and whites can stand with full justice," and President Grover Cleveland said, "Your words cannot fail to delight and encourage all who wish well for your race." But black intellectuals and militants scorned Washington's program. Bishop Henry M. Turner, an advocate of emigration to Africa, thought that Washington "will have to live a long time to undo the harm he has done our race." One Negro newspaper reported, "Prof. B.

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*Du Bois sits in his office at Atlanta University in 1909. At the university, he undertook sociological surveys to document the oppressive conditions faced by black Americans.*

T. or Bad Taste Wash. has made a speech . . . . The white press style Prof. Bad Taste the new Negro, but if there is anything in him except the most servile type of the old Negro we fail to find it.”

**S**everal hundred miles north, in Wilberforce, Du Bois sided with the moderates. “Let me heartily congratulate you upon your phenomenal success in Atlanta,” he wrote to Washington. Hearing of dissent in the black press, Du Bois went so far as to send a note to *The New York Age*, arguing that the Compromise “might be the basis of a real settlement between whites and blacks in the South, if the South opened up to the Negroes the doors of economic opportunity.” Beneath Washington’s conciliatory tone he perceived a sound strategy: Don’t demand political rights until you have the economic power to back up the demand.

Du Bois had his reasons for the generous response. Three months later, he sent another letter. “My Dear Mr. Washington,” it began. “This is my second year at Wilberforce, and although the field here is a good one, yet I am not wholly satisfied and am continually on the lookout for another position.” He found Wilberforce intellectually stifling, filled with revivalism among the undergraduates and nepotism among the administrators. Stuck in an institution with “too much church politics in the management and too little real interest and devotion to the work of real education,” Du Bois was desperate to get out. His Harvard dissertation on the slave trade was about to be published, he was engaged to Nina Gomer, a Wilberforce student, and he had student loan payments to make. “If you hear of an opening which you think I am fitted to fill,” he beseeched, “kindly let me know.”

This time Washington replied swiftly, proposing two weeks later that Du Bois come to Tuskegee. But Du Bois hesitated. On April 1, he sent a surprisingly casual response: “I have been for some time seeking a leisure hour in which to answer you[r] kind letter of the 17th of January. . . . I feel that I should like the work at Tuskegee if I could be of service to you,” but “at present I do not know just how I could be of service.” Du Bois had been the one to ask about a job, and now, it must have seemed to Washington, he was playing hard to get. He specialized in history and economics, Du Bois noted, and “some elementary courses in these lines

WASHINGTON WAS CALLED  
“THE LEADER OF HIS RACE.”  
IN LONDON, HE TOOK TEA  
WITH QUEEN VICTORIA.

would be needed at Tuskegee”—a gratuitous criticism to include in a job negotiation—but Du Bois couldn’t commit. What had happened in the preceding weeks to turn him from job seeker to hot prospect was obvious: Another offer had come through. The University of Pennsylvania had contacted him about undertaking a yearlong study of the black population in Philadelphia. He planned to accept and postpone his Tuskegee option: “This, it might be, would [be] a good introductory year’s work after which if needed I could come to Tuskegee.”

No definite plans were arranged. Washington visited Wilberforce in June 1896, and Du Bois sent him an advance note offering the hospitality of a friend’s home (Du Bois was living in a dormitory), but no record of their meeting exists. In the ensuing two years, each managed his own career. Still basking in the acclaim of the Atlanta Compromise speech, Washington made trips to the White House to arrange a Tuskegee visit by President William McKinley. In October 1898 he addressed 16,000 people at the Chicago Peace Jubilee, only months after being the featured speaker at the dedication of the Robert Gould Shaw monument in Boston (William James had been merely number two on the program). He was now called “The Leader of His Race,” and editors and politicians monitored his words as prime indicators of the black viewpoint.

In Philadelphia, meanwhile, plodding door to door asking wary residents about income, employment, and background as he gathered material for his study *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois found his own prestige growing. His basic premise—that social science founded on hard data was the best approach to the “Negro problem”—began to win acceptance. *The Atlantic Monthly* published his work, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics proposed some studies that Du Bois might direct, he was elected vice president of the American Negro Academy, and he lectured to the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences.

But his contract at the University of Pennsylvania was due to expire on January 1, 1898, and the university showed no interest in keeping him. Indeed, Du Bois griped, it paid him a “pitiful stipend” and “my name never actually got

into the catalogue. . . . I did no instructing save once to pilot a pack of idiots through the Negro slums.” Du Bois’s dissertation adviser, Albert Bushnell Hart, urged Washington to tender another job offer. “Have you no place for the best-educated colored man available for college work?” he chided. But the Wizard kept silent.

Given Du Bois’s vision of higher education and increasing militancy, we might interpret Washington’s silence as ideologically driven. He could not risk the ire of local whites and Tuskegee donors who might object to the haughty sociologist. But Washington’s hesitation may have stemmed not from clashes of ideas but from his recent dealings with Du Bois. He had already sent Du Bois two job offers, and both were rejected. Du Bois himself had solicited the second offer, only to treat it in a cavalier way. At the very time Du Bois’s backers were advising Washington to offer him a position, Du Bois was negotiating with Atlanta University for a professorship in economics and history. By Christmas 1897, the Du Boises were settled there in faculty apartments. Why should Washington engage in yet another auction for the young scholar’s services?

The recruitment dance ended, but the next two years brought the men into closer league. Du Bois organized a meeting in 1899 at Atlanta University on a topic dear to the Wizard’s heart: “The Negro in Business.” Du Bois and colleague John Hope championed Washington’s message of economic power, advising black businessmen to carve out market niches and form a trade guild. Washington liked the idea so much that he com-

mandeered it and inaugurated the National Negro Business League, with Du Bois’s help. After the conference, Du Bois had been appointed head of a committee of the Afro-American Council to coordinate local chap-

ters of the proposed guild. Du Bois agreed on condition that the council supply funds for postage. Washington learned of the plan and had Bookerite council member T. Thomas Fortune kill the appropriation. Du Bois abandoned the project but at Washington’s request forwarded his lengthy mailing list of black businessmen. Washington used it to recruit league members. Du Bois suspected Washington’s chicanery but did not protest. He may have felt relieved.

Another Tuskegee initiative had reached Du Bois’s desk weeks earlier. He and Washington had shared the stage in Boston in late March and exchanged warm regards. Du Bois was energized by his work at Atlanta University; Washington looked haggard and depressed. “Mr. Washington was not at his best,” Du Bois said, and supporters raised money to send him on a vacation to Europe. But the meeting renewed Washington’s recruitment efforts, and three weeks before the “Negro in Business” conference, he sent Du Bois yet another job offer.

## DU BOIS REJECTED SEVERAL JOB OFFERS FROM ‘THE WIZARD.’

**A**s Du Bois pondered the offer for two months in Atlanta, Washington took tea with Queen Victoria in England and met ex-president Benjamin Harrison in Paris. When Du Bois finally replied on July 12, his letter bore all the marks of courtesy—“I assure you that I appreciate the

honor”—but a new note of restraint as well. He promised to “decide during the winter as to whether I think a change best for all interests,” but wanted “to hear from you more definitely as to the work you would expect & the salary.” As a working sociologist, Du Bois needed institutional resources to hire data collectors, pay for clerical support, and publish findings. A move to Tuskegee would require a research plan. Du Bois vowed to “think out a plan of work that I might accomplish at Tuskegee [sic],” and he burdened Washington with doing the same: “I trust you will write me freely & frankly as to any plans you may have, that we may understand each other thoroughly.”

**T**he phrases “freely & frankly” and “understand each other” constituted tacit acknowledgment of practical differences between Du Bois’s social science and Washington’s vocational training. But Du Bois’s reply issued from something else as well. Two recent incidents had shocked him. First, a month before the “Negro in Business” conference, Sam Hose, a black farmhand suspected of rape and murder, was lynched in a town southwest of Atlanta, tortured and dismembered before 2,000 cheering whites. Du Bois composed a protest statement and headed toward the offices of *The Atlanta Constitution*, but he halted when someone told him that in a store up ahead were displayed the roasted knuckles of the victim. He turned for home and sank into a professional soul-search. “One could not be a calm, cool, detached scientist,” he thought, “while Negroes were lynched, murdered and starved.”

The second incident occurred two days after Washington sent his offer letter: Du Bois’s beloved son, Burghardt, fell ill of diphtheria. He was 18 months old, lively and bright, with olive skin and blond curls. But the sewage system in Atlanta was leaky and the water tainted. “He died at eventide,” Du Bois recalled, “when the sun lay like a brooding sorrow above the western hills.” Nina plunged into depression: “In a sense my wife died too.” As they walked to the cemetery, Burghardt’s coffin draped in posies, white voices on the sidewalk muttered, “Niggers!”

The two traumatic incidents explain the caginess in Du Bois’s July letter. Certainly Du Bois worried about Washington’s overseeing his work, but he appreciated the offer. In August 1899, at a meeting of the Afro-American Council in Chicago, some delegates denounced Washington for skipping the meeting, a sign, they said, of his soft stand on Jim Crow and lynching. Du Bois rose with several others to defend Washington—a gesture duly reported to Tuskegee. Two months later, Washington renewed his offer, adding that “our printing office will be wholly at your service and you could use it in a way that would scatter your writings all through the country.” Du Bois would teach but one class a year, salary \$1,400, with housing included. “If any portion of this proposition is not satisfactory to you,” Washington closed, “I shall be glad to make any reasonable changes in it.”

Du Bois waited until February 1900 to decide. In the meantime, the two men worked on parallel efforts to quash a new threat, a disfranchisement bill pending in the Georgia legislature. As white supremacists sought to



install literacy tests at the polls, with a “grandfather clause” to protect white voters (if a forebear was qualified to vote in 1867, you were qualified to vote), Washington roused Georgia blacks to protest, mulling over “how far I ought to go in fighting these measures in other states when the colored people themselves sit down and will do nothing to help themselves.” A November interview with *The Atlanta Constitution* was headlined “Washington Urges Equal Treatment: Danger to the South in Unjust Race Discrimination.” Alongside appeared a petition calling the bill a “menace to free democratic institutions,” signed by Du Bois and 23 others.

Du Bois visited Tuskegee in February, and as he did for all notable guests, Washington displayed the campus as a thriving social experiment: sturdy brick halls built by the students themselves, spotless grounds, young men in crisp



*At Tuskegee Institute, which Booker T. Washington founded in 1881, black students acquired the vocational skills that would equip them for jobs in the trades and agriculture. This 1902 photo shows Tuskegee students at work in the institute’s dairy.*

uniforms and women in chaste white blouses and skirts, diligent researchers such as George Washington Carver. But for the fourth time, Du Bois balked. “I really question how much I am really needed at Tuskegee,” he wrote. He suspected that he would be more of “ornamental use than a fundamental necessity.” Added to that was the question of public relations: “Would not my department be regarded by the public as a sort of superfluous addition not quite in consonance with the fundamental Tuskegee idea?”

The points were salient, and no doubt Du Bois realized that Washington had considered them long before—and overridden them. That may be why Du Bois stated them briefly in his letter before raising a weightier hindrance: another possible job. The position of superintendent of Negro schools in Washington, D.C., had opened up, and Du Bois had been encouraged to apply. The move would double his salary and take Nina far from Jim Crow Atlanta and Burghardt's gravesite. To "serve both your cause & the general cause of the Negro," Du Bois asked, "is not the Washington position—provided always I could get it—such a place?" Du Bois closed with a request: "If I should apply for the W. place your indorsement [sic] would go further probably than anyone else's. Could you conscientiously give it?"

Nine days later, returning to his office and finding more notices urging him to apply for the D.C. job, he fired off another solicitation to Washington. Claiming not to have "definitely decided" against Tuskegee, he repeated his request: "If without prejudice to your position & the school's

DU BOIS STOOD FOR  
RACE PRIDE AND  
HIGHER EDUCATION,  
WASHINGTON FOR  
TACTICAL CONCILIATION  
AND VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION.

you could endorse me I shall appreciate it." Du Bois knew that Washington would be asked for recommendations, and, indeed, the D.C. commissioner of education did just that in early March. At the same time, the editor of *The Colored American* informed Washington that the field had been narrowed to Du Bois and an inside candidate, Robert Terrell, husband of the

powerful Mary Church Terrell—writer, suffragist, founder of the Colored Women's League, and member of the D.C. Board of Education. Du Bois, he said, "would be the most *acceptable* man in the country—acceptable from a *scholarly* standpoint. Du Bois would command respect because of his attainments, but not popularity."

Washington favored Du Bois but asked the commissioner to keep his recommendation private. Writing from New York, he then told Du Bois not to use the letter of recommendation he had given him, for already "I have recommended you as strongly as I could." Unfortunately, as with every hiring Washington oversaw, the matter turned political. Without mentioning Du Bois, T. Thomas Fortune wrote to Washington pushing Terrell "because he is your and my active friend." Four days later, perhaps hearing of the Du Bois recommendation, Fortune declared that he and others "are pulling together for Terrell." The same day, another Bookerite wrote to Washington, "I am sorry that you endorsed Du Bois for the Supt Negro schools here. He is not of your people. Your friends almost to a man are against him." On March 18, Washington backpedaled, telling Fortune, "If I had any idea that the matter was going to assume so great importance I should have consulted you before making any move." In the end, the commissioner selected neither Du Bois nor Terrell.

Du Bois thought he had been manipulated, that Washington had caved in to local interests. True enough, but federal appointments for African Americans were always knotty affairs, and Washington had the most to lose. A bad hiring on his recommendation would reflect poorly on the Tuskegee Machine, and his supporters were just as quick to second-guess him as were his opponents. Du Bois still had the Tuskegee offer in hand, and in April he declined, noting the rural drawbacks: “The only opening that would attract me now would be one that brought me nearer the centres of culture & learning.”

**B**ut the break didn't hinder the men's cooperation on other matters. That spring, traveling to Savannah to plan the “Negro Section” for the 1900 Paris Exposition, Du Bois boarded a Southern Railway night train in Atlanta's Union Depot only to be refused a sleeping car berth. No Negroes allowed, the conductor told him. Du Bois consulted with attorneys and formed a committee to present the case to federal authorities. With each move, he asked Washington for counsel and support. Washington brought the Jim Crow policy to the attention of Tuskegee trustee and railroad magnate William Henry Baldwin, Jr. Baldwin rebuffed him, but Washington helped Du Bois on the sly. In November 1902 he asked Du Bois to tally the costs of the case, promising “to bear a portion of it provided I can hand it to you personally and not have any connection with your committee.”

A month later, in *Gunton's Magazine*, Washington saluted “the valuable studies of Professor W. E. B. Du Bois,” and, in July, Du Bois accepted Washington's invitation to join a gathering at his camp in West Virginia, described by *The Colored American* as “a company of representative Negroes, perhaps the most intelligent, the most cultured and the wealthiest in the United States.” Du Bois later canceled. When Washington's *Up from Slavery* became a bestseller, Du Bois reviewed it approvingly, citing Washington's “singular insight . . . steering as he must amid so many diverse interests and opinions.” The following March, Du Bois invited Washington to attend the annual conference at Atlanta University on aspects of African American identity, saying that “I think you will grant that I have sought in every way to minimize the breach between colleges & industrial schools & have in all possible ways tried to cooperate with Tuskegee in its work.” Du Bois added a defensive note—“I have not been so successful in getting you to cooperate with ours”—but Washington *did* participate in the meeting and said during his speech that “the work that Dr. Du Bois is doing will stand for years as a monument to his ability, wisdom, and faithfulness.”

So even as the differences in their outlooks widened, Du Bois and Washington maintained a mutual respect and worked together. The alternation of cordiality and suspicion did not signal a deep ideological breach. It represented the sort of collaboration and jockeying that characterizes any pairing of egos and institutions. Du Bois directed research at Atlanta University, Washington ran the Tuskegee Machine. Du Bois stood for race pride and higher education, Washington for tactical conciliation and vocational education. As each one shaped his program, their respective talents turned them into figureheads and established a polarity that helped orient others to the “race question.”

Washington understood this better than his deputies, and Du Bois accepted



*Du Bois left Atlanta University in 1910 to join the staff of the NAACP, which he had helped to found the previous year. In this NAACP-sponsored demonstration against mob violence, Du Bois is the second figure from the right in the second row of marchers.*

his equivocations as dictated by circumstance. If Du Bois could have maintained his scholarly integrity and offered clear but measured criticisms of the Tuskegee agenda while still supporting Tuskegee measures, and if Washington could have backed Du Bois without offending his donors and moderates, their limited partnership might have lasted until Washington's death in 1915. When Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk* in April 1903, with its critical chapter on Washington, many thought it a declaration of war. But though the criticism rankled Washington, he'd heard worse before, and he shrugged it off. Besides, Du Bois intended no threat to Tuskegee; three months later he was teaching summer school there, and in July he dined at the headmaster's home. Washington even paid his traveling expenses, telling an underling, "If he chooses to be little we must teach him a lesson by being greater and broader than he is." As long as Du Bois remained principled and independent of organized resistance to the Tuskegee Machine, their wary cooperation would continue.

**O**n July 30, 1903, Washington entered the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church on Columbus Avenue in Boston. Two thousand people awaited him, along with 11 police officers. Boston was the home of the most vitriolic anti-Bookerite group in the nation, led by Monroe Trotter, and everyone expected trouble. Most of the spectators were faithful supporters of Washington's National Negro Business League, but Trotter had sprinkled his confederates throughout the assembly. When the first speaker took the podium and hailed the guest of honor, hisses erupted. T. Thomas Fortune was next, and as he needled the crowd with loyalty oaths to Washington,



a man in a butler's uniform rose and approached the stage, shouting at Fortune. Ushers met him in the aisle, Trotterites goaded him, league members yelled back, then police officers dragged the man from the hall. Washington did not move or speak. Fortune cleared his throat and returned to his speech, but in seconds he lapsed into a fit of sneezing. Others on the platform coughed and wheezed. Someone had thrown a cloud of cayenne pepper across the stage.

As the speakers drew their handkerchiefs, the butler burst back inside and officers leapt at him. Trotter jumped from his seat and shouted, "Put me out—arrest me!" The master of ceremonies called for order, and Trotter sat down. An entertainer tried to lead the assembly in song, and a black lawyer from Boston rebuked the protesters for "making a disturbance in the house of God." The master of ceremonies rose to introduce Washington, while Fortune scolded the Trotterites. As the Wizard strode to center stage, Trotter jumped up and began yelling questions: "Can a man make a successful educator and politician at the same time? Are the rope and the torch all the race is to get under your leadership?" Few could hear him. Trotter cohorts were screaming at the stage and Bookerites were shouting them down. Scuffles broke out; two stabbings took place. Trotter, his sister, the butler, and one other accomplice were arrested. Officers cleared the melee and resumed their

posts, people returned to their seats, and Washington launched a dispirited rehash of the gospel of thrift.

The incident reached the press everywhere, and Washington worried that it gave publicity to his opponents. For eight years he had stood alone as the representative of nine million black citizens. Whites and most blacks thought that blacks spoke with one voice, *his* voice. The Tuskegee Machine operated on the principle that Washington's rectitude proved the race's potential, and Theodore Roosevelt and Andrew Carnegie accepted the vision. Now was not the time to let internal squabbles spill into the public sphere. Trotter had to be crushed. The AME Zion Church pressed charges, and Trotter and two others were sentenced to 30 days in jail.

It was in this heated partisan climate, with Washington's sensitivities at their peak, that Du Bois unwittingly took a fateful step. At the very time that Bookerite forces were preparing a case against Trotter, Du Bois finished teaching his summer-school class at Tuskegee, journeyed north, and stayed as a guest in Trotter's home. Washington was appalled. Du Bois claimed he knew nothing about the controversy until he arrived, but Washington could only feel insulted.

It was time to force Du Bois's hand. In August, Emmett Scott, an assistant of Washington's, began coaxing black intellectuals away from Du Bois, and Washington planted spies among Trotter's circle. He informed Philadelphia benefactor Robert C. Ogden that he had "evidence which is indisputable showing that Dr. Du Bois is very largely behind the mean and underhanded attacks that have been made upon me." He continued to advise Du Bois on the railway case but conceived a gathering that would force Du Bois into an us-or-them deci-

sion. He proposed a conference in New York of black leaders “to try to agree upon certain fundamental principles and to see in what way we understand or misunderstand each other.” But when Du Bois suggested possible attendees and Washington vetoed them, he realized that the Wizard was prevaricating.

Du Bois lost patience. “I do not think it will be profitable for me to give further advice which will not be followed,” he wrote in mid-November. “The conference is yours and you will naturally constitute it as you choose.” Washington relented, accepting a few Trotterites and paying Du Bois’s travel expenses. But at the meeting Du Bois was still far outnumbered, and the speeches were all pro-Tuskegee statements. A committee of three (Du Bois, Washington, and another attendee) was formed to advance black causes, but as the committee deliberated, Du Bois was outvoted 2 to 1. He concluded that the whole affair was designed to neutralize him. The time had come to join the Machine or join the opposition.

Over the course of 1904, Du Bois pulled away. He skipped July meetings of the committee and wrote an article ridiculing the Tuskegee vision as propaganda that “silently allows a new slavery to rise.” He resigned from the committee in August.

Washington maintained contact, but the tone now was no different from that of messages sent to other operatives. Secretly, he advised Hampton Institute against hosting Du Bois on campus, and as he planned a meeting in St. Louis, he told Emmett Scott, “I prefer to let Du Bois draw his own crowd, and I will draw mine.”

Du Bois no longer cared. When, in January 1905, he drafted a table of “Debit and Credit” in the Atlanta monthly *The Voice of the Negro*, and mentioned “\$3000 of ‘hush money’ used to subsidize the Negro press,” their collaboration was over. Du Bois didn’t cite Tuskegee by name, but everyone knew what he meant. Washington controlled the black press, bought loyalty, planted spies, ostracized critics, and co-opted reform movements and let them die. His accommodation of whites had become too obsequious, but more important, his black power had become oppressive. For 10 years, Du Bois and Washington had espoused different visions but supported each other. When Washington converted this fruitful conflict of ideas into a power struggle of men, he miscalculated.

**T**his, then, was the personal background of their later dispute. A decade of offerings, forbearance, and demurral lay behind one of the great debates in U.S. history. In subsequent years, Washington and Du Bois came to define the basic terms of race relations in the country—militance versus conciliation, separatism versus assimilation, higher education versus trade-school training. All the appeals, transactions, and tensions that marked their first decade of acquaintance disappeared, and an unnuanced contrast of beliefs and policies took hold: In the popular histories, “Du Bois” signifies black protest and studious pride; “Washington,” Negro humility and an ethic of thrift. The contrast shadowed race theory and race practice for 50 years, through Du Bois’s death in August 1963, just hours before a quarter-million people convened at the Lincoln Memorial. But behind the division lay the peculiar chemistry of the dispositions of two men, one pragmatic and controlling, the other principled and solitary. For a time, they worked together, until each came gradually to believe that the other had betrayed the cause of racial uplift—and the personal giving of himself. □

# THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

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## *The Lost Art of Reading*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) sounded the official alarm this summer: The reading of literature has dramatically decreased, particularly among young adults. “For the first time in modern history, less than half of the adult population now reads literature, and these trends reflect a larger decline in other sorts of reading,” says NEA chairman Dana Gioia. If “a well-read citizenry is essential to a vibrant democracy,” the NEA admonishes in its report, *Reading at Risk*, “the decline of literary reading calls for serious action.”

Is the situation really so dire? Some commentators agree, and point to several disturbing causes. Others, finding various limitations in the NEA study, insist that there’s really no great cause for alarm.

The study’s authors asked 17,000 adults if they had read any novels, short stories, plays, or poetry outside of work or school during the previous 12 months. Only 47 percent said they had, down from 57 percent in 1982.

The decline in literary reading was evident in all demographic groups, but it was most pronounced among young adults. As recently as the 1980s, they were the biggest consumers of literature. Now they rank just below senior citizens as the most indifferent readers. Among 18- to 24-year-olds, for example, only 43 percent say they’ve recently read a work of literature on their own time, down from 60 percent in 1982.

Culture and learning are not the only

things that could be hurt. Roger Kimball, managing editor of *The New Criterion*, also is “dismayed” by the NEA findings, he writes in the magazine’s weblog at [www.newcriterion.com](http://www.newcriterion.com) (July 14, 2004). “The decline in literary reading is of special concern, not least because of the role reading plays in fostering a responsive and engaged citizenry. *Reading at Risk* reports that 43 percent of literary readers perform volunteer and charity work as against 17 percent of nonreaders.”

Andrew Solomon, author of *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (2001), worries that literary self-starvation may even affect individuals’ health. “There is a basic social divide between those for whom life is an accrual of fresh experience and knowledge, and those for whom maturity is a process of mental atrophy. The shift toward the latter category is frightening,” he writes on the op-ed page of *The New York Times* (July 10, 2004). Solomon thinks that “the crisis in reading” may be contributing to “a crisis in national health,” seen in the growing incidence of depression, as well as to “crises” in national politics and education.

What accounts for the public’s diminished interest in literature? Writing in *The New Criterion*’s summer 2004 “web special” at [www.newcriterion.com](http://www.newcriterion.com), James Bowman, a resident scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, charges that “the way [literature] is now being taught in schools and universities” is the

chief culprit. Instead of being taught to love the great works of literature for their explorations of the human spirit, students are encouraged to feel contempt for them as “examples of the various sorts of diabolical encodings with which the oppressor-cultures of their times have been able to mask a naked power lust.”

That the nation’s English teachers might be to blame is not even entertained as a possibility by the NEA. More surprisingly, perhaps, it gives television, the usual villain in such studies, a pass. “In 2002,” according to the NEA report, “those who do read and those who do not read literature watched about the same amount of TV per day—three hours’ worth.” A more likely suspect: the Internet. It “could have played a role” in reading’s decline, since home Internet use took off during the years that literary reading was declining.

During those same years, America’s Hispanic population also rose, and this too had an impact, according to the NEA. Only 27 percent of Hispanics in the NEA survey said they read any literary works in 2002, down from 36 percent 20 years earlier. An influx of less educated immigrants no doubt accounts for some of that decline. Hispanic males have the lowest literary reading rate (18 percent in 2002), followed by black men (30 percent) and Hispanic women (34 percent). The taste for literature is about equal (just over 40 percent) among white men and black women, and most developed among white women. Sixty-one percent of them told the researchers they had read a book in one of the qualifying genres.

But Charles McGrath, former editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, writes in the newspaper (July 11, 2004) that *Reading at Risk* may take too narrow a view of what’s worth reading. It excludes magazines and newspapers and implies that the Internet “steals time people used to spend with books. But when people surf the Web, what they are doing, for the most part, is reading.”

And book reading may not be in such dire shape, either. As McGrath and others note, the NEA’s definition of literature is expansive in that it includes everything from mysteries to pornography. But it utterly excludes nonfiction, a category full of fine writing. The latest Tom Clancy novel is “literature,” but Ron Chernow’s recent well-received biography of Alexander Hamilton is not. Nor is *The Edu-*

*cation of Henry Adams* or Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Carlin Romano, critic at large for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 23, 2004), points out another problem with the NEA study: its exclusion of literary reading done for school or work. “With the relaxation of traditional course requirements and expansion of higher education generally, more young people than ever integrate their desired reading into course work,” he says.

Without making the exclusions that the NEA study did, the Gallup Organization ([www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com)) has been conducting polls about book reading for more than 20 years. With little variation, a large majority of respondents—87 percent in a recent survey—say they have read all or part of at least one book during the past year. Five percent claim to have read 70 or more books.

But the Gallup polls, like the NEA survey, make no distinctions regarding the *quality* of the books read. The avid reader of 70 books might be ingesting thrillers or romance novels.

“Serious reading had always been a minority matter,” observes Joseph Epstein, author of *Envy* (2003) and other works, writing in *The Weekly Standard* (Aug. 16, 2004). “By serious reading I mean the reading of those novels, plays, poems—also philosophies, histories, and other belletristic writing—that make the most exacting efforts to honor their subjects by treating them with the exacting complexity they deserve. Serious readers at some point make a usually accidental connection with literature, sometimes through a teacher but quite as often on their own; when young they come upon a book that blows them away by the aesthetic pleasure they derive from it, the wisdom they find in it, the point of view it provides them. . . .

“Read any amount of serious imaginative literature with care and you will be highly skeptical of the statistical style of thinking,” Epstein concludes. “You will quickly grasp that, in a standard statistical report such as *Reading at Risk*, serious reading, always a minority interest, isn’t at stake here. Nothing more is going on, really, than the *crise du jour*, soon to be replaced by the report on eating disorders, the harmfulness of aspirin, or the drop in high-school math scores.”

## *Balloons and Brass*

“Officer Politics” by Lawrence F. Kaplan, in *The New Republic* (Sept. 13 & 20, 2004),  
1331 H St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Amid the balloons, funny hats, and familiar hoopla at this summer’s political conventions, there was one sight that should have been shocking: Retired military brass giving partisan speeches on the convention rostrums.

It’s one thing for ex-officers to run for office, writes Kaplan, a senior editor of *The New Republic*. Ulysses S. Grant and Dwight D. Eisenhower made no bones about being partisan figures. But today’s endorsers try to use the aura of neutral professionalism to throw the prestige of the military behind their preferred candidate.

By tradition, officers have been rigorously nonpartisan, even after retirement. That began to change after the Vietnam War, as the officer corps increasingly identified with the GOP, but it was Bill Clinton who first enlisted a top officer, retired admiral William Crowe, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Clinton hoped the endorsement would offset charges that he had evaded the Vietnam-era draft. This year, more than 100 retired generals and admirals have endorsed one or the other of the two major presidential candidates.

It’s a dangerous trend, argues Kaplan, and it’s the military itself that’s likely to suffer the most.

“When generals take to the hustings, politicians respond by treating the military as if it were an interest group like the AFL-CIO or the NAACP,” to be slighted or embraced depending on political considerations. And, Kaplan asks, how long will it be before civilian leaders start promoting top officers based on their political affiliation rather than their professional competence? At least one Clinton-era general was asked which party he belonged to. The politicization of the military will increase pressure on serving officers to surrender their status as professionals and become political yes men. It has already hurt the cohesion and commitment of the officer corps. Increasingly Republican in its orientation, the corps saw a “hemorrhage” of unhappy officers during the Clinton years.

At the same time, there’s the danger that “the military may gain undue influence over decisions that, properly understood, remain the exclusive property of civilians.” Some top officers, for example, openly opposed the Clinton White House on issues such as gays in the military and intervention in Bosnia.

The generals should be playing golf, not politics, Kaplan concludes. That will happen only if political leaders insist on it.

## *President Hamilton’s America*

“What If Aaron Burr Had Missed?” by Thomas Fleming, History News Network (July 5, 2004),  
[www.hnn.us/articles/5944.html](http://www.hnn.us/articles/5944.html).

Once confined mostly to cocktail conversation and late-night dormitory bull sessions, counterfactual history has become a burgeoning scholarly pursuit. Here’s how it works: Start with a famous historical incident, such as the 1804 duel between Vice President Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, then speculate about what might have happened had certain events been altered. What if Burr had missed?

Here’s Fleming’s fanciful spin: Following that near-miss at the dueling grounds in Weehawken, New Jersey—and given President Thomas Jefferson’s declining popularity

in the wake of such disasters as his unsuccessful, and blatantly partisan, effort to remove Supreme Court justice Samuel Chase—the charismatic Hamilton outstrips Jefferson’s favored successor, “the colorless James Madison,” in the race for the presidency in 1808. Once in office, Hamilton cements his power by creating a strong navy and army. The young United States annexes Canada in the War of 1812, then consumes Florida, Texas, and Mexico—and sets its sights on South America. In the midst of this expansionist maneuvering, Hamilton acts decisively to prevent a potential



With Alexander Hamilton's death at the hands of Aaron Burr in 1804, America may have lost not only a future president, but its best hope of peacefully ending slavery and averting civil war.

civil war by emancipating America's slaves. Abolition, in turn, decisively shifts the balance of the U.S. economy from agriculture to industry, priming America to challenge Britain for world economic supremacy.

As Fleming, a historian and the author of *Duel: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and the Future of America*, notes, this Hamiltonian order bears certain disturbing similarities to the reign of one of Hamilton's contemporaries, Napoleon. Hamilton's military becomes a bludgeon for enforcing the authority of the federal government over the states. Meanwhile, Hamilton introduces the Christian Constitutional Society he had proposed in 1801, a national organization designed to promote Christian values and attack critics of the Con-

stitution. Hamilton sees no need to step down after two terms and remains president until his death in 1830. Yet he enjoys great popularity during his presidency, as huge federal investments in roads, canals, and other projects breed national prosperity.

The "Hamiltonian revolution," Fleming concludes, would have averted civil war and spared the South from decades of economic ruin. "America would have become one of the great industrial powers of the world by 1860." Inevitably, however, industrialization would breed political turmoil and class conflict. Just as inevitably, a few historians, ignoring "hints of reduced government grants," would begin debating "whether it was a good thing that Aaron Burr had missed."

## Promises, Promises

"Political Promises—What Do They Mean?" by David W. Lovell, in *Quadrant* (July–Aug. 2004), 437 Darling St., Balmain, New South Wales 2041 Australia.

As the hard-fought presidential election of 2004 nears its climax, the campaign promises are piling up. Soon cynics will be toting up the winner's unfulfilled pledges—a foolish exercise, in the view of Lovell, acting

rector of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra.

It's strange, he points out, that politicians are held to higher standards of promise-

keeping than everyone else. The divorce statistics amply show how willing millions of people are to break what may well be the most solemn vows they will ever make.

Pragmatists hold that promises should be broken if the outcome of keeping them would, on balance, be worse. And what is politics but a pragmatic undertaking, in which outcomes count for more than purity of intention or consistency? But voters tend to forget that.

Promises serve a function beyond the mere harvesting of votes. “Making political promises in liberal democracies helps to provide governments with authority to act. Perceptions that promises are routinely broken—however inaccurate—diminish governmental authority.”

But political promises may not be broken as often as we think. A 1963 study of those made in 10 federal elections in Australia found that to be the case. It’s the ones that are not ful-

filled, particularly those made in extravagant language, that feed “the public misperception that breaking political promises is routine.” Remember “read my lips”?

Some promises go unfulfilled because of obstacles beyond the politician’s control, such as gridlock or interest-group opposition. Some are deliberately broken because circumstances change—the money dries up or a disaster occurs.

Of course, some promises are broken because they’re “unachievable, irresponsible, or overly optimistic.” Prime Minister Bob Hawke of Australia was returned to office in 1987 after pledging that he would eliminate child poverty in three years. Politicians shouldn’t make such impossible promises, Lovell says. But there’s a corollary: Citizens shouldn’t ask of politics more than it can provide. No one is promising that citizens will lower their expectations anytime soon.

## *Churn, Baby, Churn!*

“Time, Term Limits, and Turnover: Trends in Membership Stability in U.S. State Legislatures” by Gary F. Moncrief, Richard G. Niemi, and Lynda W. Powell, in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (Aug. 2004), Comparative Legislative Research Center, 334 Schaeffer Hall, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1409.

More than a decade after the first term limits were imposed on state legislators, the results of the new policy are appearing, and they’re encouraging to its supporters. The turnover rate among legislators had been dropping, but term limit legislation has halt-

ed, and possibly reversed, that trend.

During the 1930s, more than half of all state legislators, on average, were replaced after every election. By the 1980s, that figure had dropped below a quarter: 24 percent in the lower houses and 22 percent in the upper houses, note po-

### EXCERPT

## *The Last Voter*

*Due to earlier reforms and the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, registration laws are more uniform and registration costs are lower than at any point since registration requirements became widely adopted. There is now little room for enhancing turnout further by making registration easier. . . . [C]ontinued nonvoting by substantial numbers of citizens suggests that for many people, voting remains an activity from which there is virtually no gratification—instrumental, expressive, or otherwise. Consequently, for those whose goal is a democracy where most people engage in the fundamental act of political participation, a pessimistic conclusion cannot be avoided.*

—Benjamin Highton, a political scientist at the University of California at Davis, in *Perspectives on Politics* (Sept. 2004).

litical scientists Moncrief, of Boise State University, and Niemi and Powell, both of the University of Rochester.

Starting in 1990, with Colorado, California, and Oklahoma, critics of the status quo in state government managed to impose term limits in 21 states. Legislators were restricted to terms of between six and 12 continuous years in one chamber. In three states, courts overturned the limits; in two, legislatures repealed them; in five, the laws haven't been in effect long enough to have had a significant impact. That leaves 11 term-limited states driving the trend.

While the long decline in legislative turnover continued into the 1990s in states without term limits, the turnover rate rose in the handful of term-limited states. Nearly 31 percent of lower-house legislators in those states were newcomers during the 1990s, compared with 25 percent during the 1980s.

In the upper houses, turnover increased from 21 percent to 26 percent.

As Moncrief, Niemi, and Powell note, the rise in turnover rates wasn't as predictable as it seems. Term limit laws might, for example, have discouraged individuals from challenging incumbents, and thereby actually *decreased* turnover.

Political scientists were right to predict that term limits would encourage more lower-house members to seek election to their state's upper chamber. In states with term limits of six to eight years, about a quarter of the senators in 2002 were graduates of the lower house, compared with 10 percent in 1994.

Still to be answered, the authors note, is the key question about term limits: Does the frequent infusion of new blood improve the performance of legislatures more than the continual loss of legislative experience hurts it?

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

# *The Psychology of Homeland Defense*

"The Neglected Home Front" by Stephen E. Flynn, in *Foreign Affairs* (Sept.–Oct. 2004), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021; "Leap Before You Look: The Failure of Homeland Security" by Benjamin Friedman, in *Breakthroughs* (Spring 2004), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Security Studies Program, 292 Main St. (E38-600), Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

There's an unusual element in the growing debate over homeland security. In addition to arguments over policy, politics, and dollars, the debate now includes serious disagreements over how to adjust the national psyche to the threat of terrorism.

One view is advanced by Flynn, a senior fellow in national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, who charges that the Bush administration is wrongly preoccupied with striking terrorist havens abroad while spending too little on homeland security and neglecting the "systematic engagement of civil society and the private sector" in the effort.

The terrorists' real target, Flynn argues, is not any particular locale but public confidence in the "vital systems" that underpin American society. But U.S. "transportation, energy, information, financial, chemical, food, and logistical networks" remain, for the most part, virtually unprotected. While the Pentagon will spend \$7.6 billion to improve security at military bases this year, the Department of Homeland Security

will spend only \$2.6 billion to protect America's vast economic infrastructure.

A sound defense requires something like what's been done with air safety. Why does the public continue to fly even after horrifying airline crashes? Because people are confident that government and industry will do their utmost to incorporate lessons learned and guarantee future safety, according to Flynn. Americans must feel the same confidence in the wake of any terrorist attack.

That means abandoning the Bush administration's reliance on the private sector to improve security at chemical plants and other potential targets. Corporations are unlikely to act unless the government requires their competitors to make similar investments. Likewise, says Flynn, the population must be mobilized. But after "a rocky start that generated a run on plastic sheeting and duct tape," civil defense efforts have fizzled.

A diametrically opposed view comes from Friedman, a graduate student at the Massa-

chusetts Institute of Technology: “Two dangerous fantasies afflict American homeland security: the idea that we are all at great risk and the idea that all preparation for risk helps to avert it.” With its national color-coded alert system, its warnings that all Americans should “make a plan for what you will do in an emergency, [and] make a kit of emergency supplies,” and its official declaration that even native Alaskan villages and other obscure sites are potential terrorist targets, the Department of Homeland Security is only whipping up irrational fears—and playing right into terrorists’ hands. If they assessed threats rationally, Friedman says, Americans would worry a lot more about their diets and a lot less about suicide bombers.

The irrationality of the current approach is reflected in the government’s \$50 billion homeland security budget, which has provided \$58,000 for the town of Colchester, Vermont, to buy “a search and rescue vehicle that can bore through the concrete of collapsed buildings,” and a formula for “first responder” aid that gives Wyoming \$35 per resident while New York gets \$5.

We’re spending too much on homeland security, Friedman believes, and not enough on the things that would do the most good—hunting down terrorists and curtailing the supply of weapons they would turn against the United States. “If we are all afraid of terrorism,” he declares, “we are all its victims.”

## *Military Myths*

“A School for the Nation?” by Ronald R. Krebs, in *International Security* (Spring 2004), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

The idea that the armed forces can serve as a “school for the nation” was born in 19th-century Europe and has since been embraced everywhere from tsarist Russia to the contemporary developing world. In the United States, a small group of intellectuals on both the left

and the right tout a revived draft or mandatory national service as a way to forge a stronger sense of national community and overcome the divisions of race, class, and culture.

It may work in those old World War II movies, in which groups of wisecracking guys



*Building better citizens? World War II-era recruits are sworn into service.*

from all over America are transformed by a tour of duty, but real life offers more chastening evidence, says Krebs, a political scientist at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Military service may stiffen an individual's spine and instill more self-discipline and a greater sense of purpose, but hopes of social transformation are exaggerated. After World War II, "the soldier did not come home to reform America," noted Samuel A. Stouffer in *The American Soldier* (1949). And African-American veterans seemed more averse to change. A study of black veterans in the late 1970s found them heavily concentrated in the business world and underrepresented in the ranks of community and civil rights leaders.

Friendships formed in the foxhole don't always last, and rarely shape attitudes toward larger groups of people. Old beliefs and prejudices die hard. And sometimes familiarity does not breed good feelings. Despite the experiences of World War II and Korea, white Americans weren't moved to abandon racism and segregation. Lessons about the limits of military socialization come from all over the world: The Red Army was supposed to create a "new Soviet man," and the Yugoslav People's Army an "all-Yugoslav identity." Their failures were predictable, says Krebs. How can a few years in uniform accomplish what families, schools, the media, and other agents of socialization cannot?

## *The Neocon War*

"In Defense of Democratic Realism" by Charles Krauthammer, in *The National Interest* (Fall 2004), 1615 L St., N.W., Ste. 1230, Washington, D.C. 20036.

An unlikely war of words erupted this summer between two prominent neoconservative thinkers over the U.S. decision to invade Iraq. As we reported in last issue's *Periodical Observer*, political scientist Francis Fukuyama fired first, with a scathing critique of columnist Charles Krauthammer, whose views were said to have strongly influenced the Bush administration's pre-invasion thinking.

Fukuyama criticized the air of unreality that he claimed surrounded Krauthammer's rhetoric, charging that neither Iraq nor Al Qaeda posed a threat to the existence of the United States. The columnist replies that Fukuyama fails to grasp that "Arab/Islamic radicalism" does pose an existential threat to America. "When Hitler marched into the Rhineland in 1936, he did not 'currently' have the means to overrun Europe. Many Europeans believed, delusionally, that he did not present an existential threat. By Fukuyama's logic, they were right." And what if terrorists get their hands on nuclear weapons?

Fukuyama underestimates the power of religion, according to Krauthammer. Grounded in Islam, which has a billion adherents, Islamic radicalism has a ready supply of recruits and can draw on a long tradition of messianic zeal and a cult of martyrdom. Fukuyama also has an interest in upholding the "end of his-

tory" thesis that made his reputation. The thesis, "if it means anything, means an end to precisely this kind of ideological existential threat."

*Pace* Fukuyama, Iraq was and is "central" to the war against Islamic radicalism, Krauthammer maintains. Everything was changed by 9/11. "We could continue to fight Arab/Islamic radicalism by catching a terrorist leader here, rolling up a cell there. Or we could go to the heart of the problem, and take the risky but imperative course of trying to reorder the Arab world." The fact that many allies opposed the invasion didn't make it any less necessary, Krauthammer writes.

Fukuyama found it strange that his fellow neoconservatives, who had long warned of "the dangers of ambitious social engineering" at home, were so confident in America's ability to foster democracy abroad. Krauthammer replies that when the stakes were high enough in the past—as in Germany, Japan, and South Korea—the United States succeeded in doing just that. "The rejection of nation-building, whether on grounds of American incompetence or Arab recalcitrance, reduces the War on Terror to cops-and-robbers. It simply does not get to the root of the problem, which is the cauldron of political oppression, religious intolerance, and social ruin in the Arab-Islamic world."

## *A Touchdown for Subsidies*

“Should Cities Be Ready for Some Football? Assessing the Social Benefits of Hosting an NFL Team” by Gerald A. Carlino and N. Edward Coulson, in *Business Review* (2nd qtr., 2004), Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, 10 Independence Mall, Philadelphia, Pa. 19106.

It's become a familiar spectacle: Cities frantically compete for the favor of the National Football League (or the like) and offer to subsidize a stadium to attract a team. Do the benefits a city derives from having a professional sports team really outweigh the costs? Many analysts say no. But economists Carlino, of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, and Coulson, of Pennsylvania State University, argue that an important factor is often overlooked: the pleasure city residents take in rooting for a home team, even if they never go to a game. “They root for the local athletes, look forward to reading about their success or failure in the newspaper, and share in the citywide joy when the home team wins a championship.”

If people appreciate such things, they should be willing to pay for them, just as they pay for other “quality-of-life” benefits, such as scenic views or good weather. And that taste should be reflected in higher land prices and rents.

Carlino and Coulson looked at the record in eight cities that gained or lost NFL franchises during the 1990s. Holding other city traits constant, the economists calculated that having an NFL team raised annual rents for housing an average of eight percent. (All figures are in 1999 dollars.) That translates into about \$480 a year per housing unit—or about \$139 million in an average central city. In other words, people are willing to pay nearly \$500 a year to live in a city with an NFL team.

As a result, the authors estimate, the host cities may each reap about \$50 million annually in higher revenues from real estate taxes. Subsidies cost each city an average of only \$27 million annually.

Still, Carlino and Coulson stop short of giving stadium subsidies their full endorsement. After all, spending millions on stadiums might mean not funding “possibly more worthy” projects, such as new schools.

## *Fighting for Health*

“Redefining Competition in Health Care” by Michael E. Porter and Elizabeth Olmsted Teisberg, in *Harvard Business Review* (June 2004), 60 Harvard Way, Boston, Mass. 02163.

Is there any way out of the health-care mess? The costs to businesses alone of providing health insurance have outpaced inflation in 13 of the past 17 years, reaching more than \$6,200 per employee last year, yet the system keeps failing to provide care to all Americans. When it comes to health care, the vaunted magic of the market appears not to work, but making health care a government monopoly hardly seems a better alternative. So what's the solution?

“The most fundamental and unrecognized problem in U.S. health care today is that competition operates at the wrong level,” write Porter, a Harvard Business School professor, and Teisberg, a business professor at the University of Virginia. “It takes place at the level of health plans, networks, and hospital groups. It should occur in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of individual health

conditions or co-occurring conditions.” That's the level at which “true value is created—or destroyed.”

Exacerbating the wrong-level competition is the pursuit of “the wrong objective: reducing cost,” as if health care were a standardized commodity. Health plans compete to sign up subscribers. Health-care providers compete to be included in health plan networks by giving deep discounts to insurers and employers with large patient populations. They also compete to form the largest provider groups, offering the widest array of services. Instead of cost reduction, what occurs is cost shifting. And instead of providing better quality care, the object becomes securing greater bargaining power and restricting access to services.

In the “healthy” competition the authors envision, providers would try to develop dis-

tinctive offerings, and most hospitals “would not try to be all things to everyone.” All restrictions on patient choice of health-care providers would disappear. Providers would charge all patients the same price for treating the same medical condition, regardless of the patient’s insurer or employer; billing would be simplified. And instead of trying to limit patients’ choices and control physicians’ behavior, insurers and other payers would compete in giving subscribers helpful information about treatment

alternatives and providers who have track records of excellent outcomes with given diseases and procedures.

How to achieve all that? Porter and Teisberg look to employers, “the major purchasers of health care services,” to lead the way—by making quality, not price, the key criterion in their purchases, and by insisting “that choice and information be made truly available at the level of specific diseases and treatments.”

## SOCIETY

# *A Real Head Start*

“The Black-White Test Score Gap” by George Farkas, in *Contexts* (Spring 2004), Univ. of California, Dept. of Sociology, No. 1980, Berkeley, Calif. 94720-1980.

The persistent gap between the standardized-test scores of black and white children has long resisted explanation. *Biased tests?* The tests focus on basic abilities needed in school and well-paying jobs (and the gap shows up even when the teachers are black). *Race-related test anxiety?* The gap is found even among very young children. *A genetic basis?* There’s no evidence for genetic superiority in IQ in individuals of either race. *Social class and family background?* Yes, of course, but most studies find that these account for only about half of the gap. And while racial differences in income have narrowed since 1990, the test score gap has not.

According to Farkas, a sociologist at Pennsylvania State University, research now points to an explanation rooted in cultural differences in child rearing that are expressed when children are very young.

Some of the differences are class based. Researchers studying 42 families of both races found that by the time their one-year-olds had turned three, professional parents had spoken 35 million words to them, middle- and working-class parents 20 million words, and low-income parents only 10 million words. Less talk produced smaller vocabularies in the children.

However, there’s a black-white gap in vocabulary even when parents are of the same social class. Farkas’s own study of youngsters ages three to 13 showed that black children from high-income families had significantly smaller vocabularies than their affluent white coun-

terparts. The African-American children had about the same vocabulary knowledge as white children from low-income families.

In yet another study, which showed a widening racial gap in a group of 20,000 youngsters who entered kindergarten in 1998, teachers, including black teachers, told the researchers that black students at all income levels were less likely “to persist at tasks, be eager to learn, or pay attention”—and as a result of this and their initial disadvantage, were less likely to be placed in “higher ability groups.” Race- and class-based differences in “home environment” again appear to be the key, writes Farkas. For example, middle-class black parents are less likely than their white counterparts (but more likely than poor black parents) to be “encouraging and positive” in verbal exchanges with their young children.

What can be done? Smaller class sizes and an emphasis on phonics instruction will help, Farkas says, but the racial gap appears well before children reach school. Yes, black parents should be encouraged to “interact more with their children in ways that will better prepare them for school,” but Farkas emphasizes the need to thoroughly transform Head Start and similar preschool programs so that they teach crucial pre-reading and pre-math skills rather than the social skills that are their focus today. And he sees even greater potential in Early Head Start, a new program for children as young as one year old.

# Vacations for All

“Tourism in America before World War II” by Thomas Weiss, in *The Journal of Economic History* (June 2004), Social Science History Institute, Bldg. 200, Rm. 3, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif. 94305–2024.

The first American tourist may have been one Dr. Alexander Hamilton (no known relation to the first U.S. Treasury secretary), who in 1744 traveled “a course of 1624 miles” from his home in Annapolis, Maryland, just to have a look around. The road from Hamilton’s day to the current era of mass tourism has been, in its way, just as long and leisurely, writes Weiss, an economist at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Colonial Americans had little time or money for “frivolous” pursuits, but George Washington and other privileged sorts went, ostensibly for their health, to take the waters in nearby spas. By 1770, Berkeley Warm Springs in what is now West Virginia had become a popular resort for Virginia’s planter aristocracy. After the Revolution spas multiplied, coming to include Hot Springs, Arkansas, and, the most famous, Saratoga Springs, in upstate New York.

In the early 19th century, Niagara Falls and other scenic wonders began drawing visitors (some of them on a fashionable tour of such places not unlike the later Grand Tour of

Europe). Seaside resorts, such as Cape May, New Jersey, also grew in popularity. By about 1855, Weiss estimates, America had as many as 300,000 tourists a year—flocking to spas (100,000), a handful of beach resorts (100,000), Niagara (80,000), New Hampshire’s White Mountains (10,000), and other hot spots.

After the Civil War, the western frontier joined the list of “must see” locales, and the first northern “snowbirds” seeking winter refuge appeared in the South. In coastal South Carolina, people said they lived off fish in summer and Yankees in winter. Still, tourism remained an elite pursuit. At the turn of the 20th century, Weiss estimates, only about two percent of the population (1.5 million people) was able to indulge in the luxury of pleasure travel. That began to change with the arrival of the automobile. Auto touring allowed shorter, cheaper jaunts to a wider selection of destinations, facilitated by auto camps and, by 1930, that fabulous American invention, the motel. By then, America’s best-known tourist destinations were attracting about six million



*The automobile opened up new destinations to travelers, with popular attractions logging more than six million visitors annually by 1937.*

visitors annually, or more than five percent of the population. The Depression brought an unexpected benefit: paid vacations for working people. Nearly 40 percent of hourly workers in manufacturing had them by 1937.

Then came the post-World War II democratization of travel: Paychecks fattened, high-

ways were built, airlines took wing, and, as Weiss sums it up, “all hell broke loose.” Even as Americans complain that they’re starved for free time, tourism has become one of the nation’s fastest-growing economic sectors, accounting for nearly four percent of the gross domestic product.

## *My Name or Yours?*

“Making a Name: Women’s Surnames at Marriage and Beyond” by Claudia Goldin and Maria Shim, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Spring 2004), Macalester College, 1600 Grand Ave., Saint Paul, Minn. 55105.

“I do. I don’t.” That might be the wedding vow of many young women who choose to keep their given names at marriage. Apparently, it’s being heard less often these days. After peaking in the mid-1980s, the number of “keepers” declined in the 1990s, report Goldin, a Harvard University economist, and Shim, a recent Harvard graduate.

The practice of keeping one’s maiden name varies by education and other factors. The authors looked at Massachusetts data on white women who were in their late twenties when they gave birth to their first child. In 1990, 21 percent of the college graduates were keepers; a decade later, only 13 percent. Among those with more than four years of college, the proportion of keepers

dropped from 29 percent to 20 percent.

Goldin and Shim found a parallel trend among Harvard graduates. In the class of 1980, 44 percent of women who married within 10 years of graduation decided to keep their surname; in the class of 1990, only 32 percent did.

Nationwide, the authors estimate, “a shade under 20 percent” of college-educated women now keep their surname when they tie the knot.

Why the change? More conservative social values, or maybe, the authors speculate, young women have gained more self-confidence and feel less peer pressure to turn their married names into proclamations for female equality.

### PRESS & MEDIA

## *Japanese Press Exposed!*

“A Public Betrayed: The Power of Japan’s Scandal-Breaking Weeklies” and “A Public Betrayed: Establishment Press Leaks Tips to Japan’s Weeklies” by Takesato Watanabe and Adam Gamble, in *Japan Media Review* (Aug. 26, 2004), [www.ojr.org](http://www.ojr.org).

Many Japanese readers who suspect (correctly) that they’re not getting the full story from their bland daily newspapers turn to a raffish alternative: the *shukanishi*, 15 weekly newsmagazines that purport to give the real lowdown on people and events. More than 90 percent of *shukanishi* sales are made by newsstands, so the magazines feature sensational headlines, sometimes bearing little or no relationship to the articles that follow.

In the United States, the market is largely divided between a small audience of relatively highbrow newspaper and magazine con-

sumers and a mass audience. Japan, by contrast, has a large middlebrow market. So along with sleaze and sensation, some *shukanishi* offer social commentary, book reviews, political news, and fiction.

Bizarre combinations of *Newsweek* and *The National Enquirer*, with a dash of *Penthouse* and a pinch of *The New Yorker*, the *shukanishi* are often dismissed as trashy tabloids. That’s a mistake, say Watanabe and Gamble, authors of *A Public Betrayed*, a recently published book on the Japanese news media. With their middlebrow readership, the *shukanishi* have an

influence that goes far beyond their combined circulation of 500,000.

*Shukanshi* defenders argue that the mainstream dailies, with their system of press clubs actually embedded in government agencies, provide only the superficial *tatemaē*, or official, view of events, while the weeklies try to get at the *honme*, or substantive and truthful, version of the story. Though it's true, say Watanabe and Gamble, that the establishment press

serves up *tatemaē*, the *shukanshi* don't consistently get at the reality either. They're supported by the powerful advertising agency Dentsu, which is very much a part of the establishment, and their politics are nationalistic and conservative. "They sometimes present subjects in greater depth. They have even been known to break important political scandals. However, they rarely offer much in the way of genuinely important journalism."

## Who Owns the Media?

"The Media Monotony" by Jack Shafer, in *Slate* (Aug. 4, 2004), slate.msn.com.

Ben H. Bagdikian is at it again. In *Media Monopoly* (1983), the eminent media critic—a former *Washington Post* ombudsman and emeritus dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley—maintained that 50 companies dominated the newspaper, broadcast, magazine, book, and movie industries. Updated five times, the book is still required reading in many college journalism and sociology courses. Now Bagdikian has published a seventh edition, with a new title, *The New Media Monopoly*, and a new thesis. The number of companies is down to five: Time Warner, Viacom, News Corporation, Disney, and Bertelsmann. "These five corporations decide what most citizens will—or will not—learn," Bagdikian writes.

That's largely hogwash, says Shafer, who writes the "Press Box" column for *Slate* (which, significantly for the conspiracy-minded, is owned by Microsoft). Yes, Bagdikian's Big Five own or control four major movie studios, nearly 60 cable channels, five broadcast TV networks, a satellite TV oper-

ation, book publishers, and magazines, though only Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation owns major newspapers. Says Shafer: "The Big Five determine what the majority learns only in those places where the newsstand sells only *The New York Post* and *Time* and where TV receivers have been doctored to accept signals only from CNN, ABC, CBS, and the Fox News Channel."

"If anybody decides what most citizens learn," asserts Shafer, "it's the agenda-setting editors at *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. The TV news would go dark if it couldn't crib from the Big Four Newspapers. NPR's *Morning Edition* would fall mute. The newsweeklies would have to run more cover stories on ice cream, dreams, and guides to colleges."

Hard as it may be for Bagdikian to admit, the news media's quality and variety "have never been better," says Shafer. "Who longs for the days of William Randolph Hearst? Of three broadcast networks? Of the days before the Internet?"

### RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

## Nehru's Model Morality

"Nehru's Faith" by Sunil Khilnani, in *The New Republic* (May 24, 2004), 1331 H St., N.W., Ste. 700, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India (1947–64), is often held up as the rational, scientific opposite to the deeply spiritual Hindu leader Mohandas

Gandhi. These are "simplifications that border on caricature," asserts Khilnani, who finds in Nehru's "deeply held moral convictions" an appealing quest, "not always successful, to base

public life on a reasoned morality.”

Nehru “believed in the moral life not just as sustaining private life, but also as necessary for the living of any kind of political life.” Using reason, and often engaging Gandhi and others in probing dialogues, Nehru attempted to filter all his decisions through his own demanding moral prism before adopting a course of action. Sometimes the process became ag-



*India's Jawaharlal Nehru eschewed religion in his personal life but brought a deep moral sense to his role as prime minister.*

onizing, as when he faced demands during the early 1950s to redraw India's internal boundaries along linguistic lines. Having already overseen the disaster of partition in 1947, when Muslim Pakistan broke away from the Indian state, Nehru feared that the language question would further divide India. In Khilnani's view, by “temporizing and refusing to give in immediately to popular passions,” Nehru arrived at a series of subtle compromises and adjustments “that actually strengthened the Union and [have] endured remarkably well.”

Throughout his political life, says Khilnani, a professor of politics at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, Nehru struggled with the choices and responsibilities that came with power. As his-

torian Arnold Toynbee wrote, “It is more blessed to be imprisoned for the sake of one's ideals than to imprison other people, incongruously, in the name of the same ideals. Nehru lived to have both experiences.” But where some might turn to religious faith for guidance, as did India's other influential leaders Gandhi and the poet Rabindranath Tagore, Nehru stubbornly resisted religion. Khilnani suggests that it was Nehru's deep understanding of European history that gave him such insight into the dangers of mixing religion and politics. To Nehru, there was equal disaster in “attempts to define the character of the state in terms of the claims of religious faith” and in concentrating too much power in one person. A democracy grounded on secular principles seemed to offer the only safe course for India.

Khilnani believes that Nehru's method of moral reasoning offers a model for the modern world. “In a world in which religion was declining (as in the West) or in which religious faith existed in multiple forms (as in India), no particular religion or belief system could claim universal allegiance, no shared morality could be taken for granted.” How best to guide such societies into proper ways of thinking and acting? Or, as Khilnani puts it, more fundamentally, “how can we create and sustain a moral public life?” Nehru believed that “reason, and the processes of reasoning, are the greatest resources we have through which to create and to sustain our moral imagination.”

Religion today, observes Khilnani, “almost never refers to an inner space of contemplation and private struggle, and almost always to an outer realm of conflict and commotion.” It is being drained of its moral content. Perhaps Nehru's methods, which sometimes seemed out of step with the India of his time, “may be better suited to today's world, disjointed and disrupted by the claims of identity: They are more deeply and innately sensitive to the claims of diversity in the construction of a moral public life.”

# *The Opium of Progress*

“An Illusion with a Future” by John Gray, in *Daedalus* (Summer 2004), Norton’s Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Nothing in the modern outlook seems more indispensable than the idea of progress. Without faith in the advance of humankind, how could we go on? Yet humans long did go on without faith in progress, observes Gray, a professor of European thought at the London School of Economics. “The idea is found in none of the world’s religions and was unknown among the ancient philosophers.” For Aristotle, and for early modern thinkers such as Machiavelli, and even for some Enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume, history is a cycle of growth and decline, a story of recurrent gain and loss, not of continual progress. And those thinkers were right, Gray asserts. “Progress is an illusion—a view of human life and history that answers to the needs of the heart, not reason.”

Whence came this cherished illusion? It “is the offspring of a marriage between seeming rivals—the lingering influence of Christian faith and the growing power of science—in early-19th-century Europe. From the eschatological hopes of Christianity we inherit the belief that meaning and even salvation can be found in the flux of history. From the accelerating advance of scientific knowledge we acquire the belief in a similar advance by humanity itself.”

But in reality, the expansion of knowledge increases only human power, Gray argues. Human needs remain much the same. And as humans use their growing knowledge to satisfy their often-conflicting needs, “they remain as prone to frailty and folly as they have ever been.” This human imperfectibility is expressed in the Christian doctrine of original sin

and the biblical myth of the Fall, as well as in the Hindu and Buddhist assertions of ingrained human delusion.

In contrast, says Gray, is the secular humanist belief that more knowledge somehow makes humans more rational. “From Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill to John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, it has been believed that progress in science would be matched by progress in society.” The mass murders in which the 20th century so outdid all its predecessors give the lie to that belief, as do the most dangerous threats today, Gray argues. “The spread of weapons of mass destruction is a response to intractable political conflicts; but it is also a byproduct of the diffusion of scientific knowledge.”

Yet the illusion of progress “has sometimes been a benign one,” Gray acknowledges. “Would we have seen the abolition of slavery, or the prohibition of torture, without the hope of a better future?” Even so, he believes that the good this faith has done is outweighed by the harm. “Far more than the religions of the past, it clouds our perception of the human condition.” Without it, the world would still have had ethnic and religious conflict in the 20th century, but not mass murder “with the aim of perfecting humanity.”

In time, the religion of progress may disappear, says Gray, but he does not expect modern men and women to willingly give up the faith. “The illusion that through science humans can remake the world is an integral part of the modern condition. Renewing the eschatological hopes of the past, progress is an illusion with a future.”

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

### *Changing Times*

“Clock Synchrony, Time Distribution and Electrical Timekeeping in Britain, 1880–1925” by Hannah Gay, in *Past & Present* (Nov. 2003), Oxford Univ. Press, Great Clarendon St., Oxford, England OX2 6DP.

Throughout history, humans have displayed a “need for a unified time system and for people to coordinate their activities in line with it.”

But despite advances in timekeeping from natural rhythms, such as those of the sun or tides, to the virtual precision of cesium atomic clocks,

## *The Periodical Observer*

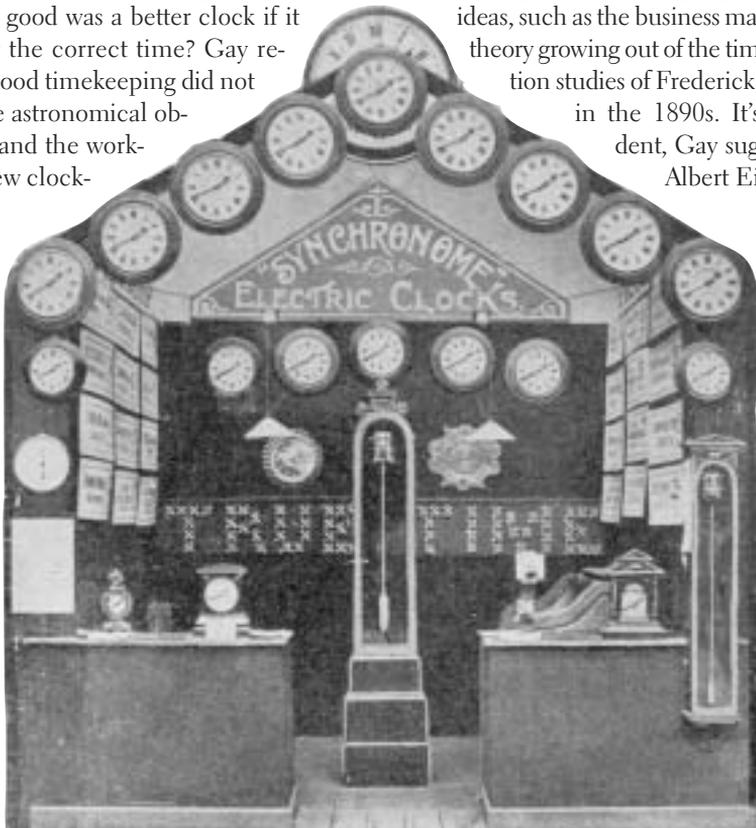
synchronizing societal clocks has proved a vexing problem. As late as 1908, almost three decades after Greenwich Mean Time had been established as the standard, a letter writer to *The Times* of London complained that no two public timepieces kept the same time. “A lying timekeeper,” as the time-sensitive writer put it, “is an abomination and should not be tolerated.”

The evolution of time synchronization, according to Gay, a historian at British Columbia’s Simon Fraser University and at Imperial College, London, depended not just on better timekeeping devices but on sweeping changes in societal attitudes. While coordinating activities mattered to some organizations—the military and monasteries are familiar examples—most people seemed content for centuries to live and work by more casual rhythms. Such practices underwent dramatic changes beginning in the 19th century, as industrializing nations such as Great Britain began measuring days by “manufacturers’ time,” aided by the development of better timekeeping devices.

But what good was a better clock if it didn’t show the correct time? Gay reports that “good timekeeping did not exist outside astronomical observatories, and the workshops of a few clock-

makers, until very late in the 19th century.” The situation even yielded a tidy income for John Henry Belville, who acquired the accurate time from the Royal Observatory on a chronometer and then “sold the time.” By 1870, Britain’s General Post Office had been given the monopoly for transmitting the Greenwich time signal to those willing to pay for it, up to £42 a year. A 1908 *Times* editorial warned that areas with inaccurate timekeeping would be “regarded as extremely antiquated and unprogressive.”

Other changes were afoot, however. Rail traffic’s increasing complexity—and the recognition that “local time” played havoc with train schedules—led to an emphasis on standardization. Telegraph signals were used to transmit more accurate time, a practice that led in the 1850s to the development of synchronous clocks, which depended on electrical impulses, not internal winding mechanisms. The Prime Meridian Conference of 1884 established time zones and a concept of “world time.” Improved timekeeping fostered new ideas, such as the business management theory growing out of the time and motion studies of Frederick W. Taylor in the 1890s. It’s no accident, Gay suggests, that Albert Einstein de-



*The Synchronome Company displayed this model of its synchronous clock in 1903. An electronic signal keyed to the pendulum in the center ensured that all the clocks would keep the same time.*

veloped his ideas at precisely the moment when modern synchronization took hold. The modern sense of time creates a feeling of anxiety, of always being rushed, but at its advent it

also created new (and more relativistic) ways of seeing the world and an enormous feeling of optimism about humankind's ability to comprehend and control the flow of events.

## *Resilient Rainforests*

"How 'Virgin' Is Virgin Rainforest?" by K.J. Willis, L. Gillson, and T. M. Brncic, in *Science* (Apr. 16, 2004), American Assn. for the Advancement of Science, 1200 New York Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

The plight of Earth's tropical rainforests—disappearing at a rate of almost 15 million acres a year, with up to two-thirds of the loss due to slash-and-burn farming—may not be as dire as everyone supposes. Evidence has begun to accumulate that many of these rainforests suffered the destructive intrusion of humans in the past, yet managed to recover.

Case studies in the three largest blocks of undisturbed rainforest—in the Amazon basin, the Congo basin, and Southeast Asia—"now suggest that prehistoric human activities were far more extensive than originally thought," report the authors, all affiliated with the University of Oxford's Long-Term Ecology Laboratory.

In the Amazon basin, recent studies indicate that the most fertile regions in the lowland rainforest have a type of soil that was formed by burning and agricultural activities 2,500 years ago. Such "terra preta" soils cover as much as 123,550 acres in central Amazonia. Emerging archaeological evidence from the

Upper Xingu region of Brazil—which "now comprises the largest contiguous tract of tropical forest in the southern peripheries of the Amazon"—also shows extensive settlements between 400 and 750 years ago. "These were complex regional settlements indicating intensive management and development of the landscape and resulting in large-scale transformation of the forest to agricultural land and parkland," Willis and her coauthors write. But after "catastrophic depopulation" during the 17th century, "extensive reforestation" took place.

Recent studies in the Congo basin and the Indo-Malay region of Southeast Asia tell similar stories of early human disturbance and subsequent forest regeneration.

The rate and extent of forest clearing today may be much greater, but "the process is comparable to prehistoric losses" in many cases, say the authors. "These tropical ecosystems are not as fragile as often portrayed and in fact are quite resilient."

## *At Death's Door*

"Darkness, Tunnels, and Light" by G.M. Woerlee, in *Skeptical Inquirer* (May-June 2004), 944 Deer Dr., N.E., Albuquerque, N.M. 87122.

"I was moving very rapidly down a long, dark tunnel. I seemed to be floating. I saw faces which came and went, and which looked at me kindly, but did not communicate. I did not recognize them. As I got nearer to the end of the tunnel, I seemed to be surrounded by a wonderful warm glowing light." So reported a woman who nearly died in childbirth. Indeed, wondrous near-death experiences such as hers have been reported for centuries, and there's no doubt that they're real.

But are they evidence of a spiritual realm—of life after death? Woerlee, a physician and anesthesiologist who practices in Leiden, the Netherlands, thinks not.

After his interest in the subject was piqued by the 1990 film *Flatliners*, Woerlee read many reports of near-death experiences. In an account given in a 1926 book, for example, a woman who came close to dying in a London obstetrics hospital first saw only darkness, then what she called a "lovely

brightness,” as well as “bright forms.” No one else in the room saw any of this. As Woerlee read the account, it became apparent to him that her medical condition “caused her pupils to widen. The woman was dying of heart failure, and lethal heart failure causes oxygen starvation; severe oxygen starvation causes the pupils to widen.” When that happens, a person sees bright light and, because of the reduced depth of field, sees clearly only “people upon whom the eyes are focused, while all other people are seen as bright and blurry forms.”

Oxygen starvation, which is responsible for the terminal loss of consciousness in more than 90 percent of deaths, can also cause both darkness and tunnel experiences, Woerlee learned. Because the retina requires more oxygen than the brain does, vision will fail—producing a perception of

darkness—before the loss of consciousness. And because the retina’s optical center happens to have the greatest supply of blood, peripheral vision will fail—producing a tunnel experience—before total vision does.

But what about the sensations of “moving, flying, or being drawn through a tunnel toward a light or entering the light”? Oxygen starvation affects not only the brain but “the sense organs that provide the brain with most of its information about body position and movement.” Add convulsions resulting from severe oxygen starvation, and movements of the body made in the course of treatment and care, combine all this with “a total loss of vision, tunnel vision, or the effects of pupil widening,” and the result can be those strange sensations. According to Woerlee, all aspects of the near-death experiences have a physical explanation.

## *The Politically Incorrect Diet*

“The Economics of Obesity” by Inas Rashad and Michael Grossman, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 2004), 1112 16th St., N.W., Ste. 140, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Obesity was responsible for about 400,000 deaths in 2000, and is fast catching up with smoking (435,000 deaths) as the nation’s leading cause of preventable deaths. It turns out, though, that the two killers are working together in an unusual way.

After remaining steady for two decades, American obesity rates rose sharply between 1980 and 2000. The percentage of obese adults went from 14 to 30, and that of overweight children from five to 14. Genetics helps to explain an individual case of obesity but not the massive collective increase.

Economists have identified various causes, including a drop in food prices and the introduction of the microwave oven, which favors fattier foods. But the chief cause, responsible for up to two-thirds of the increase in adult obesity since 1980, say economists Rashad, of Georgia State University, and Grossman, of the City University of New York, is the explosive increase in the number of meals consumed outside the home, particularly fast food. And what’s the principal reason so many Americans are dining out so often? Women’s increased numbers in the labor force.

The next-most-powerful factor in promoting obesity, the authors note, is perhaps more surprising than the proliferation of restaurants: the war on smoking. Higher taxes on cigarettes, and the resultant higher prices, have prompted large numbers of smokers to quit. And once deprived of the appetite-suppressing effect of smoking, they eat more. Other things being equal, say Rashad and Grossman, a 10 percent increase in the inflation-adjusted price of cigarettes produces a two percent increase in the number of obese people. The authors calculate that the 164 percent increase in the price of cigarettes since 1980 is responsible for 20 percent of the national rise in obesity.

Rashad and Grossman don’t advocate that the overweight take up smoking, or that women quit their jobs to stay home and cook. But they do have a suggestion for the collective fight against fat: Perhaps the government should subsidize exercise programs and facilities for the obese. It might also work through schools and recreation centers to help children ward off those menacing extra pounds.

*Lost Cause*

“Critical Condition” by Sven Birkerts, in *Bookforum* (Spring 2004), 350 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001, and “The Democratization of Cultural Criticism” by George Cotkin, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 2, 2004), 1255 23rd St., N.W., Ste. 700, Washington, D.C. 20037.

In its heyday in the 1930s and after, *Partisan Review*, fighting Stalinism and promoting modernism, was at the center of American intellectual life. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, the center shifted to *The New York Review of Books*, *Esquire*, *Harper's*, and other venues for the New Journalism and opposition to the Vietnam War. Today, American intellectual life has no center, laments Birkerts, editor of *Agni*, a literary journal based at Boston University: “If our situation feels demoralized, dissipated, without urgent core, it is to some degree because we are without a larger rallying cause and without any stirring sense of possibility.”

Though rallying causes are available (e.g., opposition to the Bush administration’s “outrages”), “the rallying *will*” is lacking. “Our intellectual life is fragmented. It has, perhaps of economic necessity, migrated into the academy, where it can only conform to the dominant strictures of theory-suffused disciplines.”

It was theory’s ascendancy in the 1980s and 1990s that eventually made traditional literary criticism, rooted in humanism and practiced by generalists, seem hopelessly old-fashioned. Meanwhile, “corporate conglomeration” was transforming the publishing world, ushering in the era of the blockbuster bestseller and making “the merely literary . . . a harder sell in the trade market-

place.” By the mid-1990s, “the rules of the literary game” had changed, for reviewers as well as authors. There were fewer literary books being published by the major trade houses than in earlier decades, and fewer venues in which to review them. And instead of making straightforward literary judgments, reviewers took cover behind irony. When irony began to cloy, some turned to “snark”—vicious, apparently gratuitous negativity—as in the notorious pronouncement by bad-boy reviewer Dale Peck that “Rick Moody is the worst writer of his generation.” Such judgments, says Birkerts, are a cry of rage and desperation, born of “the terrible vacuum feeling of not mattering, not connecting, not being heard.”

Cotkin, a professor of history at California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, doesn’t buy it. “Snark” did not begin with Peck, he says. Mary McCarthy, for instance, “outvenomed many of her compatriots” in the *Partisan Review* crowd.

Where Birkerts sees the loss of a “center,” Cotkin sees the “democratization of criticism.” The change, he admits, does pose problems. But rather than “nostalgia for a golden age that never was,” the solution, in his view, is “more democracy (against the corporatization of culture) . . . and a spirit of openness to what is new and invigorating in our culture.”

*The Wisdom of Mad*

“From Madness to Dysentery: *Mad*’s Other New York Intellectuals” by Nathan Abrams, in *Journal of American Studies* (Dec. 2003), Cambridge Univ. Press, Edinburgh Bldg., Shaftesbury Rd., Cambridge CB2 2RU, England.

During the decade that many intellectuals still regard as the Age of Conformity, one publication was willing to take on every sacred cow: *Mad Magazine*. Its joyous 1950s nihilism helped prepare the way for the adversary culture of the 1960s.

*Mad* began, in October 1952, as a comic book aimed at teenagers. Comic books, which first appeared in the mid-1930s, became a truly mass medium during and after World War II; by 1947, they were selling 60 million copies a month. In the 1950s, they

were portrayed as a national menace, a cause of juvenile delinquency and other social ills. Congressional hearings were held. To ward off government regulation, *Mad*'s publisher, William Gaines, set up the Comics Code Authority to ensure that every comic book was certifiably "wholesome." He had no intention of making *Mad* meet that criterion, so in 1955 it became a "magazine" instead. *Mad* later took its revenge with an article that blamed juvenile delinquency on baseball.

*Mad* sent up its rival publications (by turning innocent teens Archie and Jughead into chain-smoking juvenile delinquents, for instance), along with movie stars, television shows, pop singers, politicians, and advertisers. After the magazine satirically exposed the ads for various consumer products hidden in TV shows and movies, the Federal Communications Commission and Congress pressured the TV networks to cut back on the practice. *Mad* itself ran spoof ads for bogus products such as "Ded Ryder Cowboy Carbine" rifles. Rooted in pop culture, the magazine anticipated pop art.

Though Gaines always insisted that *Mad* had no political agenda, it took on politicians such as Senator Joseph McCarthy (in 1954), and "was not afraid to critique either side in the Cold War struggle," writes Abrams, who teaches modern U.S. history at the University of Southampton, England. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (who had a bald pate like the "Mr. Clean" of liquid cleaner fame) became "Mr. Mean: All-Commie Brainwasher" in a



*Mad* continues to skewer American culture, though it may lack some of the bite of its original creators.

*Mad* parody of an ad that had asked, in all seriousness, "Is Your Bathroom Breeding Bolsheviks?"

*Mad* refused "to affirm or support" anyone or anything, says Abrams. It treated student radicalism of the 1960s with the same irreverence it did everything else. But it made enough of an impact that Marshall McLuhan and many other intellectuals of the day felt compelled to take its measure.

*Mad*, since absorbed by a media conglomerate, survives in body, if not in spirit, says Abrams. The familiar face of Alfred E. Newman still continues to stare out from *Mad*'s front page, his "toothy grin a reminder of [the magazine's] mordant history."

## *No More Mozart!*

"Radio Silence: How NPR Purged Classical Music from Its Airwaves" by Andrew Ferguson, in *The Weekly Standard* (June 14, 2004), 1150 17th St., N.W., Ste. 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

If less classical music seems to be coming from your local public radio station, it's not just your imagination. Even though the number of public stations has grown to more than 800 across America—boasting a listenership of 29 million—the number of those stations identi-

fying themselves as "classical" has been cut in half since 1993. The stations still playing classical music increasingly fill their designated music hours (mostly at night) with a syndicated service called Classical 24 rather than local programming. Jazz, folk, blues, and bluegrass

have also all but vanished from the public radio airwaves. So what's filling all those hours? News-talk programs such as *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition* have claimed much bigger shares of airtime.

There's nothing wrong with giving listeners what they want, writes *Weekly Standard* senior editor Ferguson, but there's an economic undercurrent driving the changes on public radio—and public radio was expressly supposed to be immune to such pressures.

Public radio began in the 1920s as a spate of low-output, community-run broadcasts mostly aimed at rural listeners. (*Broadcast* was originally a farmers' term for spreading seeds across a field.) After World War II, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reserved the left side of the FM dial for educational radio. Classical music seemed particularly suited to stations free from commercial pressures: "an art form that was good for the polity and good for the soul," Ferguson writes.

Public radio existed in this blissful state until the 1980s, when President Ronald Reagan threatened to cut its government subsidies. At the same time, the FCC began relaxing the rules governing advertising on the public airwaves, allowing "underwriters" to subsidize programming. A vicious circle was created, writes Ferguson. Programmers "stepped up their solicitation of funds from

corporations and foundations," and began studying how to attract "a better class of listener—the kind who could be relied upon to donate money to public radio, and . . . just as important, create a desirable target audience for underwriters." Radio consultants, such as the influential David Giovannoni, were quick to point out that *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* attracted the most listeners. (Consultants also characterized news-talk listeners as youthful "citizens of the world," and classical music listeners as older folks seeking escape.) The listener trough in the middle of the day occurred during the classical music hours. It didn't take a marketing genius to conclude that adding more news hours would increase the number of listeners.

The situation seems unlikely to reverse itself anytime soon. Bob Goldfarb, a program director in Seattle, says that most stations now broadcast what the station manager wants to listen to. "Nowadays not many of these people have been educated to a taste in classical music. They're news-talk people. And by now they've got a news-talk audience." It's a slippery slope. Individual stations pay large fees to NPR for news programming, often more than \$1 million a year. As Ferguson points out, "These high costs accelerate and, in turn, require ever more listeners to cover them."

## OTHER NATIONS

### *A Model Muslim State?*

"Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities" by Graham E. Fuller, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2004), Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1800 K St., N.W., Ste. 400, Washington, D.C. 20006.

When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded modern Turkey in the 1920s, he wanted a thoroughly secular state that kept religion at the margins of public life. Now, after decades of repression, a moderate Islam has moved to the center of Turkish life. And Turkey, with its maturing democracy and growing independence, is fast becoming an appealing model for the Muslim world, argues Fuller, author of *The Future of Political Islam* (2003) and a former U.S. Central Intelligence Agency official.

"It was only natural that a key feature of the Turkish identity—its deep association with the

protection and spread of Islam for hundreds of years—could not remain forever suppressed," he says. For all the economic progress that modernization brought, the vast majority of Turks remained religious. And as Turkey's commitment to democracy deepened in recent decades, in part because of its desire to join the European Union, the Turkish military, the zealous guardian of Atatürk's secularist legacy, "increasingly limited its previously interventionist role in politics." The overtly religious Justice and Progress Party, which "prudently describes itself as coming from an

‘Islamic background,’” scored a spectacular victory in the 2002 elections, becoming the country’s ruling party. Meanwhile, the popular Nur movement, springing from “the same traditional Anatolian heartland,” calls for an apolitical revival of Islam as the moral basis for civil society, stressing the need for education, democracy, and tolerance.

As “the first state in the history of the Muslim world to freely elect to national power an Islamist party,” Turkey seems to have accomplished “the management and political integration of Islam,” which is “the leading challenge to the Muslim world today,” says Fuller.

Seeking to become an advanced, Westernized nation, Turkey under the Atatürkists tied itself closely to the West. But with the Soviet threat gone, Ankara can now be more independent of Washington. “Arabs sat up and took notice that a democratic Turkey could say no to Washington on assisting the U.S. invasion of Iraq, something despotic Arab rulers dared not do.”

For decades under the Atatürkists, Turkey tried to ignore the Arab world and Israel. But threats from regionally ambitious authoritarian regimes in Iran, Iraq, and Syria led Turkey’s leaders to develop ties with Israel. Now that those threats are much diminished (thanks, in part, to the United States), Turkey “is almost surely moving toward improved relations” with the three Muslim countries. And Ankara’s decision to meet some of the demands of its Kurdish population for cultural autonomy and linguistic rights has muted Kurdish separatism and eased Turkish anxieties about neighboring Iraq, which also has a large Kurdish population.

“This new independent-minded Turkey, moving toward resolution of its traditional Islamist and Kurdish issues and away from the old, hackneyed vision of a secular pro-U.S. state,” concludes Fuller, “is on its way to becoming a genuine model for the Muslim world and gaining acceptance among many Muslims as such.”

EXCERPT

## *Target: Canada*

*Reading a book composed entirely of excerpts from textbooks may seem an unpromising activity, but history texts reveal much about national perspectives and prejudices. . . .*

*According to Canadian texts (six are cited), the United States planned to conquer and annex Canada during the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and at various points in between. During the Cold War, the United States repeatedly bullied Canada into supporting its aggressive military policies. Canadian officials hoped that NATO would evolve into a North Atlantic community that would act as a counterweight to U.S. influence in Canada, but in vain: Canadian governments had to toe the U.S. line or suffer humiliation. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker, concerned that [President John F.] Kennedy’s belligerence might lead to a nuclear war, waited three days before announcing that Canadian forces had gone on the alert. In the next election, the Americans used their influence to topple the truculent prime minister. Diefenbaker’s successor, Lester Pearson, aligned Canada more closely with the United States, but in 1965, he annoyed Lyndon Johnson by calling for a bombing pause and a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam War. In a meeting after the speech, Johnson grabbed Pearson by the lapels and shouted, “You pissed on my rug.”*

*Thus have Canadian texts immortalized the Johnson vernacular.*

*In few countries are the texts so consistently critical of the United States as they are in Canada.*

—Frances FitzGerald, author of *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (1979), reviewing Dana Lindaman and Kyle Ward’s *History Lessons: How Textbooks from Around the World Portray U.S. History*, in *The Washington Post Book World* (Aug. 8–14, 2004)

# The New Art of China

Special section on China, by Richard Vine, Barbara Pollack, Jonathan Napack, and Lisa Movius, in *Art in America* (June–July 2004), 575 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012.

Amid all the news stories about budding entrepreneurs springing up all over China, one phenomenon has largely escaped notice: Venues for contemporary art are suddenly all the rage. In Beijing, more than a dozen new galleries have opened, mostly operated by foreigners. Seven years ago there were none, and foreigners were forbidden either to own galleries or to trade in art. The Shanghai Gallery of Art opened in January, filling its mammoth 18,000 square feet with works by both homegrown and expatriate artists and catering to eager buyers, of whom 40 percent are mainland Chinese.

Chinese artists, particularly in the realms of photography and video art, are also beginning to gain international notice, with a major retrospective now touring the United States. According to Christopher Phillips, curator of New York's International Center of Photography and co-organizer of the exhibition, as recently as five years ago local exhibits were being closed down without warning by Chinese officials. But when Chinese artists began receiving favorable reviews abroad, "the cultural ministry made a conscious decision to try to find ways to use this art to bolster China's image." Phillips acknowledges that the situation can put an artist in a delicate position, in "danger of seeming to be a government-sponsored 'official artist.'"

Many of the new artists seem drawn to the scene, writes Napack, a Hong Kong-based writer, because of the potential to become "remarkably affluent, relative to their country's average income." Those who can sell internationally "profit from global market prices but pay low Chinese living costs," while others can "moonlight in the booming design and media industries." Those who transgress certain limits still face arrest, but the limits are expanding. Add to the mix an emerging moneyed elite, interested in collecting art, and the coming of age of a "sixth generation," born after the bleak Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square, and the ingredients are in place for a new wave of artists, some of whom seem intent on pushing boundaries.

A performance piece by Gu Zhenqing, *Controversy Model*, prominently featured at the Beijing Biennial in 2003, displayed caged guard dogs chained to treadmills that were set in motion by the dogs' frenzied attempts to attack each other. The same show offered Liu Wei's *Event of Art*, a table of microphones under the legend "Everyone has the right to speak." Those who accepted the invitation were rewarded with ear-shattering feedback.

Many artists seem drawn to video and photography, suggests artist and writer Pollack, because these media allow them "to



One of nine images that comprise Zhang Huan's 2001 *Family Tree*.

keep pace with the cultural upheavals in their country during the past decade." Christopher Phillips agrees: "Artists have realized that a whole way of life is disappearing and being replaced overnight by another, and much of their work represents a kind of stunned attempt to deal with this situation." The only unifying sentiment of this art, in Napack's view, is "a frustration with the moral bankruptcy of Chinese society mixed with a contempt for the hypocrisy of the West." In one show, he saw nihilism more radical than virtual-

ly anything one would expect “in the history of Western modernism.”

Underlying it all seems to be a strange—at least to Western eyes—economic, cultural, and political dynamic. Many galleries are backed by real estate developers who, reports artist and critic Vine, use them “to attract high-end clients to new business or residential spaces.” Many entrepreneurial print and photo artists sell their work directly to customers—and perhaps secretly inflate sup-

posedly limited editions. And all of this happens under the not entirely benevolent eye of the government. President Jiang Zemin’s “Theory of the Three Represents” address in 2000 named artists as one of the “advanced forces” of society. While Jiang’s remarks placed the work of Chinese artists in a new political context, it remains to be seen whether the government will continue to allow China’s contemporary art scene to expand in new and provocative directions.

## *No Thanks, Comrade*

“Explaining Labor Weakness in Post-Communist Europe: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspective” by Stephen Crowley, in *East European Politics and Societies* (Summer 2004), SAGE Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91320.

With great fanfare, the European Union (EU) added 10 new states to its 15-member lineup this summer. The newcomers are poorer than their Western European neighbors, and eight of them—including the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia—are still shaking off the effects of long communist rule. Hardly anybody thinks it’s going to be easy to mesh them into the EU, and Crowley, a professor of politics at Oberlin College, points to a surprising source of difficulty: massive differences between East and West in the role and power of organized labor.

The EU is built on a “social Europe” model, with powerful labor unions that represent the broader political and economic interests of workers at the national level in addition to negotiating wages with employers. Along with industry and business, these labor groups play a leading role in forging a wide variety of government social and economic policies. But in the former workers’ paradises that recently joined the EU, organized labor is weak, decentralized, and rapidly losing members. It resembles American labor a lot more than it does its Western European counterparts.

The rate of labor union membership has been declining throughout Europe, but in the postcommunist states it has been plummeting, dropping from high levels around the time the Berlin Wall fell to only 29.7 percent of the working population in the pe-

riod 1995–97—and much of that strength is concentrated in the stagnant industries that remain state owned. (The comparable rate in Western Europe at the time was 33.7 percent.) The decline occurred despite a period of postcommunist economic transition and upheaval “equal to or worse than the Great Depression.” Real wages have declined, yet the postcommunist unions have rallied workers for only a small number of strikes.

Crowley brushes aside competing explanations and pins the blame for labor’s weakness on the legacy of communism. During the communist years, unions were vehicles of the state and allies of management more than they were representatives of workers. The taint survives. According to surveys, people in the postcommunist states have less trust in unions than in any other civic institution. Union leaders, including those who helped undermine the communist system, have provided little direction, unsure “whether they should be defending their workers against capitalism or helping to bring it about.”

Some observers think that integration into the EU will promote the transformation of Eastern Europe’s unions into something more like, say, Germany’s. Crowley is skeptical. Lacking legitimacy, fundamentally weakened by their drastic decline, and still directionless, the unions of Eastern Europe don’t have great prospects. As the EU strains to draw the continent together, Eastern and Western labor remain oceans apart.

# CURRENT BOOKS

Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction

## *The Art of the Essay*

THE BEST AMERICAN ESSAYS 2004.

Edited by Louis Menand. Series editor, Robert Atwan. Houghton Mifflin.

323 pp. \$27.50 cloth, \$14 paper

Reviewed by Phyllis Rose

This is the 19th appearance of a volume that I look forward to every year—*The Best American Essays*. A guest editor makes the final selection of about 20 essays from hundreds of pieces sifted by series editor Robert Atwan. It's an elegant system that has produced collections of consistently high quality, and this year's selection, by Louis Menand, the author of *The Metaphysical Club* (2001) and a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, maintains the tradition. The series offers heartening evidence that there are people in America who like to hear other people's thoughts on any subject, from blindness to taxidermy, Yiddish to yarn, the envy of a boyfriend's success to survival in the Arctic, so long as the thinking is fresh and the writing expressive. I would want nothing changed about this series except the size of its audience, which should be even bigger.

The term *essay* comes trailing clouds of apathy. It's a turn-on to few people other than essayists and their nearest and dearest. Atwan initially considered calling the volume *Best American Nonfiction*, and perhaps that would have been better after all. Readers might then expect something urgent, central, hard hitting, which the best essays are, whether their topics are personal or public.

People say that books of essays don't sell, but that's not necessarily so when there is a unifying, powerful subject. Barbara Ehrenreich's dazzling *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2001), a first-person account of stints in various low-wage jobs, became a *New York Times* bestseller. Ehrenreich considers herself an essayist, but her larger purpose, to show the injustice of contemporary American capitalism, informs each of the essays that make up *Nickel and Dimed*. I would suggest that a similar single-mindedness is evident in the work of every great essayist, from Montaigne, whose project was himself, to George Orwell, whose work Ehrenreich's closely recalls in spirit and impact. The individual pieces, the essays, in some way or other are in the service of an overarching project.

A volume can also become a classic when it collects in one place many examples of a powerful outlook and sensibility, allied to however loosely defined a focus, as in Joan Didion's *Slouching towards Bethlehem* (1968) or Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), the latter less obviously, but no less, an essay collection than the former. Other writers who have been able to yoke an essayist's sensibilities to the larger purpose needed for a book include two whose work appears in *Best American Essays*: Wayne Koestenbaum, the author of *The Queen's Throat* (1993), and Anne Fad-



Michel de Montaigne, the first essayist

man, the author of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* (1997). Indeed, a lot of what we call nonfiction is the work of essayists. In an introductory note to her magical volume *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (1982), Dillard explains that “this is not a collection of occasional pieces, such as a writer brings out to supplement his real work; instead this is my real work, such as it is.”

Dillard is a novelist as well as an essayist, and so are Didion, Susan Sontag, V. S. Naipaul, and W. G. Sebald. One of my favorite essays in Menand’s collection is “Caught,” by Jonathan Franzen, the author of the novel *The Corrections* (2001). Consider the opening sentence of Franzen’s essay: “Kortenhof had heard of a high school where pranksters had put an automobile tire over the top of a 30-foot flagpole, like a ring on a finger, and this seemed to him an impressive and elegant and beautiful feat that we at our high school ought to try to duplicate.” I read this sentence three times before I could convince myself that I hadn’t read it in *The Corrections*. The passage is perfectly novelistic. It plunges us into someone else’s experience.

Later in Franzen’s piece come expository passages more typical of essays classically conceived: “Adolescence is best enjoyed without self-consciousness, but self-consciousness, unfor-

tunately, is its leading symptom. Even when something important happens to you, even when your heart’s getting crushed or exalted . . . there come these moments when you’re aware that what’s happening is not the real story. Unless you actually die, the real story is still ahead of you. This alone, this cruel mixture of consciousness and irrelevance, this built-in hollowness, is enough to account for how pissed off you are.”

Franzen opens with an example that comes across as felt experience and then follows it with the mental leap to a more abstract consideration of the example—that’s what makes this a wonderful essay. But it is also, if I remember correctly, the texture of *The Corrections*. And of other great novels besides. We don’t have to invoke the interstitial essays by Tolstoy in *War and Peace* or Melville in *Moby Dick* to make the point. I think it’s better made by re-reading Philip Roth and paying attention to how much of the impulse, as well as the technique, of his novels is essayistic. *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969) and *The Human Stain* (2000), to take examples from the two ends of his career, are powered by pages-long monologues on subjects of passionate interest to the author, assigned to one character or another. (“Jews have always spoken essays,” writes Leonard Michaels in the current collection.) And, to take this one step further, the qualities of Roth’s best nonfiction, such as *Patrimony* (1991), an account of his father’s death, are exactly the qualities of his great novels.

The observation has been made for decades that good nonfiction employs techniques of fiction, especially narrative. When we encounter a terrific nonfiction writer, such as Laura Hillenbrand, who can make even a racehorse interesting, we say she’s a great storyteller. But it’s equally a gift, the gift of the essayist, to see stories as examples of a larger idea. An astute reader of *Seabiscuit* (2001) wouldn’t need to read “A Sudden Illness,” Hillenbrand’s account in *Best American Essays* of her experience of chronic fatigue syndrome, to know what a marvelous essayist she is. Nonfiction as artful as *Seabiscuit* doesn’t get written without the essayistic gift of marrying instance to abstraction.

The same is true of Susan Orlean's irresistible *The Orchid Thief* (1998). Orlean is represented in this collection by a piece on a taxidermists' convention, which, like *The Orchid Thief*, is about the obsessions people rely on to give life meaning.

Whether the result is nonfiction or fiction, certain writers move up and down the abstraction scale at a unique pace and with a unique pitch. Voice, a quality much prized by writers and connoisseurs of writing, as Menand points out in his astute introduction, is hard to define and impossible to create on demand. Nevertheless, we respond to it. Susan Sontag sounds like Susan Sontag whether we read the essayistic *Illness as Metaphor* (1978) or the novel *The Volcano Lover* (1992).

Where essayists who want to write novels can go wrong is in believing that, in fiction, they have to leave the expository part of themselves behind, just showing, not telling. In doing so, they silence part of their literary uniqueness. George Eliot made the transition from critic to novelist—a transition she wasn't at all sure she could make—because she found herself able to imagine dramatically. But the transition worked as well as it did because she felt free to bring into the novels the same expository voice she had used in criticism. In *The Quick and the Dead* (2000), one of the best novels of recent years, Joy Williams assigns to one of her characters the intemperate, partisan spirit—and some of the opinions—she herself expressed in controversial essays about the environment for *Harper's* and *Esquire*. Williams has the technical and spiritual flexibility to keep the political passion from taking over the whole book.

Editors are the unsung heroes of such collections as *The Best American Essays*. All the essays were originally published in magazines; I'd be surprised if many weren't assignments, or, at the least, encouragements. A good editor who loves essays encourages them in others. *The New Yorker* must have many such editors, because seven out of the 22 essays in this collection, almost a third of them, originally appeared there. The magazine hasn't always been as favored: The 1986 and 1987 *Best American Essays* each had only one *New Yorker* selection, perhaps because previous editors made it a point to look beyond *The New York-*

*er*. But Menand's partiality to his own magazine is merited. Orlean's deadpan essay on the taxidermists' convention, Hillenbrand's and Franzen's memoiristic essays, and Adam Gopnik's cultural investigations (a brilliant one on *The Matrix* is in this collection) clearly represent a new style and a new generational voice, which *The New Yorker* in recent years has powerfully expressed. For in addition to a personal voice, essays reflect—they cannot help it—the values and stylistic preferences of their time and country.

In all things relating to the essay, you especially have to admire the first essayist. Montaigne was his own editor. He assigned himself the subjects and had to provide his own encouragement. A good editor can say "That doesn't sound like you" or "This part is thin." Montaigne did this for himself. He went back over his essays in the years after he'd written them, demanding of himself another example here, another quotation there. In a good edition, you can follow the process, because the various layers are chronologically labeled. Montaigne's essays, the brilliant samples that defined the form, have little overall narrative or logical argument, yet they are filled with wonderful stories. How generals react to the bravery of their enemies, for instance, prompts five examples, each one riveting. The women of a defeated city are exempted from the planned mass execution and allowed to leave with whatever they can carry on their backs before the city is razed. They manage to carry all of their men, and the conquering general is so moved by their gallantry that he spares the city.

Montaigne knows hundreds of these stories, and one reads him looking forward to the next, as well as to what he has to say about it. Perfect unions of example and generalization, his essays have fascinated centuries of readers. It's the same combination of thinking small and thinking big, of incident and rumination, that makes people like me love essays as much as fiction, and for many of the same reasons.

>PHYLLIS ROSE, a professor of English at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, is the author of *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (1983) and *The Year of Reading Proust: A Memoir in Real Time* (1997), as well as the essay collections *Writing of Women* (1985) and *Never Say Goodbye* (1990).

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

**COPIES IN SECONDS:**  
*How a Lone Inventor and an Unknown Company Created the Biggest Communication Breakthrough since Gutenberg—Chester Carlson and the Birth of the Xerox Machine.*

By David Owen. Simon & Schuster.

320 pp. \$24

The first copying machine, David Owen tells us, was language, and the second was writing. Papyrus followed clay tablets, parchment followed papyrus. Later technology included movable type, lithography, and James Watt's copying press, patented in 1780. It's a story full of twists and turns and sudden illuminations, culminating in one of the most significant technological developments of the 20th century—Chester Carlson's invention of xerography.

Carlson (1906–68) spent much of his childhood in miserable poverty. By the age of 16, he was his family's principal breadwinner. He managed to put himself through the California Institute of Technology, and in 1930, degree in hand, he was hired as a research engineer by Bell Laboratories in New York. He spent his days in a dingy basement lab, performing simple quality tests, and his evenings in a rented room, imagining his future as a famous inventor.

Over the next couple of years, he outlined hundreds of ideas in pocket notebooks, including a raincoat with gutters, a see-through toothpaste tube, an improved cap for ginger ale bottles, and a machine that could make multiple copies without harming the original document. The progress of copying in the 20th century would have taken quite a different turn if Carlson had devoted himself to one of his other ideas (apparently, the raincoat with gutters was already patented). But his ambition increasingly focused on the copy machine. He began spending his free hours at the New York Public Library, reading science journals and pondering the challenges.

In 1933, Bell Labs fired Carlson for “scheming” to start his own company. It was a fortunate dismissal, for he landed a

job in the patent office of the electronics firm P. R. Mallory & Company, where, besides learning about patent law, he saw firsthand the difficulty of copying drawings in patent applications with photostat machines and other slow, cumbersome technologies available at the time. More convinced than ever that he was on the right track, he set up a makeshift lab in his kitchen, purchased rudimentary equipment, and started to experiment. With the help of an assistant, he produced the first xerographic copy, using a microscope slide and India ink, in 1938.

What would we do, Owen asks, without xerography? “We would have fewer lawyers, larger forests, smaller landfills, no Pentagon Papers, no laser printers, more (fewer?) bureaucrats” —the list goes on. Yet xerography “was so unusual and nonintuitive that it could conceivably have been overlooked entirely.” Carlson met with skepticism when he tried to pitch his idea. Only a small company named Haloid, located in Rochester, New York, was willing to invest in his process. Even after the first copy machine—the 914 Office Copier—



A 1960 ad promoted Xerox's new line of photocopiers, which promised to save time and money, if not space.

went into production in 1960, some scientists considered the process unfeasible.

*Copies in Seconds* is an elegant, fascinating study of a dogged inventor and his doubtful idea. Ultimately, it's a story of vindication: By 1966, Haloid had changed its name to Xerox (adapted from the 1940s coinage *xerography*) and was the 15th-largest publicly owned corporation in the United States, Chester Carlson was one of the country's wealthiest men, and information was circulating more widely than ever before.

—JOANNA SCOTT

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**LOOKING FOR LONGLEAF:**  
*The Fall and Rise of an  
American Forest.*

By Lawrence S. Earley. Univ. of North Carolina Press. 322 pp. \$27.50

Longleaf pines once covered 92 million acres of sand dunes, savannas, and foothills from southeastern Virginia to eastern Texas: “a continuous, measureless forest, an ocean of trees,” German traveler Johann David Schoepf wrote in the 1780s. Today, less than three million acres of longleaf forest remain, mostly fragmented into isolated stands near the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. The former range of this long-needled, giant-coned species is now dominated by loblolly and slash pines—and, of course, by civilization.

The decline of the longleaf pine is a complex story, well and thoroughly told by journalist Lawrence Earley. Human exploitation of the longleaf forest began in the 18th century, when settlers loosed millions of grazing cattle and foraging hogs beneath the canopy. Later in the century, the tar industry rose in the Southeast to satisfy worldwide demand for naval stores; it was followed in the early 19th century by the rapid expansion of the turpentine industry. Turpentine “chippers,” Earley writes in one of his charming detours, hacked into the trees to draw out the resin, while crews of “dippers” collected the gum for the distillers—“outlaw work carried on by outlaws,” in the words of one worker. Though these practices didn't always kill the trees, “cutting into a living tree with an ax . . . was not conducive to its health,” Earley writes. Slapdash chipping and dipping exhausted hundreds of thousands of acres of longleaf forest each year.

With a half-century of enthusiastic “cut-and-run” logging that began around 1875, the timber industry liquidated most of the remaining longleaf stands. What the 18th-century explorer William Bartram described as “the solemn symphony of the steady western breezes . . . rising and falling through the thick and wavy foliage” was largely silenced. Though some observers mourned the loss of the graceful trees, there was little hope for the species. Longleaf was difficult to cultivate and grew slowly, so the pulp mills that followed the loggers planted the now-ubiquitous loblolly and slash pine.

The U.S. Forest Service, wedded to its long campaign against wildfire, also helped keep longleaf off the landscape during much of the 20th century. Beginning in the 1930s, several researchers found that regular fires encouraged the recovery of longleaf stands, but the federal agency discouraged the release of their work. “Smokey Bear could not distinguish between a fire that warmed a house and one that burned it down,” a retired Forest Service researcher said. Not until the mid-1980s, when environmentalists sued, did the Forest Service commit to reversing the decline of the longleaf forest.

By the time the tale reaches the present day, one wonders how even a single longleaf pine could have survived. Yet Earley finds some hardy remnants. At Eglin Air Force Base in the Florida Panhandle, tall turkey oaks camouflage a large swath of old-growth longleaf; at a Girl Scout camp in southern Louisiana, a Louisiana State University researcher is attempting to piece together a longleaf ecosystem. Longleaf restoration is usually considered a money-losing proposition, but a few small landowners, timber companies, and managers of hunting plantations have turned restoration projects to their financial advantage by selling longleaf needles, so-called brown gold, for garden and landscaping mulch, or by patiently raising large, high-value trees.

Could the once-grand longleaf forest, whose remains still shelter some of the most diverse plant communities in the world, be restored to its past glory? Not in our lifetimes. But the corps of longleaf defenders, Earley suggests, may yet midwife a humbler recovery.

—MICHELLE NIJHUIS

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**WHEN GERMS TRAVEL:**  
*Six Major Epidemics That Have  
Invaded America Since 1900 and the  
Fears They Have Unleashed.*

By Howard Markel. Pantheon Books.

263 pp. \$25

In 1991, when a bloody coup toppled Haiti's first democratically elected president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, thousands of Haitians fled the island state. Mostly they headed for the United States, in ramshackle boats unfit for the local bays, let alone the open Atlantic.

In the 1980s, the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration both had singled out Haiti as a nation of people at high risk for HIV infection and AIDS—the only such geographic designation to appear on the high-risk lists, even though several U.S. cities had higher infection rates. In response to criticism and protests, both agencies ultimately removed Haitians from their lists, the CDC in 1985 and the FDA in 1990.

Nonetheless, President George H. W. Bush ordered the U.S. Coast Guard to intercept the boats and transfer the Haitians to Guantánamo Naval Base in Cuba. Some 12,000 refugees ended up there (thousands of others were returned to Haiti), in horrid conditions—too few and rarely emptied toilets, overcrowded housing, poor food, and reported beatings. Approximately 200 of the refugees did test positive for HIV infection; they were kept at Guantánamo for nearly two years with no anti-HIV treatment.

“The comments of President Bush’s

[Immigration and Naturalization Service] spokesman, Duke Austin, best reflected the U.S. government’s attitude at the time,” writes Howard Markel. “He refused to acknowledge the moral, ethical, and legal repercussions of imprisoning HIV-positive refugees. “They’re gonna die anyway, right?” he asked a crowd of scribbling journalists just before Christmas in 1992.”

Markel, a pediatrician and medical historian at the University of Michigan, has written a compelling book about immigration and infectious disease. Title notwithstanding, it’s less about traveling germs than about our fear of the unknown, especially the infectious unknown. In addition to U.S. policy toward AIDS, Markel examines the American response to immigrant-borne tuberculosis, typhus, cholera, bubonic plague, and trachoma (an eye infection).

He recounts one atrocity after another committed in the name of public health—Mexicans forced to bathe in a mixture of gasoline, kerosene, and vinegar because of fears of lice and typhus, the quarantine of all of San Francisco’s Chinatown for plague, the infection of immigrants as a result of unsanitary medical practices at Ellis Island. Markel’s accounts are powerful and his documentation extensive.

Time and again, Markel shows, Americans have responded to viruses and bacteria with xenophobia, racism, and moral and ethical blindness. Everyone who considers the United States a nation of civilized people should read this book.

—GERALD N. CALLAHAN

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## HISTORY

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**FINAL SOLUTIONS:**  
*Mass Killing and Genocide  
in the 20th Century.*

By Benjamin A. Valentino. Cornell Univ. Press. 317 pp. \$29.95

“If we hope to anticipate mass killing, we must begin to think of it in the same way its perpetrators do,” writes Benjamin Valentino, a political scientist at Dartmouth College. Isn’t mass killing simply the outermost consequence of irrational group hatred? That’s the tra-

ditional perspective on it, but Valentino believes otherwise. In his view, mass killing represents a rational choice of elites to achieve or stay in political power in the face of perceived threats to their dominance.

Valentino develops his argument through eight case studies. Three fit the legal definition of genocide (the intentional destruction, in whole or in part, of a “national, ethnical, racial, or religious group”): Armenia, the Holocaust, and Rwanda. The remaining five amount to

what political scientist Barbara Harff calls “politicide,” mass killing for political reasons: Stalin’s Soviet Union, Mao’s China, the Khmer Rouge’s Cambodia, Guatemala, and Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. By emphasizing cases of politicide over those of genocide, Valentino stacks the deck in favor of his politics-centered argument from the start.

He convincingly demonstrates how communist collectivization in the Soviet Union and China led to unparalleled mass murder, but his case is weaker for some of the other instances of politicide. What begins as rational political opposition to an insurgency can expose cultural fault lines of irrational ethnic hatred. In Guatemala, for example, an anti-communist counterinsurgency turned into a genocidal war against the Mayan Indians who supported the communist guerrillas. Whole Mayan villages were slaughtered, men, women, and children—yet Valentino denies the racial, ethnic aspect of the war. In Afghanistan, too, he downplays the ethnic, religious, and nationalistic roots of the resistance to Soviet occupation.

Valentino’s argument is least successful in accounting for genocide. As causes of genocide, he believes that dehumanizing attitudes, a nondemocratic government, and ethnic hatred are “secondary to deeper political and military conflicts,” though other scholars have shown them to be strong predictors. The Holocaust and the Armenian and Rwandan genocides were last resorts, Valentino contends, undertaken only after emigration and deportation failed to bring about ethnic cleansing of the respective societies. But he doesn’t adequately address why ethnic cleansing was the goal to start with; Jews, for example, were no threat to German survival except in Hitler’s fantasies. Mass killing, moreover, wasn’t a mere last resort: The Turks deported Armenians into the Syrian desert as a method of genocide, not an alternative to it, and Hutu extremists allowed no Tutsi to escape from Rwanda in 1994.

Rational means, Max Weber observed, can be adopted to achieve the most irrational ends. The meticulous planning of the death camps was a rational means to an utterly irrational end, a Jew-free Europe. Valentino minimizes the fact that the irrational ends of genocide mostly arise out of nationalism, ethnic hatred,

religious intolerance, and racism.

Despite its shortcomings, Valentino’s strategic perspective on mass killing produces an extremely useful conclusion: The best strategy for prevention is to remove those leaders likely to commit mass murder. But regime change by international intervention has not yet become an accepted norm, even to stop genocide. Some 5,500 heavy infantry with a strong mandate might have prevented the genocide in Rwanda. Instead, the United Nations withdrew. In Darfur, we see that the lessons of Rwanda haven’t yet been learned.

—GREGORY H. STANTON

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**WELLINGTON’S RIFLES:**  
*Six Years to Waterloo with England’s  
Legendary Sharpshooters.*

By Mark Urban. Walker. 351 pp. \$27

The way to the Duke of Wellington’s victories against Napoleon’s forces in Portugal and Spain in the opening years of the 19th century was paved with British defeats in the American Revolutionary War. American sharpshooters with accurate rifles took advantage of cover to torment the well-drilled British ranks and kill their officers. In response, the British deployed sharpshooting Americans who had remained loyal to the Crown. Once the war was over, many of these loyalists deemed it prudent to depart with the British. Some of them remained in the army, where they joined thoughtful British officers to build a specialized corps of riflemen.

These riflemen were to prove invaluable in the wars against Napoleon. Dressed in somber green with black buttons (rather than the shining brass ones that could give away a position), they blended with the landscape. Deployed as skirmishers in ones and twos ahead of the stolid lines of British infantry, they repeatedly decapitated French attacks by killing the officers and sniping at the gunners of the redoubtable artillery.

The French, too, had developed a new style of warfare that relied heavily on skirmishers. Their armies used their excellent and highly mobile artillery (modernized under the monarchy) to bombard the drilled ranks of their enemies, then deployed swarms of skirmishers (known as *voltigeurs*, or leapers) to torment the battered ranks further. The differ-



At Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington's victory owed much to his well-armed British riflemen.

ence was that the *voltigeurs* used smooth-bore muskets, barely accurate even at 30 yards, whereas the British sharpshooters had sturdy Baker rifles. Although their rate of fire was much slower, British riflemen were usually sure of a kill at 200 yards. Wellington won battle after battle by using his riflemen to repel the *voltigeurs*, posting his ranks of infantry behind the brow of a hill to protect them from French artillery, then deploying the infantry in double lines so that each man could shoot (only the front ranks in the French columns could fire).

This is the context for the highly readable and entertaining book by Mark Urban, a former British officer turned journalist. He uses memoirs, hitherto-unpublished diaries, and French archives to give a detailed account, focusing on six soldiers of the celebrated 95th Regiment. He describes their campaigns in Portugal in 1809, through Spain and into southern France in 1814, and finally at Waterloo in 1815.

Urban reproduces a British recruiting poster of the day: "You will carry a Rifle no heavier than a Fowling-Piece. You will knock down your enemy at Five Hundred Yards, instead of missing him at Fifty. Your clothing is GREEN, and needs no cleaning but a BRUSH." In fact, with extra rounds, spare shoes and socks, mess tin, water, and other supplies, each rifleman had to carry more than 70 pounds. Once, to reach the battlefield of Talavera, in Spain, the sharpshooters

marched 30 miles uphill in 24 hours. And, marching at the quickstep, they moved markedly faster than the standard infantry.

Much of this is familiar territory for Urban, whose last book was *The Man Who Broke Napoleon's Codes*, a fascinating account of the Peninsular War through the exploits of the staff officer who learned to read Napoleon's "Great Paris Cipher." But the riflemen make for a better story, offering at once a broader yet more focused canvas that illuminates the way all armies at the end of the 18th century sought tactics to cope with the massive killing power of the new artillery and the massed musketry fire of well-trained troops. Wellington consistently beat the French because the riflemen gave him the means to do so, just as the American sharpshooters had frustrated and beaten the redcoats.

—MARTIN WALKER

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**LIBERIA:**

*Portrait of a Failed State.*

By John-Peter Pham. Reed Press.  
252 pp. \$24.95

Liberia aspired at its birth to be a beacon of light and progress for all of Africa, but ended up sliding into absolute anarchy a century and a half later. A civil war starting in 1989 lasted more than a decade, killed five percent of the population and displaced two-thirds, destroyed the fragile infrastructure of the state, and made criminality the

only means of economic survival. Liberia is now a byword for bizarre atrocities, committed by soldiers high on drugs and dressed in all manner of strange gear, including blond wigs and women's clothes.

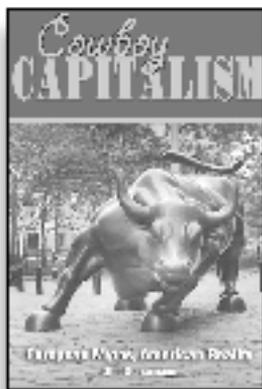
John-Peter Pham was a diplomat in East Africa during the latter phases of the civil war, which ultimately engulfed the whole region. Both personal experience and wide reading qualify him admirably to explain Liberia's descent from high aspiration to nightmare. He is concise as well as fair-minded: The sound of grinding axes cannot be heard in these pages.

Pham traces the origin of Liberia's catastrophe to the very founding of the state in the 1820s by a small group of expatriated black Americans, an act that was inherently contradictory insofar as the Americo-Liberians achieved liberty at the cost of subordinating the indigenous inhabitants. The Americo-Liberians became, in effect, a colonial elite, and were at least as convinced of their civilizing mission as any European colonial official. Small in number—never more than three percent of the population of the territory to which they laid claim—they had great difficulty imposing their rule and resorted to unscrupulous and sometimes brutal methods. They craved the respect of the outside world, and looked to America for inspiration and protection: a regard that was never reciprocated.

The old order was formally overthrown in 1980, but it had been modified over previous decades to incorporate an increasing number of indigenous people into the fast-expanding economy. (Astonishing though it may seem now, for several years in the 1950s Liberia had the world's highest rate of economic growth.) But authoritarian systems are most vulnerable when, having lost confidence in their own divine right, they reform themselves, a truth borne out by the Liberian case.

Hatred of an old regime is not necessarily sufficient to unite the population in an alternative project, and Liberia soon became a playground of personal and ethnic ambition. In 1980, the master-sergeant-turned-five-star-general, Samuel Doe, replaced the Americo-Liberians as the elite with his own ethnic group, the Krahn, who made up approximately the same small proportion of the population. As they used to say in Portuguese

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Africa, the struggle continues.

Pham does not draw sufficient attention to a factor I believe to have been crucial in the debacle not only of Liberia but of all post-colonial Africa: the disjunction in the educated classes between abstract, rhetorical universal principles and innermost desires for personal advancement. Thus, old regimes such as the Americo-Liberian are criticized from the standpoint of an ideal by people with limited, or deliberately concealed, self-knowledge—they speak of social justice but dream of Mercedes cars. Nevertheless, Pham's book is the best short guide to the Liberian imbroglio, and serves as a timely warning to those who think weak and disintegrating states can be led by outside intervention to the paths of peace and wisdom.

—THEODORE DALRYMPLE

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**THE NUREMBERG INTERVIEWS:  
*An American Psychiatrist's  
Conversations with the  
Defendants and Witnesses.***

By Leon Goldensohn. Edited by Robert Gellately. Knopf. 474 pp. \$35

As every publisher knows—and as we were reminded during Holocaust denier David Irving's audacious but ill-fated libel suit against his fellow historian Deborah Lipstadt—there can probably be no such thing as a surfeit of information about the Third Reich. Like Richard Overly's *Interrogations* (2001), which synthesized the transcripts of interviews of captured German leaders, Leon Goldensohn's fastidious record of his encounters with fallen potentates and functionaries offers a backstage glimpse of the Nuremberg trials.

A psychiatrist who rose to the rank of major in the U.S. Army, Goldensohn (1911-61) spent seven months of 1946 interviewing Nazi officials held as both defendants and witnesses at the Nuremberg trials, for purposes of monitoring their mental health. Although he never fulfilled his plan to write a book about the assignment, his notes and transcripts were collated after his death and subsequently came to the attention of Florida State University professor Robert Gellately, author of *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (2001).

The result is, essentially, a work in

progress, which inevitably lacks the narrative flow and occasional melodramatic flourish of psychologist G. M. Gilbert's *Nuremberg Diary* (1947). But Goldensohn remains an intriguing witness to history nonetheless. There may be a chilling doggedness to some of his techniques: Asking Rudolf Hoess, the former commandant of Auschwitz, if his wife was "a good cook" elicits no useful information. And like many an interlocutor at Nuremberg, Goldensohn is invariably confronted with long-winded evasions and self-justifications, particularly when he attempts to probe the inner workings of the Final Solution.

But his patience and persistence yield valuable insights, especially from the lowlier figures in the Nazi hierarchy. Indeed, the third of the book devoted to the men called as witnesses is the most intriguing. The loftily self-absorbed SS general Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski attempts to depict himself as an "incorruptible," good Nazi. The fanatical *Einsatzgruppe* leader Otto Ohlendorf is so successful at convincing himself that he was a mere pawn that he resembles, in Goldensohn's words, "a burned-out ghouf."

In a curious way, there is an even more repellent quality to the portrait of Walter Schellenberg, the urbane intelligence official who seems capable of infinite adjustments to the moral calculus. If the VIPs in the other cells often seem less than human, Schellenberg is all too recognizable as the ambitious, quick-witted young man who always knows which way the wind is blowing. Though the monsters were hanged, Schellenberg's spiritual descendants will always be with us.

—CLIVE DAVIS

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**ATHENS:  
*A History, from Ancient  
Ideal to Modern City.***

By Robin Waterfield. Basic.  
362 pp. \$27.50

Classicist Robin Waterfield takes on a daunting task. He aims to provide a concise but detailed history of Athens from the Mycenaean settlements of the 13th century B.C.E. to the preparations for the 2004 Olympics. Waterfield's love for the land and its history permeates the book. He provides vivid portraits of the major players—Pericles,

Demosthenes, Lord Elgin, and Lord Byron—as well as less familiar figures, such as the mournful, scholarly archbishop Michael of Chonae, who labored in the 12th century to restore the Parthenon. His forthrightly “moralizing history” contains a good deal that’s inspiring and edifying, but also, unfortunately, much that’s misleading.

Waterfield blames Athenian imperialism for the agonies of the fifth-century B.C.E. Peloponnesian War and gives a chilling, accurate description of Athenian hubris, exemplified in the eradication of Melos and Skione. But he doesn’t grasp the complexity of the causes of the war. In his account, reluctant Spartans were “forced” to “confront Athens and its imperialist ambitions.” In contrast, the Athenian general and historian Thucydides properly emphasized Sparta’s fear of Athens’s growth as well as Sparta’s long-standing, bitter jealousy of Athens. Unlike Thucydides, Waterfield doesn’t mention Athens’s offer to submit to arbitration to avoid war, and he underreports Sparta’s war crimes, such as the massacre of the Plataeans.

The book’s moralizing builds on Waterfield’s notion of an “Olympic spirit of Greek cooperation.” Although he admits that the Olympic truce of Greek antiquity was little more than a guarantee of safe passage for competitors and spectators to and from Olympia, he wants to believe that wars generally subsided. But not only did Greece’s internecine wars continue, the Olympic

truce itself was broken on a few occasions and Olympia witnessed warfare in its own sacred precincts.

Scholars have long cautioned against investing the Olympics with undeserved moral status. In the case of the notorious 1936 games in Berlin, precisely this kind of weak history and fuzzy thinking caused the world to overlook the crimes of the hosts in the name of a putative Olympic ideal. In truth, the ancient Olympics were relentlessly competitive and ruthlessly individual; teams and teamwork were unknown. The actual Olympic ideal is no more evidence of the ancient Greeks’ multiculturalism than is their term for non-Greek speakers, *barbaroi*—“barbarians.”

*Athens* raises crucial questions about the past and challenges us to apply history to today’s decisions (“If America could look back on Athens’s story . . . it might learn to curtail its use of arms and to become a defender of true culture, not monotonous globalization”), but it doesn’t offer the material that would allow us to do so judiciously. Waterfield’s “Olympic ideal” is no more valid than his insistence on the moral equivalence of Robert Mugabe, Saddam Hussein, and the United States. The book might at least encourage readers to delve deeper, but the bibliography omits many seminal yet readable works. All in all, Athens deserves better than *Athens*.

—MICHAEL POLIAKOFF

## ARTS & LETTERS

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**KAFKA:**

*A Biography.*

By Nicholas Murray. Yale Univ. Press.

440 pp. \$30

On July 12, 1914, Franz Kafka, an employee of the Workers’ Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia in Prague, was alone in his room when he was abruptly ambushed by three women: his fiancée, Felice Bauer (whom he would never marry); a colleague of hers, Grete Bloch (with whom he had been carrying on an intimate correspondence); and Erna Bauer, Felice’s sister. Assuming a prosecuto-

rial mode, Felice proceeded to read aloud portions of letters Kafka had written to Grete. It’s not clear from Nicholas Murray’s meticulous biography exactly what her accusations were. What is clear is that this incident, which Kafka later referred to as “the tribunal,” was the direct inspiration for *The Trial*, his haunting novel about Joseph K., charged with an unspecified crime he didn’t commit.

Kafka’s stark visions of estrangement, persecution, and punishment have been read as prophesies of Nazism and Stalinism, yet their origins often lie not in any encounter



*Franz Kafka mined the terrors he faced in everyday life to create his angst-ridden fiction.*

with authoritarian power but in domestic or romantic conflicts that wouldn't seem out of place on *Beverly Hills 90210*. For the hypersensitive Kafka (1883–1924), just getting through an ordinary day could be the emotional equivalent of being arraigned by a despot's callous functionaries. "For even the most intimate friend to set foot in my room," he told Felice, "fills me with terror."

Kafka's anxiety in the face of the quotidian sometimes seems a tad histrionic. He once admitted, "I always feel 10 times better than I say; it's just my pen that runs away with me, that's all." And sometimes he seems weirdly proud of his angst, which he described to one girlfriend as "perhaps the best part" of him. What ailed Kafka? Was he clinically depressed? Sadomasochistic? (Diary entry: "This morning . . . the joy again of imagining a knife twisted in my heart.") Was his multiple outsider status—a German speaker in Prague, a Jew among Christians—a factor? Whatever his debility, it was lifelong.

Alas, therein lies the main problem with this book. Murray, whose previous works include biographies of Matthew Arnold, Aldous Huxley, and Bruce Chatwin, has done a conscientious job, but he's stuck with

a drama in which the settings and supporting cast, and above all the protagonist's preoccupations and state of mind, change little over the years; the result is a largely monotonous slog through unvarying and terribly grim terrain. There's little real drama, as opposed to self-dramatization: We're immersed throughout in Kafka's feelings of alienation and self-disgust (to read this book is to understand Gregor Samsa's transformation, in "The Metamorphosis," into a giant insect), his resentful overattachment to his indulgent yet unaffectionate parents (with whom he lived all his 40 years in, says Murray, an atmosphere of "claustrophobic mutual surveillance"), and his inability to connect normally with women ("He could not bear to leave the bright, white cell of his self and put himself in another's hands, even though he longed for that consummation. . . . He seems not to have possessed the capacity for simple joy in another's love").

Kafka attributed his chronic psychological incapacity to having "vigorously absorbed the negative element of the age in which I live." Yet despite occasional promising glimpses beyond his narrow circle—he saw Nijinsky dance, attended lectures by Rudolf Steiner and Martin Buber, crossed paths with Einstein, Rilke, and Puccini, and vacationed at a naturist spa where he was known as "the man in the swimming trunks"—we don't get as much of a sense of the age, let alone of its "negative element," as we'd like. A book less relentlessly focused on Kafka's static inner world and more attentive to his outer world might have been at once more congenial and more illuminating.

—BRUCE BAWER

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*I AM ALIVE AND  
YOU ARE DEAD:  
A Journey into the Mind of  
Philip K. Dick.*

By Emmanuel Carrère. Translated by Timothy Bent. Metropolitan Books. 315 pp. \$26

What better way for an author to be honored than to have his name become an adjective for the very thing he wrote about? Among science-fiction aficionados, the term "phildickian" has come to refer to tropes and

tales that turn reality inside out or upside down. And the biggest fans of such tales are proud to call themselves “Dickheads.”

More of us are fans of Philip K. Dick (1928-82) than know it. You may not have read his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* but you’ve probably seen *Blade Runner*, the Ridley Scott movie based on it. You may not have read the short story “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale,” but there’s a good chance you’ve watched Arnold Schwarzenegger brawl his way through the screen version, *Total Recall*. Steven Spielberg’s *Minority Report* is based on fiction by Dick, as is the upcoming *A Scanner Darkly*, starring Keanu Reeves. In an increasingly erratic and tortured career, Dick managed to write more than 50 novels, a host of stories, and some 8,000 pages of unedited, often incomprehensible notes toward what he called his “grand Exegesis.” It’s an output that would be remarkable for any writer, but it’s all the more so for one afflicted by a legion of demons.

Agoraphobic, paranoid, possibly schizophrenic, overweight, suicidal, addicted to a raft of prescription medications (he simultaneously patronized a half-dozen doctors to keep himself supplied), a drinker, a smoker, his own worst enemy in almost every way imaginable, Dick nonetheless turned out a briskly paced and richly textured body of work. Though he spent most of his life in

dismal California backwaters, he traveled mentally to other worlds, imagining places where time moved backward and the dead rose from their graves, where animals had become so rare that people bought expensive robot pets, where criminals were caught before they committed their crimes, and where eager customers bought happy memories of events they hadn’t actually experienced. Dick’s work easily places him in the company of science-fiction icons Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert, and Robert Heinlein.

Just how he accomplished so much is, unfortunately, left obscure in this sympathetic but self-indulgent portrait. “I have tried to depict the life of Philip K. Dick from the inside . . . with the same freedom and empathy—indeed with the same truth—with which he depicted his own characters,” explains French novelist Emmanuel Carrère. In practice, this means we get “imaginative recreations” of Dick’s actions, thoughts, and delusions, but no source notes, bibliography, or index. After dozens of pages imagining one or another hallucination or breakdown, it’s a great relief to seize on a verifiable fact, as if stumbling from a swamp onto dry land. Philip K. Dick often lost touch with reality—indeed, it became his trademark, in his life and in his art—but it’s too bad Carrère felt he had to follow suit.

—ROBERT MASELLO

## CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

### *FAT MAN FED UP: How American Politics Went Bad.*

By Jack Germond. Random House.  
224 pp. \$24.95

Jack Germond was always on my list of people I’d like to drink with through a long evening. I’m a political junkie, and he has been immersed in American politics for some 50 years, as a terrific reporter and columnist for the Gannett syndicate, *The Washington Star*, and *The Baltimore Sun*, and as a sometime (but not so successful) television talking head on *The McLaughlin Group* and elsewhere. I wanted to hear him tell war stories. Now, I can cross him off my

list. He has written a barroom rant that does the job.

Sort of.

There are lots of stories, although most of the ones starring politicians appeared in *The New York Times* when they happened, and many of the rest feature Germond as subject—and hero.

But *Fat Man Fed Up* is more confession than memoir. We see the emergence of a political soul once buried under the pretense of journalistic objectivity: a liberal Democrat with a fondness for cerebral and verbal candidates such as Morris Udall and Bill Bradley, politicians who find it

hard to connect with voters but who make terrific drinking buddies. Germond roots for those who stand up for truth and justice but get done in by the dirty deeds of consultants and money—as when John McCain’s voting record on breast cancer was distorted during the 2000 Republican primaries, all to the benefit of George W. Bush, whom Germond describes as “an embarrassment” combining “ignorance and arrogance.”

And therein lies one of the lessons of Germond’s diatribe. Reporters have opinions, strong ones. From drinking with candidates or schmoozing with them in unguarded moments, they think they know who should be elected. But the knowledge drives them crazy, because they’re supposed to be objective.

Something else drives Germond crazy, too. The game of politics has changed enormously since his salad days in the 1960s and ’70s. Today, he says, it’s about apathetic and gullible voters, sleazy consultants, incompetent journalists, and, of course, the dominance of money, which he calls the “easy answer” that explains much of what’s so wrong. But I’m old enough to remember Germond’s good old days a bit differently. When I ran for Congress 32 years ago, I spent most of my time dialing for dollars, and I struggled with the same kinds of conflicts and potential obligations that candidates face nowadays.

No, what made the good old days so good for Germond is that he was a player, influential, close to the decision makers, on a first-name basis with the few hundred people who controlled the political process. What’s not to like? For half of those 50 years, you had to talk with Germond (and *The Washington Post’s* David Broder, *The New York Times’s* Johnny Apple, *The Boston Globe’s* Bob Healy, and a few others) if you wanted to go national. Germond was *important*. But today, television and the Internet have shrunk the clout of print reporters.

People didn’t get their political news from *The Daily Show* when Jack was king. Now that he’s off the throne, the mask has come off as well.

—MARTY LINSKY

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*NEW POLITICAL RELIGIONS,  
or An Analysis of Modern Terrorism.*

By Barry Cooper. Univ. of Missouri Press. 242 pp. \$44.95

Wave upon wave of books about Islam and terrorism have been published in the West since September 11, 2001, but few have offered much new. University of Calgary political scientist Barry Cooper’s volume might have been one more rehash, because his sources are entirely secondary. Instead, Cooper draws useful parallels between the Islamist extremism now stalking the planet and prior forms of totalitarian ideology.

A belief in the intrinsic separation of the political follower from the rest of the world; faith in the capacity of the political creed to fulfill divine, historical, or natural laws—such characteristics are common to all forms of totalitarianism, including Nazism, Stalinism, Japanese militarism, Italian fascism, and the contemporary Japanese cult of Aum Shinrikyo, to which Cooper devotes substantial attention. But his main focus is on “Salafism.” That’s the polite term preferred by both militants and Western academics when discussing Wahhabism and neo-Wahhabism, the Islamic movements that inspire Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda, and their allies.

Classic Wahhabism, like Soviet, Italian, and German totalitarianism, has enjoyed the backing of a state: the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in which Wahhabism remains the official religion. Neo-Wahhabism is the product of thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), who introduced the concept of revolution into a religious milieu that previously had eschewed it as a form of sowing dissension, a major sin in Sunni Islam. Unlike the original Wahhabis in the Arabian Peninsula, who allied with the Christian powers for their own political ends, the neo-Wahhabis of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Pakistani Jama’at movement preached resistance against Christian domination as represented by British rule in their countries.

Cooper believes that the works of political philosopher Eric Voegelin, including *Political Religions* (1938) and *The New Science of Politics* (1952), provide a framework for understanding terrorism. Voegelin not only equated political extremism with forms of religious

affirmation, he also perceived the role of crises in stimulating political developments. He read Plato and Aristotle as products of a crisis in ancient Hellenic society, while Augustine's *City of God* grew out of the crisis of Rome and Christianity, and Hegel marked "the beginning of the modern Western crisis."

And what crisis has stirred so much of the Islamic world to a radical if deviant attempt at religious revitalization? Everyone, Cooper included, seems to give the same answer: the encounter with that oft-cited but seldom defined *deus ex machina* "modernity." Islam-

ic revivalism stirred by non-Muslim success (and, let us add, colonial aggression) has given rise to "direct political action" in the form of terrorism.

Cooper's book is marred by his reliance on secondary sources, including eccentric and marginal works that seek to locate the crisis of Islam in the religion itself. Even so, *New Political Religions* is clearly written, and it includes enough basic information, and enough fresh understanding, to be recommended to all newcomers to the discussion.

—STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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### *CITIES OF WORDS:*

#### *Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life.*

By Stanley Cavell. Harvard Univ. Press. 458 pp. \$29.95

Surely no scholar has done more to bring American philosophy into the viewing room than Harvard University's Stanley Cavell. His latest volume reads as if it were a single, pleasantly rambling essay—an integration, extension, and reunion of his earlier writings

on film, particularly *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (1981), and his writings on Ralph Waldo Emerson, particularly *This New Yet Unapproachable America* (1989) and *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1990). If the present edition is less focused than the earlier volumes, its intimate, ambulatory style is equally rewarding.

Cavell explicitly marries, or remarries, philosophy, particularly the notion of moral per-



*The Philadelphia Story* (1940): A romantic comedy or a study of Emersonian democracy?

fectionism, and films about remarriage. Plato gets paired with *His Girl Friday*, Emerson with *The Philadelphia Story*, John Locke with *Adam's Rib*, and Sigmund Freud with *The Lady Eve*, among others. The philosophical basis of democracy meets what's arguably the most democratic of art forms. Invoking Plato's notion, taken up and transformed by Emerson, of an imaginary city of ideas distinct from the quotidian city of things, Cavell traces the migration of moral perfectionism from ancient Greece to 19th-century Concord and on to 20th-century Hollywood.

The effect is seductive in its fulfillment of a double longing: academe's desire for public visibility and film's desire for recognition as high art. There is a tragic, unstable inevitability to the pairing, like the union of Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe, the brains of philosophy meeting the beauty and glamour of motion pictures. Yet for all its tensions, the union inexplicably endures.

In line with Cavell's vision of the social contract, his work convinces by the magnetism of its ideas rather than by the force of its rhetoric. His thinking often exemplifies the best qualities of the American ethos: its expansive, democratic vision, its drive for self-determination, and its emphasis on both the personal and social dimensions of its moral imagination. For him, as for Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, democracy is tested by basic social relations. The films about remarriage, Cavell convincingly argues, require us to judge whether the marriages depicted manage to fulfill the Romantic and democratic vision of a genuine "union."

Philosophy and film don't need each other, but, like Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant in *The Philadelphia Story*, they have something to say to each other. Cinema, by depicting the existential crises of being human, fulfills moral philosophy's need to be widely understood and applied. With its concentrated temporality, film lends itself particularly well to reflection on lived events and their consequences. And what is philosophy if not, like cinema, an elaborate way of watching ourselves? Both contribute to what Cavell calls the "kind of conversation [that] constitutes the bond that democracy . . . asks of itself." So does this book.

—ELIZABETH WILLIS

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**CATCH AND RELEASE:**  
*Trout Fishing and the Meaning of Life.*  
By Mark Kingwell. Viking.  
242 pp. \$21.95

Books populated by brothers, fathers, and fish invariably elicit comparisons to Norman McLean's poetic memoir *A River Runs Through It* (1976). *Catch and Release* has those elements, though not the larger-than-life loggers, Indians, prostitutes, and poker players of McLean's Montana youth. But like McLean, University of Toronto philosophy professor Mark Kingwell skillfully merges fishing with insights about love and loss, nature and human finitude, and grace and patience.

Kingwell emphasizes from the start that "This Book Is Not About Fishing," as he titles the first chapter, but rather about "thinking about fishing." The narrative spools around Kingwell's annual fishing trip to British Columbia with his father and two brothers. Fishing, he reflects, invites a "basic restoration of a state of native receptivity" to inward clarity. With a weekend on the water as his aperture, he examines what swims below the surface of life.

Kingwell manages to raise a mundane physical act—sitting silent in a boat with a line in the water—to the level of the metaphysical. His eye for comparisons and distinctions calls to mind a time when philosophy was as much aesthetic experience as rational enterprise. Anglers are like philosophers, he writes, in that "against all odds and evidence, they are liable to cling to methods and arrangements that worked once, or seemed to, yet do so no longer." On the debate over dry flies versus wet flies (dry flies lie on the surface whereas wet flies sink), he writes: "Dry-fly fishing necessarily puts wet-fly fishing down because it is more difficult to master, and therefore the odds against catching any fish at all are markedly high." But given the counterintuitive distinctions of angling (like those of philosophy), "elegantly catching nothing" while pursuing "the mastery of subtle technique" is preferable to inelegantly catching a bucket full of fish.

Kingwell manages to cover a large canvas with fine brush strokes. He muses on masculinity and the comforts of male silence, Aristotle's treatment of the tension between action and contemplation, and the relative virtues of

polenta and risotto—all this from having sat in a boat on a lonely lake in British Columbia. Throughout, his approach is more fly-fisher's cast than archer's shot: The lure is dispatched in a general direction, not aimed at any target in particular.

*Catch and Release* casts a series of lures in

hopes of playing and landing memories, grasping such meanings as life allows us to catch, and then, often, letting them go. In the end, this is a book about hope, for fishing is, “like all hope, an embodied paradox of desire and desire's defeat.”

—PETER CHURCH

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Bruce Bawer** is the author of *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity* (1997) and several volumes of literary criticism. **Gerald N. Callahan**, an immunologist who teaches at Colorado State University, is the author of *Faith, Madness, and Spontaneous Human Combustion: What Immunology Can Teach Us about Self-Perception* (2002). **Peter Church** is a former researcher at *The Wilson Quarterly*. **Theodore Dalrymple**, a physician and psychiatrist who practices in England, is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and the author of *Life at the Bottom: The Worldview That Makes the Underclass* (2001) and, writing as Anthony Daniels, *Monrovia Mon Amour: A Visit to Liberia* (1992). **Clive Davis** writes for *The Times* of London. **Marty Linsky** is a former journalist and politician who teaches at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and consults through his firm, Cambridge Leadership Associates. **Robert Masello** is a visiting lecturer in literature at Claremont McKenna College in California and the author of the forthcoming novel *Vigil*. **Michelle Nijhuis** is a freelance writer in western Colorado. **Michael Poliakoff** is a classical scholar and the former deputy secretary of education of Pennsylvania. **Stephen Schwartz** is the author of *The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism* (2002). **Joanna Scott**, a professor of English at the University of Rochester, is the author of seven works of fiction, including *Make Believe* (2000) and *Tourmaline* (2002). **Gregory H. Stanton** is the president of Genocide Watch and a visiting professor at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia. **Martin Walker** is editor in chief of United Press International. **Elizabeth Willis**, a professor of English at Wesleyan University, is the author of three poetry collections.

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## PORTRAIT: Uncle Sam



There was a real Uncle Sam, and his birth—in Massachusetts in 1766—preceded the nation's. In 1789 Samuel Willson went west, to Troy, New York, with his brother Ebenezer, and the two became successful businessmen. As David Hackett Fischer tells the tale in *Liberty and Freedom: An American History* (2004), Sam was much loved and admired, and after he married Betsey Mann, relatives and friends in the area began to call him Uncle Sam (and his wife Aunt Betsey). During the War of 1812 he shipped meat to American troops in barrels marked with the initials "U.S." Legend has it that when a soldier asked what the U.S. stood for, he was told "Uncle Sam Willson." The "New York militia," says Fischer, "began to speak of their rations as Uncle Sam's. The name caught on and was soon attached to the government itself."

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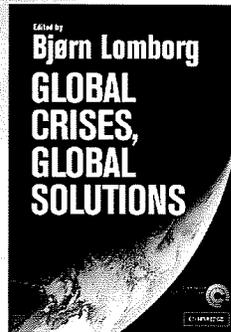
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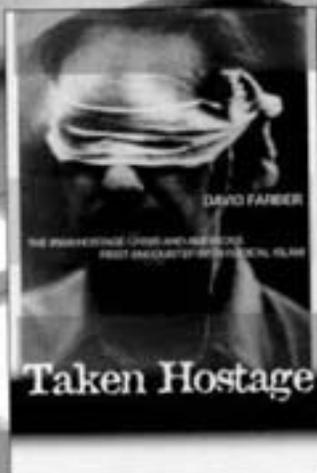
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