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# Inside the Chinese Mind

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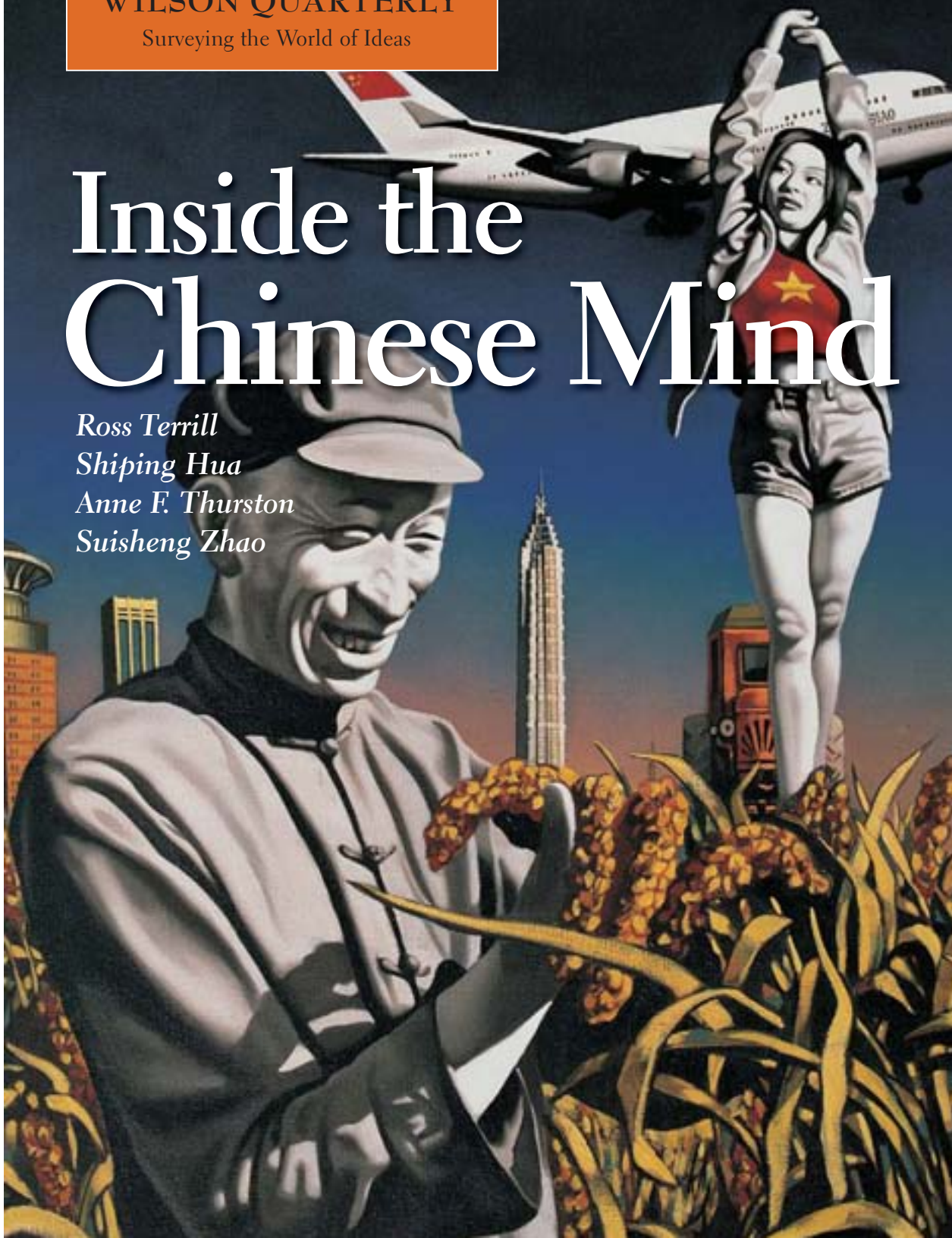
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AUTUMN 2005 VOL. XXIX NO. 4





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AUTUMN 2005

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COVER: Detail from The Catchers in the Rye (2001), by Zhong Biao, design by David Herbick.

The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.



## Editor's Comment

**N**ext year, the *WQ* will celebrate its 30th anniversary, a milestone that we're planning to mark in a variety of special ways. I'm excited to announce that we'll cap the celebration with a one-week Alaskan cruise in July. While that's nearly a year away, I hope you'll save the date and consider joining us for this first-of-its-kind event. Traveling aboard the Holland America Lines' *Zaandam*, you'll be able to meet some of the writers and scholars who have graced the pages of the magazine and join them for a series of panel discussions on the sorts of topics that enliven the *WQ*. Among them: How far will China rise? Taking the temperature of American culture. Is there a clash of civilizations?

*WQ* editors will be on hand throughout the trip, and we're working now to enlist a group of stimulating speakers for our panel discussions. Of course, there will be plenty of opportunities to mingle with the speakers. Details can be obtained at the cruise website, [www.wqcruise.com](http://www.wqcruise.com), or by calling 1-800-707-1634.

Of one thing I can assure you: The cast of characters will reflect the intelligence and wit you have come to appreciate in the pages of the magazine. And I look forward to your own lively role in the conversations. During the six years I've been privileged to serve as editor of the *WQ*—and the many years before that when I was a member of the staff—I've had an extraordinary opportunity to develop a rapport with our readers, and I've always felt we've been embarked together on a journey of discovery. Now we have the opportunity to make that journey literal, aboard a fine ship and in a gorgeous setting. Please join us!

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## *American Pictorial*

Orchids to the *WQ* for highlighting, in its essay cluster "America in the Footlights" [*WQ*, Summer '05], some of the contradictions that confuse efforts to rescue the U.S. image abroad from decades of neglect. You have begun an important discussion. Yet the editor's comment, leading with today's favorite whine, "Why do they hate us?" implies an endorsement of the quick-fix approaches of a public-relations blitz. Effective public diplomacy requires more than pro-American spin. It took 150 years of patient education to fill the "reservoirs of goodwill," a process begun by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson in Paris and carried forward by 19th-century intellectual diplomats, missionary-educators, merchants, and the military before the philanthropists took over; then government waded in, briefly in 1917 and permanently in 1938.

Marc Lynch's masterful account of al-Jazeera's role in the process of Arab democratization ["Watching al-Jazeera"] makes clear that the United States' refusal to try patient engagement instead of confrontational demonization deprives it of any honored role in the Arab reformist discourse.

Student visas may seem a tiny detail of cultural diplomacy, but therein lies God or Devil, as Sarah L. Courteau reminds us ["Diplomacy Is in the Details"]. In a decent diplomacy, culture is not an add-on or a frill; it is part of the seamless web of U.S. relations with other societies.

Martha Bayles ["Goodwill Hunting"], tackling the issue more broadly, has been misled by the meretricious rhetoric of public diplomacy, whose advocates preach the revival of the United States Information Agency exactly as it was before it was folded into the State Department in 1999. For her, cultural diplomacy is merely a "dimension" of public diplomacy—the very view that drowned

USIA in its final two PR-oriented decades. She rightly sees the Cold War as the apogee of U.S. *public* diplomacy but underestimates the overwhelming and semi-autonomous cultural component, thus mistaking the part for the whole. In fact, like Edward Djerejian and Joseph Nye Jr., Bayles pleads for *cultural* investments. Her suggestion that we inject religion into the Near East equation by initiating an exchange program between Christian and Muslim youths in the media is surely incendiary: Democratization in the Arab world requires a gentle weaning of state from church; to introduce religion—and which religion, by the way?—will send the wrong signal and look like an American jihad.

If Ms. Bayles admits to confusion over the meaning of "public diplomacy," Frederick W. Kagan ["Power and Persuasion"] has no doubts. For him it is a matter of balancing power and persuasion, hard power and soft power (and, presumably, hard persuasion and soft persuasion), to support U.S. hegemony. He impressively details the strategies and propaganda employed by Bonaparte, Bismarck, and the British in South Africa. To relate the United States to these imperialist-nationalist exemplars, he cites the postwar U.S. reeducation effort in Germany and Japan, without mentioning its towering educational and cultural components and generous commercial interchanges. But Americans have not yet accepted the role of hegemonists—nor, fortunately, is our system capable of producing a Bismarck or a Bonaparte. Whatever empire the United States accumulated before World War II was essentially an economic and commercial affair, with an educational overlay. It did not "project" democracy so much as simply set out examples of how democracy might work. It was a Jeffersonian empire based on "peace, commerce, and friendship with all nations"—and by "commerce," Jefferson meant dialogue.

Today's reservoirs of goodwill are mud

flats. We shall have to begin again, and there are no shortcuts. Filling reservoirs is a job for educational and cultural processes, a win-win game that must be pursued with gigantic patience over time, along with concerted shorter-term efforts. Can the United States rise to such challenges? A better question: If it cannot, what then?

*Richard Arndt*

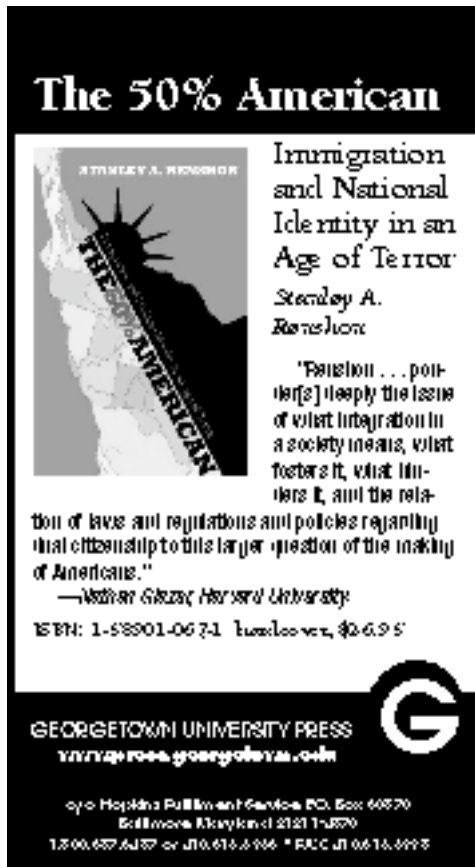
*Author, First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the 20th Century (2005)  
President, Americans for UNESCO  
Washington, D.C.*

Martha Bayles is right to call attention to the role of cultural exchanges in influencing public opinion in other countries. Stalin died in 1953, but it took more than 30 years for the system he established to be overturned, when a new Soviet generation had come to power that, through cultural exchanges, had been exposed to the world beyond Soviet borders and had come to realize that their media had not been telling them the truth, that communism had failed them, and that the Soviet Union had fallen far behind the West.

Exchanges of students, teachers, scholars, scientists and engineers, writers, performing artists, and athletes, as well as political leaders, enabled Soviet citizens to see their own country in a different light. International radio broadcasts and the printed word exposed millions to the world beyond Soviet borders. U.S. exhibitions proved that seeing is believing. Performing arts exchanges showcased our culture and stimulated creativity.

Will similar public-diplomacy practices succeed in the Muslim world? Can what defeated communism serve as a model for defeating anti-Americanism and terrorism today? The jury is still out, but while our experience in the Soviet Union and elsewhere shows how difficult it can be to bring change to countries that have old and rich traditions and cultures, it also shows that patience can pay off.

To be sure, no two regions of the world are alike. But we can still use many of public diplomacy's proven tools. To reach foreign audiences, it behooves us to continue doing what we know works well, but also to utilize new technologies — computers, the Internet,



and satellite television. The greater challenge of protecting exchange participants alone should make us rethink the mix of public-diplomacy activities.

However, Bayles's endorsement of people-to-people exchanges between young American Christian groups and their Muslim counterparts overseas is likely to be counterproductive. Despite injunctions against missionary work, such efforts would be seen by Muslims as a children's crusade to counter the growing influence of Islam.

Additional personnel and funding for public diplomacy alone will not win support for American actions. Those who are expected to practice public diplomacy should have some input in policy decisions. As Edward R. Murrow, the well-known television journalist and former director of USIA, put it, we have to be "in on the takeoffs and not just the crash landings."

*Yale Richmond*

*Author, Cultural Exchange and the Cold War:  
Raising the Iron Curtain (2003)  
Washington, D.C.*

## Correspondence

Frederick W. Kagan writes that hard and soft power are not mutually exclusive and that diplomacy is not the opposite of war. He is correct, but he focuses on only part of the story. Power is the ability to get the outcomes you want. Hard power is the ability to get those outcomes through coercion or inducement—sticks and carrots. Soft power is the ability to get the desired results through attraction—to shape what others want. It can rest on the attractiveness of your culture, your political ideals, or your policies and diplomacy. Hard and soft power sometimes reinforce, sometimes substitute, and sometimes interfere with each other.

Combining hard and soft power was crucial to our victory in the Cold War. Our hard power deterred Soviet aggression while our soft power eroded the base of communism behind the Iron Curtain. But it is worth remembering that in the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union was also attractive in many parts of Western Europe. But it squandered its soft power with repressive policies at home and its invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Skeptics say that whatever the merits of soft power, it has little to do with our current “war on terrorism.” Osama bin Laden and his followers are repelled, not attracted, by American culture, values, and policies. Military power was essential in defeating the Taliban government in Afghanistan, and soft power will never convert fanatics. True, but the skeptics mistake half the answer for the whole answer. The current struggle is not a clash of civilizations; it is a civil war inside Islamic civilization between moderates and extremists. We will win only if moderate Muslims win, and our ability to attract the moderates is critical.

How has the current war in Iraq affected moderate Muslims around the world? The polls are not encouraging. Kagan is correct that the exercise of hard power can attract when it is successful or legitimate. American prestige in the Middle East rose after the first Iraq war, but that war was fought by a broad coalition with a United Nations blessing. The costs for our

soft power vary with the perceived legitimacy and breadth of our coalition. The way we pursued the second Iraq war pitted our hard power against our soft power in a manner that has been costly for our larger struggle against jihadi extremists in the broader Muslim world.

More than four centuries ago, Niccolò Machiavelli advised princes in Italy that it was more important to be feared than to be loved. In today’s world, it is best to be both. To win the struggle against terrorism, the United States has to learn better how to combine its soft and hard power. That combination is smart power.

*Joseph S. Nye Jr.*

*Author, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (2004)*

*John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, Mass.*

It is refreshing, particularly for an Arab reader, to come across an enlightened and nuanced Western perspective such as Marc Lynch’s on a topic as controversial as al-Jazeera.

Lynch finds the affinities between the al-Jazeera project and U.S. aspirations to promote democracy and other reform in the Arab world more striking than their apparent incomparability. While in the short term al-Jazeera is strengthening anti-American sentiments, in the long run it is shoring up “the foundations of a pluralist political culture” of public argument and is aiding reform by providing a forum of expression for Arabs. The American administration, in demonizing al-Jazeera and setting up its own, unpopular channel, al-Hurra, has bypassed an important conduit to a part of the world with which the United States desperately needs to engage.

However, the extent to which al-Jazeera and, for that matter, Arab news media can transform the political environment in the Middle East is questionable. Al-Jazeera’s power should not be overstated; nor should its “urgent desire to promote democracy and other reforms in the Arab world” be taken for granted.

Although al-Jazeera enjoys editorial



independence, the network is tightly bound to its host country, Qatar, which is sitting on the second-largest gas reserve in the world and aspires to become an energy giant. Qatar has sought the protection of the United States, which in turn has found in this small gulf emirate a convenient partner in the oil-rich, conflict-ridden Middle East. At the same time, Qatar courts Arab public opinion on the airwaves of al-Jazeera and often rides the mood of the Arab street. Serving two masters, as it were, al-Jazeera's host country has so far managed to walk a fine line—but how long it can continue to do so remains to be seen.

Furthermore, Lynch seems to blur the distinction between public opinion and public sphere, and in doing so portrays new Arab media such as al-Jazeera as effectively fostering democracy. In the West, media lay out issues and inform potential voters. In this sense, media contribute to the development of political institutions and thus have the potential to enhance the relationship between citizens and their government, make government more transparent, promote civic participation, increase awareness about and participation in public-policy debates, decentralize power, strengthen civil society, advance civil rights, and facilitate—or at least project—democratic values.

Not so in the Arab world, where, for the most part, autocracy reigns. Al-Jazeera's purportedly wide appeal and growing influence suggest a fragile equation: The more open it is about the state of affairs in the Arab world, the more likely it is to create discontent that cannot properly be addressed if the region's democracy deficit persists. Absent credible political institutions and systems, the media democracy ushered in by new Arab media could degenerate into a mobocracy, making a channel like al-Jazeera as much a potential threat as an opportunity.

*Mohamed Zayani*

*Editor, The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media (2005)*

*Associate Professor of Critical Theory  
American University of Sharjah  
Sharjah, United Arab Emirates*

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## *FDR's Wheelchair*

Of course Christopher Clausen ["The President and the Wheelchair," *WQ*, Summer '05] is right when he says that Frank Freidel and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in their books about Franklin Delano Roosevelt written in the 1950s, "treat his polio and its physical manifestations matter-of-factly, as if every well-informed person knew at least the essentials of his condition and had known at the time." I think you could delete "well-informed." What with the publicity roused by Warm Springs and the March of Dimes and the parental panic caused by infantile paralysis, every sane voter knew that America's president was crippled by polio. FDR's aversion to wheelchair photographs was probably due, as Mr. Clausen suggests, to the desire of a proud man to minimize his personal handicap in order to avoid pity; but he publicly and wholeheartedly identified himself with the search for a polio cure.

Should the Washington memorial yield to FDR's preference not to be depicted in a wheelchair, or should it yield to the "polios" in their desire to demonstrate that a "polio," for all his handicap, could occupy the White House? I see the strength in the opposing cases and confess agnosticism.

Robert Graham's portraiture of the Great Depression in the Washington memorial is brilliant, but I do not like the Roosevelt statues. FDR, the president of buoyant vitality who restored the damaged morale of a nation, looks weary, exhausted, sad, at the end of his tether. Mrs. Roosevelt looks like a Scarsdale matron in Manhattan for an afternoon of shopping.

Clausen writes, "Subsequent political history and present-day attitudes make it amply clear that a man handicapped as Roosevelt was would stand no chance of reaching the White House today." That may well be if FDR had never existed. But, surely, after FDR, the Republic would tolerate polio in the White House.

*Arthur Schlesinger Jr.  
New York, N.Y.*

As Clausen writes, since Hugh Gallagher's book *FDR's Splendid Deception* was published in 1985, it has become



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accepted "fact" that my grandfather went out of his way to hide his infirmity from American voters. But common sense should tell us that four presidential races (1932, 1936, 1940, and 1944), considerable traveling in between campaigns by train and car across the United States, and daily life in the White House would make it impossible for FDR, or any president, to hide such an important—and visible—factor.

As a young child and a teenager in the White House, I personally observed my grandfather's composure. In my memoirs, on which I am currently at work, I describe how he was a very private person and rigorously avoided any comment about what might be causing him pain or severe inconvenience. Burdening others with one's problems just wasn't done. The attitude adopted by those in FDR's class was that one was to remain cheerful. FDR was, in addition, funny and humorous. This was his natural temperament, and it also usefully covered up or smoothed over the awkwardness people often felt when seeing plainly that their president was a cripple.

In FDR's time, the press was sensitive to the invasion of an individual's privacy. (Gone are the days!) Photographers voluntarily excluded FDR's spindly legs (which were so bony that even trousers couldn't disguise them) from their pictures. Reporters didn't mention that he was an invalid. His condition certainly didn't affect his performance as president, and that was what concerned the White House press corps.

As for deception on the political front, Clausen sums it up in two words: "Some secret." That FDR was a cripple was a potential issue for FDR's political opponents—and they were legion. The devastating effect of FDR's polio was a concern

for FDR in the 1928 campaign for the governorship of New York, and then again during his first presidential campaign. But neither FDR nor Louis Howe, his closest political adviser, considered this to be a major obstacle for voters to overcome. (Only *The New York Herald Tribune* editorialized, and in 1932 only, that FDR was physically unfit to be president.)

Yes, for reasons of privacy, and perhaps pride, FDR “hid” the fact that he was a cripple—to the degree that he could. But what about that lurching gait of his, if only for a few steps to the podium, or the many times when it was impossible for him to hide from the public that he was being carried off a train or lifted from his car to a waiting wheelchair? My guess is that most voters did not want to focus on their president’s disability. They chose to avoid knowing or understanding that they had elected a cripple. Yet, for history’s sake, it is terribly important to know that they did so.

I raised this matter with the U.S. Park Service a year before the Roosevelt memorial was to be inaugurated. And when I later visited the memorial, I pointed out the inadequacy of their “interpretation” on this point. A major aspect of FDR’s life, one with huge political implications, was being lost. It was not surprising that the National Organization on Disability picked up “the great battle of the wheelchair,” and that President Bill Clinton did not oppose the campaign. So a statue of FDR in a wheelchair was added to his memorial.

The trouble is that the wheelchair statue doesn’t do the job. You wouldn’t guess from the statue that my grandfather used his wheelchair as little as possible. It was painful for him to ride on bare wood, and the muscles in his buttocks and thighs were not strong enough to hold him on the wheelchair unless he firmly grasped the side of it with one hand. More important, however, is that the statue doesn’t in any way credit Americans’ extraordinary act: electing a cripple to the presidency four times. Perhaps the statue even reinforces the continuing myth that President Roosevelt covered up his disability.

*Curtis Roosevelt  
Saint-Bonnet-du-Gard, France*

As the organization that lobbied for the inclusion of the statue of FDR in his wheelchair at the FDR memorial, we encourage recognition that Roosevelt’s disability was very much a public part of who he was. The statue is by no means a nod to modern political correctness. Instead, it is the accurate portrayal of a man who used a wheelchair every day of his presidency.

The statue of FDR in a wheelchair at the FDR memorial is a public testament to the disability that robbed him of the use of his legs, but in doing so enabled him to inspire millions. Thanks in significant measure to the statue, his inspiration continues today.

Cast in bronze, behind the statue of FDR in his wheelchair, is a statement by Eleanor Roosevelt, who said, “Franklin’s illness . . . gave him strength and courage he had not had before. He had to think out the fundamentals of living and learn the greatest of all lessons—infinite patience and never-ending persistence.” Eleanor’s words ring as true today as they did then. Strength, courage, patience, and persistence are integral characteristics of America’s 54 million, and the world’s 600 million, people with disabilities.

The statue of FDR in his wheelchair vividly demonstrates that it is ability, not disability, that counts.

*Michael R. Deland  
Chairman and President  
National Organization on Disability  
Washington, D.C.*

That FDR was crippled by polio and, for all practical purposes, confined to a wheelchair and that he had to be carried to and from almost every venue were facts indeed “hidden” from the public, contrary to Clausen’s contention. Perhaps it’s more accurate to say this information was “not communicated” because, given the mores and the technology of the day, there was no need to be terribly covert. FDR’s crippled condition was concealed by his friends, by the press, and by his ample supply of enemies.

My father, an army officer during World War II and a well-read and attentive voter in

*Continued on page 11*

## FROM THE CENTER

On days when I have some extra time, I like to walk the halls of the Wilson Center and make unannounced visits to peoples' offices. I joke that the purpose is to make sure nobody is slacking off. In truth, these visits give me an opportunity to sample the Center's sweeping diversity, for behind the programming and publications, the Center comprises an eclectic group whose individual journeys encompass many disciplines and much of the world. Take, for example, just two of our nearly 20 extraordinarily talented program and project directors.

Blair Ruble took his first college course in Russian history because the other European history classes looked boring. What he learned triggered an interest that led him to obtain a doctorate in Soviet government and a job at the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute. After a stint at the Social Science Research Council, Blair was called back to the Institute in the late 1980s, as perestroika was dawning. Born after George Kennan's famous 1946 "long telegram" outlining containment policy, Blair was well suited to accept the torch from the eminent generation of Cold War scholars.

Blair took advantage of the dissolution of the Soviet Union to redefine the Kennan Institute's character. The Institute opened offices in Moscow and Kyiv, and has worked to improve higher education in Russia. During the Cold War, you could count the Soviet scholars affiliated with the Institute on two hands; under Blair's leadership, there have been nearly 400. At one of the Wilson Center's recent Christmas talent shows, several of these scholars sang a boisterous rendition of "Moscow Nights" in Russian, a performance I would have been unlikely to see during most of my years in the U.S. Congress.

Blair's research has dealt with the forces loosed by change, and he is now focused on migration. Millions of people move within and to Russia, and the number will rise as Russia's birthrate falls. In Central Asia, a quarter of the working population of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan migrates to work in neighboring oil- and gas-rich Kazakhstan. These migrations occur at a dynamic crossroads, where Islam meets Christianity, and the region's energy

resources contrast with its underdevelopment. Blair's work is reflected in the Kennan Institute's programming and in his forthcoming book, *Creating Diversity Capital*.

Howard Wolpe's journey has been very different, though it evidences the same dedication. Howard represented Michigan's third district in Congress for seven terms. For a decade, he chaired the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and he served for five years as President Clinton's special envoy to Africa's Great Lakes Region (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). Howard developed a strong connection to the war-torn region, and continued to work for peace and stability there after leaving Congress. In 1999, he founded the Africa Program at the Wilson Center.



### Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

One of the Africa Program's primary initiatives has been in Burundi, where decades of ethnic

and civil conflict have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths. With seed funding from the World Bank, Howard and his team launched the Burundi Leadership Training Program, which brings together Burundians from various ethnic and regional factions as it trains leaders from several areas of society.

The initiative has exceeded expectations, having aided Burundians in preparing for their August 19 democratic presidential election, the country's first in more than a decade. Howard and his team have been invited to train officials of the incoming administration, and they are exploring similar initiatives in Congo and Liberia. At the Center, the Burundi program provided a model for our new Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity, which reinforces our commitment to conflict prevention.

Woodrow Wilson used to say, "I use all the brains I have, and all I can borrow." Here at the Wilson Center, we have people who have worked in academia, government, journalism, science, law, and business. I am happy to borrow from them; I invite you to borrow from them as well, through the programming and publications that reflect their work and experience. That, after all, is the purpose of an institute of advanced research.

Lee H. Hamilton  
Director

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*Continued from page 9*

1936, told me that he and the members of the “public” he knew were not aware of FDR’s condition until after his death. Instead, the public was barraged with press messages describing FDR’s vigor and his active life, and regularly saw FDR in newsreels and heard him on the radio. Everything conveyed about the president was, of course, true except for that one rather significant omission. Your citations of stray bits of coverage that are exceptions to the general blackout do not disprove the overall effectiveness of “non-communication.”

That FDR’s infirmity was hidden wasn’t an anomaly. Non-communication from the White House was regular practice—the dearth of information on Woodrow Wilson’s condition after his stroke is an important example—up to at least the Kennedy administration.

*Fulton Wilcox  
Colts Neck, N.J.*

After reading Christopher Clausen’s essay, I wondered what my 90-year-old

mother remembered about FDR. She was 18 in 1933, the year he became president. Without mentioning the article, I asked her whether she remembered that FDR had been crippled by polio and when she knew it. She responded, without hesitation, that she and “everybody” knew at the time that FDR was crippled. My mother added, without prompting, that she remembered seeing pictures of FDR in a wheelchair when he was president. I asked her what impact this knowledge had on her decision to vote for FDR or his opponents. Again without hesitation, she answered, “None.” That generation was more intelligent than we give them credit for.

*Dick Kaufman  
Centennial, Colo.*

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### *Looks Don't Conceive*

Daniel Akst [“What Meets the Eye,” *WQ*, Summer '05] scores many com-

elling points about the value of physical “good looks” in human society until he ventures into the myth-making “science” of evolutionary psychology, whose practitioners begin “by taking calipers to body parts [such] as wrists, elbows, and feet to see how closely they match” and end by concocting higher-order narratives about the survival value of symmetry, the holy grail of male and female beauty.

Even a cursory look at the shoppers in a Wal-Mart or at the welter of diverse specimens from different human gene pools around the world will reveal that no combination of optimal measurements of physical height, weight, facial features, body symmetry, and proportion has been preponderantly “selected” for survival over others. In general, a few people in our surroundings are very beautiful at one end of the spectrum; a few people are very ugly at the opposite end; and, in between, a majority distribution ranges from plain to attractive.

But the fatal red herring of “evolutionary psychology” is the presumed correlation between looks and fertility. If physical attractiveness promotes higher IQ, better pay, more careerism, and elevated socio-economic status for advantaged men and women, then it may be useful and ominous to consider that the beautiful people are more likely to practice modern contraception backed up with abortifacients and abortion to depress their fertility, while their disadvantaged sisters and brothers in less fashionable places of the world get less money and more children. For the last 40 years, though birthrates have been declining worldwide, they have fallen precipitously in Western developed nations to sub-replacement levels, especially in Europe, the United States (whose population will continue to grow because of immigration), and Japan.

It is fitting that Akst chose Audrey Hepburn, Marilyn Monroe, and Twiggy as his poster children of perfectly calibrated female beauty. Audrey had only two children, Twiggy had one, and Marilyn had none.

*Jim Valentine*  
Woodland Hills, Calif.

After reading Mr. Akst’s essay on looks, I thought I would draw your attention to “What’s Looks Got to Do With It? Instructor Appearance and Student Evaluations of Teaching,” an article that Karen Gerdes, Sue Steiner, and I published this summer in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. We conducted our research in response to the Hamermesh and Parker study to which Akst alludes, which found that better-looking college instructors receive higher ratings from their students. Our research indicates that looks have very little effect when a variety of other factors known to matter in teaching evaluations, such as the grade a student expects to earn and how challenging he or she finds the class, are taken into account. These factors were omitted from Hamermesh and Parker’s study.

I remain skeptical of the idea that notions of human good looks are generally consistent across times and cultures, though I can’t support this critique with research. Such beauty standards might have been somewhat constant over hundreds of years in northern European cultures (though certainly the desired female silhouette has changed significantly over the past several centuries), but the more cultures one examines, the less likely this claim becomes. Preferences, at various places and times in history, for corsets, bound feet, giant lips, enormously elongated necks, flattened skulls, extra-tall foreheads, etc., indicate nonuniform standards of beauty.

I also suspect that, within a particular culture and time period, what individual people perceive as beautiful varies significantly. With some notable exceptions, I find the current crop of celebrities very unattractive, though Akst argues that our society has outsourced beauty to them. Heck, my daughter and I can’t agree on which 17-year-old boys are good looking!

*Heather E. Campbell*  
Associate Professor  
School of Public Affairs  
Arizona State University  
Tempe, Ariz.

# Findings

## Martyrdom's Perks?

According to *Women's Wear Daily*, longtime publishing executive Jason Epstein caused a flap in August when he remarked that his wife, Judith Miller of *The New York Times*, was having “the time of her life” in the Alexandria, Virginia, city jail, where she’d been incarcerated by a federal judge. Miller, as it happens, wouldn’t be the first journalist to find unexpected pleasures in getting imprisoned for (in her phrase) the “civil disobedience” of refusing to identify a confidential source.

obstinately silent reporters, instead of being dispatched to the grimy city jail, “were furnished with two of the best rooms in the Capitol, where they fared sumptuously.” In 1886, a *Baltimore Sun* reporter incarcerated for contempt of court (like Miller) got to serve most of his sentence at home, *The New York Times* reported, noting that “one appreciative friend sends him a bottle of champagne every day.”

Then there’s Marie Torre, TV columnist for the *The New York Herald Tribune* in the 1950s. Though all but forgotten today, Torre was the Judith Miller of her era, a front-page martyr to the First Amendment.

For Torre, the underlying dispute



TV columnist Marie Torre (left) arrives at Hudson County Jail in 1959, amid a flock of photographers. At right, Judith Miller, heads to “the time of her life” in an Alexandria, Virginia, jail cell.

In years past, many reporters who declined to name names during congressional hearings were locked up in the U.S. Capitol—“no Bastille,” Senate historian Donald A. Ritchie notes in *Press Gallery* (1991). During an 1848 standoff with the U.S. Senate, *New York Herald* reporter John Nugent “passed his captivity in comfort,” Ritchie writes. “His paper published his [articles] under the dateline ‘Custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms’ and doubled his salary during his imprisonment.” During an 1871 impasse, one senator harrumphed that two

involved not CIA secrets but CBS ones. In a 1957 column, she quoted an unnamed CBS source on why Judy Garland’s TV special kept getting postponed: “I don’t know, but I wouldn’t be surprised if it’s because she thinks she’s terribly fat.” Garland sued CBS and subpoenaed Torre, but the columnist refused to name her source. The *Herald Tribune* would stand behind her, pledged editor Ogden R. Reid, adding that perhaps “you’ll have to spend a day in jail, but if you go you’ll be famous.”

One of his predictions proved off-base—

## Findings

Torre was sentenced to 10 days in jail—but not the other. During the long appeals process before she got locked up, “my name appeared in all the newspapers, with more frequency than some of the TV stars,” Torre proudly noted in her memoir, *Don’t Quote Me* (1965). “Social invitations doubled. My mail tripled. Jackie Gleason sent me a luscious chocolate cake with a file in it.”

On January 5, 1959, having lost all appeals, she entered Hudson County Jail in Jersey City amid “flashing bulbs, a retinue of newsmen, and a crowd of spectators that would have done justice to a Broadway premiere.” One jailer remarked that her arrival had attracted more media than mobster Frank Costello’s. Then, instead of quietly reading *Doctor Zhivago* in her cell, as she’d planned, “I received more visitors . . . than I really cared to see.” Among them was “Mrs. Samuel I. Newhouse, the chic wife of the newspaper publisher. . . . Tears welled in Mrs. Newhouse’s eyes when she saw me in my prison garb, and without make-up. I tried to console her.”

After a few days behind bars, Torre came to feel rather valiant. “My stay in jail became, not a personal hardship, but a privilege. Suddenly, my incarceration did not matter. . . . Corny though it may sound, I felt like a symbol. And it was a beautiful feeling—a selfless feeling—something pure and serene.” On January 15, free at last, she told the reporters waiting outside that she “wouldn’t have missed this for the world.”

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## Blame France

Americans adopt a polyglot approach to mispronouncing foreign words. “Certain sounds take on exotic associations for English speakers, and they often overuse these sounds in words they know to be foreign,” Kate Burridge writes in *Weeds in the Garden of Words* (Cambridge Univ. Press).

An example is the “zh” sound in *genre*, *rouge*, *beige*, and other French-born words. “Because it has a rather exotic ring to it, we tend to plop it into other words we know are

also borrowings.” For instance, *raj* should have “the boring old English sound ‘dj’ (as in *judge*),” writes Burridge, but Americans often substitute a “zh” ending. So too with *Beijing*: “The ‘dj’ consonant would be closer to the Chinese original, but it has a rather mundane English ring to it. This foreign city should have a foreign sound to it; so ‘zh’ is substituted.” C’est la vie.

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## Moonstruck

That historic “one small step for man” was originally assigned not to Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong but to fellow astronaut Buzz Aldrin. “The early checklists showed Aldrin leaving the [lunar module] first, and my sources confirm that the media were apprised accordingly,” Andrew Smith writes in *Moondust: In Search of the Men Who Fell to Earth* (Fourth Estate). (The third astronaut on the mission, Michael Collins, awaited his crewmates in the orbiting command module; he never set down on the moon.) By one account, Smith reports, Armstrong insisted on being the first human to step onto the moon, and, as commander, he got his way. By another account, NASA officials “considered Armstrong better equipped to handle the clamor when he got back.” If so, they were probably right: In 2002, when confronted by an obstreperous fellow who insisted that the moon landing had been faked, the 72-year-



Though not the first to walk on the moon in July 1969 (that honor went to Neil Armstrong), Buzz Aldrin was the astronaut most photographed.



old Aldrin punched him.

When NASA's decision was final—Armstrong would moonwalk first—Aldrin claimed to be relieved. Still, according to Apollo historian Eric Jones, Armstrong took 24 pictures of Aldrin on the lunar surface with the camera they shared, but Aldrin snapped only five of Armstrong, and most turned out to be unfocused or overexposed. Perhaps the best lunar picture of Armstrong was taken by Armstrong himself: his reflection in Aldrin's visor.

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## Classroom Crucible

A few weeks into her introductory class, Anthropology professor Rebekah Nathan writes in *My Freshman Year* (Cornell Univ. Press), she often announces that the lecture hall contains a witch. The witch—perhaps male, perhaps female—is, she says, responsible for everyone's colds, bad grades, romantic rebuffs, and other setbacks. Once the students in the large class have finished tittering, they rise one by one and state their names, and then everyone turns in a list of three potential witches.

Leading candidates turn out to be relatively few, Nathan reports, and the indicia of witchcraft boil down to exemplary performance in the classroom. "Students invariably pick the people whom I, as the teacher, would label the most engaged and prepared, if not the best students. They are the ones who ask me questions and respond to my questions, who come to class a little early or stay a little late, and who sit in the . . . front row or two or in the center column of the classroom." Nerd, geek, brownnose—and now witch?

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## Coma Therapy

Rabies has "the highest case fatality ratio of any infectious disease," Rodney Willoughby Jr. and several Medical College of Wisconsin colleagues write in *The New England Journal of Medicine* (June 16, 2005), and it kills some 50,000 people a year. Treatment soon after infection can vanquish the virus, but once symptoms

emerge—usually a month or two after infection—"death typically occurs within five to seven days." Before the immune system can muster its defenses, the virus orders the brain to stop the heart or lungs.

In a recent case, however, Willoughby's team successfully treated a rabies patient—a 15-year-old Wisconsin girl lightly bitten on a finger by a bat—*after* symptoms had developed. In essence, they shut down as much as possible of the girl's brain so that her immune system would have a chance to gear up. Heavy doses of anesthesia and tranquilizers put her into a deep coma, with almost no brain activity. The rabies antibody levels in her spinal fluid increased—proof that her body was fighting back. The doctors varied and finally withdrew the coma-inducing drugs after about two weeks, and the girl slowly regained consciousness. The rabies infection was gone.

Dr. Willoughby reports by e-mail that now, a year after the bat bite, the girl attends high school full time, rides her bike, is learning to drive, plans to attend her homecoming dance, and will address an international conference of rabies specialists in October.

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## FDR Fan

"I am a boy but I think very much," a 12-year-old admirer wrote to President Franklin D. Roosevelt in late 1940. The young writer congratulated Roosevelt on his reelection, apologized for his shaky grammar ("I don't know very English"), and asked for a handout: "If you like, give me a \$10 bill green American. . . . I would like to have one." He signed off: "Thank you very much. Good by. Your friend, Fidel Castro."

Dwight Young, author of *Dear Mr. President* (National Geographic Books), in which the Castro letter appears, observes, "The long-running U.S. trade embargo, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Mariel boatlift, the Elián González saga—is it possible that all of it could have been avoided if FDR had simply tucked a ten-spot into an envelope and mailed it off to the Colegio de Dolores in Santiago? No, of course not. But still. . . ."

# America's Other Muslims

While Louis Farrakhan captures headlines, the lesser-known W. D. Mohammed has a large following among African-American Muslims—and a warmer view of the United States. Can he help make America's immigrant Muslims more at home in their adopted country?

*by Peter Skerry*

On Labor Day weekend 2004, more than a thousand African-American men and women gathered at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Chicago for a Saturday afternoon fashion show. Black women of various shapes and sizes glided down the runway in eye-catching African prints fashioned into stylish but loose-fitting dresses. There were even a few male models, sporting similarly colorful tunics and leisure suits. The patter of the announcers was accompanied by an African-American version of Muzak—understated funk punctuated with the occasional unobtrusive rap number. Every so often audience members were reminded to “write those checks and spend that money.”

The “head-wrap,” usually some kind of turban, worn by every woman on the runway was a sign that this was no ordinary fashion show, as was the way the clothes were described to the audience. Though the emcee occasionally noted how a particular dress “accentuated” the figure of the model sashaying down the runway, the most frequently heard word was “modest,” as in “This outfit would be good for a night on the town when you want to look stylish *and* modest” or “This is for the sister who wants to be modest *and* strut her stuff.”

The fashion show had begun with a reading from the Qur'an—in Arabic, by a

woman. Once again, highly unusual. The occasion was the annual convention of Imam Warith Deen (W. D.) Mohammed's organization, The Mosque Cares. The three-day event had begun the day before, Friday (*Jumma*), the Muslim day of prayer, with a two-and-a-half-hour service attended by about 3,000 worshipers. These were middle- to lower-middle-class husbands, wives, and children, a few of whom were surely not Muslim. They were also, as Imam Mohammed later put it to me, “folks who want to get past resentment and who want to be one with humanity.”

Again, the service was not typical of Muslim prayer services around the world. There was little kneeling and prostration. Indeed, there was little actual praying, and not much Arabic was spoken. (The overwhelming majority of those present would not have understood a whole lot.) The session was taken up mostly with a rambling but low-key sermon (*khutba*) by Imam Mohammed, who emphasized the importance of taking “conscious, rational responsibility” for one's self, toward the goal of taking advantage of the opportunities available in the United States. At the concluding session on Sunday afternoon, the dominant topics were community economic empowerment and Muslim education and schools.



*Calling himself “a new Muslim,” W. D. Mohammed, son of the Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad, has quietly led his followers in unexpected directions since the death of his father in 1975.*

In the hotel exhibition hall, the conference’s “Business Bazaar” was crammed with booths staffed by African-American entrepreneurs selling vitamins, fruit ciders and specialty foods, skin care products, books and DVDs, and other items catering to the needs of middle-class African-American Muslims. In the background, soothing R&B and pop standards were piped in, interrupted at one point by a live Muslim hip-hop performance.

In his *khutba*, Imam Mohammed drew frequently on his own life, including his upbringing in the Nation of Islam by his father, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, whose formal title is routinely invoked by the imam and his followers, always with the utmost respect. What was *not* mentioned all weekend, either by the imam or by any of the other African-American Muslims attending, was the Patriot Act.

That may have been the most striking aspect of the event. For at virtually any other Muslim gathering these days, the Patriot Act is routinely and angrily denounced—for the

most part, inaccurately—as the basis for the deportations, detentions, and profiling that have frightened and outraged Muslims in this country. The majority of Muslims in the United States are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Many of them are not citizens. All of them understandably feel vulnerable and, indeed, targeted in this post-9/11 environment.

But not so vulnerable that immigrant Muslims pass up any opportunity to condemn the Bush administration. Again, the contrast with the African-American Muslims at the Hyatt Regency was stark. Imam Mohammed *did* mention President Bush once, in connection with the Iraq war. He did not offer enthusiastic support for the president, but he went out of his way not to criticize him or his policies.

**W**. D. Mohammed took over the Nation of Islam—a curious amalgam of freemasonry, Christianity, and Islam that religion scholar C. Eric Lincoln once dubbed a “proto-Islamic cult”—upon his



father's death in 1975, and immediately brought its adherents to Sunni Islam. Not only did the son change the name of the organization, he transformed its ideology, eliminating its antiwhite racism and embracing the political institutions of the United States. And he did all this while continuing to honor his father's memory.

**B**ut times have changed, and what might once have seemed interesting or important about W. D. Mohammed now seems less so. What matters today is whether his version of Islam, clearly African-American but also far closer to traditional Islam than his father's eccentric doctrine, will prove compatible with what immigrant

Muslims believe and practice. His openness to American society, culture, and politics makes it difficult for immigrant Muslims, and indeed for some African-American Muslims, to embrace his teachings. Yet Imam Mohammed's efforts to ground his work in authentically Arabic and Islamic sources cause problems for those uncomfortable about straying too far from their African-American roots. Meanwhile, America's powerful social and cultural turbines are drawing immigrant Muslims, and especially their children, into the American mainstream—sometimes not obviously, usually not completely, and almost never painlessly. Gradually, this process is transforming what it means to be a Muslim in America.

>PETER SKERRY, a former Wilson Center fellow, teaches political science at Boston College and is a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. He is at work on a book titled *Joining the Fray: The Political Future of Muslims in America*. Devin Fernandes assisted in the research and preparation of this article.



*The faithful listen as Imam Mohammed addresses the annual convention of The Mosque Cares in Chicago earlier this year.*

important a role—social, cultural, or political—he and his followers will play in the unfolding drama.

**T**oday there are between two and three million Muslims living in the United States. Most of them—anywhere from two-thirds to four-fifths—are immigrant-origin Muslims. Since 9/11 these newcomers have felt under siege yet challenged to become more directly involved in American society and politics. For potential allies and guides through this unfamiliar terrain, they have been turning to African-American Muslims.

But immigrant Muslims themselves hardly constitute a cohesive political group. Although social and cultural change and post-9/11 pressures are bringing them together, they remain divided along sectarian, linguistic, and national-origin

At the same time, post-9/11 political realities impress upon immigrant Muslim leaders the need for role models and allies. African-American Muslims loom large in such scenarios. And as the spiritual leader of nearly three-fifths of the more than 300 African-American mosques, so does W. D. Mohammed. Reliable numbers are hard to come by. By the most generous estimates, Mohammed's following could not exceed 50,000. But no other African-American Muslim leader has nearly that number. At 71, he has the bearing and reputation of a statesman. He is an esteemed figure who, by remaining above petty personal conflicts and divisive political squabbles, has gained the respect not only of African Americans of all faiths but of immigrant Muslims and their leaders. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how

lines. More to the point, long-standing differences continue to divide immigrant Muslims from their African-American coreligionists. The same weekend that W. D. Mohammed's convention was meeting in downtown Chicago, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the largest immigrant Muslim organization in America, was welcoming more than 30,000 individuals to its annual convention across town at O'Hare Airport. (At the ISNA conference, President Bush and the Patriot Act were roundly denounced.) This was not the first time such a crosstown split had occurred. On occasion, the two conventions have shared some speakers, including their leaders. But the organizations remain distinct, with different constituencies, each worshipping Allah in its own way—and mostly in its own mosques.

Nor is W. D. Mohammed's position unchallenged. Within his own highly decentralized organization, many imams ignore his advice and follow their own paths. Among African Americans, Islam is fragmented into more than a dozen sects, including several remnants still claiming the mantle of the Nation of Islam. A few leaders have emerged as rivals to Imam Mohammed for media attention and African-American loyalties. Of these, the most visible is Minister Louis Farrakhan, who picked up the reins (and the name) of the Nation of Islam dropped by W. D. Mohammed, and who in recent years has moved the Nation closer to Sunni Islam.

Another important figure is Imam Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin—the former civil rights firebrand and Black Panther H. Rap Brown—who typifies those African-American Muslims who want to practice a purer, more authentic version of Islam than that espoused by Imam Mohammed, and who are far more critical of American society than he.

The individual and organizational rivalries among these leaders are exacerbated by daunting theological, ideological, and political crosscurrents. Many African-American Muslims, not just aging 1960s revolutionaries, complain that W. D. Mohammed and his adherents practice a form of Islam not well grounded in knowledge of either Arabic or the Islamic texts and commentaries. Many take issue as well with Imam Mohammed's relatively uncritical embrace of American values and institutions. As Sherman Jackson, a professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Michigan, has observed, Imam Mohammed is criticized, and often dismissed, for practicing "*nouveau Islamique*."

**I**n contrast to the mass of ordinary Black Muslims isolated within the bronzed ghetto created for them by his father, W. D. Mohammed was brought up in a cosmopolitan environment. Travel abroad and his education in this country exposed him to the languages, religions, and politics of the Arab and Muslim worlds. Like his contemporary and sometime ally Malcolm X, Mohammed converted to Sunni Islam in

the 1960s. When he assumed leadership of the Nation of Islam in 1975, it should not have been a surprise that he immediately opened the doors to the "white devils" and, according to Vassar College religion professor Lawrence Mamiya, declared that "there will be no such category as a white Muslim or a black Muslim. All will be Muslims. All children of God." Of even greater significance to Muslims, Mohammed rejected the highly unorthodox doctrine that his father's teacher, Wallace D. Fard, was God incarnate, and that Elijah Muhammad was his prophet. Again contradicting his father, Mohammed began teaching the orthodox Muslim doctrine that there is in fact life after death.

It was less predictable that W. D. Mohammed would have immediately disbanded the Fruit of Islam, his father's menacing praetorian guard. (The young Mohammed had served as a "Junior Fruit," which, he told the convention audience, was among his happiest memories.) Imam Mohammed also drastically decentralized the hierarchy built up over decades by his father. The legacy of that restructuring endures today: Mohammed has little formal authority and not much control over the roughly 185 mosques that are affiliated with his organization—or, more accurately, his network.

**E**ven more surprising, indeed paradoxical, was that W. D. Mohammed's move toward Sunni Islam also entailed significant movement toward mainstream America. Women were allowed to go out alone at night and were afforded greater responsibilities in the mosques. Imam Mohammed publicly endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment and rejected his father's condemnation of civic engagement and allegiance to the U.S. government. Though he himself, as a conscientious objector (in accordance with his father's teaching), had refused to enter the military, Mohammed decreed that such service was no longer forbidden. Indeed, within a few years he was lecturing at the Pentagon.

The imam also encouraged his followers to vote and perform other civic duties. In the mosques (no longer known as "tem-

ples”), the Nation of Islam’s flag was replaced with the American flag, and students at affiliated schools were taught to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The American flag appeared on the cover of the organization’s newspaper, where it can still be found today. As Mohammed told *The Jerusalem Post* in the mid-1990s, “We should love America passionately now that America has changed so drastically within a relatively short period of time.”

Since 9/11, W. D. Mohammed’s fervor for America has hardly waned. The contrast with attitudes among immigrant Muslims is striking, and he highlighted it in a recent interview with me. We met in a spartan, slightly shabby, one-story brick building on the outskirts of Chicago. It seemed a place to meet a plumbing contractor, not a spiritual leader.

But this is a very down-to-earth, unassuming man. The imam arrived in a late-model but nondescript SUV, accompanied only by his daughter—without the male entourage of assistants and bodyguards that many such leaders have. He was well dressed but casual, and definitely not flashy, in a tailored suit and knit polo shirt. As he had reminded his audience at the Hyatt Regency, he once worked as a welder and still considers himself “an ordinary man, in fact a very ordinary man.”

Across a conference table crowded into a back room, Imam Mohammed speaks softly, affably. Echoing themes from the convention, he emphasizes the importance of “conscious beings” who seek “the rational truth” and avoid sentimentalism, which he associates with Christianity. When pressed on this point, he wryly says, “Well, yes, I like my tomatoes firm!”

Even while embracing America and denouncing black racism and separatism, W. D. Mohammed has always been attentive to group pride and race consciousness; at times he has even appeared to espouse black nationalism, though he has never actually done so. One of his first official acts upon succeeding his father was to rename the Nation of Islam’s former Harlem temple after Malcolm X. During the same period, Imam Mohammed coined the

term “Bilalian” to refer to all black people, not just Black Muslims. This was an allusion to Bilal Ibn Rabah, an Ethiopian slave who had been brought to Arabia and later became a confidant of the Prophet and then the first muezzin, the person who calls believers to prayer. Bilal was a link not only to Islam but to Africa, at a time when black Americans began to refer to themselves as African Americans.

The Nation of Islam’s old newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*, was renamed *The Bilalian News* (it later became today’s *Muslim Journal*), and the mosque in south-central Los Angeles became the Bilal Islamic Center, a name that has stuck. Today, the term “Bilal” is much less in vogue. Still, W. D. Mohammed continues to appeal to black pride, particularly in the context of business development and community empowerment. At the Chicago convention, he even argued that “your heart is dead if you waste five gallons of gas to drive to a white man’s store rather than shop within your own community.” Yet in the next breath he urged his audience not to “make a racial picture, but a human picture. If you establish yourself in a racial picture first, you establish yourself a mess.”

Ihsan Bagby, a professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Kentucky who is himself a Muslim and an African American, reminds us that the relationship between Islam and their own racial and ethnic heritage is a critical issue for African-American Muslims—perhaps *the* critical issue:

African-American Muslims come to Islam carrying African-American and American cultural experiences (foremost the Black Church and the street), and the question arises: How much of that unique African-American culture is to be left behind? . . . To what extent should African-American Muslims follow the traditional practices of the Muslim world, which is the culture that immigrant Muslims bear?

Group pride and race consciousness are definitely part of the glue that binds W. D. Mo-

hammed's followers to him and to one another, but in his hands they are never ideologically charged. Advancing them has never been the goal of the organization.

Despite the deference Imam Mohammed paid to group sensitivities, his reforms were not implemented without dissension. Many longtime adherents departed. Over the years, there have been tensions between the imam and the most prominent of these dissidents, Louis Farrakhan, but, true to form, Mohammed has avoided any personal criticism of Farrakhan. In a 1999 interview with *The Los Angeles Times'* Teresa Watanabe, he acknowledged Farrakhan's "positives," such as his urging "the poor, irresponsible black men . . . to accept responsibility for their families, to earn an honest income." But he concluded that Farrakhan's perspective had become irrelevant:

The Nation was designed to attract poor and hopeless blacks to come to something created for nobody but them. But we live in new realities now. Blacks are being encouraged to aspire to the highest positions in America now. Everything is open to us. There is very little place for the extreme idea of the Nation of Islam in America today.

In February 2000, W. D. Mohammed and Louis Farrakhan publicly reconciled at an event in Chicago. Also making an unprecedented appearance with Farrakhan was Kashmiri-born Sayyid Syeed, the secretary-general of ISNA. Both Mohammed and Syeed acknowledged Farrakhan's movement toward orthodoxy, including his observance of Ramadan according to the lunar calendar and his recognition of Friday prayer as the principal religious gathering of the week. Indeed, at this session Farrakhan effectively renounced the Nation of Islam's basic teaching that Elijah Muhammad was a prophet by declaring that "we bear witness that there is no prophet after the prophet Mohammed." Most observers attribute Farrakhan's rapprochement with Islam at least in part to his bout with prostate can-

cer. But having survived that, Farrakhan has never quite followed through, and the Nation remains outside the broad umbrella of Islam.

Other differences between Minister Farrakhan and Imam Mohammed remain vivid. Farrakhan has indulged in anti-Semitism; Imam Mohammed habitually points to his conversations with prominent rabbis and Jewish organizations (even though headlines such as "Ariel Sharon's Government Using Hitler Tactics" appear in his *Muslim Journal*). The imam and his lieutenants also boast of his consultations with Vatican officials and audiences with the pope, and they highlight his friendship with televangelist Reverend Robert Schuller, who has spoken at the annual convention.

At the same time, Imam Mohammed is hardly reluctant to criticize Christianity, though he does so without a trace of sectarian venom. In his *khutba* at the Hyatt Regency, he referred obliquely to Christianity as "the old religion," whose appeals to emotion were intended to "make you docile and put you at the service of political rulers." In contrast, he pointed out, "we don't treat you like sheep or fish," but focus instead on "the conscious, rational person." Yet in the same *khutba*, Mohammed also reassured his listeners: "Many of you were Christian. . . . That's nothing to be ashamed of. . . . It's something to be proud of."

W. D. Mohammed's approach to politics offers another point of contrast with Farrakhan. As noted earlier, Mohammed has urged his followers to get involved in politics. Farrakhan moved in the same direction with characteristic zeal by plunging headlong into Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns. Imam Mohammed's approach has been more discreet, which is undoubtedly why he opposed Jackson's candidacy. In 1976 he endorsed Jimmy Carter for president and in 1992 supported George H. W. Bush. But though perceived as socially and politically conservative, he has avoided being strongly identified with any one political personality, party, or platform. For Mohammed, promoting individual responsibility and rebuilding communities, not



playing electoral politics, is what's critical.

While Farrakhan was courting controversy and media attention with events such as the Million Man March on Washington in 1995, W. D. Mohammed kept a lower profile, maintaining relationships with his imams and busying himself with an overhaul of the curriculum of the Islamic elementary schools he had inherited from his father. In honor of his mother, these were renamed the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools, and there are now about 35 in operation. More recently, he has been building up a cooperative purchasing network that relies on local imams and their mosques to purchase and distribute halal meats and foods. The Collective Purchasing Conference may also be a way for Mohammed to exercise more authority over his imams.

One reason W. D. Mohammed was able to pursue such low-visibility, long-term institution-building is that, at least until the mid-1990s, he received support from Arab governments. Much as his father formed close ties to Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, Mohammed maintained cordial relations with Anwar el-Sadat. C. Eric Lincoln reports that the imam was the only American observer invited to attend the Tenth Annual Islamic Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Fez, Morocco, in May 1979. Around the same time, he was named by Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states "sole consultant and trustee" for the distribution of Islamic missionary funds in the United States. Perhaps more critical to many Muslims in America, he was given the responsibility of certifying Americans who applied for Saudi visas to make the hajj to Mecca.

W. D. Mohammed's ties to the Saudis merit particular attention. Saudis reportedly contributed millions toward the construction of the Bilal Islamic Center in Los Angeles. And in his interview with me, Imam Mohammed acknowledged that for several years they gave him an annual payment of about \$70,000. His relationship with the Saudi Arabian government was probably strongest during the Gulf War. At the beginning of that conflict, according to Georgetown University historian Yvonne

Haddad, the Saudi ambassador convened a meeting of American Muslim leaders. In that roomful of Saudi beneficiaries, W. D. Mohammed was the only one who did as he was asked: He signed a document supporting U.S. intervention in the region. All the others refused, and their support from the Saudis soon ended. Imam Mohammed's funding continued for a few more years. He indicated to me that it stopped sometime in 1994, when he claims to have broken with the Saudis. In an interview with *The Los Angeles Times* in 1999 he said:

I don't receive any money now, but I have received some and I lost it . . . because I suspected some strings were attached. I said I can't accept this kind of relationship. They were choosing my friends for me, too. The enemy of the friends who were giving me money was supposed to be my enemy, too.

In the years since 9/11, it has been reported that the Bilal Center continues to receive Saudi funding. If it does, the explanation may lie with the decentralized nature of Mohammed's organization and his limited control over imams in his network. The salient point here is that throughout the roughly 20-year period when Imam Mohammed cooperated with the Saudis, he effectively defied their religious doctrine by placing himself and his organization squarely within the American mainstream.

**A**s that meeting with the Saudi ambassador suggests, African-American Muslims tend to see the world very differently from their immigrant coreligionists. Relations between African-American and immigrant Muslims are strained at worst, wary at best. Aside from differences of language, culture, and national origin, tensions have long been fueled by class disparities. Immigrant Muslims tend to be university educated and comfortably situated, while African-American Muslims are likely to be neither. Even W. D. Mohammed's followers, who seem better off than other African-American Muslims,

barely have a foothold in the middle class. For immigrant Muslims, then, episodes such as the meeting with the Saudi ambassador are bound to fuel deep-seated prejudices that African-American Muslims are not reliable and independent actors.

A still greater issue for immigrant Muslims is their perception that African-American Muslims lack a solid grounding in the Arabic language and Islamic texts and do not practice their faith rigorously. These suspicions are not completely unfounded. Ihsan Bagby and several colleagues interviewed (before 9/11) leaders at more than one-third of the 1,200 or so U.S. mosques.\* The results confirm that African-American imams generally are less likely to have degrees from either secular or Islamic institutions than their immigrant counterparts. Moreover, African-American imams are much more likely to be working part-time or as volunteers.

Mosques affiliated with W. D. Mohammed seem particularly susceptible to these shortcomings. Bagby's data suggest, for example, that imams associated with Mohammed have less formal Islamic education than other African-American imams, who tend to be educated outside the United States. A similar lack of rigor is indicated by the informality of their worship services. Imam Mohammed is well versed in Arabic and the Islamic texts, but such learning was not much in evidence at the *Jummah* service he led at the Chicago convention. This casual tone is even more apparent at local mosques, where worshipers drift in late, talk during the service, and fail to sit and kneel in the tight, ordered rows ("shoulder-to-shoulder, feet-to-feet" is the saying) that Muslims, as preoccupied with correct practice as with correct belief, value highly. Even the imams complain about this. As an immigrant Muslim activist sympathetic to Imam Mohammed said to me, "Their mosques feel like churches!"

\*The Mosque Study Project 2000, part of a comprehensive Hartford Seminary study of religious congregations, is the only such survey of mosques in America. It was cosponsored by W. D. Mohammed, ISNA, the Islamic Council of North America, and the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

W. D. Mohammed is mindful of the problem. In recent years, he has been urging his imams to become better grounded in Islam and Arabic. But his decentralized organization has afforded him neither the authority nor the resources to move his underpaid, mostly part-time imams toward this goal. At the same time, his emphasis on Islamic rigor has bumped up against group pride and been interpreted by many as a rejection of African-American culture. In the late summer of 2003, these tensions burst into the open when Mohammed publicly criticized his imams for dragging their feet.

Tensions over religion clearly poison political relations between African-American and immigrant Muslims. As Abdul Karim Hasan, imam at the Bilal Islamic Center, told *The Los Angeles Times*, "We share the faith with immigrant Muslims, but not much else. . . . They think we don't know as much about religion as they do." The low point was reached during the closing weeks of the 2000 presidential campaign, when immigrant Muslim organizations, claiming to speak for all Muslim Americans, endorsed George W. Bush—without acknowledging African-American Muslim objections to that endorsement. Things did not improve much after 9/11, when immigrant Muslims experienced what to them was Bush's betrayal, and many of their African-American brothers and sisters could not resist saying, "We told you so."

I am not aware that W. D. Mohammed ever expressed that sentiment. On the contrary, it is likely that he too supported Bush in 2000, though it is characteristic of the man that I have not been able to verify this. But in the post-9/11 context, what has to frustrate, even anger, immigrant Muslims is Imam Mohammed's refusal to criticize either the Patriot Act or the president's Iraq policies. More to the point, there has long been a subtle distance that Mohammed puts between himself and his immigrant brothers and sisters. Indeed, he was voicing concerns about them long before 9/11. In 1997 he told *The San Jose Mercury News*, "I am a new Muslim. I



*W. D. Mohammed (left) of The Mosque Cares and the Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan publicly reconciled five years ago, after Farrakhan's pledge to accept more orthodox Islamic practices.*

don't quite identify with the thinking of the Islamic world. I identify with the beliefs of the Islamic world, but not necessarily with the thinking of most of the voices I'm hearing." More recently, in my interview with him, he related that, despite warm personal relations with some of their leaders, he was uneasy with immigrant Muslims and concerned that they were not entirely friendly toward the United States. As he put it, "I'm not comfort-

able with some of their friends."

**T**here are African-American Muslims who express fewer complaints about immigrant Muslims. Scattered among the 44 percent of predominantly African-American mosques *not* affiliated with W. D. Mohammed's organization, they encompass many different sectarian tendencies and do not constitute a cohesive group. But they do share a longstanding

orientation, going back to the 1930s and 1940s, toward Sunni Islam. They have therefore been designated “historically Sunni African-American Muslims” HSAAM, for short—by Professor Bagby. As African Americans, these particular Muslims tend to make Islam the basis of a reformulated critique—even a condemnation—of the American mainstream. One of the most visible leaders in this disparate group is Imam Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, the former H. Rap Brown. Al-Amin, whose Atlanta-based organization is called the National Community, converted to Islam while in jail during the 1970s. He is now back in prison, after being convicted in February 2002 of killing a policeman.

Imam Al-Amin and other HSAAM Muslims do not necessarily call for the violent overthrow of the U.S. government. Rather, they seek to withdraw from what they regard as a corrupt, immoral society and build separate institutions and communities as defenses against it. For such Muslims, whether African-American or not, this goal has meant a rejection of involvement in American politics—a position that has found support among the Saudis. In the words of Steven Barboza, an American journalist who has written about his own conversion to Islam, “While H. Rap Brown would have enjoined listeners to bear and tear down, Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin says discipline yourselves through prayer, fasting, charity, and steadfastness, so that you will be organized and prepared when Allah tears the system down.”

**D**espite (some would say *because of*) his radical views and relatively small following, Imam Al-Amin has been recognized, even championed, by immigrant Muslim leaders and organizations. His perspective is broadly typical of HSAAM Muslims, whose views in some respects resemble those of immigrant Muslims more than they do those of W. D. Mohammed and his followers. This can be stated with some confidence, thanks again to Professor Bagby’s Mosque Study Project 2000. His data indicate that three-

fourths of all predominantly African-American mosques have been founded since 1970; their number continues to increase, though not so fast as the number of immigrant mosques. And at least since the 1980s, the number of HSAAM mosques has increased faster than the number of W. D. Mohammed mosques.

HSAAM mosques are also much stricter and more literal than W. D. Mohammed affiliates in interpreting the Qur’an. This is signaled by the mosques’ treatment of women. Bagby’s data indicate that somewhat greater numbers of women are involved in W. D. Mohammed mosques than in HSAAM or immigrant mosques. Only 16 percent of W. D. Mohammed mosques make women pray behind a curtain or in another room, while 45 percent of HSAAM mosques—and 81 percent of immigrant mosques—do. (That fashion show at the Chicago convention would definitely not go over well with these other Muslims.) Finally, there is the question of whether Muslim women can serve on a mosque’s governing board. Ninety-three percent of W. D. Mohammed affiliates allow women on their boards, as compared with only 60 percent of HSAAM mosques and 66 percent of immigrant mosques.

As for the ever-present pull of group pride and race consciousness, the differences between these two groups are notable. Asked how well they try to preserve their ethnic or national heritage, 29 percent of W. D. Mohammed affiliates said “very well,” while only six percent of HSAAM mosques did. This is to be expected, since HSAAM mosques are oriented more toward traditional Islam, which de-emphasizes racial and ethnic differences in favor of the *umma*—the worldwide community of all Muslims.

From the perspective of the non-Muslim majority, perhaps the most striking divergence between these two groups of African-American Muslims concerns how open they are to American society. Bagby’s data indicate that HSAAM Muslims are much more critical of America than are the followers of W. D. Mohammed. Ninety-three percent of his affiliates strongly agree that Muslims

should be involved in American society, while only 49 percent of HSAAM mosques do. Even more striking is the divergence of views about involvement in American politics: 90 percent of W. D. Mohammed mosques—but only 37 percent of HSAAM mosques—strongly agree that Muslims should participate in the political process. And while 33 percent of W. D. Mohammed mosques believe that America is hostile to Islam, fully 74 percent of HSAAM mosques do. Finally, and most compellingly, the data indicate that only 18 percent of W. D. Mohammed affiliates and 24 percent of immigrant mosques strongly agree that “America is an immoral, corrupt society.” The figure for HSAAM mosques is 66 percent.

**T**he irony is that W. D. Mohammed and his followers are more open to American society but also more intent on holding on to their African-American heritage than their HSAAM brothers and sisters. As Bagby reminds us, the pull of black culture and group identity is a fact of life for most African Americans. Their culture and group identity are, in fact, constitutive of their identity as Americans. A leader such as Imam Mohammed is not likely to ignore this, but neither will a rival such as Farrakhan let him forget it.

Of course, such particularistic tendencies do not go unchallenged in today’s world. Thanks to the media, jet travel, Arab petrodollars, and immigration, the globalized reality of Islam has had a powerful influence on W. D. Mohammed, Louis Farrakhan, and HSAAM Muslims—just as it did on Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X before them. Among African Americans, globalization has made it difficult to sustain deviant or cultish versions of Islam—but clearly, *not* versions that are implacably hostile to America. Indeed, these same globalizing forces have contributed to the legitimacy and influence of HSAAM Muslims. Among these African Americans at least, black nationalist and separatist impulses have been sublimated into a new, Third World ideology. For them, the test of authenticity is no longer blackness but “Islamicity.”

Immigrant Muslim leaders would like

all these differences somehow to get blurred. They are struggling to overcome divisions not only among themselves but among African-American Muslims and proto-Muslims such as Farrakhan. Of course, the principal challenge is to bring African-American Muslims generally together with immigrant Muslims. Unity of that sort appeals to Muslims normatively as a step toward realizing the *umma*. But it is also obviously in the interest of immigrant Muslim leaders, who are struggling to protect themselves and forge alliances in the wake of 9/11.

Such strategic calculations are more complicated for African-American Muslim leaders. For some, Islam is just a new platform from which to condemn the United States, much as it is for some immigrant Muslims. Yet for those such as W. D. Mohammed, Islam has actually been the way back to the American mainstream. This is undoubtedly why, even as he has worked to bring his followers closer to Islam, Imam Mohammed has distanced himself from immigrant Muslims. His imams seem to get that point, at least. Once again, Imam Hasan of the Bilal Center is obligingly blunt: “For African-American Muslims, the priorities are economic justice, education, and service to humanity at the street level in our country. We don’t make decisions based on what is good for Pakistan, Afghanistan, or the Middle East.”

It would not be easy, under any circumstances, for any one individual to negotiate all these crosscurrents. For W. D. Mohammed, these challenges arise just as his own organization struggles to maintain its cohesion and membership. But if the example of Imam Mohammed and his followers demonstrates anything, it is American society’s vitality and its capacity to absorb and adapt. In the midst of the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, who would have dared anticipate the gains, however incomplete, that have been made? Certainly no one would have foreseen that a generation later, the son of the leader of a bizarre, racist cult would offer Americans hope, and even some help, in the face of daunting new challenges. □

# My Favorite Wasteland

The case against TV used to be a slam-dunk: guilty as charged by reason of inanity. The inanity still abounds—it wouldn't be TV otherwise—but so do a lot of other qualities that often make the couch in the den a fitter habitation for an adult than the stadium seat in a multiplex.

by James Morris

Nearly 50 years ago, when television was in its first flush decade of popularity, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II wrote an original musical for CBS. On a Sunday evening in March 1957, some 107 million Americans tuned in to a live broadcast of *Cinderella*. The number is astonishing. The U.S. population at the time was around 170 million. So more than 60 percent of the country watched, and was ready on Monday morning for a national conversation about Julie Andrews. The equivalent for today's population would be an audience of 180 million. The Super Bowl, TV's most-watched event, this year drew about 86 million; *American Idol* averages some 28 million.

It's inconceivable that 180 million Americans could agree on anything nowadays, let alone on what entertains them. That's why individual entertainment units have become essential personal accessories, along with tiny phones for our tiny conversations, little cameras and computers, and a portable water supply. (When archaeologists come to sift the dust of our lapsed civilization several millennia hence, will they credit our worship of personal hydration?)

We're not just in a different age from the age of *Cinderella*; we're in a different nation. The common culture is a panoply of cultures and segmented markets, and our cultural glue might as well be oat-

meal. TV has hit an especially bad patch since the big networks discovered reality, or rather, since they discovered reality TV, which is to real life as Kool-Aid is to champagne. The conventions of the genre are as predictable as the phases of a celebrity marriage—bonding, betrayal, tears, humiliation, outrage, separation, moving on—and the ritual sameness of the programs, no matter what their setting or circumstance, extends to the smallest details. For example, you're certain to hear "Oh my god!" many, many times. The words are a reality-show mantra, variously spaced and inflected: "Oh . . . my . . . god!" or "Ohmygod" or "Oh my GOD!" They test the limits of participants' rhetorical powers, expressing joy, outrage, shock, surprise, horror, hope, astonishment in the face of, say, a remodeled child or home or bosom.

Reality TV's appeal is aggressively voyeuristic. The shows satisfy an entire alphabet of market tastes, even as they measure a half-century of startling social transformation. No emotion is too private, no sentiment too inane, to be expressed. And yet, having become a nation of performers, always half-alert to the possible presence of a camera and always ready for a close-up, America contains an endless supply of individuals willing to lend themselves to the games and to what is often, by any traditional measure, public humiliation. The Cinderellas of our time are the



*When Julie Andrews and the cast of Cinderella performed for a TV audience of more than 100 million viewers in 1957, they did so live—no tape, no retakes—and had just one chance to get things right.*

bachelorettes who get to hook up with their princes in a hot tub on TV; if a glass slipper is involved, it probably signals a foot fetish.

Of course, TV has always been mostly awful. “Boob tube” did not begin as an anatomical observation. The myth persists of a Golden Age of Television in the 1950s, but the blurry surviving kinescoped evidence yields a baser metal. Way back in May 1961, Newton Minow, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, called TV “a vast wasteland.” Well, the landscape is a lot vaster 44 years later, and still wasted, but how could it not be? TV never stops any more; there’s just too much of it. In the late 1940s, a station played “The Star Spangled Banner” by 10 p.m. and signed off for the night. The citizenry rested—or read or did their bit for the baby boom. There’s not enough talent even in today’s fame-crazed United States to keep TV interesting *all* the time. Remember: Most books are not worth read-

ing either. And not every play took a prize in old Athens; the relatively few that survive by no means represent the lot that did not.



**Y**et even after you concede the worst about broadcast TV, there’s a case to be made that, on many evenings, an intelligent adult is better off spending an hour or two in front of a TV set than in a movie theater. That’s all the more true if you’re foolish enough to reach the theater by the announced starting time of the movie. You’ve been captured for 15 or 20 minutes of *Clockwork Orange*-ish saturation in loud, out-of-focus commercials and previews that warn you off months of movies to come. Why have human rights groups not made a fuss?

Hollywood wonders why fewer people go to the movies these days. Movies with no claim on an adult’s attention are the main reason; they come mostly from industrial

## My Favorite Wasteland

Hollywood, but “courageous” independent filmmakers share the blame. Independent filmmakers are never less than “courageous”; the word attaches to them like a Homeric epithet, as “honest” does to their work. But small and honest can be as much an ordeal as Hollywood’s fat and false.

Need more reasons to stay home? You could probably find them sitting in the row behind you. Many members of the contemporary movie audience, only marginally socialized, would have made a misanthrope of Gandhi; they undermine every argument for intelligent design in the universe. And don’t forget to factor in the fused odors of nachos, chicken strips, and that yellow wash for the popcorn.

Grownups who do choose to remain at home with the remote—and I often count myself among them, not a TV enthusiast exactly, but certainly a sympathist—have no reason to apologize. TV can now teach Hollywood something about smarts, which would once have been unthinkable. And the amazing thing is that movies lose out even when they’re not up against the toughest competition TV has to offer: those gold- and silver-standard cable shows such as *The Sopranos*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Deadwood*, *Entourage*, *The Wire*, and *The Shield*, and all the upscale science, nature, and history programming. Keep that fare from the competition—along with sporting events, which are regularly TV’s glory.

And bench bronze-standard daytime TV, beginning with those morning talk shows on which anchors and anchoresses, by turns chirpy and grave, get to say, “Up next, starvation in Africa and the rundown on new running shoes”; or (a kind of signature moment for the Katies and Dianes), “I know this must be a difficult time for you, Mrs. Patsy, but how did you feel when you learned that . . .” (here insert the indignity of the day) “your husband is polygamous?” “your daughter is a terrorist?” “your son was decapitated?” During these interrogations, crowds of Americans outside the TV studio windows, giddy at

the prospect of being picked out by a camera, jump to be seen and scream to be heard. Perform.

No afternoon soaps either, or four-square wisdom from big Dr. Phil, who’s tough as nails but not as sharp. No Oprah or Supreme Court long shot Judge Judy. Out, too, are those nighttime news and exposé shows presided over by reporters who barge into homes and businesses and build new support for the Second Amendment; no *60 Minutes*, with its venerable cast swapping memories of the Taft White House; no hard-hitting series tackling the sorts of topics that cause seismic shifts in Stone Phillips’s chin: “Chariots of Doom: Is Your Child’s Stroller Ready to Go Off-Road?”; “Losing Hair, Losing Heart.”

Keep PBS on the sidelines as well, where increasingly it has kept itself. The recent talk about political bias at the network was a distraction from the real scandal: the desperation of pledge week (weeks? months?) programming. Problem: How do you charm the dollars from an aging audience that you’ve decided is mired in reminiscence? Solution: Woo them with old bits of Broadway and with the pop sights and sounds of their mid-20th-century youth. The stations appear to be inching toward a Village People reunion. Oh for those former rows of grim-faced clog dancers and tenors at dog’s-ear frequencies! Oh even for Yanni! But if the glory days are mostly past, who can fail to appreciate the *Antiques Roadshow* phenomenon and the virulent but oh-so-genteel (PBSish) materialism at its root? Is this a great country or what? Even our junk is precious. “Rinse out the chamber pot, Henry! It has a rendezvous with destiny.”

What else can be cut from the competition? Well, I’ve never warmed to *The West Wing*, that glib, glittering consolation prize to Democrats. And three other current prime-time shows of wide appeal—*Alias*, *Lost*, and *Desperate Housewives*—seem to me good reasons to join a book club. All three subscribe to a jerk-the-audience-around ethic of plot development that will sanction any twist, no matter how baroque

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or illogical. *Lost* is the worst of them, in part because it's so humorless and so insistent on being about something, though what, exactly, remains a mystery. *Alias* was fun when it was new a few years back and kept its sexy leading lady (part-time killer spy, part-time honors graduate student) running down foreign corridors in an assortment of bustiers; it stumbled later when it tried to pass off mind-numbing incoherence as mind-tickling complexity. At least *Housewives* has a sense of humor. But it's hopped up on the quirky, and the habit already shows signs of getting out of hand. Wisteria Lane could relocate to Twin Peaks.

Last to go are all those popular legal/forensic/tell-tale-pubic-hair procedurals that traffic in the most sensational matter under the guise of a public-service documentary realism. Their specification of body parts and bodily fluids is always clinically dispassionate; their discussion of a catalog of sexual perversions is professional grade. "Nothing prurient here, ma'am; we're just doing our job. It's a dirty job, but . . . I mean, it's not *dirty* dirty. . . ." Right. There was a time when the sun never set on the British Empire; so now does it shine always on a *Law and Order*. Addicts of these series may yet insist on a *Law and Order DMV* and a *CSI: Charlottesville*.



When all that good stuff has to sit out the competition, what's left in the wasteland of broadcast TV to keep a discriminating adult from the multiplex? More in the course of a week than you might think. I'm



*On the reality-TV show Fear Factor, the environment even for celebrity contestants such as Donnie Osmond is often grubby.*

partial to eight shows in particular, and I could easily name several more. As it happens, six of the eight are on much-maligned Fox. But hold the laurel. Fox is also the network on which a line of midgets competed with an elephant to see who could pull a jet plane down an airport runway faster. (For those ashamed to ask: the elephant.)

*Everybody Loves Raymond* left the air this past spring, after nine seasons, for eternal life in syndication heaven. It still merits the present tense. At its frequent best it's the very model of a situation comedy—that is to say, of a comedy of situations. It finds the radiating comic possibilities in the offhand gestures of family life. The talk on most situation comedies is nothing like real talk. The shows are hit-and-miss, and miss-and-miss, gag machines, spitting their wit like tennis ball dispensers. The process is as relentless as the



*The witty scripts for TV's Gilmore Girls make Lauren Graham and Alexis Bledel a smart, hip, and loving mother-and-daughter team, in a droll Connecticut town somewhere between Hartford and Brigadoon.*

launch and lockdown of an Augustan couplet, though Alexander Pope never did *Friends*. *Raymond* is different, so well written and acted, so perfectly pitched, that even the silences, especially the silences, are hilarious. It makes comedy look easy.

*Arrested Development* is also a situation comedy about a family, the upscale but downward-spiraling Bluths, and it's like nothing else on TV. The show thrives on fierce, absurdist whimsy and elliptical narrative, recalling the Richard Lester-directed Beatles movies of the 1960s. It's that good and that funny, comic to the core, with scripts that know how to bring that core to the surface. The members of the House of Bluth, joined in a roundelay of ethical, emotional, and sexual dysfunction, could tutor the House of Atreus in bad behavior, so this is a family show not for family viewing. It lurches along giddily, at a take-no-prisoners pace, till the narrator says, "On the next *Arrested Development*"—and introduces scenes that will not appear again.

**T**he *Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* feature cartoon families who share the luxury of not aging while the world around them keeps steadily up to date. U.S. presidents come and go; the Simpsons and the

Hills endure, and react as their eternally fixed and familiar selves to everything current the writers throw at them. About *The Simpsons* there's little left to say after all these years. Sometimes it's as good as ever, shrewd and irreverent about American cultural and religious pieties (God does cameos), and sometimes it's way off stride. Homer's idiocy has long since run its comic course, yet the writers insist on rediscovering it. You keep hoping that they'll renounce their lazy, scattershot ways and return to form. And because you keep hoping, you keep watching.

*King of the Hill* dates from 1997, but it's never had the breakout success it deserves, which may be a good thing. Fame hasn't gone to its head, as happened with *The Simpsons*. (Fox routinely sacrifices *Hill* on Sunday evenings to the gods of interminable football games.) The series has stayed steadily on track and low-key hilarious, at once a send-up and an affirmation of red-state America values. The Hill family of Arlen, Texas, may shop at the big-box Mega-Lo Mart, but they're TV royalty: levelheaded patriarch Hank (the anti-Homer Simpson), purveyor of propane and propane accessories; his wife, Peggy, a substitute high school teacher, sometimes of Spanish, who

has to wing it after *hola*; and their ample, affable, and fitfully adolescent 13-year-old son, Bobby, of Tom Landry Middle School. Good people all, who deserve a more compliant world.

*24* now has four seasons under its ammunition belt, and each one has taken audiences through a single day in the life of federal counterterrorism agent Jack Bauer, for whom mayhem is mother's milk. The gimmick is that the single day is presented in the real time of 24 sequential hour-long episodes. There's always a digital clock ticking, and it's usually attached to a bomb. The show is like every cliffhanging Saturday matinee serial of long ago—but reimaged to be high-tech, relevant, breathless, and brutal. During this past season's "day," Muslim terrorists, their cells scattered across the United States, tried to kill millions of Americans by melting down the nation's nuclear reactors and then leveling Los Angeles with a nuclear missile. That's after they've had Air Force One shot down with the president and his son on board. (For good measure, a subplot threatened to take America to war with China.) *24* has an irresistible narrative pull. It knows how to tell a story—indeed, to tell many stories at once. Take note, George Lucas. And civil servants might note the ease with which employees at Jack's federal agency are yanked from their desks to be tortured in a back room if they're suspected of disloyalty. One such employee, who's mighty peeved after she's roughed up by mistake, demands a two-pay-grade promotion. She's reprimanded for asking during a national emergency.

**O**n *Gilmore Girls*, a sassy and glamorous single mom in the perfect Connecticut town (the kind with annual harvest and Revolutionary War festivals) is raising a sassy and glamorous daughter, who's also, yes, her best friend and, after several prep school seasons, a Yalie. No way around it: This is a show about relationships—familial, collegial, romantic. Wait, put down that remote! There are no wittier scripts on TV. The dialogue is saturated in American pop-cultural savvy and is usually delivered at a speed that recalls Hollywood's headlong comedies of the 1930s. Along with

love, affection, Yale, and the charms of a boutique New England inn, *Gilmore Girls* celebrates intelligence.

*The OC* (that's Orange County, California, for the uninitiated) has come a long way since its launch a couple of years ago as a teenage sex-and-sand soaper. The original tone was set when a snotty rich kid punched the hero from the wrong side of the tracks and sneered over his fallen body, "Welcome to the OC, bitch!" But it wasn't long before the two were friends, as can happen when creative types decide to "take things in a different direction." The folks behind *The OC* discovered the virtues of sly, self-aware scripts; gave rich, troubled parents equal time with their troubled teens; looked kindly even on the wicked; and made all the seaside philandering rather sweet—because, when you come right down to it, nothing's more important than family and friends and a fabulous pool house. The sex and the ocean will keep the show from ever being confused with *Gilmore Girls*, and though several of *The OC*'s twentysomething high school students could probably spell Yale, none of them is likely to end up there.

*House* was new last season—a hospital drama with an eponymous antihero, the curmudgeonly middle-aged diagnostician Dr. Gregory House. He's wounded, physically



*Beer and backyard wisdom are daily staples for Hank Hill and pals on Fox's King of the Hill.*

## My Favorite Wasteland

(bum leg) and emotionally, and he's so rude that friends and relatives of patients regularly try to deck him. But damn, the man is brilliant. He and his crack team of put-upon younger diagnosticians trade delirious barages of medical lingo—often at *Gilmore Girls* speed—in the course of using an arsenal of tests and invasive procedures to identify the baffling disease of the week. *House* is a show with many close-your-eyes moments for non-medical staff viewers. Needles are sunk like oil rigs, and you're never sure what part of a patient may extrude. There are also inside-the-body special effects that allow a piece of plaque, for example, to travel from an artery to the brain and hit like a meteor. When you're not saying "Ouch," you're wondering, "Would Blue Cross pay for any of this?"



What I admire most about these shows, and most deplore about contemporary movies, is the quality of the scripts. The TV series are devised and written by smart people who seem to be allowed to let their intelligence show. Yes, the individual and ensemble performances on several of the series are superb, but would the actors be as good as they are if they were miming the action? TV shows are designed for the small screen and cannot rely, as movies do, on visual and aural effects to distract audiences. If what's being said on TV isn't interesting, why bother to watch? Television is rigorous, right down to the confinement of hour or half-hour time slots, further reduced by commercials. There's no room for the narrative bloat that inflates so many Hollywood movies from their natural party-balloon size to Thanksgiving-parade dimensions.

For all the physical confines of the TV medium, there *is* one kind of spaciousness available to it, and that's temporal. A successful TV series persists over any number of seasons, and week by week, season by season, its characters evolve into more substantial figures than a movie's typical one-offs, who exist only between the studio's logo at the start and the end credits' stately crawl toward naming the crew's caterer. TV characters trail increasingly full but always open-ended per-

sonal histories, like friends or neighbors of long standing. Their lives and circumstances achieve a cumulative familiarity, in which viewers are invested. And the familiar comes to exert a comfortable pull, which yields to a what-happens-next curiosity.

Of course, friendships sour, and against once-favored neighbors you may end up pulling the shades. If time is the friend of the best TV series, it can also turn hostile. Even the most imaginative shows may have trouble sustaining the qualities that initially drew you to them. They try too hard and succumb to excess. Remember how embarrassing Kramer's behavior eventually became on *Seinfeld*? The line between antic and deranged should be an iridescent highway stripe, yet the *Seinfeld* writers kept swerving into oncoming traffic. Some shows—not *Seinfeld*—have just a couple of terrific seasons in them, and success is their undoing: It extends their life and thins their blood. Even the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the entertainment of choice in their day, had only 24 books apiece, and when Virgil reworked the two of them into the *Aeneid*, he reduced the total to 12.



There are snobs about TV who won't admit that it's ever worth their time; they have a set but can't remember where they keep it. And there are the hooked, for whom the lit screen is the glow to their lives. Mostly, there are in-betweeners, who pick and choose. Can you join their ranks and still respect yourself in the morning? I think you can, though you may find yourself razzed by skeptics. Make no mistake: The faith of the TV sympathist will be tested, even by friends: "Hey, can you join us tonight for a movie? *Great Lakes Line Dance*. Top honors at Sundance [uh-oh]. Toast of Telluride [strike two]. Rocked Toronto [game over]. A Duluth teenager reconciles his two sets of feuding same-sex parents and gets a killer college-admissions essay out of the experience. Turns down Harvard for Bard." The weak will temporize: "Wish I could, but my stomach's upset and I'm going to bed early." A true believer owns up: "Sorry, I can't. God's smiting Homer on *The Simpsons* tonight. So. Duluth. Wow. Enjoy." □

# Kosovo: Mission Not Yet Accomplished

Six years ago, a U.S.-led military intervention ended ethnic violence in Kosovo. International peacekeepers have patrolled the province ever since. Now Kosovo has reached a turning point. Without America's continued leadership, Kosovo could reignite, spreading new conflict throughout the Balkans.

*by Martin C. Sletzinger and Nida Gelazis*

Throughout the 1990s, Yugoslavia was the world's nightmare. Today, the pleasant lethargy of the seaside has returned to the Adriatic coast that forms the western borders of Croatia and Montenegro. This past summer *The New York Times* proclaimed Croatia "a new Riviera," where celebrities such as Gwyneth Paltrow take their ease. Farther east in Belgrade, open-air cafés, throbbing nightclubs, and plentiful restaurants do a brisk business. And on most evenings, residents and visitors stroll about in downtown Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital where snipers once picked off people in the streets.

Democratically elected governments are installed in every one of the western Balkan countries—Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Albania. Some, notably Bosnia and Herzegovina, have managed to return significant numbers of refugees to their homes. All aspire to join the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Yet this bright picture belies the bleak reality. High unemployment rates, rampant crime and corruption, unreformed political institutions, and lingering ethnic tensions continue to afflict the region. The Yu-

goslavia crisis is not quite over; neither, it seems, is the process of the former country's disintegration. By far the biggest question mark remaining in the Balkans is Kosovo, a desperately poor province the size of Connecticut, composed of small farms and towns scattered across the forested mountains that make up the southern portion of Serbia. The fate of Kosovo is intertwined with that of all its neighbors, some still recovering from their own ethnic conflicts.

Six years after a NATO bombing campaign against Slobodan Milosević's Yugoslavia to end violence against Kosovo's ethnic Albanians, Kosovo remains a political and economic morass. Barely half of the 200,000 Serbs who inhabited the province in 1999 remain, and those who do are guarded by United Nations peacekeepers and live for the most part in isolated enclaves, fearful of reprisals by the province's two million ethnic Albanians. Kosovo remains a UN protectorate, neither an independent country nor a directly ruled province of Serbia. Before its status can be resolved, a host of tough questions will need to be addressed.

The Balkans, relatively peaceful and largely out of sight for the past few years, have also been out of mind in the United

States. Now the Bush administration would like nothing better than to diminish America's remaining commitments in the region and concentrate on its other state-building efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although publicly neither endorsing nor rejecting independence for Kosovo, the United States is pushing for a course that could lead relatively quickly to Kosovo's independence and to EU membership. But neither Kosovo nor the EU is ready for such a move.

**A**t a time when anti-Americanism is the political sentiment du jour around the globe, the Balkans are one of the few areas where the United States is popular. Virtually everyone in the region wants the United States to remain in the Balkans, as do America's European allies. The United States enjoys a unique position of trust there. Albanians trust it because U.S. leadership in the bombing of Serbia enabled Kosovo to escape the control of Milosević once and for all. Croats and Bosniaks—as Bosnia's Muslims are known—are grateful because they perceived the NATO bombing as retaliation for Milosević's earlier attacks on them. America's credibility also stems from its remove across the Atlantic—it does not carry the burdens of historical involvement in the region that make each Balkan state suspicious of European countries such as Britain, Germany, and France. And even though the U.S. military bombed Belgrade, Serbs appreciate its protection of the Serb enclaves in Kosovo as well as the Serbian part of Bosnia.

Yet the United States has already significantly pruned its commitments in the western Balkans, where U.S. peacekeepers serve beside about 25,000 troops principally from the EU and NATO countries. U.S. peacekeepers now number just over 2,000; at the height of American involvement in 1996, there were nearly 20,000. U.S. aid—mostly for state-building efforts such as civic education, the development of political parties, and market reform—has been scaled back dramatically as well. In 2002, the western Balkans received \$441.8 million, while fiscal year 2005's estimated assistance is \$264.4 million.

This is as it should be, many might argue. The United States faces greater threats and challenges outside Europe, where only a few of its European allies have been eager to help. Why not hand off the problems in the western Balkans to the EU? When it led the NATO bombing campaign in defense of human dignity, however, the United States took on a responsibility that can only be discharged when human dignity is restored. The current situation in Kosovo indicates that this mission is far from complete.

Today, ethnic Albanians make up 90 percent of the population of Kosovo, while the remainder consists primarily of Serbs, Roma, and Turks. The hatreds that divide the Serb and Albanian ethnic communities are founded on a bloody history of conflict and the scars of recent violence, as well as language and religious barriers. Most ethnic Albanians are Muslims, while the Serbs are Serbian Orthodox, members of a branch of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Under the rule of Marshal Tito, the Communist leader who managed to keep Yugoslavia whole from the end of World War II until his death in 1980, Kosovo was part of the Republic of Serbia, as it had been earlier. In 1974, Tito granted Kosovo autonomy almost equal to that of the six republics within Yugoslavia, but when Slobodan Milosević became president in 1989, he stripped the province of that freedom. As Yugoslavia disintegrated in the early 1990s, civil war erupted in Croatia and Bosnia, but in Kosovo the ethnic Albanian majority pressed for independence from Serbia more or less peacefully—until the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, which ended the violence in Bosnia but did not address resolution of the issue of Kosovo.

In 1997, the Albanian-led Kosovo Liberation Army launched a guerilla campaign. Serbs, led by Milosević—who is currently standing trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)—retaliated with violent mass expulsions. With the Clinton administration in the lead, NATO member countries—by then familiar with Milosević's ethnic cleansing tactics in Srebrenica, Bosnia, where 7,000 Muslim men and boys

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*Children trail a peacekeeper in the outskirts of Kosovo's capital, Pristina. Since NATO bombs ended Serbia's aggression in Kosovo, international troops have been protecting Kosovo's Serbian minority.*

were killed in July 1995—launched a bombing campaign designed to force Serbs to stop the expulsions. It was NATO's first attack on a sovereign European country in its 50-year history.

NATO planners expected the bombing, which began on March 24, 1999, to last less than a week. Instead, it continued for 78 days, even as Milosević's army continued its expulsion campaign, driving nearly 800,000 of Kosovo's two million Albanians into Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro. Milosević's ground war against the guerillas cost several thousand lives on both sides.

The war finally ended when Milosević agreed to an international military presence in Kosovo, led by NATO, and a political framework headed by the UN. When the bombing stopped, President Bill Clinton declared in an Oval Office address, "Because of our resolve, the 20th century is ending not with helpless indignation, but with a hopeful affirmation of human dignity and human rights for the 21st century."

As Albanians returned to Kosovo, however, there followed a retaliatory round of forced migration of the province's Serbs, despite the fact that Kosovo was a protectorate under the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, known as UNMIK. Red Cross and UN estimates put the number of Serb refugees from Kosovo at just over 100,000. The fires of ethnic hatred, banked to varying degrees in other Balkan countries, continue to burn with intensity there. In March 2004, the worst violence since 1999 broke out when radical Kosovar Albanians damaged or destroyed three dozen churches and cultural monuments—some of them centuries old—in Prizren, Peć, and other Serbian enclaves.

**A** resolution of Kosovo's future status is vital to energizing economic and political development and fostering greater stability in the region. But the two sides are so far apart. The Kosovars, led by President Ibrahim Rugova, want independence from Serbia now, and will accept—so they say

publicly—nothing less. The Serbs' formal position, as expressed by Serbian president Boris Tadic and prime minister Vojislav Kostunica, is adamantly to rule out independence for Kosovo, which to many Serbs represents the historic cradle of their nation. Straying from this party line is political suicide in Serbia. Recently, when parliamentarian and former foreign minister Goran Svilanovic suggested that Serbs needed to come to grips with the impending loss of Kosovo, he was thrown out of his voting bloc in parliament.

In an unconvincing effort to demonstrate flexibility, the government in Belgrade has proposed a new formula for Kosovo's future status: "More than autonomy, less than independence." This clever slogan can be interpreted in many ways. To the international community, it hints at some flexibility in Serbia's anti-independence stance. To the Serb population, it shows that independence for Kosovo is unequivocally off the table.

Recently, some in the region have expressed new interest in a plan to give local governments in Kosovo greater power, which would provide varying degrees of autonomy for areas populated by Serbs. But the Serb proposal for this decentralization plan is based on the premise that Kosovo will remain part of Serbia. The Kosovars, unsurprisingly, envision decentralization as a step toward independence. Here is yet another illustration of the distance between the two sides.

UN policy dictates that negotiations on whether Kosovo remains a part of Serbia and Montenegro or becomes an independent state hinge on the ability of the Kosovars to meet a series of democratic standards. This policy is referred to in shorthand as "standards before status." UNMIK must work with Kosovo's elected leaders to establish functioning democratic institutions under the rule of law, a competitive market economy, conditions that facilitate the return of refugees and ensure the protection of minority rights, and a constructive dialogue with Belgrade. The fragility of the current government was highlighted last spring, when the elected prime minister, Ramush Haradinaj,

resigned and surrendered to the ICTY, where he was charged with 37 counts of war crimes allegedly committed during the 1990s against Serbs.

When Norwegian diplomat Kai Eide was appointed in March as the UN envoy to review Kosovo's progress on standards, most specialists believed that his report would quickly lead to formal status negotiations, resulting in eventual independence for Kosovo, albeit with strings attached. In May, R. Nicholas Burns, U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs, said that the administration was aiming to begin negotiations on Kosovo's status by the end of 2005. "We and our allies are entering a new stage in our policy toward the Balkans, one that will accelerate the region's integration into the European family and Euro-Atlantic institutions," he told the House Committee on International Relations.

At the time, the administration's hopes did not appear misplaced. After the March 2004 violence, the UN revised its plan so that the Kosovars would be required to show *progress toward* adopting the UN standards, rather than actually adopting them. Given these lower standards and evidence that Serbia is increasingly cooperative with the ICTY, last spring it seemed probable that status talks could begin soon, allowing the United States to begin wrapping things up in Kosovo.

Now it seems likely that Eide will report that evidence even of progress is insufficient, since the safety of Serbs and their cultural monuments in Kosovo is still guaranteed only by the presence of foreign troops. Nonetheless, diplomats and analysts expect the start of negotiations on status to move forward, perhaps with a brief delay until early 2006, because the uncertainty about who will govern Kosovo in the future means that no one is governing it effectively today. Organized crime is largely unchecked, delivery of electricity is intermittent, and basic social services are lacking. The stakes are too high to permit Kosovo to continue languishing in limbo.

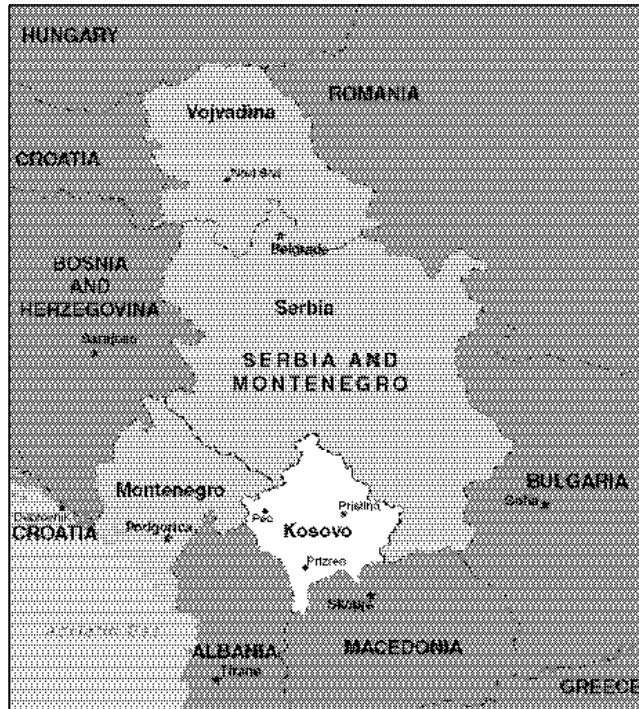
Independence for Kosovo would have wide-ranging implications for the entire region. All the countries of the western Balkans are linked by geography and history, and the two things they most desperately need—peace and economic development—will be difficult to achieve if even one country falters.



Unless all affected countries are brought into the status dialogue, the inviolability of borders and other issues that are considered settled at this point could be called into question, not just in Serbia but in Macedonia and Montenegro, where significant Albanian minorities reside. In addition, if Kosovo becomes independent before its government is strong enough to function effectively, the corruption and organized crime that already flourish there could become entrenched and spread to the wider region. These potential pitfalls are part of the reason UNMIK imposed “standards before status” in the first place.

The United States has ruled out the possibility of partition—adjusting Kosovo’s borders, which could allow part of it to become independent while some Serbian enclaves would remain in Serbia. The argument is that dividing Kosovo would neither represent a just solution (since it would reward expulsions by both Serbs and Albanians) nor offer a lasting peace (since a large number of Serbs in Kosovo live far from the Serb enclaves near the border). Many Kosovars see America’s push for accelerated negotiations and its rejection of partition as tacit support for independence. But imposed independence, achieved after a brief charade of negotiations, could very well leave the region even less stable than it is now.

**B**ecause countries in the Balkans are so intimately connected, and because Kosovo’s status so desperately needs to be resolved, an international consensus is building that the best course is the eventual inclusion of Kosovo and its neighbors in the EU. Only the EU can provide the financial and political support to foster economic development and to bring Kosovo’s Serbs and Albanians together in a manner that could make independence less contentious.



*The fate of the Albanian-dominated province of Kosovo is linked with that of its neighbors. Kosovo abuts Albania, and significant ethnic Albanian populations also live in Macedonia and Montenegro.*

The general idea is that the countries of the western Balkans can follow the path paved by the eight postcommunist countries admitted to the EU in 2004: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Before the EU began in earnest the process of admitting postcommunist Europe in 1997, the applicant countries had been struggling to achieve consensus on political and economic change. EU membership, which was contingent on significant government reforms, such as court reform, market standardization, and increased institutional efficiency, motivated the political parties in each country to cooperate.

Working toward EU membership broke the deadlock that prevented the adoption of reforms. The EU’s influence was far-reaching. Estonia and Latvia, which had long resisted international pressure to liberalize strict naturalization policies that left thousands of deeply resented ethnic Russians stateless, eased citizenship requirements. In all the new member states, EU-mandated political and economic reforms attracted previously reluctant for-



*A Serbian Orthodox church in Prizren, Kosovo, bears the scars of violence that erupted in March 2004, when ethnic Albanian extremists destroyed churches and cultural monuments in Serbian enclaves.*

eign investors, with double-digit economic growth rates the result.

For the first time, the international community had succeeded in fostering domestic reform without challenging a country's sovereignty or threatening force. Writing in *The New York Times* last year, British historian and foreign-affairs analyst Timothy Garton Ash praised the healthy "magnetic power" the EU has exerted on aspiring members: "This is regime change, European-style."

Given this success, it is easy to see why EU membership seems the panacea for the western Balkans. But the dream and the reality are far apart. The EU itself is struggling to absorb its recent additions—all of them much poorer than the western European average. And the stunning rejection of the proposed new EU constitution by French and Dutch voters earlier this year has halted the further integration of Europe, at least for the moment.

While the founding vision of the EU was to create a new borderless Europe free of ancient ethnic and national antagonisms, one need look no further than the Basque sepa-

ratists in Spain or the impasse in Cyprus to see that ethnic tensions are alive and well in the new Europe. While goods and labor may move freely, the human compulsion to erect divisions between "us" and "them" is difficult to eradicate. And there is no consensus among the EU member states on the principles or legal status of minority rights, in part because countries such as France and Belgium cannot reconcile the protection of minority rights with equality among all citizens. Without a clear set of principles, it will be very hard for the EU to address ethnic tensions in places such as Kosovo.

Perhaps more important, a strong state is needed to implement the measures required for membership in the EU. Effective government is not a hallmark of the Balkans. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnic power allocations mandated by the Dayton accords create multiple layers of government structures and institutions, including several ethnically based universities, two pension systems, and 12 health care systems. While other postcommunist countries had weak institutions, the Balkan countries also are rife with border disputes. There is the uncer-

tainty about Kosovo's status as a Serbian province. And in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some Serbs and Croats still entertain hopes of eventual unification with their mother countries.

Some experts suggest that these obstacles could be overcome if EU rules are adapted to the specific problems in the western Balkans. Perhaps the EU could establish a "second-tier" membership option, allowing countries to become members before adopting all the required standards. Or perhaps troubled regions such as Kosovo could become EU "protectorates." But these ideas run counter to the EU's entire legal foundation. One of the EU's strengths is that it is a group of countries that have agreed to be equal partners in making decisions that affect the Union. The EU's concept of shared sovereignty means that no member state can control another.

Another obstacle to quick integration is that the EU's magnetic power is not universally attractive in the Balkans. Each of the post-communist countries now in the EU succeeded in overcoming internal opponents of membership, but in the western Balkans the opposition is much stronger. Croatia's case is illustrative. It has led the pack in the western Balkans in the EU integration process, but membership negotiations were postponed in March when unreformed nationalists strongly resisted the EU's demand that Croatia turn over to the ICTY Ante Gotovina, a Croat general indicted for war crimes against Serbs during the early 1990s. He remains at large, perhaps abroad.

The EU will of course play an essential role in Kosovo's future, but the United States cannot leave everything up to its allies. Indeed, the search for a "final status" is in itself unrealistic. The unhappy reality is that there is no quick or easy fix for Kosovo. Instead, the United States and its allies must focus on finding a way to *manage* Kosovo's difficult mix of ethnic tensions, social upheaval, and economic depression. The only realistic option today is a kind of incremental, conditional independence over a period of years, in lock-step with slow, methodical preparations for membership in the EU. Such a process toward peace would necessarily be lengthy and costly, requiring meaningful negotiations

among Serbia, Kosovo, and all the countries of the region as well as the United States and its European allies. Nothing should be ruled out—even the possibility of limited border adjustments to Kosovo and Serbia—if this will help bring the parties to political settlement.

This kind of negotiation process may seem too soft, too slow, and too sticky for some. But it may be the only way forward. As political scientist P. Terrance Hoppman has emphasized in his analysis of international peace-keeping efforts, success depends upon the willingness of international policy makers to recognize the psychological effects of ethnic violence. The embers of fear and anger left by ethnic violence encourage people to see themselves as victims of the "other." In a world divided simply into good and evil, compromise with, or even civility toward, the enemy is betrayal. And if people feel that they are still victims, they continue to dehumanize their enemies, thus increasing the likelihood of further violence.

**I**f this cycle is to be broken, both Albanians' and Serbs' perceptions of themselves as victims must be overcome. The West may feel tempted to impose a solution, but only face-to-face negotiations between the two parties—even if protracted and, at least to outsiders, apparently tedious—will produce a solution that both Serbs and Albanians can call their own. Any imposed solution will not end feelings of victimization. The cycle of violence will continue.

Since the bombing of Serbia, the United States has adopted as its leading national security strategy the idea that protecting human dignity abroad will increase U.S. security at home. This theory is being tested elsewhere in the world, as the United States struggles with state-building in Iraq and Afghanistan. Through its chief role in the bombing of Milosević's Serbia, the United States gained credibility in the region. It stood up to a cruel regime that destroyed human dignity. But six years after the bombing, the conflict is far from resolved and human dignity is hardly restored. If anything, America's current foreign-policy goals should reinforce its commitment to stay in Kosovo, rather than provide an excuse for its early exit. □

# Spirit Wars

The spectacular resurgence of evangelical Christianity has obscured the fact that there's another side to the American religious coin. Spiritual seekers, from New Age animists to sober U.S. senators, have a long and honorable lineage in American life—and the potential to inspire a rebirth of liberal politics.

by Leigh E. Schmidt

America may be polarized, but in one activity its social critics have achieved a rare unanimity: lambasting American “spirituality” in all its New Age quirkiness and anarchic individualism. The range of detractors is really quite impressive. James A. Herrick, an evangelical Christian author, deplores the “new spirituality” as a mélange of Gnostics, goddess worshipers, and self-proclaimed UFO abductees out to usurp the place of Christianity: all told, a widespread but shallowly rooted challenge to the mighty religious inheritance of the West. The neoconservative pundit David Brooks of *The New York Times* thinks that a “soft-core spirituality,” with its attendant “psychobabble” and “easygoing narcissism,” is epidemic. Observers on the left are no less prone to alarm. One pair of such commentators warned recently that the rebranding of religion as “spirituality” is part of corporate capitalism’s “silent takeover” of the interior life, the sly marketing of a private, consumerist faith in the service of global enterprise.

Even many scholars of religion have jumped on the bandwagon. Martin E. Marty, the widely esteemed historian of American Christianity and professor emeritus at the University of Chicago, published an opinion piece this past January in *Christian Century* in which he labeled the “spirituality” versus “religion” debate “a defining conflict of our time.” He made crystal clear that he stood on the side of the old-time religion of church pews, potluck suppers, and hymnbooks, against the “banal” and “solipsistic” world of “religionless spirituality.” More re-

cently, in the July-August issue of *Utne* magazine, Paul R. Powers, a professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College, thumped the editors for reprinting a “soft-headed” article on spirituality: “Why American liberals who seem so happy to embrace difference in various contexts want, when it comes to religion, to sweep it under the rug of some invented, undefined, supposedly universal ‘spirituality’ remains one of the true religious mysteries of our times.”

Detractors of American religious seeking have been building their case for a while now. A bellwether was *Habits of the Heart* (1985), the best-selling, multiauthored sociological study of the corrosive effects individualism was having on American civic and religious institutions. The authors deeply lamented “liberalized versions” of morality and spirituality and argued that the old romantic ideals of self-reliance and the open road were now undermining the welfare of community, family, and congregation. “Finding oneself” and “leaving church” had, sadly enough, become complementary processes in a culture too long steeped in the expressive individualism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and their fellow wayfarers. More and more Americans were crafting their own religious stories apart from the rich moral vocabularies and collective memories that communities of faith provided. The social costs of such disjointed spiritual quests were evident not only in the fraying of church life but in eroding commitments to public citizenship, marriage, and family.



*Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.) cites his mother's faith as the source of his own views on tolerance and racial harmony. He often invokes the term spiritual as a key to these "broader values."*

All this criticism of the "new spirituality" has obscured and diminished what is, in fact, an important American tradition, one in which spiritual journeying has long been joined to social and political progressivism. Emerson's "endless seeker" was, as often as not, an abolitionist; Whitman's "traveling soul," a champion of women's rights; Henry David Thoreau's "hermit," a challenger of unjust war. A good sense of the continuing moral and political import of this American vocabulary of the spirit comes from Barack Obama, the recently elected Democratic senator from Illinois. Obama has said that, despite the results of the 2004 election, it "shouldn't be hard" to reconnect progressive politics with religious vision: "Martin Luther King did it. The abolitionists did it. Dorothy Day did it. . . . We don't have to start from scratch."

Perhaps Obama's most telling remark came in his observations about his mother's faith: "My mother saw religion as an imped-

iment to broader values, like tolerance and racial inclusivity. She remembered church-going folks who also called people nigger. But she was a deeply spiritual person, and when I moved to Chicago and worked with church-based community organizations, I kept hearing her values expressed." Obama's invocation of "spiritual" as an inclusive term, inextricably interwoven with the "broader values" of American democracy, is important and carefully chosen diction. It not only conjures up Whitman's ghost but also suggests some of the poet's own audacity. As a concept of consequence in American culture, spirituality was born of the romantic aspirations and ethical passions of Emersonians, Whitmanites, and other religious liberals. Its history is worth recovering from the heap of critical commentary, as both a counterweight to the Religious Right and a resource for the Left (which is now so often tone-deaf on spiritual matters).

In 1800, the word *spirituality* had little

*Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau sought and found spiritual solitude at Walden Pond, but some critics worried that his writings would act as a siren call to tempt disaffected churchgoers with a heady, mystical—but elusive—spirituality.*

resonance in the evangelical Protestant vernacular of personal devotion, but during the ensuing century of transcendentalist ferment, it gradually shifted from being an abstractly metaphysical term, denoting an attribute of God or the immaterial quality of the soul, to one highly charged with independence, interiority, and eccentricity. “The ripeness of Religion is doubtless to be looked for in this field of individuality,” Whitman wrote in *Democratic Vistas* in 1871, “and is a result that no organization or church can ever achieve. . . . I should say, indeed, that only in the perfect uncontamination and solitariness of individuality may the spirituality of religion come forth at all. Only here, and on such terms, the meditation, the devout ecstasy, the soaring flight.” Or, as the Harvard poet and philosopher George Santayana remarked succinctly in 1905, “This aspiring side of religion may be called Spirituality.”

*Spirituality* was a hard term to pin down, all the more so once it took transcendentalist flight. Despite the airy and expansive qualities that came to be conferred upon spirituality in Emersonian and Whitmanite circles, it had certain defining characteristics, six of which were especially prominent:

- a yearning for mystical experience or epiphanic awareness
- a valuing of silence, solitude, and sustained meditation
- a belief in the immanence of the divine in nature and attunement to that presence
- a cosmopolitan appreciation of religious variety, along with a search for unity in diversity
- an ethical earnestness in pursuit of justice-producing, progressive reforms
- an emphasis on self-cultivation, artistic creativity, and adventuresome seeking

This liberal reimagining of the interior life and its fruits had sweeping and enduring effects on American religious life, often for the good. It created a more open and expansive

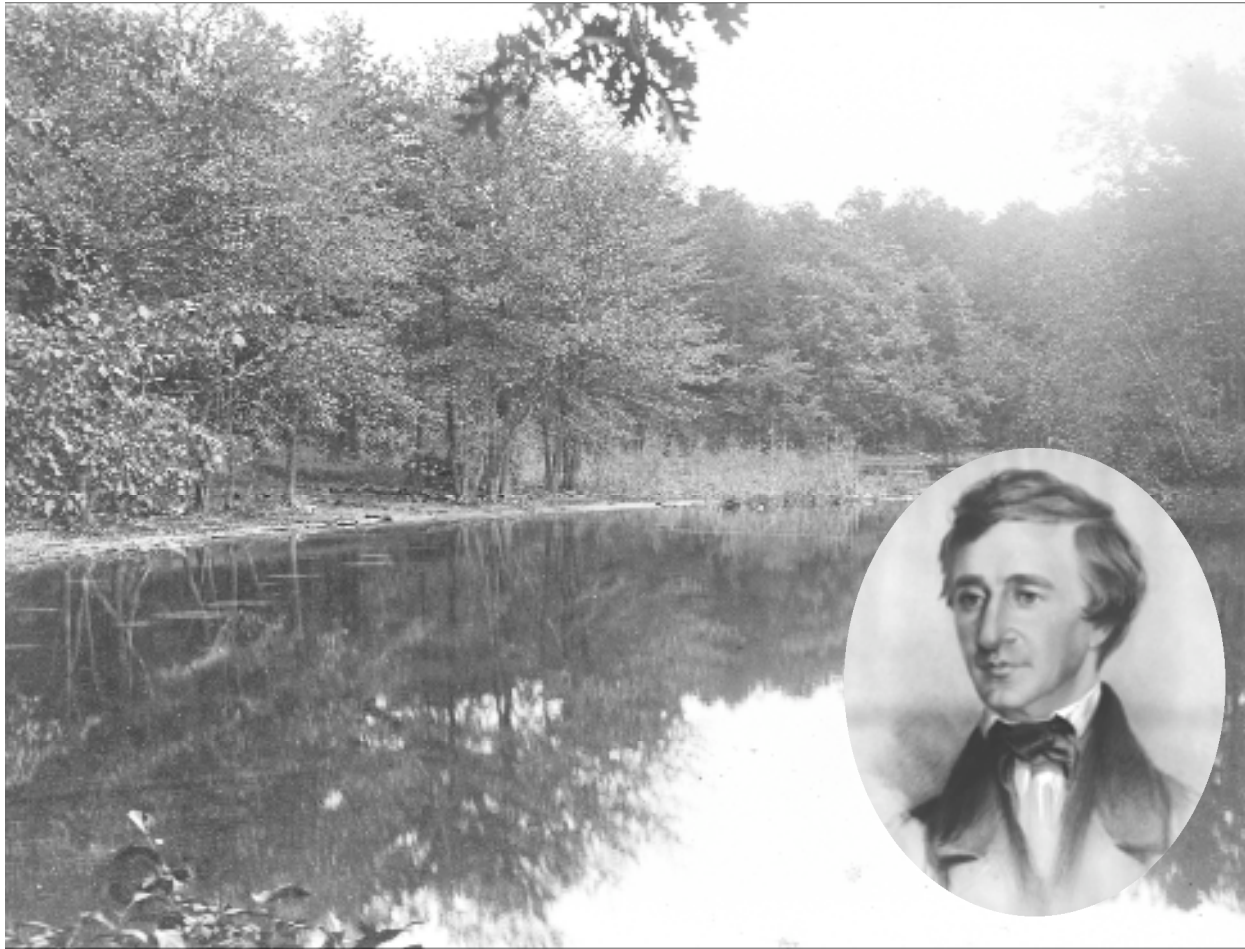
sense of religious identity; it challenged American Christian claims to supremacy and exclusivity; and it promoted an “ethical mysticism.” Liberals, indeed, could be rather tendentious about the latter. For instance, John Wright Buckham, a Methodist, insisted in 1915 on a “social mysticism” of active service to others, a spirituality that engaged the industrial crisis and the economic order. Without that component, Buckham would not count a person’s piety under his heading of “Normal Mysticism.”

Of course, spirituality as it was crafted by these 19th-century cosmopolitans and their heirs always had plenty of idiosyncrasies and failings. Still, its makers engaged in a sharply self-critical exchange, in which they anticipated most of the challenges that are still posed to their vision of religious interiority. Take the devotion to solitude, for example. These religious liberals prized serene meditation, romanticized the hermit’s life, and longed for mystical experience in forests and mountains rather than in churches. Were those emphases not a prescription for solipsism and isolation, and an ultimately fatal alienation from community and tradition?

**W**illiam R. Alger, a second-generation transcendentalist who (unlike Emerson) never left the Unitarian ministry, offered the era’s fullest exposition of seclusion in *The Solitudes of Nature and of Man; or, The Loneliness of Human Life* (1866). “The aboriginal woods of western North America,” Alger fantasized, “seem as if they might harbor a million anchorites, not one of whom should be within a day’s journey of any other.” Yet he meditated on solitude precisely because he was seeking a remedy for



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the larger social estrangements and self-absorbed anxieties he found all around him in a market-dominated world of go-getting success and failure. “This is the malady of the age—an age of Narcissuses,” he claimed. The occasional retreat into solitude that he recommended was actually imagined as a means of liberating its practitioners from the increasingly “morbid consciousness of self.”

So was Alger merely turning solitude into a form of feel-good therapy? Was he saying that well-to-do city folk needed a nice summer cottage where they could refresh their souls before rejoining the capitalist grind? Certainly he imagined his advice as having a lot more bite than that. Though he had reverently attended Thoreau’s funeral and listened with solemn attention as the church bell “told the forty-four years he had numbered,” Alger was an unusually harsh in-house critic when it came to the Concord hermit’s supposed “pampering of egotism.”

In a scornful critique, Alger asserted that Thoreau the writer was “constantly feeling himself, reflecting himself, fondling himself, reverberating himself, exalting himself, incapable of escaping or forgetting himself.” As a champion of a liberal and eclectic spirituality, Alger tried to lead his readers and congregants out of “self-nauseated weariness” into “God’s closet.”

Romancing solitude was pivotal for Alger, but it was not a matter of quietist retreat from the social and political world. Like his compatriots Theodore Parker and Franklin Sanborn, Alger nurtured reform commitments, particularly to the abolitionist cause. As Boston’s official Fourth of July orator in 1857, he was, by turns, hissed and applauded for his forceful denunciation of “the Slave-Power and its lovers.” “The battle between Slavery and Freedom in America is irreconcilable,” Alger exclaimed, dismissing an “ostrich-policy” of celebrating the na-

*An increasingly familiar scene at public ceremonies—such as this swearing in of Los Angeles police chief William Bratton in 2002—is the interfaith blessing, including, among others, a cardinal, a rabbi, and a swami.*

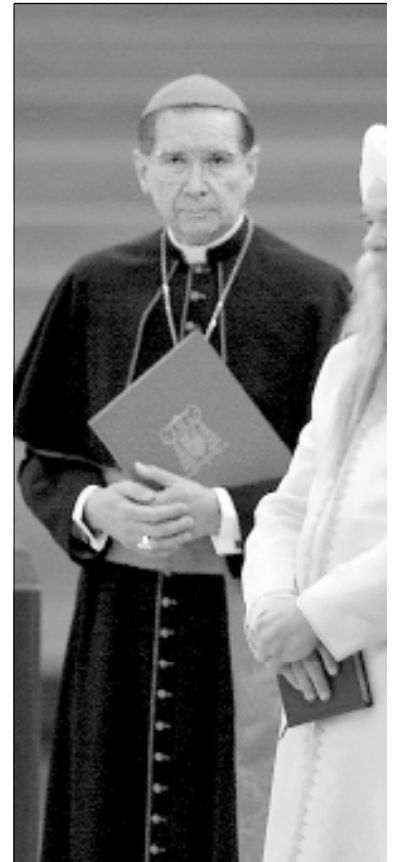
tion's independence while evading the crisis at hand. Taken aback by the furor, the board of aldermen refused him the usual etiquette of gratitude and publication; the snub launched Alger's speech into mass circulation and helped make his reputation as an antislavery agitator.

Alger was also ready, as were many of the transcendentalists, to take his readers figuratively to Persia, India, and China, and in those intellectual excursions he displayed the same misconceptions as other appropriators of "the mystic East." Many of his cultural oppositions in *The Poetry of the Orient* (1856) consisted of the usual fare, pitting "the enterprising young West" against "the meditative old East." Like the poet Coleman Barks today, Alger was particularly dazzled by the "electric freedom" of the 13th-century Sufi mystic Jalal al-Din ar-Rumi, and even proposed that Americans incorporate the "diversified disciplines" of Sufism into their own lives as a way to discover spiritual ecstasy and wonder. It was not an uncommon presumption in transcendentalist circles: Distant religious cultures offered separable scriptures and "detachable ritual morsels" for the delectation of North American dabblers weary of their own unenchanted world. The transcendentalist encounter with Asian religions was often trivializing and homogenizing, an exercise in reducing cultural differences to a universal religion that looked uncannily like Concord writ large across the globe.

But transcendentalist piety offered more than the predictable shortcomings of Orientalist fantasy. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a radical abolitionist who went on to serve as a colonel in an African-American regiment in the Civil War, heralded religious liberalism's widening vision in "The Sympathy of Religions," an essay first published in 1871 and extensively circulated thereafter. "I have worshiped in an Evangelical church when thousands rose to their feet at the motion of one hand. I have worshiped in a Roman Catholic church when the lifting of one finger broke the motionless

multitude into twinkling motion, till the magic sign was made, and all was still once more," Higginson observed, grandly sweeping aside the Protestant-Catholic antagonisms still festering across the country, before launching himself further afield. "But I never for an instant have supposed that this concentrated moment of devotion was more holy or more beautiful than when one cry from a minaret hushes a Mohammedan city to prayer, or when, at sunset, the low invocation, 'Oh! the gem in the lotus—oh! the gem in the lotus,' goes murmuring, like the cooing of many doves, across the vast surface of Thibet." In so minimizing liturgical differences, Higginson committed most of liberalism's universalizing sins, but he also imagined a cosmopolitan piety in which religious identities were open, fluxional, and sympathetic rather than closed, fixed, and proselytizing. Religious encounters across cultures were imagined as engaging rather than threatening; they were seen as occasions for parliamentary gatherings rather than mission stations. "When we fully comprehend the sympathy of religions," Higginson concluded, "we shall deal with other faiths on equal terms."

**T**he radicalism of Higginson and his compeers created the space for an ever-widening religious exchange in American culture. In 1897, the Hindu swami Saradananda joined the conversation (and the New England lecture circuit) with his own discourse on "The Sympathy of Religions." "By sympathy," Saradananda explained, "the Vedantist [an adherent of a 19th-century Hindu reform movement] does not mean a kind of dull indifference, or haughty toleration, which seems to say, 'I know you are wrong and my religion is the on-







ly true one, yet I will let you follow it, and perhaps one day your eyes will be opened.' His sympathy is not a negative one, but it is of a direct, positive nature, which knows that all religions are true, they have the same goal." Hindus, Saradananda insisted, did not reduce the "religious orchestra of the universe" to mere "monotones." The sympathy of religions, he assured, would not be purchased at the price of particularity and variation: "The mission of Vedanta to the West is not to make Christians Hindus, but to make the Christian a better Christian, a Hindu a better Hindu, and a Mohammedan a better Mohammedan." Reaching God required specific paths, not a uniform one "in the place of the many."

The liberal architects of American spirituality came rather quickly to realize that their vision of one universal religion was at cross-purposes with their equally important ideals of cosmopolitan variety and democratic individuality. Most were not particularly interested in rolling back transcendentalist notions of spontaneity, creativity, and spir-

itual independence for the sake of religious unanimity. As the conversation among them unfolded, many insisted that for liberals to be truly liberal, their religious cosmopolitanism could not become bland and colorless. In an 1895 lecture, the Reform rabbi Solomon Schindler, after a warm introduction from Higginson himself, argued that all the talk of unifying the religions or reducing them to a common core suggested a misguided conformity. "The happiest state will come to pass," Schindler claimed, "when each individual will be allowed to formulate his own ideas regarding the universe and his position in and relation to it. Not one unified religion is the goal, but as many millions of religions as there will be individuals." Democratic individuality, not liberal universality, was the central spiritual value.

The roots of today's seeker spirituality are tangled, but they go deep in American culture and often prove, on closer inspection, to be surprisingly robust. It is hard, once one has traveled any length on the roads forward

from Emerson and Whitman, not to be impressed by the tenacity of this joined tradition of spiritual seeking and political progressivism in American religious life. Take, for example, the visionary ecumenist Sarah Farmer, who, in 1894, in Eliot, Maine, organized her own summer school for the comparative study of religion and social activism. A genius as a religious and political go-between, she hosted everyone from D. T. Suzuki, emergent ambassador of Zen Buddhism, to George Herron, renowned advocate of Christian socialism, to W. E. B. Du Bois, founder of the NAACP, to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, pioneering feminist and economist, to Anagarika Dharmapala, Sinhalese Buddhist critic of British colonialism. One partisan eulogized her, with some fairness, as “the actual fulfiller of Emerson in terms of applied influence.”

Or consider Rufus Jones, a liberal Quaker who wrote more extensively on mysticism than any other American in the first half of the 20th century, and who crucially popularized the notion of the “seeker” as a modern religious type. Jones also managed, while holding a professorship at Haverford College and writing more than a book a year on average, to help lead the American Friends Service Committee from its founding in 1917. The AFSC was initially organized to support civil service for Quaker conscientious objectors during World War I, but with the aid of Jones’s internationalist vision, it soon expanded its domain to relief work with refugees across Europe, for which service it received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947. Throughout his life, Jones imagined his Quaker faith as much through the romantic prism of Emerson, Whitman, and John Greenleaf Whittier as on the basis of the journal of George Fox, the 17th-century founder of the Religious Society of Friends.

**I**n our own time, there is the example of Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun* magazine, who speaks of an “Emancipatory Spirituality” and expressly connects the material work of liberal progressivism to lived spiritual practice. He is adamant that what the Democrats really need is a better understanding of religion and “the politics of

meaning,” a sturdier commitment to engaging the deeper values and transcendent hopes of Americans. “The liberal world,” he claims, “has developed such knee-jerk hostility to religion” that it has “marginalized those many people on the left who actually do have spiritual yearnings.” Echoes of the same idiom can be heard in *The Future of American Progressivism* (1998), by Roberto Unger and Cornel West. Unger and West link “the re-energizing of democratic politics” to “the American religion of possibility.” For good measure, they even point to Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas* as the bible of that religious-political amalgam.

When the renowned psychologist of religion William James was asked in 1904, “What do you mean by ‘spirituality?’” he responded: “Susceptibility to ideals, but with a certain freedom to indulge in imagination about them. A certain amount of ‘otherworldly’ fancy.” That is the kind of whimsical, individualistic answer that would have earned James no small amount of scorn from today’s cultural critics had they heard it from some supposed avatar of the New Age. Yet for all of James’s vaunted privatizing of religion—he defined it, for his purposes, as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude”—he always remained very much interested in the fruits of faith, the inner resources of saintliness. What kinds of interior lives produced the energy and dedication of the saints, “their extravagance of human tenderness”? Without some sense of the spirit’s vast potentialities, James wondered, how would Americans ever confront their “material attachments” and regain “the moral fighting shape”? “Naturalistic optimism,” he wrote, “is mere syllabub and flattery and sponge-cake” compared with the hopes and demands that the spiritual life was capable of fostering. A Whitmanite individualist, James allowed the churches no monopoly on mystical experience or social conscience; a wide-awake pragmatist, he also believed that liberals and progressives turned away from the spiritual at their own peril. On both points Senator Obama apparently concurs, and there’s nothing “soft-core,” “softheaded,” or “sponge-cake” about that. □

# INSIDE THE CHINESE MIND

The world marvels at China's spectacular rise to economic success, and worried speculation grows about the future role of the country as a political and military power. But what do the Chinese themselves want? That question would be difficult to answer even if this land of more than a billion people were not an authoritarian state ruled by a tiny elite. Our authors search for clues in the historical and cultural currents that will shape the Chinese future.



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# What Does China Want?

*by Ross Terrill*

**W**hen China first intrigued America, in the late 18th century, we desired its tea and silk. The American missionaries and traders who reached Canton and other ports did not trouble to reflect on what China might want of us—nothing more than the Christian gospel and gadgets and tobacco, they seemed to assume. In the years since, Americans seldom have had occasion to ponder the question. The historical pattern was that



*Shanghai's Pudong financial district, sprouting on former farmlands across the Huangpu River from the city's famous 19th-century Bund, has already established itself as one of Asia's financial hubs.*

America influenced China, and that unequal dynamic climaxed in the World War II alliance with Chiang Kai-shek's shaky Kuomintang government against the fascist powers. In the 1940s it was presumed that China desired simply to recover from Japanese occupation, poverty, disunity, and corruption.

When "our China," the Nationalist regime of Chiang, went up in a puff of smoke at the end of the 1940s and the Communists took over Beijing, China became The Other. In the acrimonious years after Mao Zedong's triumph in 1949, China was beyond our influence. But we knew what China wanted: Mao had warned that he would "lean to one side," and soon he declared, "The Soviet Union's today is China's tomorrow." We were the "imperialists," and Mao was against us.

After Moscow and Beijing quarreled in the early 1960s and the Vietnam War escalated later in the decade, what China wanted became more complex. In the so-called Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, Mao's realm seemed irrational to the United States—and also to Moscow and most of the world. Yet, in 1971, Beijing indicated to President Richard Nixon its desire to lean to the

American side to counterbalance the (assumed) coming eclipse of the United States by a rising Soviet Union.

Today, China's goals have again become hard to read; yet understanding them has never been so urgent. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the worldwide spread of democracy, China embodies an enigma: economic success under a Communist regime. The world knows what the United States stands for: free markets and democracy wherever possible. And it knows what Osama bin Laden wants: a return to the Caliphate. But China's goals are less clear. What do the post-Mao, post-Soviet Union, money-minded Chinese want? The question puzzles—and worries—many Americans.

Despite its enhanced influence in the past few years, Beijing still tends to behave reactively rather than pursue distinctive goals beyond China's borders. This comforts some people; they see China as a cautious, even conservative, power. And, to an extent, it is. But that's not the whole story. Beijing indeed behaves defensively in three fundamental respects: It sees itself as recovering from economic backwardness; it copes in quiet frustration with its relative weakness as compared with the strength of the United States; and it participates in a great number of international organizations for the limited purpose of keeping their agendas from

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inconveniencing China. This defensive behavior may suggest that Beijing is uncertain about whether to seek to return to a past imperial primacy in Asia, the “Middle Kingdom,” or to join what people other than the Chinese style the “international community.” It may, of course, be simply that China is playing for time, hiding plans that for now seem too hard to pull off.

Unlike the United States, which trumpets its goals, China does seem to keep its intentions under wraps. If you read the speeches of President Hu Jintao, who is also Communist Party chief and head of the military, or those of his predecessor, Jiang Zemin, “peace and development” seem to be the goals of Chinese foreign policy. The phrase reveals but also misleads. Peace and development are means rather than ends for Beijing’s foreign policy. To say they are China’s goals is like saying Hu Jintao’s purpose tomorrow is to put on his trousers and brush his teeth.

China is unusual in today’s world because it is part empire and part modern nation. A modernizing Marxist-Leninist party state has been built upon a very old and successful tradition of governance and the imperial mentality that went with it. This extends autocratic empire into an era otherwise done with multinational empires. Communist China, astonishingly, inherited the borders of the Qing empire at its grandest, including Tibet, southern Mongolia, and the Muslim west that was once East Turkestan. But a modernizing China is torn: Hold on to empire for the sake of Chinese glory? Or yield to a postimperial politics made natural by the new society and economy visible in today’s Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing?

The impulse to transmute the old Middle Kingdom into a hegemony based, this time, not on Confucian ethics but on economic power, is still there, but two forces cut against it. International economic and cultural interdependence will at some point collide with political paternalism. And the United States, Japan, India, and other powers may not permit a neo-Middle Kingdom.

Because China remains an authoritarian state, we cannot know what the Chinese people want. Still less can we assign a direction to the future of Chinese civilization, saying, for example, that it will “clash” with Islam or Western civilization. We can answer the question about China’s goals only in terms of the actions of the current Beijing party-state. What are the nine male engineers who make up the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeking for China? We can discern perhaps six goals in their actions.



China pursues a foreign policy that maximizes stability at home. This is true of many other nations as well, but acutely so of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Control of the populace has seldom been taken for granted by post-1949 Beijing, as indeed it could not be taken by Chinese rulers through the 150 years of foreign pressures and domestic troubles

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that marked the decline of the Qing dynasty. From the beginnings of the PRC to the present, Beijing has been wary of losing its grip on its far-flung realm.

China's three largest provinces, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, were historically not Chinese territory, and their rooted inhabitants differ in religion, language, culture, and typical livelihood from Chinese people. Dealing with minorities who may prefer independence to rule by Chinese has led Beijing to employ semicolonial methods. In Tibet, higher education is open only to Chinese speakers, the vast west of the PRC is all on Beijing time, and the Muslim Uyghur population in Xinjiang has been purposely diluted by Chinese internal immigration, to cite just a few examples. In addition, the claim of the CCP to be the fount of truth as well as power creates numerous forbidden mental zones that must be policed. Any philosophical heterodoxy is treated, with or without justification, as a political threat to the CCP. The regime trusts you with your money but not with your mind.

THE REGIME TRUSTS YOU  
WITH YOUR MONEY BUT  
NOT WITH YOUR MIND.

In 1998, Jiang Zemin gave a startling 20 speeches on World War II during a visit to Japan. The Japanese chief cabinet secretary eventually said in frustration, "Isn't that all behind us?" But Japan's past transgressions will never be "all behind us" so long as the imperial state in Beijing feels a need to legitimate itself with the Chinese people by shouting "Japanese militarists!" Insecurities of this sort shape foreign policy. Thus, dealings with South Asia

## China

are intended to weaken the links between Tibet and the Tibetan government in exile in India—much as dealings with Central Asia are intended to dampen the hopes of Uyghur separatists in Xinjiang. The same eye to domestic control guides policy toward Mongolia, Korea, Thailand, and other neighbors. In sum, the PRC is a diverse semi-empire, with many inhabitants sharing racial, religious, or historical links with peoples just across one of China's borders. And the PRC is an authoritarian regime that, as if in response to self-induced nightmares, often acts like a state afraid of its own citizens.

The first goal, then, is internal stability.

**A** second goal of Beijing's foreign policy is to sustain China's economic growth. As Marxism fades and no official public philosophy replaces it, an improved standard of living and pride in the nation have come to legitimate a regime that never faces an election. The economic achievements in the quarter-century since Deng Xiaoping took the reins in the post-Mao era are certainly worth protecting. The economy has quadrupled in size, and its yearly growth continues at eight to nine percent (by government figures). Foreign trade has increased by a factor of 10 overall; recently, the volume of foreign trade has been expanding by 25 percent annually. The post-Mao economic surge is fueled by foreign money, and urban coastal areas benefit most from the trade, technology, and managerial skill generated by this investment. Farmers did well in the initial rounds of the reform period, but they have since lagged badly behind city dwellers, some 15 percent of whom enjoy characteristic trappings of contemporary middle-class life: cell phones, Internet access, cars, homeownership, and international vacations.

Beijing is crafting foreign policy to sustain the economic growth that keeps its legitimacy intact. Hence China's bow to stringent demands by the United States and others when it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001; hence its relatively transparent juggling act over the yuan-dollar exchange rate; and hence its restraint this past June when Australia allowed a defecting Chinese diplomat to be accepted as a resident in Australia. (China relies increasingly on Australian liquefied natural gas, coal, and iron ore.) It was surely in part to avoid damage to China's huge exports to the American market that Beijing suspended the provocative missile tests it had staged off the shores of Taiwan

*In 1995, Chinese police keep watch over Tibetan Buddhists celebrating the Tsong Khapa festival at a Buddhist monastery. Tensions continue to strain Beijing's authority over Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia, its three largest and most distant provinces.*



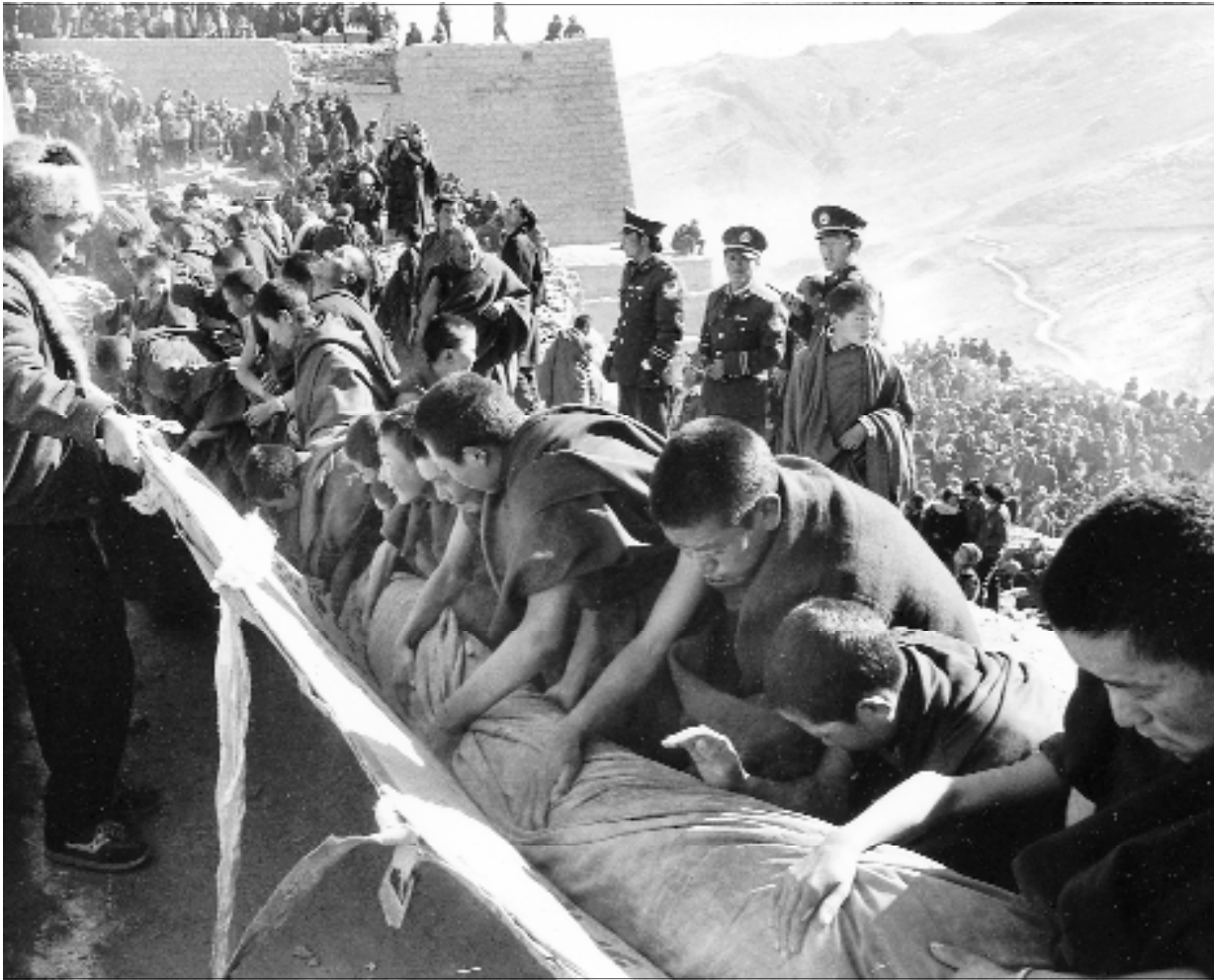


to show its displeasure with a pro-independence candidate in the island's 1996 presidential election. (President Bill Clinton had dispatched two aircraft carriers to the vicinity.) And in 2001, after a collision between U.S. and Chinese military planes near Hainan Island, Beijing abruptly switched off its initial "antihegemonic" rhetoric and returned the distressed American crew—again to protect the key bilateral relationship that furthers China's economic modernization.

The third goal of Beijing's foreign policy is to maintain a peaceful environment in China's complicated geographic situation. The PRC is the only country in the world

that has to deal with 14 abutting neighbors, seven of which share borders of more than 600 miles, and four others close by China's extraordinarily long coastline. In its first 30 years, the PRC went to war on all five of its flanks. In the Korean War, it suffered more than a million dead and wounded. The PRC fought India in 1959 and 1962. It sent 320,000 engi-

IN THE KOREAN WAR, CHINA  
SUFFERED MORE THAN A  
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neering and anti-aircraft troops to help Ho Chi Minh win the Vietnam War. In 1969, putative socialist brothers Moscow and Beijing took to the sword at the Amur and Ussuri rivers in the northeast. In 1979, Deng's China attacked Vietnam to "teach Hanoi a lesson."

To China's credit and Asia's relief, Beijing in the 1980s adopted a new foreign policy of omnidirectional smiles, labeled a "policy of peace and independence." Fighting no war after 1979, Beijing soon smoothed relations with the Soviet Union, mended the shattered fence with

Indonesia, stunningly recognized South Korea and stuffed a cloth down North Korea's angry throat, established a shared gatekeeper role with Moscow in Central Asia, joined international

BEIJING IS PREPARING  
THE WAY FOR FUTURE  
DOMINANCE IN EAST ASIA.

agencies by the month, and eventually became more enmeshed with the United States (except in military relations) than at any time in Chinese history. In a striking change from what was true for most of the PRC's history, Beijing today has no enemies.

Caution to gain time continues. In today's ongoing six-party talks on the Korean peninsula, Beijing, in its own opaque fashion, pursues a policy (not in American interests) of keeping the peace by clinging to the status quo. A divided Korea, however hair-raising Pyongyang's gyrations may continue to be, is better for China than a united Korea of uncertain orientation. In Central Asia, Beijing likewise opts for "talks" on border demarcation and "splittist" issues that sweep problems under the carpet and sustain the status quo.

By the turn of the 21st century, it had become clear that Beijing was moving beyond omnidirectional smiles to lay the groundwork for a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine in East Asia. This fourth goal of the PRC is, of course, unstated. China bids to replace the United States as the chief influence in East Asia. Unfortunately, the Washington-led projects in Afghanistan and Iraq may have distracted the Bush administration and the American public from the preparations Beijing is making for future dominance, when they ought to pay close attention to these moves.

**G**oal four is built on China's enhanced reputation in the aftermath of the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, which left it undisturbed, and on its two decades of economic success. More concrete, if still negative, aims are coming into view. On a few global issues where Chinese and American interests coincide, or Beijing cannot effectively resist U.S. policy, it goes along with the United States, "abstains," or opposes Washington with a limp wrist. But in Asia, Chinese leaders are doing much to frustrate and exclude the United States. They drive a wedge between Japan and the United States at every opportunity. They whisper in Australian ears that Canberra would be better off looking only to Asia and not across the Pacific. In December, a mile-

stone will be reached when an East Asia summit convenes in Malaysia without U.S. representation, thanks in part to Chinese pressure. Beijing sees the summit as a step toward forming an East Asian organization that will not include the United States.

In the Southeast Asian theater, the overture to a Chinese Monroe Doctrine can be heard unmistakably in Burma (Myanmar) and several other countries. Burma receives substantial Chinese aid, including funds for important infrastructure projects. The Burmese leaders are nervous about Sinicization of northern Burma, where ethnic Chinese live and trade. But like the tribute Burma traditionally paid to the Chinese court in centuries past, the smiles toward Beijing are an insurance policy. The result is that Burma has entered China's sphere of influence, as has Laos. Thailand and even Malaysia could be future candidates.

All the while, Beijing fosters a perception of China as the equal of the United States—a precious fifth goal. Consider Jiang Zemin's visit to America in 1997. "American negotiators preparing for the visit," reported *The New York Times*, "have said they were perplexed by the way their Chinese counterparts seemed extremely particular about the details of protocol and symbol." These included the size and color of carpets, the positioning, in photos of Jiang, of Harvard University's *Veritas* emblem and Philadelphia's Liberty Bell, and the style and design of the ties worn by Jiang and President Clinton. All such details were plotted to further an image of the PRC as being on a par with the United States. A *Times* edi-



*The post-Mao leaders: At a Central Committee meeting in 1992, Deng Xiaoping (in tunic) greets his successor, Jiang Zemin (center), and Hu Jintao (left), who later succeeded Jiang.*

torial after the visit must have heartened Beijing: “[Jiang] used his appearances with Mr. Clinton to present himself as a statesman who could meet on equal terms with the leader of the world’s richest and most powerful country.”

The next year Clinton went to China, and Beijing pulled similar strings to punch above its weight. It negotiated fiercely to have Clinton not stop in Japan en route, the better to showcase his China visit,

THE NEXT CHINESE DRAMA  
WILL PROBABLY UNFOLD  
NOT IN FOREIGN RELATIONS  
BUT AT HOME.

and to stretch the visit to eight days so that it would exceed the historic seven days Nixon spent in China in 1972. In a secret speech after the trip, the Chinese premier expressed delight that Clinton “made no stopover in

Japan on his way to China . . . with the result that Japan has lost face.” The Chinese official press pounced on any morsel of comment from outside China that Clinton and Jiang had met as equals. It declared that the “two leaders together” (forget Europe, Japan, and India!) had made Asia “more stable” and the “world more peaceful.”

Goal six of China’s international policy is to “regain” territories that Beijing feels rightfully belong within the PRC. The list of such territories runs from areas of trumpeted intent to ones of secret hope and includes Taiwan and a large number of islands in the Yellow Sea, South China Sea, and East China Sea. In the case of Taiwan, Beijing awaits an opportunity that will consist of some combination of a favorable (to Beijing) evolution in Taiwan’s domestic politics, U.S. fatigue at the strain of supporting Taiwan, greater PRC capacity to transport troops and materiel quickly across the 100-mile Taiwan Strait, and a Japan more malleable to China’s wishes than it is at present. In the case of the Spratly Islands, spread across crucial Southeast Asian sea routes and claimed in part by six countries, Beijing awaits sufficient naval capacity to “resume” control; the islands are essentially uninhabited but are rich in oil and other resources. Not a few Vietnamese, Koreans, Thai, and Indians also expect China, when it is able, to lay claim to parts of their territory that were once Chinese.

Of China’s aspirations for territories on its northern flank, Mao said this in 1964: “About 100 years ago, the area to the east of Lake Baikal became Russian territory, and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka, and other areas have been Soviet territory. We have not yet presented our account for this list.” In due course, the account could be presented. By 1973, Mao had augmented the roster of territories he felt had been stolen by Moscow. Out of the blue, during a conversation on other topics with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, he complained that “the Soviet Union has carved out one and a half million square kilometers from China.” In the 1960s and 1970s, the same Communist Party that

now rules in Beijing claimed as Chinese territory parts of today's Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Should Russia's hold over its far east weaken, and the movement of Chinese people to live and trade in border areas continue, China may "present its account" for a portion of Siberia.



**A**rising power does not always attain its goals. For modern authoritarian states, success has mostly been shortlived. Thus, the goals of all three fascist powers, which caused World War II, were abruptly canceled by 1945, and the foreign-policy goals of the Soviet bloc disappeared without trace in 1991. The prospects that China will achieve its six foreign-policy goals depend, I believe, on the Chinese political system and on how other powers react to China's ambitions.

The next Chinese drama will probably unfold not in foreign relations but at home: A middle-class push for property rights, rural discontent, the Internet, 150 million unemployed wandering between village and city, and a suddenly aging population bringing financial and social strains will dramatize some of the contradictions of "market Leninism." Traveling one road in economics and another in politics makes it difficult to arrive at a stipulated destination. How China resolves the contradictions between its politics and its economics will determine how strong a role it is to play in the world.

The current rise of China, like the rise of Germany and Japan beginning in the late 19th century, displays high purpose, a sense of grievance, and heightened nationalism. But the rise of nations can have diverse outcomes. The



*China's rapid military modernization causes alarm, and Beijing clearly intends to make its weight felt in Asia. Yet while China is the world's second-biggest military spender, with a \$67 billion annual budget, the United States still outspends it five to one.*

## China

United Kingdom, for example, eventually accepted with equanimity the rise of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. By contrast, the rise of Germany and Japan culminated in two world wars and the destruction of the two countries' political systems—to be replaced by totally new polities and totally new international behavior. Democracy, not civilizational traits or any vast difference in relative national economic levels between today and the 1930s, makes Germany and Japan well-behaved powers in our era. Having great influence, which both now do, is not the same as being a threat to others, which both once were. China's future role in the world will be substantially determined by what happens to its out-of-date political system during the next two decades.

**I**t is sometimes overlooked that rising to the position of successful new hegemon, in any region during any epoch, presupposes three factors: the intention to be number one on the part of the rising power, the capacity to achieve that goal, and the acceptance of the new pretender by other affected powers. Beijing has the intention. The capacity is not clearly beyond it. But non-Chinese acquiescence?

East Asia retains a memory of the Chinese Middle Kingdom. Every Vietnamese and Korean knows about the age-old hauteur of the Chinese imperial court toward China's neighbors. For better and for worse, some 60 million Chinese reside in East Asia outside the PRC, reminding Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and other host countries of the primacy of Chinese civilization in the region; in some cases, the state of coexistence remains strained. Half the population of Taiwan is flat-out opposed to Beijing's intent to "resume" rule of their island, according to polls; in a 2002 survey, 38 percent saw themselves as Taiwanese, 8 percent as Chinese, 50 percent as both.

China has spent decades in the self-proclaimed role of victim: "carved like a melon" after the Opium War, bullied by the "imperialist" West, and so on. Its initial success as a hegemon would quickly present problems both of image and of practical consequence. China would learn, as the United States has done painfully, that an ascendant king of the jungle feels the bites of other beasts edged aside. A Japan that saw China eclipse the United States, its major ally, whose primacy in East Asia explains six decades of Japanese restraint, would surely challenge China. Once again, as for five decades after 1894, China and Japan would vie—and possibly fight—for control of the region.

An authoritarian China—nervous about control over its own Chinese people and without a comfortable grip on its internal non-Chinese semi-empire—probably lacks the moral appeal to lead Asia. It can be argued that the traditional Chinese empire of centuries past was a stabilizing force, but in the 21st century, any bid by China for extension of its empire, or even for a long continuance of its present multinational realm, is more likely to be destabilizing.

Empire and Communist autocracy were tightly related in the Soviet Union. There's the same interconnection in China, which, like Russia, is a landmass that did not *have* an empire but *was* one. The breakup of the Soviet

Union ended the Cold War as much as did the cracking of the Communist Party's monopoly on political power in Moscow. What Zbigniew Brzezinski said of Moscow is true of Beijing as well: "Russia can be either an empire or a democracy, but it cannot be both."

Moscow, under pressure, is redefining its national interest as it leaves behind decades of Communist empire. China has hardly begun this process. The Chinese leaders must ask whether they could smoothly rule a society as distinct from the PRC as today's Taiwan. They might ponder whether having Tibet as a state associated with China—under China's shadow, to be sure, but sovereign—might be better than everlasting tension between Lhasa and Beijing. These questions have not been asked because China is still in transition from Communist empire to modern nation, and pulled between what it wants and what it really needs. National myths (a victimized China) are beguiling; the beckoning national interest (a prosperous China) seems more compelling.

Additional questions arise about China's capacity to be the new global hegemon. Today's Beijing cannot project its power far; in the tsunami disaster of December 2004 it could not do so even to South and Southeast Asia. Problems would surely arise in Africa and Latin America, beginning with language and including race and religion and culture, if China sought to have the impact in those regions that Europe and the United States have had. There is also some doubt that China is philosophically equipped for world dominance of the kind that Britain once enjoyed through sea power, or that the United States now enjoys through business dealings, military power, popular culture, and ideas about free markets and democracy. The Maoist sense of mission was certainly strong, like the Protestant-derived Anglo-American sense of mission. Yet without communism's sharp edge, Chinese nationalism lacks a message for the world. The United States under President George W. Bush bristles with a message, even as it controls almost no non-Americans. The PRC today has no message, but is assiduous in its control at home and ambitious for a sphere of influence.

**I** speak of China as ambitious. Is China not rather a conservative power? Each proposition has passionate adherents, yet the two have a yin-yang relation. The expansionist claims of Beijing are transparent and unique among today's powerful nations. But the Beijing regime, while a dictatorship, is a rational dictatorship. It can count the numbers. It is often patient in fulfilling its goals. Equipped with a growing cadre of younger, well-trained officials, Beijing does not, like the Ming and Qing courts, deceive itself with beautiful fictions to hide the gap between reality and China's preferred worldview. China, in sum, is an ambitious power that, if faced with countervailing power, will act prudently in its long-term strategy. It surely knows that a formidable list of powers—the United States, Japan, Russia, India—has many reasons for denying China the opportunity to be a 21st-century Middle Kingdom. China was not as weak as it seemed when it was the "sick man of Asia." It may not be as enduringly strong as it now seems to those who fear or admire it. □

# A Perfect World

by Shiping Hua

In 1925, the left-wing writer Guo Moro published a short story called “Marx Enters the Confucian Temple,” hoping to reassure the Chinese people that communism was not as alien as it seemed. The story tells of a somewhat comical encounter between Confucius and Karl Marx in which the two discuss whether their visions of the good life are compatible. After Marx describes his communist utopia, Confucius claps his hands in delight. “Ah, yes!” he exclaims. Marx’s utopia and the traditional Confucian concept of *datong*, or the Grand Harmony, “unexpectedly coincide.”

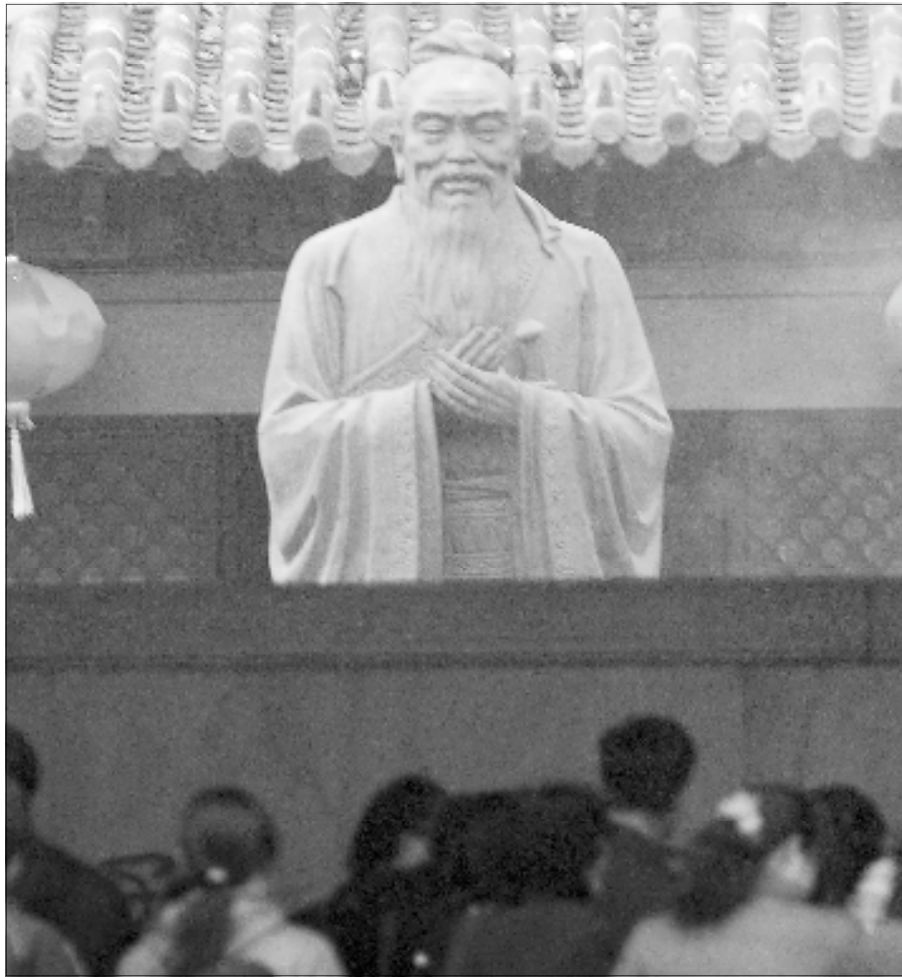
*Datong* is to be found not in the afterlife but in a real human community on earth, a community said to have actually existed long before Confucius’s own time. In his story, Guo cites a much-quoted Confucian description of *datong*:

When the Grand Harmony was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky. They chose men of talent and ability, whose words were sincere, and they cultivated harmony. Men did not love only their own parents, or nurture only their own children. The elderly were cared for till the end of their life. . . . Provisions were made for widows, orphans, childless men, and the disabled. . . . Possessions were used, but not hoarded for selfish reasons. Work was encouraged, but not for selfish advantage. In this way, selfish schemings were repressed. Robbers, thieves, rebels, and traitors had no place, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. That was what we called the Grand Harmony.

Eighty tumultuous years after Guo wrote—after a world war, civil war, and several gigantic utopian attempts to transform Chinese society—the communist dream is all but dead in China, but the 2,500-year-old idea of *datong* is very much alive. *Datong* plays a role in China much like that of freedom in American society: It is a lodestar of Chinese attitudes and thinking—and is also more prescriptive and all-encompassing than the American idea of liberty. This ideal of a prosperous and harmonious political and social order still defines the future imagined by many in China’s large and influential intellectual class. “When China’s intellectuals and leaders speak or write about their hopes for their nation’s future, elements of the notion of the Great Unity are still strongly evident—in spite of 50 years of Marxist ideology,” writes Suzanne Ogden, a political scientist at Northeastern University, in *Inklings of Democracy in China* (2002).

No second Guo Moro has emerged to proclaim that the new capitalist order created by the Communists since 1979 is compatible with the vision of





*At the Confucius Temple in Nanjing, students and their parents pay a New Year tribute to China's great sage, who at times in the recent past was the object of Communist scorn.*

China's great sage. Yet in its outlines the official post-Mao ideology conforms rather strikingly to Confucian precepts. The new theory announced in the early 1980s by Hu Qiaomu, the Communist Party's ideology czar, holds that the realization of communism in China must be put off to an indefinite future. Mao Zedong and his followers, said Hu, had committed the error of trying to rush into socialism by skipping the stage of capitalist development. In Confucian terms, the Communists were saying that *datong* would need to wait; China would have to settle in the meantime for what party leaders call *xiaokang*, or small prosperity—a word borrowed from ancient Chinese thought that describes a condition of relative social stability and wealth marred by an imperfect hierarchy of human relations and an unequal distribution of wealth.

**T**he need for a larger sense of meaning and purpose—for hope—is a universal in human society. In the Christian West, that hope traditionally resided in the afterlife, a Kingdom of Heaven reached by those who obeyed God while living in a sin-ridden world. The

Chinese *datong* is a secular and pragmatic hope. Confucius is not a religious figure, and Confucianism is a code of ethics rather than a religion. (Two other sources of Chinese tradition, Taoism and Buddhism, are religions, but China's governing class has traditionally been secular and

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Confucian.) In the Confucian worldview, hope lies in hard work and the benevolence of others, especially rulers. There is no original sin, nor are there any saviors or miracles. "Benevolence" is believed to be an inherent

human quality. In Confucius's *Analects* (c. 500 B.C.), the word *ren* (benevolence) appears more frequently than any other.

Because of their religious tradition, Westerners tend to accept as natural the imperfect nature of human society. The checks and balances built into the U.S. political system, for instance, reflect a frank recognition of the imperfection of human society. As James Madison put it, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." To a Chinese, the American tolerance of disharmony in the social and political realms is remarkable. When the sensational 1995 murder trial of O. J. Simpson ended in a not guilty verdict, I was fascinated to see that the American public eventually accepted the outcome and lost interest, even though no one else was ever charged with the crime. In China, the failure to achieve a full resolution of the crime would be much harder to accept. If a government hopes to retain its credibility, high-profile murders must somehow be "solved."

**D**uring the past 2,500 years, the Chinese quest for harmony and order in this world has inspired many extraordinary, and sometimes utopian, undertakings. In A.D. 191, for example, the peasant rebel Zhang Lu seized a part of central China and ruled over a kingdom boasting a welfare system, controlled market prices, and rehabilitation rather than punishment for petty criminals. For most of its history, however, China has lived under authoritarian feudal leaders, who have governed more in the spirit of *xiaokang* than *datong*. Yet always there remains a commitment to prosperity, pragmatism, and a belief that the collective good overrides the good of individuals.

The imperative to create a more perfect world on earth was one of the forces that drove China's premodern emperors to pour enormous resources into a system of irrigation works and waterways that exceeded in scale and scope even the great works of the Roman Empire. The Great Wall and the Grand Canal, created over the centuries to carry rice and other goods more than 1,000 miles into China's north, are by far the best known examples, but there are many others.

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Unlike Egypt's pyramids, which served religious and ceremonial purposes, these massive public works were meant to ensure relative stability and freedom from want for generations of Chinese. Although Confucian ethics impose limits on how far rulers can go in pursuit of the common good, enormous human costs accompanied these works. At the Shan-hai-guan Pass, the eastern end of the Great Wall, there is a temple in memory of Meng Jiangniu, a woman who lived during the Qin dynasty (221–205 B.C.), which began construction of the Great Wall. According to the story, which is still told to schoolchildren today, Meng's husband was one of the thousands of peasants who died doing forced hard labor to build the wall and was buried beneath it. Upon learning of her husband's death, Meng went to the site, where she cried so hard that her tears achieved a magic power and brought down a vast length of the cruel emperor's Great Wall, allowing her to recover her husband's body.

**T**he Opium War of 1840–42 and the general trauma of China's encounter with the Western imperial powers forced Chinese elites to realize that they must reform; but even as they sought to learn from the West, they took their inspiration from *datong*. They viewed the creation of a constitutional monarchy not as an end in itself, but as only the first step on a new path toward *datong*. In 1898, for example, Emperor Guangxu designated an intellectual named Kang Youwei to devise a set of political reforms for China. Even as he labored on his plan, Kang was also secretly writing his *Datong Shu*, or *Book of Datong*. It was, in essence, an attempt to reimagine the world along Confucian lines:

To have states, families, and selves is to allow each individual to maintain a sphere of selfishness. . . . States should be abolished, so that there would be no more struggle between the strong and the weak. Families should also be done away with, so that there would no longer be inequality of love and affection. And finally, selfishness itself should be banished, so that goods and services would not be used for private ends. . . . The only [true way] is for all to share the world in common. . . . To share in common is to treat each and every one alike. There should be no distinction between high and low, no discrepancy between rich and poor, no segregation of human races, no inequality between sexes. . . . All should be educated and supported with the common property; none should depend on private possessions.

With the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the leaders of the two major political parties that emerged from the ashes, the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, both embraced the concept of *datong*. Mao Zedong read the *Datong Shu* in 1917, when he was 24 years old, and soon after produced an article describing his own prescription for a utopian “new village.” In 1940, writing in explicitly Confucian terms, he spoke of the need “to eliminate class and to realize *datong*” as China developed into a communist society. During the disastrous Great Leap Forward (1958–1960), when virtually all of China's peasant farmers were organized into “people's communes,” Mao even



*Largely left behind in the recent prosperity, the vast majority of Chinese who still live in the countryside, such as this woman in Xinjiang, pose a challenge to Beijing's legitimacy.*

ordered the Communist Party officials in charge to use Kang Youwei's *Datong Shu* as their guide.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), no effort was spared in the drive to make Chinese society conform to Mao's plan for utopia, with tragic consequences for millions. A small incident from my own life illustrates the degree of this zeal. One day in 1968, when I was 12 years old, a poster was found on a wall of my school that read "Down with Chairman Mao." The poster was immediately torn down and taken to be analyzed by the Little Red Soldiers, a junior version of the Red Guards, who found that it was written on the back of a math homework assignment. It was quickly determined which teacher had given the assignment, and all the students in her class were required to write "Long live Chairman Mao," so their handwriting could be compared. Soon the author of the poster was identified: a girl in the second grade whose parents had been persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. The girl was not severely penalized; her parents very likely were.

If the hope of the Cultural Revolution was for "good politics," the hope of the post-Mao era is for prosperity and "good economics." This change is reflected in the composition of China's leadership and the Communist Party's ideology. Most Maoist leaders, especially during the Cultural Revolution, were literary intellectuals given to dreams of proletarian unity—



the writer Guo Moro, for example, became president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences—but most of the post-Mao leaders have been pragmatic technocrats. Graduates of Tsinghua University, China’s MIT, dominate the party’s upper echelons. The party once lionized as popular heroes people such as Lei Feng, a Communist soldier who loved everyone but himself. Today’s heroes are the rich, regardless of their individual character. The contemporary Chinese obsession with wealth is reflected in a popular saying: China has a population of a billion, and 900 million of them are businessmen—a singsong line that seldom fails to elicit cynical laughter.

That hollow laughter reflects the fact that the post-Mao zeal for wealth has fulfilled only part of the hope of the Chinese. It has emphasized the pragmatic this-worldly quest for prosperity encouraged by the *datong* ideal but has neglected the complementary pursuit of the collective good. Even among those Chinese who have done well during the economic boom, there is widespread discontent and unease. The unrelenting materialism of the new China no doubt helps account for the popularity of quasi-religious movements such as the Falungong, along with Christianity and other more traditional forms of religious expression. (The government has banned the Falungong, and it strives to suppress other movements.) In the eyes of many Chinese, the growing income gap between rich and poor—now larger by some measures than it is in the United States—and rampant corruption in government and the ranks of business are evidence of a society in which all are out for themselves.

FOR A GLIMPSE OF HOW CHINA  
MAY EVOLVE, SOME LOOK TO  
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AND SOUTH KOREA.

China’s leaders will not be able to continue indefinitely to meet the nation’s deeply rooted desire for *datong* with empty rhetoric. Yet the persistence of Grand Harmony as an ideal also suggests that China’s evolution in the direction of Western-style liberal democratic capitalism is not very likely. “Despite all the references to *ziyou* (freedom) in the many constitutions of the successive regimes of 20th-century China,” notes historian Philip Huang, “*ziyou* has never quite been able to shake its associated negative connotations of selfishness, with obvious consequences for Chinese conceptions of ‘democracy.’”

For a glimpse of how China may evolve, many scholars look to Asia’s other Confucian societies, such as Taiwan and South Korea. The continuing strength of the *datong* mentality in those countries can be seen in the relatively narrow gap between rich and poor—narrower than in many Western countries—that is maintained as a matter of government policy. Yet this emphasis on the collective good often goes hand in hand with some variety of authoritarian rule. While Taiwan and South Korea took several decades before they embarked on the path to democratization, China may take longer, given its official communist ideology and the size and diversity of the country. For better or worse, the *datong* tradition will remain a powerful influence for a long time to come as China struggles toward modernity. □

# An Optimist's Life

by Anne F. Thurston

When Fei Xiaotong died in April 2005 at the age of 95, most of China's ranking leaders attended the funeral. President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao were there, and so was former president Jiang Zemin. Fei was China's leading sociologist. But he was also one of the country's most revered public intellectuals, a man who descended often from the ivory tower to reach a broader public. He spoke persuasively and colorfully to both China and the West, educating his English readers about rural China and using his native language to inform China about the West. He served for years as the chairman of China's Democratic League. He was also a longtime member of the National People's Congress, China's nominal legislature, and one of its vice chairmen from 1988 to 1998.

For many years, Fei's colleagues in the West assumed he was dead. In the spring of 1957, when party chairman Mao Zedong launched a massive campaign against China's intellectuals, Fei was designated one of the country's leading "rightists." It is hard now to believe how tightly China was controlled back then, how little news seeped out. Nothing was heard of the once vocal and active Fei. When the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, and China's intellectuals again came under attack, there was still no news of Fei.

Fei Xiaotong was not dead. But sociology in China was. And in 1979, Fei was given the task of reviving it.

I first met Fei Xiaotong on the tarmac of Dulles International Airport in April 1979. China and the United States had re-established diplomatic relations in January of that year, and Fei was a member of the first delegation of social scientists and humanists to visit America since the hiatus in relations had begun some 30 years before. The visit was an occasion of joy rarely experienced in academia. Three decades of silence between friends and colleagues were suddenly broken.

Several of China's finest scholars were members of the delegation, and the American academics with whom they met were charmed. But Fei Xiaotong—rolly-poly, ebullient, outgoing, and invariably smiling—was my favorite. I found him dazzling. He changed my life. Fei had something to say. He made China real.

Born in 1910, a year before the collapse of the last of China's dynasties, Fei grew up in a time when only a tiny elite received a higher education. Fewer still had the opportunity to study abroad. Fei was extraordinarily privileged. After studying in Beijing, where he graduated from American-founded Yanqing University and received a master's degree at



*After years of government-enforced obscurity, a newly favored Fei Xiaotong was sent to America as part of a delegation of scholars after the restoration of diplomatic ties in 1979.*

Tsinghua University, he was given a fellowship to the London School of Economics, where he received his Ph.D. in 1938 under the mentorship of the esteemed anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. Fei's dissertation, published as *Peasant Life in China*, remains a classic.

Fei's pursuit of his chosen profession brought him repeated tragedy. In the summer of 1935, accompanied by Wang Tonghui, his new wife and fellow sociology student, he went to Guangxi Province for what both expected to be a year of fieldwork. The area was mountainous, remote, and desperately poor, and the couple traveled on foot, accompanied by porters and guides. They were in particularly rugged terrain, separated from their guides, when Fei fell into a tiger trap, plunging into a deep pit as stones crashed down upon him. Wang Tonghui set off alone to find help for her badly injured husband.

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She never returned. A week later, her body was found in a river. Depressed and burdened with guilt, believing that his wife had died for him and wishing that he had died instead, Fei spent months in a hospital. Instead of returning to Guangxi, he joined his elder sister in the village of Kaixiangong, on the banks of Lake Tai in his native province of Jiangsu. It was there that he conducted the research that would become *Peasant Life in China*.

**F**ei was already a professor at Tsinghua University when the People's Republic was established in October 1949. The reality of the Chinese Communist Party confronted him, as it did many of his generation, with difficult choices. In the mid-1940s, the rivalry between the Communists and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party was building toward civil war. Fei had joined the Democratic League, a group of prominent intellectuals searching for a third, more democratic way. When the third way failed and the corruption and misrule of the Nationalists became intolerable, Fei came finally to welcome the Communist victory. The account he wrote of his first year living under Communist rule contained a mixture of acceptance and enthusiasm. Fei was not a revolutionary. He was not a proponent of violence. His propensities were democratic. But he found much to admire in the newly victorious Communist Party—its focus on the poor, its insistence that education be practical, its critique of isolated, arrogant academics, its widespread popular support. He welcomed his own participation in the party-directed process of “thought reform” as a means of divesting himself of his “bourgeois” past and joining his compatriots in pursuit of a common, socialist goal. He was swept up in the patriotism of a united China free from the vestiges of foreign intrusion.

Fei's second professionally induced tragedy came shortly thereafter, in 1951, when sociology was declared a “bourgeois pseudoscience.” The discipline was abolished. The only true science in China, as Fei's biographer, David Arkush, points out, was Marxism-Leninism. Without a profession, Fei was sent to the newly established Central Academy of National Minorities to become one of its three vice presidents. He could no longer teach or do serious research.

Fei Xiaotong was granted new life in 1956, when the policy toward China's intellectuals began to change. Zhou Enlai, China's sophisticated and cultured premier, began calling for greater appreciation of the country's intellectuals, and Mao Zedong promoted a new blossoming of academic freedom. “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend,” Mao proclaimed.

Fei became active again in the newly revived Democratic League, traveling the country to meet with fellow intellectuals, becoming a public spokesman for their academic and economic interests. Then, cau-

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tiously at first and following the lead of his senior colleagues, he began to build a case for the reintroduction of sociology. He did not regret the dissolution of sociology, nor, he said (disingenuously, perhaps), had it affected his ability to do research. But social development is inevitably accompanied by problems. Better to study those problems than to claim they do not exist. The label of the discipline did not matter. Call it social investigation rather than sociology. But rely on educated specialists to conduct the research.

IN 1957, THE PARTY ACCUSED  
FEI OF JOINING A  
RIGHTIST PLOT.

Fei Xiaotong was able to conduct his first significant research in well over a decade when, in the spring of 1957, he returned to Kaixiangong. His report combined the necessary lip service to the miracles of socialist collectivization with a profound critique of its consequences for the peasants of that village. The changes that had occurred since his first visit, 21 years earlier, in 1936, he wrote, were absolutely unprecedented. The society of exploitation of man by man had been transformed, and a new era of prosperity and happiness was at hand. But Fei, as always, focused on problems—and how best to solve them. The reality was that many in Kaixiangong thought that they had been better off when Fei first visited. Many village children could not even afford to attend school.

A major reason for the decline in peasant welfare was the absence of sideline occupations—activities such as raising silkworms and transporting goods—that had been banned as “capitalist” with the introduction of agricultural collectives. Villagers could never prosper through farming alone. The collectives were creating a new psychology as well. Peasants had become dependent on the state, unable to make their own economic decisions. Morale was suffering.

**W**hile Fei was in Kaixiangong, the tide was turning against him. In the spring of 1957, the policy of greater academic freedom had merged with Mao’s campaign to reform the Communist Party. Concerned that the party had become corrupted by power, Mao encouraged, then prodded, China’s intellectuals to identify the party’s faults. Initially, the criticisms were mild and slow to come, but when the floodgates opened, the party was subjected to wholesale rebuke. Intellectuals, it seemed, still preferred genuine democracy to a dictatorship that called itself democratic. After a mere six weeks, Mao suddenly reversed course, launching an “anti-rightist” campaign against those who had spoken out. Hundreds of thousands of China’s intellectuals were declared rightists. Many lost their jobs. Others spent decades in labor reform or in exile in poor rural areas. All were silenced.

Two leaders of the Democratic League, Luo Longzhi and Zhang Bojun, were deemed China’s most egregious rightists, accused of leading a nationwide plot against the Communist Party. Fei Xiaotong was accused of having been a member of their clique. He became rightist number three.

The evil genius of Mao was his ability to turn Chinese against one another, and neither Fei nor other Chinese intellectuals were immune. In a stilted language unlike anything he had previously penned, Fei confessed to a crime of rebellion against the state, divorcing himself from the “adventurist” leaders of the Democratic League. Fei’s colleagues also spoke out against him, their attacks ranging from erudite, well-footnoted academic

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critiques of the “reactionary functionalism” of Malinowski, and hence of Fei, to vicious personal attacks. One of Fei’s closest colleagues asserted, preposterously, that within a week of the death of Wang Tonghui, Fei had fallen in love with another woman and completely forgotten his wife.

Fei’s fate was less extreme than others’. He lost his job, but he continued to live on the campus of the Central Academy of National Minorities. He was never sent to a labor reform camp, though he did spend several years laboring in the fields at a “May Seventh Cadre School” during the Cultural Revolution. But for 22 years, during which some 30 million peasants died in the famine brought on by Mao’s Great Leap Forward and the country was ripped apart by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Fei Xiaotong was silent.

Then, in 1979, Hu Qiaomu, president of the newly established Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a close associate of Deng Xiaoping, asked Fei to begin a process that would lead to the reintroduction of sociology in China. Hu told Fei that the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences had been asked to send a delegation of scholars to visit the United States. He wanted Fei to be a member.

“We did not know what had happened in sociology outside China during those years,” Fei told me later. “It was my task both to learn something of recent developments in Western sociology and to begin to establish some contacts with Western scholars.”

Fei’s task was daunting. Restoring sociology to China meant training a new generation from scratch. But there were no Chinese faculty members to train them and no books. Fei turned to Chinese sociologists from the United States and Hong Kong, who led a series of workshops that were crash courses on the rudiments of sociology. The best and most enthusiastic participants were sent abroad to study.

Fei was determined not to repeat the mistakes of his past. He never repudiated his previous work, but he accepted much of the criticism against it, coming to see his writings as a Chinese intellectual’s view of the peasantry. To the consternation of some of his American colleagues, he rejected the notion of a “universal” social science, arguing instead for “a people’s



*Fei's heirs may be China's new social entrepreneurs, such as Zhu Yongzhong, shown here in a school sponsored by his Sanchuan Development Association.*

anthropology” or a Chinese sociology—“a sociology in the service of the Chinese people, a sociology in the service of Chinese socialism.” The ultimate purpose of Chinese sociology, he believed, was to help ordinary Chinese people solve their problems. The determination of what those problems were would be made not by sociologists but by the people who were living them.

Many say that China today is in the throes of a moral crisis, as an entire generation rejects every value but self-interest. Fei Xiaotong's generation faced constant moral dilemmas—the daily choice, as Václav Havel would say, of how far to compromise in order “to get along.” But there were values that Fei held constant. His fundamental concerns were the concrete problems of everyday life. He believed that intellectuals have a responsibility to understand and help the less fortunate. And more than 40 years after joining the Democratic League, he still believed in the basic democratic values that had led him there.

THE EVIL GENIUS OF MAO  
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Thus, in the spring of 1989, he could hardly avoid the great political upheaval that rocked the country to its core. Massive protests broke out in Beijing, led by students and fueled by popular anger against the corruption

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of the Communist Party and the growing sense that millions of ordinary Chinese people had yet to share the fruits of economic reform. Democracy was the protesters' watchword. Fei stood clearly on their side. When the students staged a hunger strike in Tiananmen Square, he wrote to party chief Zhao Ziyang urging China's leaders to enter into a dialogue with the students and embrace their just demands. Later, he visited the square, supporting the students, yes, but exhorting them, for the sake of China and their health, to call off their hunger strike and return to their schools. On May 19, when Premier Li Peng declared martial law, Fei joined the chorus of his colleagues calling for an emergency session of the National People's Congress to end military authority and bring about a peaceful resolution to the confrontation.

The special session was never convened. Instead, on the night of June 3–4, 1989, the People's Liberation Army marched into Beijing, to considerable resistance from its residents, and retook the city by force.

**T**hree weeks later, I visited Fei at his home. He was at the time sufficiently high ranking to merit a bodyguard, but he was not certain whether the guard was solely for his protection or had the additional task of monitoring his activities. He had deliberately chosen a Sunday for the visit. The guard was off on Sundays.

What I remember most about our conversation is not recorded in my notes. Perhaps I misremember. But I think not. I think that Fei, like many Chinese officials, waited until the end of our conversation, when my notebook was closed and we were walking to my car, to speak off the record and from

“WE WERE SO CLOSE,”  
FEI SAID, JUST WEEKS  
AFTER TIANANMEN  
SQUARE. “SO CLOSE.”

the heart, to say what was uppermost in his mind. What I remember him saying is, “We were so close, so close.” And what I interpreted him to mean was that if he and his colleagues had been successful in convening an emergency session of the

National People's Congress, overturning the declaration of martial law, meeting many of the students' demands, and thus transforming the National People's Congress into more than a rubber stamp, China's democratic breakthrough would have begun.

My notes from that day record a Fei Xiaotong sick at heart—“walking in darkness” were the words he used. The country had suffered a huge setback, he thought, and the future was uncertain. His mood changed as he weighed one possible future against another. He proclaimed himself too old to solve this latest of China's puzzles. He was pessimistic about the future of sociology in China. Research would be too difficult. The brightest students would go abroad.

He was right about sociology. Many of the best did leave. And during the 1990s, research in China suffered. As American sociologist Richard Madsen points out, Chinese scholars kept unearthing unpleasant facts—

which is what Fei wanted, of course. And because so many of China's sociologists are American trained, Fei's hope for a distinctively Chinese sociology, focused more on what is important than merely on what can be measured, has yet to be fulfilled. Still, there are now 120 sociology departments in Chinese postsecondary institutions, and many of the promising sociologists who left China do return periodically to teach.

Part of Fei's tradition continues. The problems in China's countryside today are serious and growing worse. Yu Jianrong, a researcher at the Rural Development Center at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, is documenting widespread rural protest against excessive taxation, confiscation of land, and corrupt local officials. He echoes Fei in criticizing China's contemporary intellectuals for prescribing on behalf of China's farmers while excluding them as actors in their own right. He would have the farmers represent themselves.

Increasingly they are. Dotting the social landscape of China today are "social entrepreneurs" with values not greatly different from Fei's—an acute sense of responsibility for the disadvantaged and a mission to find solutions to society's ills. They are generally young, between 30 and 45 years old, and have middle or normal school educations. Many are former teachers, and some are disillusioned former officials. Some have formed small nongovernmental organizations to carry out their goals, thus contributing to the development of civil society in China and to a third, more democratic way. They focus on alleviating poverty and bringing primary schools, water delivery systems, or fuel-saving solar cookers to poor rural villages. A growing number of local organizations are devoted to environmental protection, and some address the rapidly expanding problem of HIV/AIDS.

I saw Fei only rarely during the last years of his life, but the change he wrought in my life is permanent. He taught me that understanding China requires being there, at the country's grassroots, away from officials and guides, listening to the stories of people's everyday lives. When I traveled in America with his delegation in 1979, the stories I heard that made China real were about the political persecutions so many in the group had suffered, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. I determined to go to China and listen to those stories, so that they could be told and never forgotten. In 1981, Fei made arrangements for me to do just that. I saw him often during the 1980s and helped edit several of the pieces he wrote for the West. The two calligraphy scrolls he made in my honor hang prominently in my home, and I still follow the admonition he inscribed for me in one of his books: to remember him always.

Because of his role in my research, and because we were friends, some people think that buried in my 1987 book about China's cultural revolution, *Enemies of the People*, is the story of Fei Xiaotong. But Fei Xiaotong never told me the more heart-rending parts of his story. I learned about them from others. He was an optimist at heart. He looked forward rather than back. □

# Nationalism's Double Edge

by Suisheng Zhao

It was a rude shock for many in the West this past April when tens of thousands of anti-Japanese demonstrators took to the streets of Shanghai and dozens of other Chinese cities for several days of violent protests. Shouting anti-Japanese slogans, they smashed the windows of Japanese stores and restaurants, overturned Japanese cars, and burned Japanese flags and photos of Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi. The demonstrators were reacting to a seemingly mundane event, Koizumi's visit to a Tokyo shrine commemorating Japanese war dead. But it did not escape notice in China that the shrine honored Japanese war criminals as well as ordinary soldiers. The memory of atrocities such as the Rape of Nanking in 1937, when Japanese soldiers killed hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians, is vivid still in China, and the publication of Japanese history textbooks minimizing these war crimes added fuel to the fire.

In Japan and the West, the nationalist flare-up fed anxiety about the rise of a more aggressive China. Critics suggested that the government itself had cynically manufactured the protests. It is true that, with the decline of communist ideology as a unifying force during the 1990s, Beijing has routinely exploited nationalist feelings to divert attention from domestic problems and to gain leverage in the diplomatic world, among other purposes. The growing self-confidence born of economic success, along with a deep sense of historical grievance against Japan and the Western powers, has made nationalism a potent force. But in April, officials in the capital city watched the demonstrations with genuine alarm. They knew that Chinese nationalism is a double-edged sword that could as easily turn against the government as it did against the Japanese, threatening the very existence of the Communist regime. Anger at the Japanese could lead to open criticism of Beijing's foreign policy—which is unforgivably soft in the eyes of most liberal nationalists—and could ignite a host of popular grievances about corruption, economic inequality, and other troubles.

President Hu Jintao and his government were particularly concerned about an Internet-based campaign to mount much bigger demonstrations on the anniversary of the May Fourth Movement—a patriotic outburst



Archive password: OUTLAST



*Pride in China's impressive economic success helped fuel the rising nationalism that sent thousands of anti-Japanese demonstrators into the streets of Shanghai in April 2005.*

that erupted after World War I when the Treaty of Versailles gave Japan control of a slice of Chinese territory and that has become a symbol of social reform, individual emancipation, and resistance to foreign aggression. Taking advantage of its control of telecommunications, the government broadcast a blizzard of text messages to mobile phone users warning against “spreading rumors, believing rumors, or joining illegal demonstrations.” Police in China’s major cities were put on full alert. The demonstrations were quashed.

**I**n the West, Chinese nationalism often appears to be a single, worrisome phenomenon. But as April’s events suggest, there is more than one variety of Chinese nationalism—and more than one path that it may follow in the future. The demonstrations revealed the face of *liberal* nationalism, whose partisans among students and intellectuals advo-

cate a China that is more democratic at home but more assertive abroad.

Watching from their offices in Beijing, the officials of Hu's government exemplified the tradition of *state* nationalism, which has roots deep in the imperial past but today closely identifies the Chinese nation with the Communist state. The Chinese government officially expresses

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nationalist sentiment as *aigu*, which in Chinese means "loving the state," or *aiguo zhuyi*, which means "love and support for China," a China that is always indistinguishable from the Communist state. State nationalism demands that citizens subordinate their individual interests to those of

the state. And in its relations with foreign powers, China's current rulers believe that the state must prudently balance nationalist imperatives against other objectives, particularly the overriding goal of economic modernization.

In a campaign of "patriotic education" after the 1989 Tiananmen Square debacle, Beijing declared that China was not yet ready for Western-style democracy. Continued one-party rule would maintain the political stability needed for rapid economic development. Amid the anti-Western backlash in reaction to the West's post-Tiananmen sanctions against China, the regime was able to present itself as the defender of China's pride and national interests by preventing Taiwan's independence, securing entry into the World Trade Organization, and, in a victory that swelled many Chinese hearts, bringing the 2008 Olympics to Beijing.

**Y**et there are limits to how far the regime will go in the name of nationalist pride and principle. Time and again in recent years, Beijing has permitted, and sometimes encouraged, liberal nationalists to take their militant views to the streets, only to call a halt when a threat to China's long-term goal of economic modernization appeared. When U.S. warplanes accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, demonstrations swept China for two days, until then-vice president Hu, perceiving a threat to Sino-American relations (and perhaps to the Beijing regime itself), went on national television to stop them. *The People's Daily* cautioned that Western countries were issuing advisories against travel to China, threatening tourism and trade. Two years later, when a U.S. spy plane and a Chinese fighter collided over the South China Sea, Beijing accepted something less than the

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full formal apology it had demanded, opting once again to smooth relations with an important partner in trade and investment rather than stand on a point of national pride.

As China's economic and military power grows in the decades ahead, the tension between the pragmatic state nationalism of the Beijing government and the liberal nationalism of the streets will largely determine what kind of face China shows to the world.

**M**odern Chinese nationalism was born in the wake of China's shattering defeat by Britain in the Opium War of 1840–42, which led to the disintegration of imperial China and the loss of national sovereignty as Western powers carved out zones of influence on the mainland. From Sun Yat-sen in the early 20th century to Hu Jintao today, all of China's leaders have been committed to the quest to blot out China's humiliation at the hands of imperialists and to recapture the greatness of the past. They have seen China's decline as "a historical mistake, which they should correct," as Chinese scholar Yan Xuetong observes. Of all the slogans heard by the Chinese people in more than a century of struggle, *zhenxing zhonghua* (rejuvenation of China) has had by far the most powerful appeal.

China's first nationalists were *ethnic* nationalists. In the wake of the Opium War and other encounters with the West, as well as the disastrous defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, the search for national rebirth inspired Sun Yat-sen and other leaders from the ethnic Han majority to seek the overthrow of the long-ruling minority Manchu dynasty and to establish an ethnic state. But after the dynasty's collapse in 1911, Sun recognized that a more inclusive nationalism would be a wiser course for leaders who hoped to rule not only the Han areas along China's coast but Tibet, Mongolia, and Xinjiang. Under Sun, the Chinese nation was redefined as a multiethnic political community, with the state as the great object of loyalty.

Today ethnic nationalism remains very much alive on China's frontiers. Nourished by a sense of grievance over the failure to share the fruits of China's economic boom—incomes in Beijing were three times larger than those in largely Muslim Xinjiang by the late 1990s—and by the global changes that have fueled nationalism and ethnic separatism everywhere, China's ethnic nationalism is a source of great anxiety in Beijing.

Even as officially sanctioned ethnic nationalism vanished in a puff of smoke during the early 20th century, a new liberal nationalism was being born among reformers who looked to the West for political and social models. Then, as now, liberal nationalism was a movement chiefly among intellectuals—though in China, the intellectual class includes virtually everyone with a high school education (currently about a quarter of the population).

IN BEIJING, ETHNIC  
NATIONALISM IS A  
SOURCE OF GREAT ANXIETY.



It is a distinctively Chinese liberalism. One of the movement's seminal figures, Liang Qichao (1873–1929), wrote that defeat in the Sino-Japanese War woke the Chinese people “from the dream of 4,000 years.” Well read and widely traveled in Japan and the West, Liang propounded a new liberalism that elevated individual rights but still put the nation first. At a time of national peril, he argued, citizens should put the survival of the nation before their personal interests. Devotion to the nation rather than Western-style individual rights is also the chief underpinning of the liberal nationalists' commitment to democracy. They believe that citizens have the right and duty to hold the state accountable for the defense of China's national interests. In 1999, for example, Wang Xiaodong, a leading liberal nationalist editor, denounced China's state-controlled news media for failing to report that Beijing had agreed to pay the United States \$2.87 million for damage to U.S. diplomatic properties in China during anti-American demonstrations. China needed news media that told the truth and a government that sought the consent of the people before making such concessions, Wang told *The Far Eastern Economic Review*. The Chinese people, he declared, should have the right to vote out political leaders who inadequately defend their national interests.



*Resentment born of decades of humiliation by Western powers animates much of today's nationalism. Here, Chinese officials arrive for talks with the leaders of an Anglo-French military expedition in 1860. In a series of treaties, the Chinese were forced to grant trade concessions, Christian-missionary access, and other privileges.*

Just as today's liberal nationalists criticize the Communist regime for violating individual freedoms and failing to stand up to the imperialist powers, so their predecessors criticized the Kuomintang regime of 1928–49. Some allied themselves with the Communist Party. But when Chairman Mao Zedong's Hundred Flowers Campaign encouraged many of these nationalists to criticize openly the Communists' monopoly of political power in 1957, they were brutally purged, and some were jailed or sent to labor camps.

**L**iberal nationalism did not re-emerge until the 1980s, when Deng Xiaoping's call for "thought liberation" and post-Mao reform created new opportunities. Fearful of criticizing the Communist

state directly, many liberal nationalists instead blamed China's "authoritarian culture" for the lack of modernization in China. They called for a rejection of Chinese tradition and an embrace of Western culture and models of development—an agenda that was forcefully expressed in 1988 in a six-part documentary television series, *Heshang* (River Elegy), that electrified China. The series made no direct attack on the Communist Party, but it highlighted the huge gap between the ideal world constructed by party ideology and the cruel reality of the People's Republic. (The point was sufficiently clear that Beijing prohibited a third broadcast of the series.) It portrayed China as a declining ancient civilization whose modern history compared very unfavorably with Western achievements in the industrial and information revolutions. Using powerful imagery of the Yellow River's muddy torrents rushing into the serene blue of the ocean, *Heshang* suggested that China must look for its fulfillment toward the vast expanse of the Pacific and beyond.

Even in 1988, however, the liberal nationalists' admiration for the West's success was joined to a view of the West as hostile and aggressive, and within a few years mainstream Chinese intellectual discourse had shifted drastically. The liberal nationalists were angered by Western sanctions and

rhetoric about human rights violations after Tiananmen Square. And they were shocked by political scientist Samuel Huntington's prediction of a "clash of civilizations" in a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article and by open calls in the West for the containment of China, such as Charles Krauthammer's in a 1995 *Time* column comparing China with pre-World War II Germany. The instant popularity in the mid-1990s of the "say no" books, such as *China Can Say No* and *China Still Can Say No*, reflected the change in sentiment. The books' simple message was that Western nations, particularly the United States, were plotting against China in a new cold war, and that China must stand up to them. The authors of *China Can Say No* confessed that as students they themselves had craved Western culture and products, until the unconscionable rejection of Beijing's bid to host the 2000 Olympics and the U.S. Navy's show of force in the Taiwan Strait early in 1996 forced them to rethink their hopes and dreams. Before the Chinese could say no to the Americans, the books warned, they first had to say no to themselves, to their lack of nationalist spirit and to their blind worship of the United States.

China's liberal and state nationalists are united in pursuing *qiangguomeng*, the dream of a strong China, but both camps are also beset by the same set of historically rooted divisions over how to achieve that goal. There are nativists who see the subversion of indigenous Chinese virtues by foreign imperialists as the root of China's weakness. They call for a return to Chinese tradition and self-reliance and take a confrontational stance toward the outside world, as Mao Zedong did during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. Anti-traditionalists regard Chinese tradition as the source of the nation's weakness, and they favor the adoption of foreign cultures and models. Although their militant approach to the wider world echoes Chinese nativism, today's liberal nationalists are antitraditionalist in their approach to most issues.

The pragmatists who have steered China's foreign policy since Deng Xiaoping came to power in the late 1970s seek to adapt to the changing world, but they have very few commitments to particular ideological principles. As Deng said, "It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white as long as it can catch rats." Economic modernization is their overarching objective—because economic prosperity is both a means for the Communist Party to stay in power and the foundation of China's national aspirations to greatness. China's leaders, therefore, have tried to avoid confrontation with the United States and other Western powers, emphasizing peace and development as China's major international goals. They are assertive in defending China's national interests, such as reunification with Taiwan, but they are not antiforeign.

Though they are increasingly constrained by nationalist sentiment and hampered by the absence of a charismatic leader such as Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping, the pragmatists have kept China on a predictable course. Talking tough but acting prudently is the pragmatists' way. As long as they are reasonably secure in Beijing, it will likely continue to be China's way as well. □

# THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

*A review of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad*

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## *A Return to the Draft?*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

As U.S. armed forces are stretched ever thinner by the Iraq war and military recruiters fall short of their quotas, fears of a military draft are stirring in America. If the writings of military manpower specialists are any indication, however, those fears are grossly exaggerated. For instance, Charles Moskos, a noted expert in the field who has long advocated mandatory national service, writes in *Orbis* (Fall 2005) that a return to conscription is “highly unlikely.” But the draft talk does point to a serious problem: an apparent mismatch between America’s proclaimed global ambitions and the military manpower needed to sustain them.

“Four years into what the Bush administration describes as an open-ended war, evidence that the [all-volunteer force] has begun to unravel is now incontrovertible,” declares Andrew J. Bacevich, a former army officer who is now a professor of international relations at Boston University. With more than 1,900 U.S. fatalities in Iraq, and polls showing that a majority of Americans now regard the 2003 invasion as a mistake, recruiting is off. Despite inducements that include signing bonuses of up to \$20,000, the active-duty army, the Army Reserve, and the Army National Guard are all struggling to meet their recruiting quotas. It’s an indication, Bacevich writes in *Commonweal* (July 15, 2005), that the administration may be forced

to scale down its ambitions abroad—a welcome development, in his view.

Even if the United States pulled out of Iraq and Afghanistan, however, the strain would not disappear. The active-duty U.S. Army was purposely shrunk from 730,000 soldiers at the end of the Cold War in 1990 to 485,000 today, notes Moskos, who is a professor emeritus of sociology at Northwestern University. Yet since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United States has committed troops abroad on a wide variety of missions that hadn’t been anticipated, ranging from intervention in Haiti to humanitarian aid in Indonesia.

What to do? Ironically, most of the calls for conscription, usually as part of a broader scheme for national service, come from Democrats. And most of them are in the relatively small “neoliberal” or New Democrat wing of the party. They see national service as an antidote to the low levels of civic engagement among the young and the inequity of a situation in which few children of the affluent serve in the military. A return to the citizen-soldier tradition would also narrow the growing gulf between the military and civilian society. In “The Case for the Draft,” in *The Washington Monthly* (March 2005), editor in chief Paul Glastris and Philip Carter, an attorney and former army captain, propose a plan under which young

## Periodicals

people would be denied admission to four-year colleges unless they had served for one to two years in a program such as AmeriCorps, in homeland security assignments, or in the armed services, where they could fill support roles.

“There are plenty of arguments for or against” a draft, but “it’s just not going to happen,” observes Fred Kaplan, author of *The Wizards of Armageddon* (1983) and a columnist for the online magazine *Slate* (June 30, 2005). “Military commanders don’t want a draft; they’re happy to have, in the All-Volunteer Army, the best-educated, best-tempered, most easily trained soldiers in American history. Politicians don’t want a draft, because they know it’s the surest route to losing the next election; millions of supportive voters will turn into raging protesters if their little Johnny—or, worse yet, Janie—gets forced into battle.”

One answer is to increase the size of the existing all-volunteer force by offering better pay and other inducements. (Currently, the lowest-ranking private with less than two years of service makes \$14,820 annually.) But even the Pentagon doesn’t favor that course, note Glastris and Carter. Military leaders know that volunteers often sign on for long careers, and they worry about maintaining public support for the costs of a larger standing army after today’s crises are past. It would cost about \$10 billion a year in personnel costs (excluding equipment and training) to add 100,000 troops.

In *Orbis*, Moskos proposes an alternative: recruit college graduates for short (15-month) stints to perform many of the support duties now carried out by reservists on active duty. That would also renew the “citizen-soldier” tradition, and, he argues, it’s practical. The recruits would receive generous educational benefits, to pay off student loans, for example. Recruiting just 10 percent of the 1.2 million youths who receive bachelor’s degrees every year would be sufficient. A survey Moskos did last fall showed that 11 percent of Northwestern University undergraduates would “very likely” consider such a deal (which specified service as prison guards), and 18 percent said they would “seriously” consider it.

Today’s manpower bind partly stems from decisions about the force structure that were made decades ago. Frederick W. Kagan, a military historian at the American Enterprise Institute, observes in *National Security Outlook* (Aug. 2005) that decisions being made today may endanger the nation’s future security.

In the 1970s, the military adopted a “Total Force” policy, requiring heavy reliance on Guard and Reserve forces in any major confrontation. Stung by the Vietnam experience, Pentagon leaders thought that the need to mobilize civilian reserves would require future presidents to muster public support before embarking on overseas adventures. That change helped pave the way for the U.S. military’s current situation: More than 100,000 Guard and Reserve soldiers are on long-term deployments, and they make up more than 40 percent of the military force in Iraq.

Since Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld took office in 2001, the Pentagon has been pressing to implement a new technology-oriented program of “military transformation.” Spurred in part by manpower costs before Iraq, the new approach calls for the long-term development of smaller fighting forces made much more effective by the use of high-tech “intelligence, communications, and targeting systems,” and a much-reduced role for reserves both on the battlefield and at home. “Rumsfeld and other senior leaders, including President Bush, have repeatedly declared that ‘modernizing’ or ‘transforming’ the U.S. military cannot be slowed or delayed even during the current conflict,” notes Kagan. That helps explain the continuing paucity of troops in Iraq.

Kagan worries about the longer-term implications of what he calls Rumsfeld’s “ill-advised search for military efficiency.” In the post-Iraq future, transformation might allow the nation to avoid the kind of bind it’s in today, but drastically slimming down reserve forces assumes “that the American leadership will make no mistakes, the enemy offer no surprises, and the situation proffer no unexpected opportunities,” writes Kagan. In essence, it’s a bet against the “whole history of warfare.”

## *Why Republicans Win*

“Polarized Politics and the 2004 Congressional and Presidential Elections” by Gary C. Jacobson, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 2005), 475 Riverside Dr., Ste. 1274, New York, N.Y. 10115–1274.

When the elections of 2004 were over, the Republicans stood triumphant, their lease on the White House extended and their holds on the House and Senate strengthened. Though denied a ringing national endorsement from the polarized electorate, they enjoyed something more useful for victory: a big “structural” advantage.

The Republicans’ continued control of the House was never in doubt, says Jacobson, a political scientist at the University of California, San Diego. “The reason is simple: Republican voters are distributed more efficiently across House districts than are Democratic voters.”

This structural edge can be seen by looking at how Democrat Al Gore’s roughly 540,000-vote advantage in the national popular vote in 2000 dissipates when the votes are tallied by congressional district: In only 195 districts (as currently configured) does Gore outpoll George W. Bush; in 240 districts Bush does better than Gore.

Gerrymandering by Republicans in Florida, Ohio, Texas, and other states after the 2000 census is partly responsible for their structural advantage in the House. They picked up 15 seats through redistricting, while losing only six elsewhere. (Democrats’ small gains through gerrymandering in states where they controlled the process were offset by pro-GOP changes in states where neither party was fully in control.) The other reason for the GOP edge, says Jacobson, is that minority and urban voters,

who disproportionately favor Democrats, “tend to be clustered in districts with lopsided Democratic majorities.”

The more efficient distribution of Republican voters was also the Democrats’ main problem in the 2004 Senate contests. Twenty-two of the 34 states with senatorial elections were states that Bush had carried four years earlier. “Democrats had to defend 10 seats in states Bush had won. . . [while] Republicans were defending only three seats in states won by Gore.” The structural outlook for the Democrats in 2006 is not much more favorable, says Jacobson.

In both Senate and House elections in 2004, the long-term trend against ticket splitting continued. In 27 of the Senate contests, voters picked senate and presidential candidates from the same party—the highest level of such partisan consistency since 1964. Bush’s strenuous efforts as president and as candidate to cater to and mobilize his party’s base, alienating moderates and Democrats in the process, undoubtedly encouraged that trend, says Jacobson.

But the intense partisanship has a price: Postelection polls gave Bush the lowest overall approval ratings of any newly reelected president since Dwight Eisenhower in 1956. That’s a price Republican leaders are evidently willing to pay. With an evenly divided electorate and the GOP’s structural edge, they now have little electoral incentive to follow through on the pledge Bush made in 2000 to be “a uniter, not a divider.”

## *The Evangelical President*

“Jimmy Carter: The Re-emergence of Faith-Based Politics and the Abortion Rights Issue” by Andrew R. Flint and Joy Porter, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (March 2005), Dept. of Political Science, Texas A&M Univ., 4348 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843–4348.

When he put his own pious faith on conspicuous display while running for president in 1976, Jimmy Carter awakened the political sleeping giant of evangelical Christianity. But the believers who helped put him in

office that year are the very ones who would help turn him out in 1980.

Though their numbers were growing fast during the 1970s at the expense of mainstream Protestant denominations, evangelical

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Protestants, located mainly in the South and West, had been politically quiescent since the 1920s. Claiming that he would be a better president because of his deep religious convictions, Carter, a Southern Baptist and self-proclaimed born-again evangelical, introduced “an overt Biblical spirituality into the American political discourse,” write Flint and Porter, lecturers in American history and American studies, respectively, at the University of Wales in Great Britain. Striking that note of righteousness while the country was still reeling from Watergate, the Demo-



*Evangelical Christians gave Jimmy Carter strong support during his run for the presidency in 1976, but turned their backs when he came out in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment and gay rights.*

cratic candidate attracted massive support from evangelical Christians who previously had voted Republican or not at all.

Expecting Carter to fulfill his campaign promise to, in his words, “try to shape government so it does exemplify the teaching of God,” evangelical conservatives failed to notice or take seriously his stated commitment to

the Baptist belief in absolute separation of church and state. Critics pointedly reminded him of that commitment after he took part early in his presidency in a White House conference with leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, and he resolved not to make the mistake again. “Thereafter, Carter did not allow himself to be overtly politically linked to the evangelical Christian community.”

Before Carter, evangelical Protestants’ anti-Catholic bias and political apathy had kept them out of the pro-life movement. When Carter made his personal antiabortion views clear during the campaign, his candidacy drew evangelicals into the movement. But they failed to pay attention to Carter’s oft-repeated promise to uphold the Supreme Court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. His refusal in the White House to back a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion alienated evangelicals, even as his refusal to support federal funding for abortion alienated pro-choice feminists.

Evangelicals’ disillusion with Carter and his liberal political agenda set in as early as 1978. “His advocacy of the Equal Rights Amendment and gay rights and his failure to support mandatory prayer in public schools or to move to ban abortion were all anathema to their religious principles,” the authors write. By 1979, disenchanted evangelicals had begun to coalesce around a political agenda, forming organized pressure groups such as televangelist Jerry Falwell’s

Moral Majority. Carter long resisted meeting with evangelical leaders, but finally, in January 1980, he did have a short White House breakfast session with Falwell and others—which only reinforced their estrangement. Then, along came Ronald Reagan, a man not noted for his piety but ready to lend a sympathetic ear.



# Voting Your Genes

“Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?” by John R. Alford, Carolyn L. Funk, and John R. Hibbing, in *American Political Science Review* (May 2005), George Washington Univ., Dept. of Political Science, 1922 F St., N.W., Ste. 401A, Washington, D.C. 20052.

Most political scientists don't even want to think about this, but is it possible that conservatives and liberals are *born* that way? It's not quite that simple, say political scientists Alford, Funk, and Hibbing, but evidence from studies of twins indicates that genes play a strong role in shaping individuals' basic political outlooks.

The authors analyzed the responses of nearly 4,500 pairs of twins when they were presented with 28 short social or political terms, such as *school prayer* and *Republicans*, and asked to “agree” or “disagree” with them. The authors then categorized the answers as “liberal” or “conservative.” They found a much higher level of agreement among the identical twins in the survey than among the fraternal twins (who share only 50 percent of their genetic material). Comparing the differences, the authors calculated that genes account for 43 percent of the “variability” between the two groups, while shared environment accounts for only 22 percent. To put it in more concrete terms: The political ideology of individuals is, on average, about half determined by genes.

The authors point out that this makes a great deal of sense if one considers that social scientists have been trying fruitlessly for decades to tease out what *environmental* factors influence political ideology. Opinionated fathers? Long political discussions around the dinner table? Permissive child-rearing? All of these, and many

other factors, have been measured and found lacking in explanatory power.

There is no single “liberal” or “conservative” gene, say Alford, Funk, and Hibbing (of Rice University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Nebraska, respectively). Instead, many genes, interacting in various ways, are involved in influencing people's political outlooks. But the authors speculate that these interactions tend to tilt people toward one of two basic types of mindsets: *absolutist*, with a taste for order, clear rules, and “in-group unity,” and *contextualist*, with an aversion to hierarchy and unbending rules and a high degree of empathy. Yes, the authors say, that's in effect the same as conservative and liberal.

Still, individuals do seem to make some important political decisions with very little input from their genes. The authors found that heredity has little effect on political party affiliation. Parental views probably count for much more there, as they do in decisions to identify with a particular church.

If all of this is true, one of the interesting questions is, why would evolution care about politics? What is the evolutionary advantage of political diversity? There are several possible explanations, but most appealing to the authors is the thought that diverse approaches keep human society on its toes and ready to adapt, and therefore healthier.

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

# America's Foreign Fans

“In Search of Pro-Americanism” by Anne Applebaum, in *Foreign Policy* (July–Aug. 2005), 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

It's easy to lose sight of the fact that everybody in the world isn't anti-American. Even in France and Germany, sizable minorities (38 percent and 27 percent, respectively, in one BBC poll this

year) remain convinced that American influence is “positive.” Who are these pro-Americans around the globe? asks Applebaum, a *Washington Post* columnist and the author of *Gulag* (2003).

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Variations in pro-American sentiments by age, she says, suggest that personal experience counts and that U.S. foreign policy can have “a direct impact on foreigners’ perceptions,” contrary to the claims of some commentators on anti-Americanism.

In generally pro-American Poland, for example, people ages 30 to 44 are especially likely (59 percent) to regard U.S. influence as “mainly positive,” according to a recent study. Those Poles, as youths in their teens and twenties, “would have been most directly affected by the experience of the Solidarity movement and martial law” under the Communist regime, Applebaum observes, “and they would have the clearest memories of American support for the Polish underground movement.” In contrast, today’s Polish youths, whose chief knowledge of the United States may concern the difficulty of getting visas, are less approving. Only 45 percent of those under 30 see U.S. influence as “mainly positive.”

In Canada, Britain, Italy, and Australia, people older than 60, with memories of the U.S. role during World War II and the Cold War, “have relatively much more positive feelings about the United States than their children and grandchildren [do],” says Applebaum. In Britain, 64 percent of those over 60—but only 32 percent of those under 30—deem U.S. influence “mainly positive.”

Aspirations also count. Many associate the United States with upward mobility, economic progress, and a classless society. In Britain, for instance, the greatest sup-

port for America comes from those with the lowest incomes and the least formal education—a trend that appears in many developed countries.

In some developing countries, such as India, the pattern is reversed. “Indians are much more likely to be pro-American if they are not only younger but wealthier and better educated.” From Indians with very high incomes to those with average incomes to those with very low incomes, the percentage considering U.S. influence “mainly positive” runs steadily downward—from 69 percent, to 43 percent, to 30 percent. “Younger Indians have had the experience of working with American companies and American investors, whereas their parents did not. . . . The poor in India are still untouched by globalization, but the middle and upper-middle classes—those who see for themselves a role in the English-speaking, America-dominated international economy—are aspirational and therefore pro-American.”

Yet another factor in the making of pro-Americans seems to be gender. “In Europe, Asia, and South America, men are far more likely than women to have positive feelings about the United States.” Applebaum can only speculate about why—a female aversion to America’s muscular foreign policy? A greater male interest in power and entrepreneurship?

One thing that Applebaum is sure of, though, is that the United States has many “natural constituents”—and they’re “worth cultivating.”

## Overselling Democracy

“The Freedom Crusade” by David C. Hendrickson and Robert W. Tucker, in *The National Interest* (Fall 2005), 1615 L St., N.W., Ste. 1230, Washington, D.C. 20036; “Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?” by F. Gregory Gause III, in *Foreign Affairs* (Sept.–Oct. 2005), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Invoking the Founding Fathers and Abraham Lincoln, President George W. Bush declared in his second inaugural address last January that “America’s vital interests and deepest beliefs are now one,” and that henceforth the United States would “seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in

every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” Bush did not rule out the use of force to achieve this goal.

Far from fulfilling the vision of America’s Founders, the Bush administration’s campaign to promote democracy in the Middle East and the rest of the globe is, rather, at

odds with it, these authors argue. Even worse, the democracy campaign runs counter to the United States' national security interests.

For the Founders, the question of using force to revolutionize foreign governments arose early on, as a result of the French Revolution, according to Hendrickson, a political scientist at Colorado College, and Tucker, an emeritus professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University. The French Convention in 1792 decreed that "it will accord fraternity and assistance to all peoples who shall wish to recover their liberty." To Alexander Hamilton, this was "little short of a declaration of War against all nations, having princes and privileged classes," and was equally repugnant "to the general rights of Nations [and] to the true principles of liberty." Even Thomas Jefferson, who strongly sympathized with the French Revolution, said that the French should not force liberty on their neighbors.

Moreover, making the end of tyranny the declared aim of U.S. foreign policy turns all tyrannical regimes into enemies—which makes it harder to negotiate with them, as the crisis over North Korea's nuclear weapons capability illustrates. If the Bush doctrine were to be applied consistently, even friendly regimes such as

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan would be pressed to democratize. There is little sign that the administration actually intends to press very hard.

Promoting democracy in the Middle East, Bush maintained last March, will "change the conditions that give rise to extremism and terror." Under dictatorships, "responsible opposition cannot develop, and dissent is driven underground and toward the extreme."

But there's "no solid empirical evidence for a strong link between democracy, or any other regime type, and terrorism," asserts Gause, a political scientist who directs the University of Vermont's Middle East studies program. During the 1970s and 1980s, various terrorist organizations arose in democratic countries, including the Red Brigades in Italy, the Provisional Irish Republican Army in Ireland and the United Kingdom, and the Baader-Meinhof Gang in West Germany. One study found that most terrorist incidents in the 1980s were committed in democracies, generally by their own citizens. There's no reason to think that Al Qaeda would be unable to recruit followers under democratic Arab governments—especially if those governments fashioned policies in tune with American interests or made peace with Israel.

#### EXCERPT

### *Bigger Than Terrorism*

*In the longer run, the greatest challenge faced by liberal democracies will not, in my view, be an external one such as defending themselves from international terrorism or managing a return to great power rivalry, but the internal problem of integrating culturally diverse populations into a single, cohesive national community. In this respect I am much more optimistic about America's long-term prospects than those of Europe. Fear of immigration has already helped to derail the European constitution, and the violence linked to unassimilated second- and third-generation Muslims in Holland, France, and Britain represents a political time bomb to which elites in those countries are late in waking up. The only possible solution is to invent a sense of national identity that is not exclusive like the blood-and-soil versions of 19th-century Europe, yet that is much more substantive than the thin gruel offered by being a "European."*

—Francis Fukuyama, a professor of political economy at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, in the premier issue of *The American Interest* (Autumn 2005)

In reality, though, “Washington probably would not like the governments Arab democracy would produce,” Gause says. Rather than push for free elections to be held soon in the Arab world, concludes

Gause, the United States should encourage the growth of “secular, nationalist, and liberal political organizations that could compete on an equal footing with Islamist parties.”

## *Of Maps and Men*

“Lessons From the Swiss Cheese Map” by Shari Motro, in *Legal Affairs* (Sept.–Oct. 2005), 254 Elm St., New Haven, Conn. 06511.

The day before Yasir Arafat was due to sign the interim agreement at the Oslo II peace talks in September 1995, Israeli negotiators presented him with the infamous “swiss cheese” map of the West Bank as it would be altered by the agreement. “These are cantons!” the Palestinian leader shouted. “You want me to accept *cantons!* You want to *destroy* me!” He stormed out of the room.

After a further concession by Israel, Arafat did sign the agreement, but his Palestinian critics pointed again and again to the so-called swiss cheese map, as they excoriated him for capitulating to Israel. It was a dramatic illustration of the little-appreciated power of mapmaking.

While the negotiators had spent weeks meticulously working out the text of Oslo II, the map Arafat saw was produced almost as an afterthought. Nobody knows that better than Motro, who was then an Israeli soldier assigned to the talks as a translator. Late one night, her commanding officer took her to a room on an army base with large fluorescent-lit tables and piles of maps. “He handed me some dried-out markers, unfurled a map I had never seen before, and directed me to trace certain lines and shapes. Just make them clearer, he said. No cartographer was present, no graphic designer weighed in on my choices, and, when I was through, no [attorney] reviewed my work. No one knew it mattered.”

And so the official map accompanying the agreement that provided for Israel’s first significant withdrawal from the West Bank had dozens of bright yellow blotches for areas under joint Israeli-Palestinian control and eight brown blotches for areas

under Palestinian control. The map seemed to suggest that the remaining three-fourths of the West Bank would remain permanently in Israeli hands.

“Maps record facts but, whether by design or by accident, they also project worldviews and function as arguments,” says Motro, who is now a law professor at the University of Richmond and a senior fellow at Empax, a think tank in New York studying the role of graphics in peacemaking. “Every map reflects a set of judgments that influence the viewer’s impression of the underlying data. The choice of colors and labels, the cropping, and the process of selecting what gets included and what gets left out all combine to form a visual gestalt.” The three-fourths of the West Bank left for the time being in Israeli hands by Oslo II, for instance, could have been rendered in a color that linked it to Israel or the Palestinian-controlled areas, or it could have been given its own distinctive color, indicating that its future was still to be determined. “A skilled designer can make peace seem inevitable or impossible, reassuring or terrifying, logical or jumbled.”

After the Oslo “peace process” fell apart in 2001, only one of the proposed peace plans, the Geneva Accord, included maps. When Motro saw them, she says, “my heart sank,” for they were “filled with chartjunk, arbitrary colors and labels, inconsistencies, and omissions,” obscuring “the simple reassuring elegance of the agreement’s proposed solution.”

The lesson isn’t limited to the Middle East. Negotiators around the world, says Motro, must realize that a good map is worth a thousand words.

## *Forget the Deficits!*

“Fair, Not Balanced” by James K. Galbraith, in *Mother Jones* (July–Aug. 2005), 222 Sutter St., Ste. 600, San Francisco, Calif. 94108.

It’s been quite a spectacle to see leading Democrats such as New York senator Hillary Clinton take up the cause of the deficit hawks. It’s not only bad politics for the Democrats but bad economics, argues Galbraith, an economist at the University of Texas at Austin.

“Franklin Roosevelt cured his urge to balance budgets during the early New Deal and spent his way out of the Depression and to victory during World War II,” he writes. And many Republicans threw out their green eyeshades long ago. Ronald Reagan’s deficits, for example, caused by his large tax cuts in the early 1980s, delivered “a stable recovery and his landslide in 1984.” Like Reagan, George W. Bush came into office facing a recession, and his tax cuts and military spending increases followed Reagan’s pattern.

The reality, contends Galbraith, is that the budget deficits of recent years could not have been avoided. With the collapse of the 1990s boom, “any president would have cut taxes and raised spending.” Deficit spending provided a needed economic stimulus. The problem is that

“Bush’s tax cuts were skewed to the rich—Republican tax cuts always are.”

In principle, however, it’s hard to find the downside of running a federal budget deficit, Galbraith maintains. In the early 1960s, many economists said that inflation would be the result—“but there was none then, and apart from oil prices there’s little now. Today’s experts say ‘high interest rates’—yet a recent *New York Times* editorial pronounced long-term rates to be ‘abnormally low.’ Alongside many economists, Senator Clinton says that deficits crowd out private capital investment. But the investment share of [gross domestic product] is currently a full percentage point above its 60-year average.”

In contrast, Galbraith argues, there’s no concealing the downside of immediate tax hikes and spending cuts: “falling living standards, rising poverty, reduced medical care, and perhaps a new recession.”

Roll back the Bush tax cuts, Galbraith urges, but don’t be afraid to spend more money to deal with the country’s urgent problems, such as energy dependence, health care, and homeland security.

## *The Limits of People Power*

“Why We Hate HR” by Keith H. Hammonds, in *Fast Company* (Aug. 2005), 375 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

In a knowledge economy, smart, creative employees are the key to success, and everybody in corporate America loves to talk about

the importance of talent and “human capital.” There’s only one problem: the human resources department.



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“The human-resources trade long ago proved itself, at best, a necessary evil—and, at worst, a dark bureaucratic force that blindly enforces nonsensical rules, resists creativity, and impedes constructive change,” argues Hammonds, deputy editor of *Fast Company*.

One reason is that “HR” isn’t seen as a promising career path by many ambitious executives. Another is that it attracts those who say they “like to work with people.” “Good, go be a social worker,” says Arnold Kanarick, former head of HR at The Limited and Bear Stearns: “HR isn’t about being a do-gooder. It’s about how do you get the best and brightest people and raise the value of the firm.”

Creating value ought to be HR’s highest goal, contends Hammonds. But “HR pursues efficiency in lieu of value,” and it does so chiefly because it’s easier to measure. Dave Ulrich, a University of Michigan professor who has become the “best-known guru” in HR, according to Hammonds, complains that corporate HR departments focus on readily quantifiable things such as the number of hours of training employees receive rather than the results of that training. According to Ulrich, the real question is not “What are you doing?” but “What are you delivering?”

HR also forces people into boxes. Its overlords “pursue standardization and uniformity in the face of a workforce that is heteroge-

neous and complex,” charges Hammonds. But “employers keep their best people by acknowledging and rewarding their distinctive performance, not by treating them the same as everyone else.”

For years, there’s been talk of giving HR a place in the councils of top management. That has happened at some big corporations—including Yahoo, Procter & Gamble, and General Electric—but it’s rare. Corporate leaders are partly to blame, but the problem is often a failure of imagination among HR executives themselves, Hammonds believes. They have plenty of technical expertise, but they need to think more creatively about ways to mesh their work with the corporation’s larger business strategy and to bring fresh ideas to the table. That’s hard to do in itself, notes Lynda Grafton of London Business School, and even harder to execute “because business strategy changes very fast, and it’s hard to fiddle around with a compensation strategy or benefits to keep up.”

If they don’t adapt, Hammonds warns, many HR executives may find themselves writing their own pink slips. HR’s technical administrative functions are among the easiest activities for a company to outsource—and 94 percent of large employers say they already consign at least one HR activity to outside contractors.

## No Teens Wanted

“The Age Twist in Employment Rates, 2000–2004” by Andrew Sum and Ishwar Khatiwada, with Sheila Palma, in *Challenge* (July–Aug. 2005), M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 80 Business Park Dr., Armonk, N.Y. 10504.

The U.S. economy’s lackluster job creation after the Internet bubble popped five years ago has often been noted and bemoaned. What’s been missed, though, is the impact the recent rate of job creation has had on one group in particular: teenagers. Between 2000 and 2004, the teen employment rate fell from 45 percent to 36 percent, a record low. The number of employed teenagers was reduced by nearly 1.3 million.

No other age group experienced such a large decline, report Sum, director of Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies, and two colleagues.

Hardest hit, after teens, were the twentysomethings, whose employment rate fell by about four percentage points—to 68 percent for those under 25, and to 77 percent for those over 25. Even as America’s young disappeared from the workplace, the employment rate rose among people 55 and older. About 27 percent of Americans aged 65 to 69 were drawing paychecks last year, a three-point hike from the level four years earlier. For workers of all ages, the overall employment rate fell only about two points.

Who was filling the jobs that might have gone to teens? Young college gradu-

ates settling for lower-paying jobs, older women without college degrees getting positions in retail sales, and recent immigrants under 30 taking entry-level work.

“Steady, high levels of payroll job growth will be needed” in the next few years if teens are not to be left idle, Sum and his colleagues conclude.

## SOCIETY

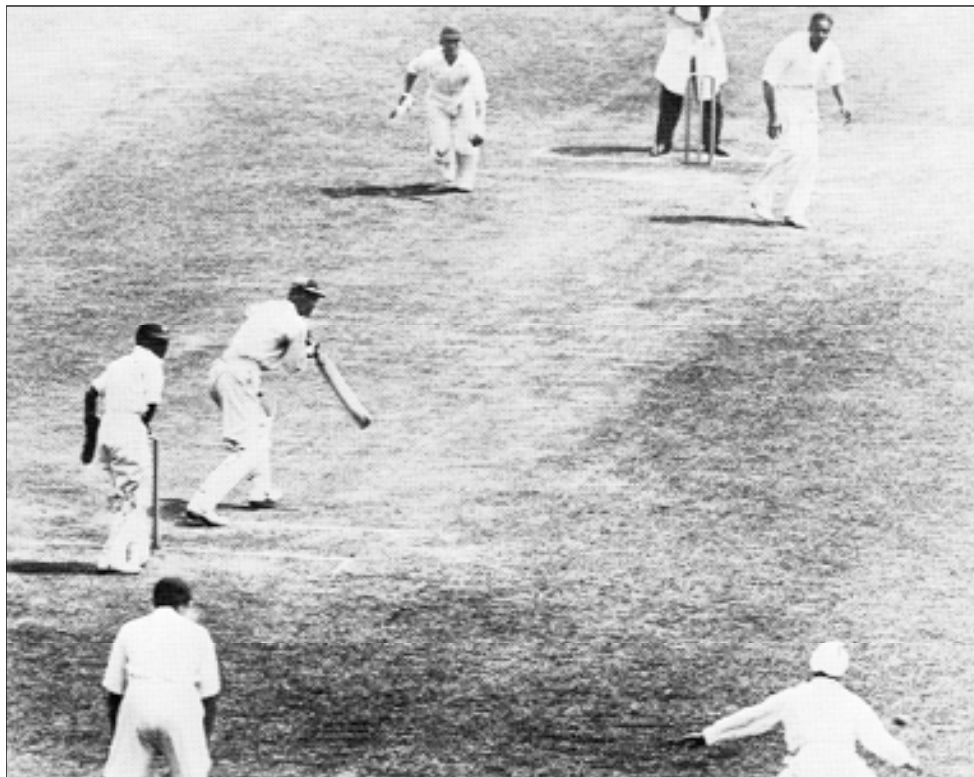
# *Cricket's Empire*

“Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket” by Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson, in *American Sociological Review* (Feb. 2005), Univ. of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Sociology, 3718 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104-6299.

Cricket has been called by one historian the “umbilical cord of Empire linking the mother country with her children.” Another called it the “main vehicle for transferring the appropriate British moral code from the messengers of empire to the local populations.” By any measure, the British effort was spectacularly successful; during the 19th and 20th centuries the game attracted players throughout the empire from Australia to Zimbabwe, and it’s now dominated by the former colonies. Yet in

the United States and Canada, the game, after enjoying some initial popularity, failed to catch on. In that experience, according to Harvard University sociologists Kaufman and Patterson, lie important lessons about cultural diffusion in our own global age.

Mass media and popular tastes may dominate the global spread of values and beliefs, but elites also play an important role. That’s certainly the case with cricket. In the British Empire, the English overlords



*India was soundly beaten when it played its first cricket match against England's national team in 1932, but today, India and several other former British colonies dominate the sport.*

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and local elites energetically promoted the sport's spread. Often, the main mechanism for imparting the game to colonial populations was the same as it was among the upper-class English: through playing cricket in schools. This was certainly true in Jamaica and India, but less so in places such as Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda, relatively late colonial acquisitions in which, says one commentator, "the Victorian public school ethos never really took root."

The game flourished regardless of class systems already in place, whether in India, with its rigid caste system, or in Trinidad, Jamaica, and Barbados, where, say the authors, "blacks and whites sometimes played cricket together." The authors speculate that in areas where social mobility was limited, "colonial elites, comfortable in their place atop the social hierarchy, had little reason to discourage those beneath them from playing a game that paid symbolic homage to British cultural and political hegemony." Indeed, the game allowed those on the lower social rungs entrée, albeit sometimes only symbolic, into the white-dominated ruling classes.

Why did cricket fail to catch on in Canada and the United States? The invention of baseball may be partly to blame. With a publicist's flair for hyper-

bole, entrepreneur A. G. Spalding outlined the sports' distinctions in 1911: "Cricket is a gentle pastime. Base Ball is War! Cricket is an Athletic Sociable [sic], played and applauded in a conventional, decorous and English manner. Base Ball is an Athletic Turmoil, played and applauded in an unconventional, enthusiastic and American manner."

Kaufman and Patterson suggest another reason why the game struggled in North America. In the United States, as in Canada, cricket quickly became relegated to a few elite clubs and developed a reputation as both snooty and boring. As early as 1884, *The New York Times* speculated that the game was limited to "Philadelphia because cricket is the slowest of games and Philadelphia is the slowest of cities."

Less secure in their social status than their counterparts in the British colonies, American and Canadian elites weren't eager to share the game with the lower orders. They didn't nurture it in schools or promote open competition. Just as certain "high-brow" entertainments such as classical music and fine art became the almost exclusive province of the wealthy in both Canada and the United States, so too did cricket, and the rest of the population decided to leave the game to the idle rich.

## *A New Room of One's Own*

"Self-Storage Nation" by Tom Vanderbilt, in *Slate* (July 18, 2005), [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com).

Our homes may be our castles, but in America, they're still not big enough to hold all our stuff. And thus the self-storage industry is growing as quickly as we can throw up endless rows of prefab tin garages around our cities and towns, says Vanderbilt, a Brooklyn-based writer. The country has nearly 40,000 self-storage facilities offering some 1.875 billion square feet of personal storage space. One in 11 American households has a self-storage stash.

The first self-storage facilities popped up in Texas in the late 1960s. In the early '70s, the big national companies—Shurgard, Public Storage, Storage USA—were born. Last year alone, the number of self-storage units on

the market spiked 24 percent. The industry's revenues now exceed those of Hollywood.

"For a resolutely banal landscape," Vanderbilt says, "self-storage is a surprisingly fertile cultural indicator." He speculates that "no-fault" divorces, high-volume sellers on the online auction website eBay, and Americans' tendency to roam—the average American U.S. resident makes 11 moves in a lifetime—all help to keep self-storage outfits in business and on the move themselves.

But it's American consumerism, suggests Vanderbilt, that emerges as the main stimulant. The average American home was 2,400 square feet in 2004—800 square feet larger than it was three decades ago. But many



houses lack yesteryear's basements and—thanks to the shift from rafter roof framing to trusses—attics. Americans frequent entire stores devoted to organizing their stuff, but the clutter is beyond what even the best-organized closet can hold.

Unfortunately for self-storage's entrepreneurs, the industry has a ramshackle, even seedy, image. Facilities tend to be considered eyesores that take up a lot of real estate but yield little employment and taxes to a community in return. Because they are manufactured to serve transients and are located on towns' peripheries, storage units have "long seemed to attract people doing something they don't want to be caught doing at home." A character based on the serial killer Aileen Wuornos is shown living in

one in the recent movie *Monster*; Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh kept chemicals in a storage unit.

Whatever their warts, self-storage facilities seem here to stay, and now they're undergoing a bit of a makeover. Some boast air conditioning, architecture that wouldn't be out of place in a subdivision, and extensive landscaping. Still, a certain gloom surrounds them, notes Vanderbilt. All those self-stored possessions "are mementos we somehow can't live with, and yet can't live without, and [they] exemplify the downside of acquisition, the moment when you realize there are more bread machines, plastic lawn chairs, and treadmills than anyone could use in a lifetime."

## PRESS & MEDIA

### *Another Vietnam?*

"War Policy, Public Support, and the Media" by William M. Darley, in *Parameters* (Summer 2005), U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave., Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5238.

Has the relentless drumbeat of pessimistic reporting by the news media been souring the public on the Iraq war? Bush administration officials at times have suggested as much. But Darley, an army colonel and the editor in chief of *Military Review*, points out that much scholarly research on past conflicts shows that the public outlook is little affected by the news media's editorial tone or bias.

Peter Braestrup, a former Vietnam war correspondent (and the *WQ*'s founding editor), showed in *Big Story* (1977) that despite the news media's misinterpretation of the January 1968 Tet Offensive as a U.S. military defeat, public support for the war remained steady—and even increased, according to Louis Harris polls, from 61 percent in December 1967 to 74 percent in February 1968. In *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (1973), Ohio State University political scientist John Mueller demonstrated that over most of the lengthy course of that war, public support followed much the same pattern as it had during the Korean War, which the press covered less extensively and less critically.

Mueller and other researchers have

found a habitual "rally round the flag" tendency in times of international crisis, regardless of press criticism or even presidential performance. "The worse I do, the more popular I get," observed President John F. Kennedy after the 1961 Bay of Pigs debacle.

Darley argues that the public doesn't tote up casualties and make cost/benefit analyses; rather, it responds viscerally to "bold leadership and action," out of what military theorist Karl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) called "primordial hatred and enmity" for the foe. But when national policy is seen as weak, that collective emotional response dissipates. It was only when President Lyndon B. Johnson announced his resignation in 1968 and seemed to give up on Vietnam that the supportive public began "an irrevocable, permanent" turn away from the war. The news media's pessimistic slant on the war had little direct impact on public opinion, but it apparently had "a decisive effect" on Johnson.

"Assuming the correctness of the policy in its articulation and the boldness of its execution," Darley concludes, "domestic public support will take care of itself."

## *Polarizing the Press*

“Bad News” by Richard A. Posner, in *The New York Times Book Review* (July 31, 2005), 229 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

The once-dominant “mainstream” news media now get whacked from both political sides. Conservatives repeatedly rail against their liberal bias (“Dan Rather!”), while liberals deplore their descent into sensationalism and willingness to serve as an echo chamber for the irresponsible Right (“Swift Boat Veterans!”). Both critiques are “basically correct,” argues Posner, a U.S. Court of Appeals judge. The source of the problem (if it is a problem) is increased competition—and a public that doesn’t want what journalists and other high-minded sorts like to think it wants.

“The mainstream media *are* predominantly liberal—in fact, more liberal than they used to be,” says Posner. They are also “more sensational, more prone to scandal, and possibly less accurate.”

Behind these trends, says Posner, is “the vertiginous decline in the cost of electronic communication and the relaxation of regulatory barriers to entry, leading to the proliferation of consumer choices.” Americans today have 10 times as many TV channels available to them as they did 30 years ago, along with the myriad offerings of the Internet. The result, he says, is a declining audience for the mainstream media and increasing political polarization and sensationalism in news reporting.

Imagine a city with only two newspapers. Because the less committed citizens vastly outnumber the partisans, each competitor has a business incentive not to lean too far right or left. But if changed economic conditions reduce the size of the audience needed to make a prof-

it, competitors will multiply. And as the new rivals try to “out-conservative” or “out-liberal” the original papers in order to gain market share, the latter now have incentives to be more politically partisan. In much the same way, argues Posner, the lowered costs of entry and increased competition in today’s media world have led to “the current tendency to political polarization in news reporting.” For example, when CNN realized that the rising Fox News Channel was drawing away many of its conservative viewers, he says, it shifted left in its coverage to try to strengthen its hold on its remaining viewers.

The notion that competition increases polarization conflicts with the notion cherished by Left and Right that “people consume news and opinion in order to become well informed about public issues.” If this were so, says Posner, then “liberals would read conservative newspapers, and conservatives liberal newspapers, just as scientists test their hypotheses by confronting them with data that may refute them.” In the real world, however, ordinary people don’t act that way. They look instead for news and opinions that support their existing beliefs, and they look for entertainment. “So they accept, and many relish, a partisan press.”

Increased competition in the news market has produced, “in sum, a better matching of supply to demand.” But giving the public more of what it wants hasn’t produced a “better” public, one “more oriented toward public issues, more motivated and competent to engage in genuine self-government.”

### RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

## *Before King*

“African American Religious Intellectuals and the Theological Foundations of the Civil Rights Movement, 1930–55” by Dennis C. Dickerson, in *Church History* (June 2005), Dept. of Religion, Florida State Univ., Dodd Hall M-05, Tallahassee, Fla. 32306–1520.

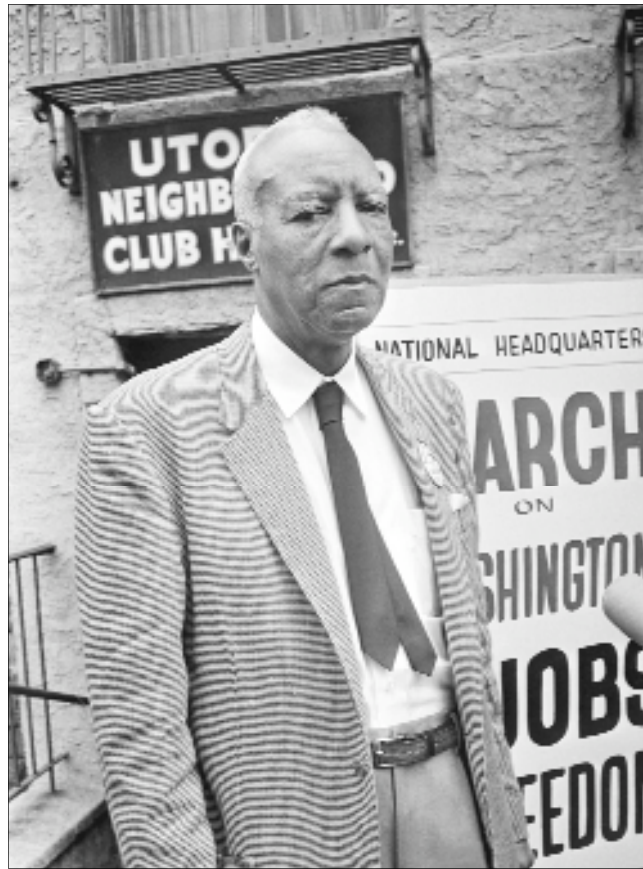
When Martin Luther King Jr. articulated the dream he had for “all God’s children” and led the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, he was standing on the shoulders of gi-

ants. Though they were invisible to most observers at the time, an earlier generation of black religious thinkers had shown King and his cohorts the way.

King defined segregation as a sin and an evil inimical to God's plan for mankind, asserted the worth of all human beings, even segregationists, and embraced nonviolence as the best path to victory. In all this, says Dickerson, a historian at Vanderbilt University, he was echoing ideas developed during the 1930s and 1940s by thinkers such as Mordecai W. Johnson, president of Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Benjamin E. Mays, dean of Howard's divinity school and later president of Morehouse College in Atlanta. Those two decades, following on the heels of the African-American cultural renaissance of the 1920s, were a time of intellectual ferment among black religious intellectuals. As a student at Morehouse during the 1940s, King fell under the influence of Mays and religion professor George D. Kelsey, and he wove their ideas into his thought and his rhetoric. Mays became a lifelong adviser to King.

Many black religious thinkers in the 1930s and 1940s traveled abroad for ecumenical conferences and made pilgrimages to India to learn from Mahatma Gandhi about Satyagraha ("soul force") and its application through direct nonviolent action. As early as 1930, Johnson had urged African Americans to take up Gandhi's approach; he later said, after visiting Gandhi in 1936, that "nonviolence is not passive resistance but rather is an active force," and that "it must be practiced in absolute love and without hate." When Howard Thurman, a professor at Howard and a Baptist minister, met Gandhi that same year, the Mahatma asked why African Americans espoused Christianity rather than Islam. Thurman gave his fullest answer to that question in *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), in which he explained that as a poor Jew within the oppressive Roman Empire, Jesus was on the side of the downtrodden.

Pre-King black religious thinkers were also



*A. Philip Randolph, who organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters during the 1920s, strongly influenced Martin Luther King Jr.'s church-based movement of nonviolent civil protest.*

influenced by labor leader A. Philip Randolph, a secular socialist who sought to organize Pullman car porters in the 1920s and 1930s. Randolph "challenged black churches and clergy to pursue social change and find the moral means to achieve it." His success in organizing demonstrators for a threatened march on Washington in 1940 prompted the government to outlaw employment discrimination in defense plants. Randolph regarded the mobilization of black church communities as vital to the struggle against Jim Crow, and his technique of grassroots mobilization meshed well with the Gandhian nonviolence favored by Thurman and other black religious intellectuals. By World War II, the black church was becoming "a militantly critical and confrontational force against Jim Crow," and the struggle against evil abroad strengthened the resolve to fight segregation at home. After the war, the groundwork was in place for the crusade that changed America.

## God's Armies

"The Rise and Decline of Christian Militarism in Prussia-Germany from Hegel to Bonhoeffer: The End Effect of the Fallacy of Sacred Violence" by John A. Moses, in *War and Society* (May 2005), School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Univ. of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, ACT 2600, Australia.

Today's Islamist terrorism is hardly the first instance of "sacred violence" in recent history. Consider Nazi Germany: Adolf Hitler's brutal rampages at home and abroad had the unshakable sanction of German Protestantism. When Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45) courageously spoke out against the Nazis, he was defying not only the state but a religious tradition that went back to the 16th century and Martin Luther himself, says Moses, who teaches in the School of Classics, History, and Religion at Australia's University of New England.

The German Reformation had brought church and state closer together. In Luther's view, the Prussian and other Protestant Germanic states had to be able to use military force to resist any restoration of papal control. The ironic result was that the church, previously independent of the state, now became subordinate to it, unable to criticize any government policy, foreign or domestic.

Against that background, G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) formulated what became virtually Prussia's official philosophy. Systematizing Luther's theology of state power, he portrayed the state as the instrument of God's will on earth. And in the Hegelian view, observes Moses, a state had to be able "not only to defend itself but to expand at the expense of less powerful neighbors. By the very fact of being weaker, they had no justification to continue to exist and there-

fore, rightly, ought to be absorbed into the greater power."

Beginning with Otto von Bismarck's chancellorship of the Reich he founded under Prussian leadership in 1871, many Germans "came to believe that Germany was the 'World Historical Nation,' chosen by Almighty God to exert preeminence in the world." Not even defeat in World War I disabused them of this notion.

Hegel's philosophy, giving divine sanction to the state's power politics and warfare, "underlay not only the discipline of history but also Protestant theology in German universities," writes Moses. German Protestant theology "endorsed emphatically the notion of a warrior God."

Bonhoeffer—who warned in mid-1932 that there would be war if the Nazis came to power (as they did the following year), and who later joined a plot to assassinate Hitler—rejected that prevailing theology and its underlying Hegelian notion that the state operated in a realm removed from the rest of humanity. Such thinking, Bonhoeffer wrote, "contradicts fundamentally Biblical thinking. . . . Indeed, there are not two realities but only one reality and that is the reality of God revealed in Christ within the reality of the world." Arrested by the Nazis in 1943, Bonhoeffer was hanged two years later, and became, posthumously, one of the most influential Christian theologians of modern times.

### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

## Environmentalism's EKG

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

The environmental movement has suffered death by a thousand agendas. That was the message delivered last fall by environmentalists Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus in a manifesto called

"The Death of Environmentalism," and they have ignited a continuing debate in a community that had always considered itself united.

Bogged down in promoting shortsighted,

narrow policy fixes for a miscellany of environmental problems, the movement's leaders have lost their inspiring vision, contend Shellenberger, the executive director of the Breakthrough Institute, and Nordhaus, a pollster with Evans/McDonough. The two base their critique (available at [www.thebreakthrough.org](http://www.thebreakthrough.org)) on interviews with two dozen leading environmentalists.

America's voters have become more conservative—and environmentalists' tendency to frame their issues in negative, apocalyptic terms just isn't selling. "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I have a dream' speech is famous because it put forward an inspiring, positive vision that carried a critique of the current moment within it," Shellenberger and Nordhaus write. "Imagine how history would have turned out had King given an 'I have a nightmare' speech instead."

They conclude that environmentalism has become just another narrow special interest. Now it must forge a new, visionary identity, embrace a wider spectrum of progressive concerns, and expand its notion of what its issues are, looking beyond the traditional "environmental" label to labor, the economy, and health care.

Environmentalists' lack of—and even distaste for—politicking helped scuttle the Senate's ratification of the Kyoto treaty to reduce greenhouse gases and allowed a deal for higher vehicle fuel-efficiency standards to slip through their fingers, Shellenberger and Nordhaus say. Confronting the calamity of global warming, environmental leaders have been woefully ineffective at building political support, believing that the rightness of their cause is all they need, that "selling technical solutions like fluorescent light bulbs, more efficient appliances, and hybrid cars will be sufficient to muster the necessary political strength to overcome the alliance of neoconservative ideologues and industry interests in Washington, D.C."

American environmental leaders today pattern their tactics after those of *Silent Spring* author Rachel Carson and other activist pioneers, according to Shellenberger and Nordhaus. They define a narrow problem and then pursue a technical solution. They're like "generals fighting the last war—in particular the war they fought and won for

basic environmental protections more than 30 years ago."

That accusation has stung leaders of some of the country's largest environmental organizations. Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope, whom the authors interviewed for their report, accused the two of "patricide" in a long rebuttal published in *Grist* (Jan. 13, 2005). He says the two mischaracterize the environmental movement and perceive normal differences in leadership styles, political strategies, etc., "as a matter of generational succession."

But former Sierra Club national president Adam Werbach aligns himself with the two: "The purpose of describing the environmental movement as dead," he writes in *In These Times* (July 11, 2005), "is to allow the space for a new movement to grow—a new movement that does not set arbitrary limitations for what is considered an 'environmental issue.'"

Some critics see such a move as perilous. "Since when did the environment become a partisan issue?" asks former *Time* magazine editor and environmental journalist Charles Alexander in *Conservation in Practice* (July–Sept. 2005). In order to succeed, he writes, environmentalists need to attract wide public support, work with far-sighted corporate leaders, and compromise enough to gain conservative political support for measures such as the Climate Stewardship Act, introduced in the Senate by Republican John McCain and Democrat Joe Lieberman. To lump the environment together with other causes is to "run the risk of reinforcing the notion that enviros are knee-jerk leftists."

Others fault Shellenberger and Nordhaus for failing to examine a true cross-section of the environmental movement. In *Social Policy* (Spring 2005), longtime activist Ludovic Blain says that the report should have been titled "The Death of Elite, White, American Environmentalism," declaring that its argument for a larger vision of what environmentalism ought to be merely echoes those expressed nearly 15 years ago at a National People of Color Environmental Summit. And Pope, of the Sierra Club, charges that the authors interviewed only environmental-

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ism's wonks, neglecting its many poets and visionaries, such as Wendell Barry and Terry Tempest Williams.

If environmentalism really is dead, what then? Shellenberger and Nordhaus offer few prescriptions, saying that a new blueprint will emerge from collaboration. Some view this claim as disingenuous, pointing out that the two originally distributed their tract,

which snipes at other organizations that compete for grant dollars, at an Environmental Grantmakers Association conference. "The Death of Environmentalism" touts the New Apollo Project, a nascent initiative aimed at freeing the United States from oil dependency and creating new "green" jobs. Both Shellenberger and Nordhaus are leaders of the project.

## Flip-Flop Medicine

"Contradicted and Initially Stronger Effects in Highly Cited Clinical Research" by John P. A. Ioannidis, in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (July 13, 2005), 515 N. State St., Chicago, Ill. 60610.

One day it's horrible for your health to let a drop of alcohol pass your lips; the next, you're told that a glass of red wine is just what the doctor ordered. So it's gone lately, with one highly publicized medical study after another contradicted or reversed.

This is no laughing matter. In 1991, the Nurses' Health Study found that women receiving hormone therapy (estrogen and progestin) enjoyed a big (44 percent) reduction in the risk of coronary artery disease, and millions of women were encouraged to begin the therapy to counteract the effects of menopause. But in 2002, the Women's Health Initiative produced a radically different conclusion: Hormone therapy *increases* the risk of coronary events in postmenopausal women by 29 percent. A subsequent study confirmed that result.

The explanation, according to Ioannidis, who teaches at the University of Ioannina School of Medicine in Greece and Tufts-New England Medical Center, is that the first study was not based on a random sample of the population. A "randomized" sample

reflects various factors, known or unknown, that might be involved in the body's reaction to the thing being studied. (Why aren't all studies randomized? Cost is not the only explanation; ethical and other considerations are sometimes involved.)

But randomization alone does not assure valid results. Ioannidis isolated 45 widely cited clinical studies from the medical literature between 1990 and 2003. Six of the original 45 articles were based on non-randomized trials, and five of the six were later challenged—a very high error rate.

The other 39 studies were all based on random samples, yet nine were nevertheless challenged. The reason? For the most part, the sample sizes were smaller than in subsequent studies.

"The examination of contradictions and refutations offers a fascinating look at the process of science" as new studies appear over the years, writes Ioannidis. In an age of instant publicity, however, a surprising study can make global headlines before that process has a chance to run its course.

## The Big Questions in Science

"What Don't We Know?" by Donald Kennedy et al., in *Science* (July 1, 2005), 1200 New York Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

It's staggering to think what marvels scientists have discovered in just the past few decades, but more interesting to ask what science still does *not* know—and may discover before too long. To mark its own 125th an-

niversary, *Science* surveyed this immense realm of scientific ignorance, coming up with 125 "hard questions" that its contributors think might be answered in the next quarter-century, and highlighting 25 of them.

“What is the universe made of?” is the big question that leads off the survey. “Ordinary” matter (including dark matter that is invisible to prying telescopes) makes up less than five percent of everything there is, reports staff writer Charles Seife. An additional 25 percent consists of exotic dark matter, “made of an as-yet-undiscovered type of particle,” which helps fill the huge voids between the galaxies. The remaining 70 percent consists of a “mysterious antigravity force known as dark energy,” whose existence was recognized only in the 1990s. Scientists are well on their way to discovering what ordinary dark matter is made of—a “dark-matter trap buried deep underground or a high-energy atom smasher” should do the trick. They “have some ideas” about exotic dark matter. But the nature of dark energy is a conundrum that “seems to transcend known physics more than any other phenomenon yet observed.”

Another big question that some scientists (and many science-fiction fans) would like answered is that hardy perennial, “Are we alone in the universe?” Privately funded researchers—Washington got out of the hunt in 1993—are hoping that growing computer power will enable them before long to check

out “perhaps a few million or even tens of millions of stars for alien signals,” reports staff writer Richard A. Kerr. After years of effort, only one or two out of each 100 million sun-like stars have been examined. “If there were just 10,000 advanced civilizations in the galaxy, researchers could well strike pay dirt before *Science* turns 150.”

Speaking of computers, “What are the limits of conventional computing?” It’s not just an engineering issue. As Bell Labs scientist Claude Shannon showed in the 1940s, there are physical laws governing the flow of information in general from one object to another. “But there is a realm beyond the classical computer: the quantum,” notes Seife. “The probabilistic nature of quantum theory allows atoms and other quantum objects to store information that’s not restricted to only the binary 0 or 1 of information theory, but can also be 0 and 1 at the same time. Physicists around the world are building rudimentary quantum computers that exploit this and other quantum effects to do things that are provably impossible for ordinary computers.” The quest could lead not only to more powerful machines but to a better understanding of the subatomic world.



*A researcher in North Yorkshire, England, tracks WIMPs (weakly interacting massive particles), thought by some scientists to be the prime components of the universe’s mysterious dark matter.*

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With even more derring-do, some scientists are seeking the biological basis of consciousness. Rejecting philosopher René Descartes' 17th-century dichotomy between mind and body, most of these scientists treat them as "different aspects of the same thing. In this view, consciousness emerges from the properties and organization of neurons in the brain," explains staff writer Greg Miller. Scientists have gleaned some insights from studying neurological patients whose injuries have limited their awareness

in certain ways, or robbed them of consciousness entirely. Ultimately, researchers are interested in why, from an evolutionary perspective, consciousness exists at all and whether other creatures possess it. The field, once considered a career killer, is now attracting many young scientists.

One prediction that emerges from the *Science* articles: Even if many of these questions are answered in the next 125 years, they will only be replaced by new and even more daunting ones.

## *Kyoto's Magnetic Force*

"Climate Change Strategy: The Business Logic Behind Voluntary Greenhouse Gas Reductions"  
by Andrew J. Hoffman, in *California Management Review* (Spring 2005), Univ. of California,  
F501 Haas School of Business No. 1900, Berkeley, Calif. 94720-1900.

If there's one thing that business likes even less than government regulation, it's uncertainty about government regulation—and that's the condition business is now in, reports Hoffman, a professor of sustainable enterprise at the University of Michigan. The cause is the U.S. refusal to ratify the Kyoto treaty to control greenhouse-gas emissions, known formally as the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

When, in late 2004, Russia became the 126th country to ratify the Kyoto treaty, it cleared the way for the pact to go into force

this past February. Multinational corporations that operate in signatory countries must comply with the new requirements. But even firms that operate only within the United States face the possibility that Congress in the future may impose similar regulations—and the reality is that some states already are doing so on their own.

The companies that are voluntarily making emission reductions aren't necessarily doing so out of concern for global warming or corporate social responsibility. Anticipat-

### EXCERPT

## *The Computer Prescription*

*There is good evidence that if the United States were to invest in health information technology, it would get a substantial payoff. Estimates of savings range from 7.5 percent of health care costs to as high as 30 percent. The low numbers represent the reduction of obvious errors. These numbers may seem very large, but take medical errors as one example. A medical error costs, in 2003 dollars, about \$3,700, and early studies indicate that somewhere between 70 and 80 percent of those errors could be eliminated. Most of these are prescribing errors, where the patient ends up getting the wrong drug, the wrong dose of a drug, or the right drug given at the wrong time. Such errors lead to a variety of consequences, including further diagnostic evaluation of the patient and additional treatments. They can also result in serious complications, which require additional interventions, and even result in death. Unfortunately, \$3,700 is a lot of money—except in health care, where it buys just a few lab tests and maybe an imaging scan and a half-day in the hospital.*

—David J. Brailer, National Health Information Technology Coordinator at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in *Business Economics* (July 2005)



ing that a regulatory regime may be imposed on them, they prefer to make reductions now by their own choice and according to their own timetables.

In some cases, greenhouse-gas emissions can be cut in ways that also enhance efficiency and trim the costs of energy use or transportation. Thus, Cinergy, one of the nation's largest coal-fired electric utilities, aims to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by five percent by 2012; two-thirds of the \$21 million it plans to spend to accomplish that will go toward upgrading the efficiency of its plants.

Under the Kyoto treaty, an industrialized country that emits less than its quota of greenhouse gases can sell its unused allotment to an-

other industrialized country. This market-oriented approach is meant to reward top pollution reducers while allowing goals to be met with maximum economic efficiency. Some American-based companies with operations around the globe, such as Alcoa, the world's largest producer of aluminum, have instituted their own internal trading systems.

For companies, says Hoffman, reducing greenhouse-gas emissions can also be a way of minimizing financial risk, not only from damage caused by droughts, floods, and hurricanes resulting from climate change, but from the difficult-to-anticipate costs of complying with future mandatory regulations on greenhouse-gas emissions.

## ARTS & LETTERS

### *Permanent Aliens*

"Leaving the Center: The Modern Writer as Exile" by Morris Dickstein, in *The Common Review* (Summer 2005), 35 E. Wacker Dr., Chicago, Ill. 60601-2298.

There's a long tradition of writers living and working in exile. Usually they've been expelled for political offense, as Ovid was 2,000 years ago and Dante 1,300 years later. But the great modernist exiles—such as Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Samuel Beckett, and Vladimir Nabokov—embraced a different sort of separation, and they did so willingly. According to Dickstein, distinguished professor of English at the City University of New York Graduate Center, they were "exiles of the spirit rather than of the body politic," seeking a new contemporary idiom in which to express their alienation: "Exile is crucial to modern writing not simply because so many of its leading figures happened to leave home; they left home because they saw modern life itself as broken, dislocated, discontinuous with the past."

Dickstein calls Henry James the first spiritual expatriate, "at home everywhere and nowhere," and in his wake came Eliot and Pound and Henry Miller, all of whom left America to escape "a philistine hatred, fear, or incomprehension of art." Eliot and Pound shared James's absolute dedication to art and used the European past to create new traditions that were characteristically their own.

Joyce left Ireland behind—in life, though not in his work—and Kafka, a German-speaking Jew from Prague (in that identification there's already a wealth of displacement) made exile and homelessness even more central to his work than these themes had been for Joyce. Kafka "felt exiled from no place he could begin to imagine as his real home; the ultimate modernist, he felt exiled from life itself."

Kafka was an immense influence on the Dublin-born Beckett, another writer who believed he had no place to lose because he had none to begin with. Beckett eventually gave up his native English to free himself from its "dense network of literary associations" and from the towering figure of Joyce, whose secretary he had been in Paris in 1928, when he first left Ireland. The original language of the works for which he is perhaps best known, the plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, was French. Its abstractness "lent a piercing clarity to his sense of isolation and hopelessness"; his characters speak in largely unfurnished worlds, where their spare words do little more than mark time against death.

But gloom is not the only mood of modernism. Kafka thought his work comic, as Miller, exhilarated by the Paris of the 1930s, thought his. There's rueful comedy in Beckett

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too. And Nabokov, who was a political as well as a spiritual fugitive, and who, like Beckett, gave up his native language to write in another, found America a source of great interest and amusement. He made the abundance of his English a compensation for the loss of his beloved Russian. “In the splendid artificiality of his language, in its surface virtuosity,” Dickstein observes, “Nabokov shows us the shock of alienation as effectively as his

more downhearted predecessors.”

No matter how fully these writers embraced new countries and new languages, or settled into “that other homeland, the kingdom of art,” they were displaced persons, homeless in their native lands, strangers abroad. We remember them for having used the dislocation to their advantage by “turning exile and alienation into a unique vantage point, an angle of vision for interpreting the world.”

## *The Sound of Salinger’s Silence*

“Reading Salinger’s Silence” by Myles Weber, in *New England Review*, (Vol. 26, No. 2), Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt. 05753.

Often when people say they write only for themselves, everyone else silently thanks them. In the case of J. D. Salinger, who has published not a word in 40 years, critics, scholars, and journalists have done little but badger and condemn him, writes Weber, a literary critic and the author of *Consuming Silences: How We Read Authors Who Don’t Publish* (2005).

Salinger became an American icon with the publication of his first book, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). He went on to publish *Nine Stories* (1953), *Franny and Zooey* (1961), and *Raise High the Roof-Beam, Carpenters; and Seymour: An Introduction* (1963). In 1965 a final short story, “Hapworth 16, 1924,” appeared in *The New Yorker*. And then began a silence all the more tantalizing because Salinger, 86, is alive and well and—by his own admission—still

writing. He refuses to talk to the press and lives in seclusion in Cornish, New Hampshire.

“The critical establishment, denied access for decades to whatever pages Salinger is actually accumulating in his desk drawer, simply will not permit Salinger to depart the active literary scene,” writes Weber. “Rather than disappear, he is reconfigured as a prolific, nearly conventional author inundating the marketplace with silence.”

And so Salinger has left himself—and, on occasion, his pet and his mailbox—open to interpretation. In 1975, C. David Heymann chronicled in *The Village Voice* his trip to Salinger’s home; he left with little to describe but a dog’s bark answering his knock: “It was a miserable whine, empty-sounding and hollow.” In 1977, *Esquire* ran an unsigned Salin-

### EXCERPT

## *Crazy Fame*

“Every time I think I am famous,” Virgil Thomson said, “I have only to go out into the world.” So it is, and so ought it probably to remain for writers, musicians, and visual artists who prefer to consider themselves, to put it as pretentiously as possible, sérieux The comedian Richard Pryor once said that he would consider himself famous when people recognized him, as they recognized Bob Hope and Muhammed Ali, by his captionless caricature. That is certainly one clear criterion for celebrity. But the best criterion I’ve yet come across holds that you are celebrated, indeed famous, only when a crazy person imagines he is you. I especially like the fact that the penetrating and prolific author of this remark happens to go by the name of Anonymous.

—Joseph Epstein, former editor of *The American Scholar*, in *The Hedgehog Review* (Spring 2005)

geresque story that turned out to be penned by the magazine's fiction editor, Gordon Lish, who said that if Salinger was not going to write stories, "someone had to write them for him." In 1982, Steven Kunes offered *People* magazine a faked transcript of an interview with Salinger, who sued and kept it from running. In 2002 came the publication of a collection of letters addressed to Salinger, including an e-mail from one Don Paton, who wrote, "You can't make yourself unfamous. Cough it up. Either publish everything you've got left in you or hurry up and die."

Would-be biographer Ian Hamilton—whom Salinger prevented, in 1987, from excerpting unpublished letters—has accused the reclusive author of pecuniary motives. "He said he wanted neither fame nor money and by this means he'd contrived to get extra supplies of both," Hamilton wrote. Others have theorized that Salinger withdrew because he knew he'd run out of talent or he couldn't stand criticism. Perhaps, as Ron Rosenbaum opined in *Esquire* in



J. D. Salinger in 1951, when he published *The Catcher in the Rye*.

1997 after a fruitless trek to Salinger's driveway, his silence "represents some kind of spiritual renunciation." (Salinger's few known contacts with the wider world haven't helped his cause; a college girl he wooed in 1972 after reading an essay she wrote in *The New York Times Magazine* later published a memoir about their affair.)

Weber dismisses such speculations as worthless, declaring that Salinger's published work is probably

"the only reliable source material" on him. In the story "Zooey," he writes of a clear imperative for the artist to keep performing—it's owed "to the Fat Lady, to the public, to Christ, to the God who dispenses talent." But noting Salinger's increasingly disjointed, difficult writing style, Weber also suggests that silence may be a still more extreme form of artistic expression. In any case, he concludes that Salinger's silence, whether broken by the publication of another story or punctuated only with an obituary, will go on speaking volumes to ears cocked to listen.

## The Shakespeare Code

"The Catholic Bard: Shakespeare and the 'Old Religion'" by Clare Asquith, in *Commonweal* (June 17, 2005), 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 405, New York, N.Y. 10115.

Though a 17th-century Protestant clergyman stated that "William Shakespeare dyed a papist," Protestant England for centuries deemed it unthinkable that the national poet had adhered to the "old religion." But historians now acknowledge that England in Shakespeare's day was not so wholeheartedly Protestant as previously portrayed. Like dissident Soviet-era dramatists expressing the cause of freedom, the Bard in his great works stealthily made a case for Catholicism, contends Asquith, author of *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (2005).

Protestant historians long maintained that Henry VIII's break with the pope in 1534 in-

augurated a new era of enlightenment. But "fresh evidence . . . indicates that Shakespeare lived in an age of silent, sullen resistance to the imposed new order. In spite of penal legislation and horrific executions, Catholics remained in the majority through 1600, conforming under duress, not out of conviction."

Scholars today agree that Shakespeare's "childhood was deeply imbued with the 'old religion,'" though he probably did not retain his Catholic beliefs throughout his working life. Asquith thinks that a familiarity with "Catholic idiom, history, and liturgy" reveals a hidden political message in Shakespeare's plays.

*The Merchant of Venice's* final act, for example, "almost completely extraneous to the

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plot,” would have had a special meaning for Catholics familiar with the church’s Easter liturgy, of which the last act contains myriad echoes—“moonlight, a single candle dispelling the darkness, music, the repeated phrase ‘in such a night.’” Asquith says that a close look at the whole play discloses a coded appeal to Queen Elizabeth “to look mercifully on her suffering subjects and lift the ban on their native religion.”

The plea evidently fell on deaf ears, and the court dramatist may have been cautioned. But he persisted. In *Much Ado About Nothing*’s first

scene, for example, the bafflingly obscure teasing of Benedick for his misogyny “conceals a skein of allusions associating Benedick with the thousands of ‘don’t knows’ who were beginning to regret their conformity to the state religion.”

Benedick’s friends joke that if he ever falls in love, he will sign a letter on “the sixth of July.” The date would have meant nothing to Protestants, but to Elizabethan Catholics, says Asquith, it was “highly significant”: July 6 was when Henry VIII executed Sir Thomas More for refusing to acknowledge Henry as the supreme head of the church in England.

## OTHER NATIONS

### *Israel’s Two Zionisms*

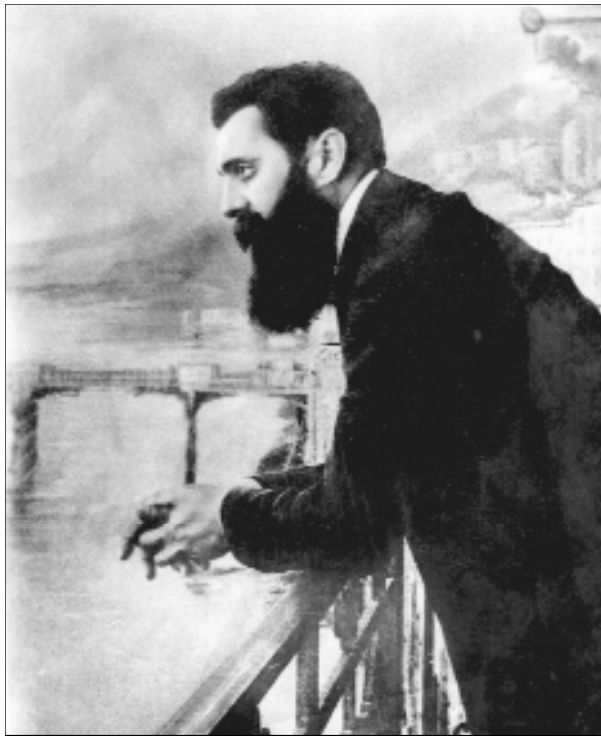
“The Political Legacy of Theodor Herzl” by Natan Sharansky, in *Azure* (Summer 2005),  
13 Yehoshua Bin-Nun St., P.O. Box 8787, Jerusalem 93145 Israel.

Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet refusenik who earlier this year quit his Israeli government post as minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs, fears that his adopted country is losing its Jewish character. The remedy, he

believes, can be found in the neglected vision of Zionism’s principal founder, Austrian writer Theodor Herzl (1860–1904).

Israel has started down the road to becoming “a ‘state of all its citizens,’ with no specific national identity.” The principle of absolute equality increasingly trumps maintaining the state’s Jewish character. Symptomatic of the trend was the Israeli Supreme Court’s landmark decision in 2000 declaring that the government could not favor Jews over Israeli Arabs in its allocation of state-owned land. If Israel continues down this path, says Sharansky, “it will no longer consider itself responsible for the fate of Jews everywhere, nor grant Jews the unconditional right to immigrate to Israel. It will certainly not try to promote Jewish culture and heritage or the Hebrew language among Jews around the world. It will provide education, health, and social services to its taxpayers, and little else.”

When Israel was founded in 1948, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, drawing on the revolutionary socialist tradition, “sought to create a new Jew out of the Di-



*Theodor Herzl chaired the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897, but it would take more than 50 years for his followers to establish the Jewish state of Israel.*

aspora ‘Jewish dust.’” He wanted Jews to shed their long exile experience and traditions, connect with their ancient biblical past, craft new forms of cultural expression, and, through the schools, the military, fresh ceremonies, myths, and monuments, “forge the new nation in a fiery melting pot.”

This revolutionary Zionist outlook—which upstaged the more conservative vision of Herzl—may have been necessary in Israel’s early years, but the cost rapidly grew too high, says Sharansky. The demand that exile traditions be abandoned pushed Orthodox Jews to the margins of Israeli society and aroused profound resentments among Jews from Arab lands. The effort to create “a new Jew” held little appeal for Sharansky or the million new immigrants in the 1990s from the collapsed Soviet Union, where the Communist effort to create “a new man” had had such tragic results.

In his novel *Altneuland* (1902), Herzl repeatedly described how the Jewish state “would incorporate the best of what each of its citizens’ lands of origin had to offer,” says Sharansky. Instead of creating a “new Jew” or a new Judaism, or erasing traditions that had sustained Jews during thousands of years of exile, the Jews would make out of their various languages and cultures “a splendid mosaic that would, in itself, be *sui generis*.”

The gradual rejection of the “Hebrew” identity that Ben-Gurion and his generation of Zionist leaders crafted has left “a cultural void” in Israel, says Sharansky. “Without Jewish history, and without Jewish culture, it is impossible to make a mosaic. What is being produced in Israel instead is a society made up of distinct groups that tend to keep mostly to themselves, put sectarian interests above national ones, and compete for control of the country.”

## *Africa’s Weak Giants*

“Building Democracy in Africa’s Weak States” by Michael Bratton, in *Democracy at Large* (2005: No. 3), 1101 15th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Though elections have become commonplace in sub-Saharan Africa since 1990, only a minority of that region’s states qualify as genuine democracies. Why? Bratton, a political scientist at Michigan State University, points to two explanations.

The first is population size: Small is better. Eleven (or 23 percent) of sub-Saharan Africa’s 48 countries are functioning democracies. And six of those 11 have populations under two million. Among the large countries, with populations of 30 million or more, only South Africa can claim to be fully democratic.

Though the small sub-Saharan states may not be as tiny as the ancient Greek city-states, they’re still small enough, Bratton says, to encourage direct communication between rulers and ruled. They’re also “likely to be socially and culturally homogeneous (like Botswana and Lesotho), thus preempting ethnic conflict.” And three of the small democracies (Cape Verde, Mauritius, and São Tomé and Príncipe) are on islands, with no worries about secessionists or irredentists.

Most sub-Saharan Africans, however, live not in the subcontinent’s 14 small countries

but in its seven large or 27 medium-sized ones. Sub-Saharan Africa’s six other large countries are either “partly free” (Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Nigeria) or “not free” (Congo-Kinshasa and Sudan). Indeed, when viewed in terms of people rather than countries, the condition of democracy on the subcontinent appears even bleaker: Only 15 percent of its residents live in freedom.

However much it affects a state’s democratic status, says Bratton, population size is not nearly as significant a factor as what he terms the state’s “strength.” Using the World Bank Institute’s numerical gauges of political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption in each country, Bratton created a total state strength score for each sub-Saharan African country. On a scale of -2.0 to +2.0, the countries varied widely: from -1.84 for medium-sized Somalia to +0.78 for small Botswana (which boasts an exceptionally honest and effective civil service). The median sub-Saharan state (represented by Tanzania and Eritrea) scored -0.67. All 11 full-fledged democracies in the subcontinent were above that median.

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Sub-Saharan Africa's most populous countries were less than half as likely as its least-populous ones to be among the stronger states. In the face of "endemic conflict, lawlessness, and corruption," giant states such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Congo-Kinshasa offer only "feeble administrations."

Therein lies the main challenge for proponents of democracy, Bratton concludes: "What Africa's large states need—and what some of its small states like Botswana, Cape Verde, and Mauritius have begun to achieve—are effective and egalitarian public bureaucracies."

## *Egypt's Muslim Brothers*

"The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers" by Mona El-Ghobashy, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Aug. 2005), Box 571236, Georgetown Univ., Washington, D.C. 20057-1236.

Egypt's first-ever multicandidate presidential election on September 7 was not a sterling moment in the march of democracy. President Hosni Mubarak ensured a continuation of his 24-year reign by barring most opposition groups from the competition, including Egypt's largest, the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. That puts off to another day a test of whether the Islamist group's professed commitment to democracy is real. El-Ghobashy, a political science instructor at Columbia University, believes that it is.

"Over the past quarter-century," she writes, "the Society of Muslim Brothers (Ikhwan) has morphed from a highly secretive, hierarchical, anti-democratic organization led by anointed elders" into something resembling a modern political party. The key forces in its transformation have been generational change and the imperatives of political survival under authoritarian rule.

Founded in 1928 by the charismatic Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), the anticolonial Society of Muslim Brothers embraced political violence in its early decades and called for the establishment of an Islamic state, even as it toiled to establish a grassroots social welfare network. It all but disappeared between 1954 and 1970, when most of its leaders were jailed by Gamal Abdel Nasser. After their release by President Anwar Sadat, the Society was tolerated but still formally outlawed. The periodic jailings have continued into recent years.

In the 1980s, long after it had abandoned violence at home as a political tool, the Society "began to develop the sedulous electioneering strategy that would become a centerpiece of [its] self-preservation" as it sought wider political support from the Egyptian public. Allying itself with the Wafd Party in 1984, and then in

1987 forming an "Islamist alliance" with the weaker Labor Party (and calling for a ban on nightclubs and the shuttering of government liquor manufacturers), the Society competed for seats in the Egyptian parliament. It also sought seats on municipal councils and won positions in influential labor unions in medicine and other professions—which critics see only as "infiltration."

In 1994, the Muslim Brothers issued statements reinterpreting the Qur'an and endorsing women's rights and political pluralism. The next year brought a statement on democracy, asserting the legitimacy of popular government. When Coptic Christians came under physical attack from more radical Islamists, the Society declared that its "Christian brothers in Egypt and the Arab world . . . have the same rights and duties as we do."

Political competition explains some of the group's shift, as does the need for support from the West. At the same time, a new generation of leaders "who came of political age on college campuses in the 1960s and 1970s" has gradually assumed power from the more hard-line "prison generation."

Last year, in an uncharacteristically transparent process, Muhammed Mahdi Akef ascended to the group's top leadership post, and two deputy positions were filled by "younger" generation members. Reiterating the group's desire to operate as a legal political party, Akef unveiled "the Muslim Brothers' vision of a republican, civil government bound by law. Aside from the usual demand for applying sharia [Islamic law]," says El-Ghobashy, his reform program differed little from the demands that the secular Egyptian opposition has been making for decades.

# CURRENT BOOKS

*Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction*

## *A Sheltered Life, Widely Shared*

EUDORA WELTY:  
*A Biography.*

By Suzanne Marrs. Harcourt. 652 pp. \$28

*Reviewed by Michael Malone*

**T**he writer Eudora Welty (1909–2001) lived a long, full, kind life, and Suzanne Marrs has given her a long, full, kind biography. In some ways it was an ordinary life, with family and friends, work and travel, a little romance and plenty of heartbreak, and daily duties done (dinner parties cooked, an ailing mother cared for) while the dramas of the world outside rumbled past on the radio and then on the television—the Depression, World War II, the struggle for civil rights in the South, the war in Vietnam, assassinations and resignations and impeachments, war in the Persian Gulf.

These events posed their threats to Welty (a beloved boyfriend fighting in the Allied invasion of Italy); the times made their demands (how could she effectively speak out against segregation in Mississippi?). But she was not a warrior and not a chronicler of her era, except in the profoundest sense that art tells us the truth. While a canvasser for liberal Democrats, she was no crusader for their causes, nor did she feel obliged to be one. The decades passed as Welty wrote her stories, took her photographs, traveled for business and pleasure, invited old friends to her home for the holidays. As she said in *One Writer's Beginnings* (1984), a sheltered life can also be a daring one. Her pen and her camera had that daring—her extraordinary pictures of African-American washerwomen, preachers, and swing dancers in the Depression-era rural South are as revelatory

as her stories. She was a writer of enormous imagination, brilliant wit, and luminous style, who lived a writer's life.

Marrs's sturdy commitment to recounting that life is both personal (they were friends) and scholarly (she has taught Welty's fiction at Millsaps College, in Jackson, Mississippi, cataloged it for the Mississippi Archives, and analyzed it in the 2002 book *One Writer's Imagination*). The attention to detail here is meticulous and exhaustive, and if there is perhaps more than we care to know about Welty's problems with a review or a furnace, there is also invaluable research, understanding, and insight. Marrs is not a Boswell, who created a work of art from a life, but she makes no such claim. Throughout, her care as a scholar is exemplary, her affection for her subject, vivid.

Among her missions is to correct critical misimpressions about that mythically reclusive Southern lady, "Miss Eudora." A busy calendar and extensive correspondence amply prove that Welty was neither the naive, apolitical pawn of a racist patriarchy nor the repressed ugly duckling swimming ambivalently near beautiful swans (such as her lifelong friends, the writers Katherine Anne Porter and Elizabeth Bowen), nor the Dickensian maiden aunt petrified into perfect gentility by rage against her mother.

Although Eudora Welty lived into her nineties, unmarried, in her family home in Jackson, and although she never flung herself



*Striking an uncharacteristic pose, Eudora Welty pretends she is a damsel in distress during the 1930s.*

into the public eye, by affairs or addictions or political stands, Marrs's biography makes it clear that Welty was no 20th-century Emily Dickinson, whose letters to the world were returned to sender. On the contrary, Welty's short stories and novels were published widely during a distinguished and celebrated career. Her fiction was successfully turned into plays and films; it won her every laurel from a Guggenheim to a Pulitzer to a French Legion of Honor. From her earliest publications in *Harper's* and *The New Yorker*, her reputation has never been in doubt. Who has not come across "Why I Live at the P.O.," "Powerhouse," or "A Worn Path" in an anthology?

Her life was, moreover, a public one. She lectured at hundreds of universities and held honorary degrees from 39 of them; she was a fellow of places such as the Yaddo artists' community; she sat on the boards of the country's highest arts organizations; she met presidents, appeared on television shows, and even made *People's* list of "Ten Great Faces in America." As she told her good friend and editor William Maxwell, "I've just had too much awarded me."

No Mississippi wallflower, she met fame with a smile, a dancing gown, a cocktail, and a suitcase. She made dozens of transatlantic

crossings and motored and flew constantly until just before her death. She loved Manhattan nightlife, London pub crawls, Paris cafés with bohemians, and country weekends with English aristocrats. She dined with Martha Graham and the Baroness de Rothschild, drank with émigré artists in Florence, lunched with E. M. Forster at Cambridge, picnicked with the David Rockefeller family on an island in Maine ("Everyone came in their own sailboat"). It's a far cry from pickling okra and picking camellias on Pinehurst Place in Jackson, but she did those too.

At times, the hectic pace interfered with (perhaps was an excuse to avoid) her writing. No wonder it took her 15 years to finish her novel *Losing Battles* (1970), and after *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972) she published no other major new work. In the spring of 1975, for instance, "she flew to Seattle for [a National] Arts Council meeting and returned to Jackson to plan for the 50th reunion of her high school class. . . . Then it was off to Tulane for an honorary degree on May 16, to Dallas for another on May 18, and to Yale University for a third on May 19. Finally, she enjoyed a week in New York before coming home to repack and regroup for a trip to Santa Barbara."



Ordinary life and death also intruded, and always she made room for both. She celebrated; she mourned. Her father and one brother died young. Her mother and her other brother died within days of each other. She outlived friends and colleagues, her beloved agent, Diarmuid Russell, and her cherished editors. She outlived the two men with whom she was in love. One of these was Ken Millar, better known as the mystery novelist Ross Macdonald.

When the state of Mississippi hosted a Eudora Welty Day in 1973, attended by the literati of the nation, her reading took place in the Rotunda of the Old Capitol, where many years later she would lie in state. On this occasion, she read a sex scene from *Losing Battles*, to the delight of Millar, who had traveled across the country for the reading, and with whom she may or may not have been having an adulterous affair: He was married when they met. If Marris knows the sexual specifics, she doesn't share them, but she does make evident that the middle-aged Welty was in love with this man, took joy in their closeness, whatever its limits, and grieved passionately over the Alzheimer's disease that took his life in 1983.

He was not Welty's first love. She gave many years of her life (agonized through a war, moved across the country) to another complicated and finally impossible romantic relationship. She called it, when writing about it as fiction, "a prolonged and hopeless love affair" with "no way out." She was in love with a man, John Robinson, whose homosexuality she only reluctantly and belatedly accepted. Marris quotes from Welty's painfully honest letters to him. (His letters to her were destroyed by Welty.) "How could I be all right in my heart or my mind while not knowing how you felt or doing anything or being anything that would count? It seems a preposterous life to me. Sometimes I feel part of something I don't know all of—or its destinations—sometimes left, no part." It may be difficult to believe that a woman as intuitive as Welty could recommend Freud's biography of Leonardo da Vinci to Robinson without suspecting his "destinations"; what remains is that his sexual rejection of Welty did not cost him her

love. They stayed close until his death in 1989.

A woman with a genius for friendship, she might have taken as her creed her friend Forster's famous line, "Only connect." With relatives, with friends both at home and in the world of the arts, she had an amazing capacity to stay connected. Of human contact, Welty wrote to Ken Millar, "I believe in it, and I trust it too and treasure it above everything, the personal, the personal, the personal! I put my faith in it not only as the source, the ground of meaning in art, in life, but as the meaning itself."

A culture is known by the stories it tells, and Southern stories are rooted in such connections, place and family and neighbors and friends, in shared memories passed down like recipes. Welty knew that in the South, there is a "we" to the stories. We are all members of the Delta wedding. "A family story is a family possession, not for a moment to be forgotten, not a bit to be dropped or left out—just added to. No good story ever became *diminished*." You stay at funerals till the tent comes down. You show up at the family reunion, even if you have to escape from prison to do it. You repeat the stories you share. For Welty, memory was "a living thing," through which the present can reclaim the losses of the past.

I once drove the 700 miles from North Carolina to Jackson to tell Eudora Welty how much I admired her. Writers knew where her house was; she'd lived there a long time. In the end I lost my nerve. I sat in the car across the street for hours, and then I drove back home. Many years later, I met Miss Welty in the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel and I told her that story. She laughed. "Honey, was that you? I almost called the police on you!"

Then, in a moment of kindness, she taught me the best lesson I ever learned as a writer. She said, "Let your fiction grow out of the land beneath your feet." It was a lesson no one ever understood more profoundly than she did.

She filled a long and not always happy life with such brief encounters of kindness, and with such enduring friendships as hers with the writer Reynolds Price, whom she loved as a son and whose early career she generously

mentored, as she did those of Elizabeth Spencer and Richard Ford and many others. Her goodness was not naive, nor her politeness prudery, nor her love of home provincial. If, for Sinclair Lewis, everyone needs a hometown to get away from, for Welty, her hometown was home. Her art made of it an everywhere. William Buckley once asked her on *Firing Line*, "How . . . could a sensitive Southern writer have lived" in Mississippi with its lynchings and fiery crosses? She answered, in a polite way of course, How could she not?

Like Carson McCullers (whom she didn't like), Eudora Welty knew that the heart is a lonely hunter; like Flannery O'Connor (whom she admired), she knew that the violent bear it away. But, most of all, like

William Faulkner ("besides being the greatest writer to me, an attractive, darling person"), she knew that we are kin as well as strangers, and laughable as well as heroic; she knew that comedy and tragedy, "the bizarre and the terrible," cannot be separated, and that given a choice between grief and nothing, she'd take grief.

An optimist's daughter, she agreed with Ken Millar's response to the bombing of Hanoi, "I believe we'll turn back from our own violence, and see what we have done is something that we can never do again." She would know now that they were wrong. But she wouldn't stop hoping.

>MICHAEL MALONE's novels include *Handling Sin* (1986), *Time's Witness* (1989), and *The Last Noel* (2002).

## *Fallen Chief to Fallen Chads*

RESTLESS GIANT:

*The United States from Watergate to Bush v. Gore.*

By James T. Patterson. Oxford Univ. Press.

448 pp. \$35

Reviewed by David M. Oshinsky

When Richard Nixon resigned his presidency in August 1974, there was more relief than celebration. The country had been spared a lacerating impeachment process. A new president, widely hailed for his honesty, was sworn into office without violence or disorder. "Our long national nightmare is over," Gerald R. Ford assured the public. "Our Constitution works."

This remarkable moment provides the opening for *Restless Giant*, the latest contribution to the multivolume Oxford History of the United States. Previous books include James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom* (1988) and David Kennedy's *Freedom from Fear* (1999), both Pulitzer Prize winners, as well as James T. Patterson's own *Grand Expectations* (1996), a superb history of the United States from 1945 to 1974. *Restless Giant* is a cut below these works—partly because there hasn't been enough time and distance to re-

flect fully on such recent events, and partly because so much has changed since the bitter campaign, political and then legal, of Bush versus Gore. Despite the author's imposing narrative skills, I suspect that this book will be seen more as a starting point than as a standard work for future scholars.

Patterson, a historian at Brown University, notes that the 1970s didn't go as smoothly as Gerald Ford had hoped. The long nightmare may have been over, but a lot of bad dreams remained. The OPEC oil embargo, the fall of South Vietnam, the near meltdown at Three Mile Island, the Iran hostage crisis—all contributed to a mood of pessimism and unease. The civil rights movement, so confident in the heroic era of bus boycotts and lunch counter sit-ins, split over such issues as forced busing and black power. As middle-class whites fled to the suburbs in record numbers, New York and other cities went bankrupt, laying off thou-

sands of teachers, firefighters, and police. Divorce and violent crime rates shot up, while student test scores tumbled. For the first time since the Great Depression of the 1930s, a majority of Americans ended a decade in worse economic shape than they had begun it.

Patterson nonetheless sees the grimness associated with the decade as somewhat overstated. The times may have been rough, he says, but they neither defined a new age of limits for the United States, as many argued at the time, nor signaled its permanent decline. Most Americans had grown up in a time of affluence, conditioned to expect a life of uninterrupted progress. In this insulated world of entitlement, writes Patterson, “many people concluded in the late 1970s that the nation was in deep trouble. Even Americans who were doing a little better at the time often talked as if they were doing worse. As if caught on a treadmill, they were often anxious about the present and wary about the future.”

It's a point well taken. Some of the trends of the 1970s weren't necessarily as menacing as they first appeared. A rising divorce rate, for example, could be interpreted as the mark of a more tolerant, less censorious society. A drop in SAT scores partly indicated that low-income and minority students were applying to college in greater numbers. The rising crime rate was in large measure due to a temporary surge in the size of the age group most likely to break the law, 14-to-24-year-old males. By the 1990s, violent crime had decreased dramatically in the United States. So had homelessness, teenage pregnancy, and abortion.

But many other trends of the era still resist judgment. One can only wonder how future historians will deal with skyrocketing oil prices and Islamic fundamentalism—issues that first took shape for Americans in the 1970s, disappeared from public consciousness for a time, then resurfaced with dramatic force in the years following 2000.

As is natural in a broad history of an era, Patterson must pick and choose from a mountain of material. Favoring political, economic, and social themes, he mostly steers clear of mass culture, ignoring the impact on American lives of sports, leisure, entertainment, and even technology. But he is strong on matters of race and ethnicity, closely fol-

lowing the emergence of forced busing and affirmative action as major issues, and shrewdly demonstrating the importance of the often overlooked Immigration Act of 1965 in remaking the nation's population by permitting family members of American citizens both naturalized and native born to enter the United States. Before 1965, Europe had accounted for 90 percent of new arrivals; since then, the overwhelming majority of legal immigrants have come from Asia and Latin America.

The political portraits in *Restless Giant* are sound but predictable. Jimmy Carter comes off as someone with the decency of a saint and the vision of a technocrat. A loner, unwilling to compromise, he becomes a Democratic Herbert Hoover, bunkered in the White House as the nation lurches from crisis to crisis. Ronald Reagan is very much the man we see in Lou Cannon's biographies—focused, well prepared, and unyielding on matters that interest him (such as tax cuts, deregulation, and the military clout to fight communism); forgetful, easily bored, and oblivious when it comes to matters that don't interest him (which included just about everything else). George H. W. Bush is lauded for his coalition-building and military restraint during the Gulf War, as well as his focus on education at home. What finished him off, says Patterson, was not the economic downturn, which had largely ended by 1992, but rather Bush's inability “to grasp an important fact about late 20th-century American politics. Winning a presidential election had come to require full-time, all-absorbing attention.”

Bill Clinton understood this in spades. A combination policy wonk and master salesman, he knew that Democratic Party activists had moved too far left since the 1970s, leaving the party's traditional constituencies behind. Caring little about international affairs—“Foreign policy is not what I came here to do,” he admitted—he made his mark as a free-trader, a budget balancer, and a welfare reformer. Like other presidents, says Patterson, Clinton grabbed more credit for the nation's successes than he probably deserved. After all, the economic boom of the 1990s also included an overheated stock market, a growing trade imbalance, and a frightening jump in consumer debt. As for Monica Lewinsky and impeachment, Patterson simply summarizes what is al-

## Current Books

ready well known: Clinton proved himself a liar, Kenneth Starr dogged him with a prudish zeal that most Americans found offensive, and the nation stumbled on. For Patterson, as for others, the Lewinsky affair was an inevitable escalation of the partisan bloodletting that engulfed Washington in this era, culminating in the election of 2000.

*Restless Giant* ends with a tight summary of the Bush-Gore campaign, noting that more Florida voters probably *intended* to cast ballots for Al Gore than for George W. Bush, but some of them—perhaps a decisive proportion—were stymied by the butterfly ballot. What is certain, says Patterson, is that the nation and its politics have changed dramatically in the decades since Watergate. The Republican Party has been reborn, energized by a new conservative base. Yet politics at the national level has become something of a standoff, with most voters clustered near the vital center and neither party having the overwhelming edge enjoyed by Democrats during the terms of

Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. Sadly, the resulting frustrations fuel a meaner brand of politics, with little prospect of relief.

Still, says Patterson, the United States of 2000 was a better, safer place than the United States of 1974. Americans, especially minorities, had more rights and opportunities than before. The specter of communism was gone; the fear of nuclear war had subsided. The quality of life, “bolstered by the bounteous resources and receptivity to change that had always been hallmarks of American history, [had] improved in manifold ways.”

And yet, looking back on that time from this time, it seems so long, long ago.

>DAVID M. OSHINSKY is *George Littlefield Professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin, where he specializes in 20th-century American politics and culture. His works include A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy (1983), The Case of the Nazi Professor (1989), “Worse Than Slavery”: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice (1996), and the newly published Polio: An American Story.*

# Serving Up Subversion

STEPIN FETCHIT:

*The Life and Times of Lincoln Perry.*

By Mel Watkins. Pantheon Books. 352 pp. \$26.95

*Reviewed by Richard Schickel*

Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry (1902–85)—to call Stepin Fetchit by his gaudy given name—is among the movies’ most paradoxical figures. He became famous in the early 1930s, and soon after that infamous, by playing a highly stylized character: a shuffling, inarticulate, bone-lazy servant, generally in the employ of Southern masses twinkling tolerantly or fuming impotently at his ineptitude. From the outset, this figure, though hilarious to many blacks, discomfited their upwardly striving brethren, who were justifiably eager to set aside the demeaning stereotypes by which they had forever been represented in show business. In time, the latter view prevailed, and Stepin Fetchit’s very stage name—borrowed from a racehorse on

which he once won a few bucks—came to symbolize everything that was contemptible in Hollywood’s historical depictions of blacks.

Yet—and here’s one paradox—the off-screen Step was exactly the opposite of his public persona. He was a proud, even arrogant, man, whose fights with the studios (mainly Twentieth Century-Fox) for more money and more screen time doubtless did as much to shorten his stardom as shifting public tastes did. Often quarrelsome with directors, producers, and costars, he was a frequent no-show on the set. He was irresponsible in his off hours as well. His romantic life was something of a scandal, and he was a famously bad driver, often wrecking the fabulous cars—at one time he was said to



*Stepin Fetchit's "shuffling, inarticulate, bone-lazy" movie persona came to symbolize Hollywood's contemptible depiction of blacks, but his offscreen self was entirely the opposite.*

own a dozen—in which he showboated around Los Angeles and New York. He ran through the \$2 million he earned in his brief glory years as fast as it came in. To put the matter simply, he was, from the studios' point of view, more trouble than he was worth.

Yet I agree with Mel Watkins, a former *New York Times Book Review* editor, that it's time to reevaluate Step's image and accomplishments. I wish Watkins had managed this task more gracefully—his book is at once repetitive and digressive, as well as tiresomely written—but still, he makes the points that need to be made.

To begin with, Stepin Fetchit didn't invent the feckless figure he made famous. The figure was, as Watkins observes, a traditional comic construct, and not just in shows aimed at white audiences; literally hundreds of actors portrayed him on the all-black "race" circuit where Step broke in during the 1920s. Watkins has understandable difficulties tracing the actor's itinerary in these years, but he makes it very clear that this was the lowest, most exploitative branch of show business: Working conditions were unspeakable, performers were routinely stranded or cheated out of their salaries, and, when

they played the South, they often had reason to fear for their lives. Step early on learned to survive—and to be both suspicious of and hostile toward the men who managed these circuits. He couldn't see how his later studio bosses were much different.

Nor could he see what was offensive about his screen character. And in his best movie years—the early 1930s—most blacks approvingly viewed him not as an accommodationist but as a model of rebelliousness in the passive-aggressive mode. As Watkins puts it, "Many blacks were perfectly aware of the running in-joke ('puttin' on old massa') that Fetchit deliberately enacted. . . . They were laughing at what he *purposefully intended* doing. Many whites, on the other hand, laughed at what . . . *appeared* to be a confirmation of a venerable Negro stereotype. For most blacks, it was ironic farce; for many whites, it was sociological verity."

Look at it this way: Whitey gives an absurd order or makes a ridiculous demand. Disobedience or outrage isn't an option. But Step can get away with a very slooow double take, one that communicates disbelief at the imposition, followed by an equally reluctant shuffle to obey, often accompanied by in-

## Current Books

comprehensible, doubtless rebellious mumbblings. Watkins stops short of what I think should be said: Stepin Fetchit was in fact a brilliant subversive, who, in his moment, deployed the only weapons of protest available to a man of his race.

A master of comic timing, Step for a few years considered himself a star. He wasn't really, not in the sense of such leading white comics of his era as Will Rogers, with whom he appeared in two 1934 films, *David Harum* and *Judge Priest*. But he was at least a well-known character actor. He was at first widely admired by blacks, who in those days were desperate to see at least a few representatives of their race on the screen in any sort of prominent role. Later in the 1930s, of course, Bill Robinson and Hattie McDaniel achieved comparable recognition, in equally subsidiary but more easily lovable parts. They were menials but not grotesques, often able to talk sense to their white employers; Step, of course, could speak only nonsense to his.

Step's fall was almost as swift as his rise. The movies marginalized him a decade after discovering him, and the black press and the NAACP soon turned decisively against him. Starting in the 1930s, the NAACP in particular pressured Hollywood to portray blacks, in manner and aspiration, as virtually identical to middle-class whites. The organization's efforts culminated in an early-1950s campaign, prompted chiefly by TV's *Amos 'n' Andy*,

against any portrayal of blacks as "inferior, lazy, dumb, and dishonest."

Step settled in Chicago and returned to his show biz roots—mainly working noisome clip and strip joints in the Midwest, doing standup routines containing a certain amount of the overtly transgressive material that younger black comedians were beginning to offer. He got a few small movie roles—not enough to constitute a comeback—and came to be admired by the likes of Flip Wilson and, of all people, Muhammad Ali, whose entourage he briefly joined as "strategic adviser." But he lost a defamation case against CBS for its very careless characterization of him in a TV documentary, and in 1976 he was felled by a massive stroke. He spent his remaining years in hospitals and nursing homes—proud, angry, but essentially irrational.

Shortly after the stroke, the NAACP's Hollywood chapter gave him a special award for his "contribution" to the "evolution" of black cinema, but that did little to assuage the spirit of a permanently misunderstood actor. By then, the studios that had once exploited him were excising much of his best work from the extant prints of films. Whatever his failings as an artful biographer, Watkins reminds us that Stepin Fetchit once lived large and was, at his best, an outrageously funny American citizen.

>RICHARD SCHICKEL, a longtime film critic for *Time*, is the author of many books, including *Harold Lloyd (1974)*, *D. W. Griffith (1984)*, *Clint Eastwood (1996)*, and *Elia Kazan (2005)*.

## ARTS & LETTERS

**THE WORLD ON SUNDAY:**  
*Graphic Art in Joseph Pulitzer's Newspaper (1898–1911).*

By Nicholson Baker and Margaret Brentano. Bulfinch Press. 134 pp. \$50

We think that we advance. Instead, we merely abandon the beauty of the past. Nothing illustrates this better than *The World on Sunday*, a magnificent coffee-table volume.

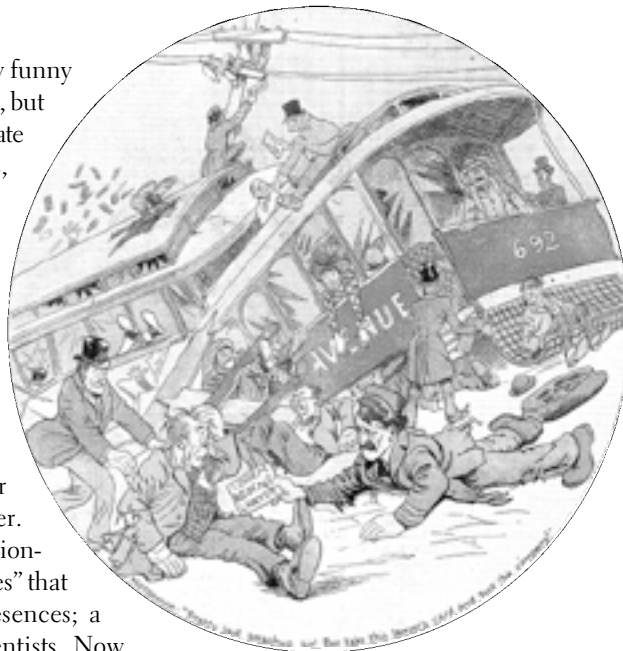
Joseph Pulitzer's New York *World* once a week became *THE GREAT SUNDAY WORLD*, a supplement-stuffed extravaganza that, as Nicholson Baker puts it, "weighed as much as

a small roast beef," and introduced the worthy bourgeois custom of lounging over the Sunday papers. Baker and Margaret Brentano reproduce material published between 1898, when the *World* installed a "marvellous" color printing press, and 1911, when Pulitzer died. With intelligent and insightful captions by Brentano, we see excerpts from nearly every section of the newspaper, including the classifieds and department store ads, but most of the selections originate—and rightly so—in the magazine and the humor section: one sumptuous, antic, multicolored spread after another, not

only a slew of very eccentric, very funny editorial cartoons and comic strips, but also breathless features that celebrate robber barons, Arctic explorers, bathing beauties, world's fairs, subways, skyscrapers, airships, and the most amazing phenomenon of the age, Teddy Roosevelt.

The *World* was a paper of record, at least in the United States, with its Sunday edition read by more than half a million Americans, yet its editors never lost their sense of giddy wonder. They sometimes slid into sensationalism—a spread on “spirit pictures” that purported to show spectral presences; a headline declaring that “Scientists Now Know Positively That There Are Thirsty People on Mars”; a lurid, warmongering cartoon on Spanish atrocities in Cuba. But even in the era of yellow journalism, the paper’s reporters dedicated a surprising amount of space to explaining the dizzying new world around them. The modern reader can still get absorbed by “The Busiest Hour on Earth”—a Manhattan rush hour—or the “12 New Americans Every Minute” passing through Ellis Island, or the way electricity was making Broadway “The Street That Knows No Night.”

The most striking element of all, and the one that most starkly distinguishes this ca. 1900 newspaper from its ca. 2000 counterpart, is the heady energy of the *World*’s graphics. The works of Pulitzer’s brilliant artists and designers epitomize what has nearly been lost in American popular culture: an idiosyncratic, nuanced, subjective vision. Consider a single illustration, and far from the best one: Dan W. Smith’s 1908 magazine cover about an upcoming carnival to celebrate the 10th birthday of the automobile. Smith depicts a luminous night scene at Columbus Circle, cars festooned with glowing Japanese lanterns and besieged by a crowd of eager swells. It’s like a Toulouse-Lautrec poster, the sort of cultural artifact that gives you a palpable desire to *be there*. Contrast it with what a Sunday magazine section might serve up today: a shapeless modern car, set against some vast and desolate landscape, perhaps with a skin-



*A typically elaborate Sunday World illustration skewers both trolley safety and the greed of “ambulance-chasing” lawyers.*

ny model standing alongside.

One finishes this book wishing only that Brentano’s captions had gone on a bit longer. But as Baker makes clear in his introduction, a large part of the goal behind *The World on Sunday* is to further the two authors’ crusade to rescue original periodicals and newspapers from those space-saving fanatics bent on mutilation and monochromatic microfilming. Baker laid out the argument in his 2001 book *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper*. Here, he and Brentano mostly let the *World* speak for itself, and it makes their case brilliantly.

—KEVIN BAKER

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**BOOKING PASSAGE:**

***We Irish and Americans.***

By Thomas Lynch. Norton.

296 pp. \$24.95

“Bits & Pieces” and “Odds & Ends” are the titles of two of the essays in *Booking Passage*, a collection by Irish-American poet and undertaker Thomas Lynch. They also describe the nature of this book, which meanders in many directions as Lynch explores the geography of his life, spiritual terrain included.

The organizing principle here is Lynch’s relationship with Ireland and the Irish. The

## Current Books

great-grandson of an earlier Thomas Lynch, who immigrated to Michigan in the 1890s, Lynch began investigating his Irish roots as a young man in the 1970s. His increasingly close relationship with a distant cousin led her, in 1992, to bequeath him the family homestead in Moveen, County Clare, where he now spends as much time as he can: “I count . . . thirty-some crossings in thirty-some years between my home in Michigan and my home in Moveen. I owe to both places my view of the world, my sense of myself, whatever I know about life and times.”

That knowledge is conveyed through an intimate voice and persuasive prose. The book starts out as a way for Lynch to “reconnect” his family with its Irish origins, through his “chronic, acute, and likely terminal” obsession with his Irish identity. And indeed, we are treated to a thoroughly researched account of Lynch family history. “Can the bigger picture be seen in the small?” he asks at one point, and, though no single Irish immigration size fits all stories, the Lynch saga is a convincing synecdoche.

Lynch’s book is especially strong where he passionately analyzes contemporary Ireland, with a sharp-eyed focus on the transformation of the Catholic Church’s place in Irish life. “Since 1970,” he writes, “everything here has changed. Ireland has gone from being the priest-ridden poor cousin of Western Europe to the roaring, secularized Celtic Tiger of the European Union.” “For the first time ever,” he adds, “the Irish have to contend with the perils of too much rather than too little.”

This process of secularization, he argues, has spelled doom for the church. Lynch expresses incisively the outrage of many Irish Catholics, in both Ireland and the United States, over the “self-inflicted” blows—the sex scandals above all—by which the church has lost its way. But what hits home most forcefully is an encounter with a priest who tells Lynch that his second marriage, performed in a courthouse, “has no standing in the eyes of God.” The priest, “giving out with the cant of a mind colonized by years of clericalism,” typifies a church that just doesn’t get it.

Lynch writes with perception and feeling about traditional Irish music (though, in his homage to the great concertina player Elizabeth Crotty, he erroneously suggests that she

composed such classics as “The Wind That Shakes the Barley”), and, as might be expected, he is always interesting and authoritative on the subject of death. Perhaps the best line in the book comes from a neighbor who, instead of expressing grief at news of a friend’s death, proclaims, “Fair play to Patsy. . . . He’s that tough job behind him, so.”

—TERENCE WINCH

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### AN AMERICAN THEATRE:

#### *The Story of Westport Country Playhouse.*

By Richard Somerset-Ward. Yale Univ. Press. 304 pp. \$39.95

The Westport Country Playhouse is one of the nation’s most venerable summer theaters. Through the doors of the old barn, still standing in an ever more expensive part of Connecticut, has passed a virtual history of 20th-century American theater. A battery of stars has appeared on stage there, and many a play has had its world premiere. Over the years, interns have included Tammy Grimes and Stephen Sondheim. Great theater minds have run the place: Lawrence Langner, patent attorney and theatrical visionary; James McKenzie, producer who always managed to find a way; and today, Joanne Woodward, who arrived on the scene in 2000, at ex-





actly the right time. Under her regime, the theater has undergone a major and much-needed renovation. As I write, the Westport Country Playhouse is about to open for its 75th season. May it have as exciting a future as it has a rich historical past.

The story begins with the redoubtable Langner, who founded the theater in 1931. The relationship between Langner and the Theatre Guild, the organization he started in 1919 with his wife, Armina Marshall, has been fairly well chronicled elsewhere. But Richard Somerset-Ward, the former head of music and arts programming for the BBC, establishes Langner as a truly memorable figure in both patent law and theater. Who knew that Langner was responsible for the National Inventors Council, which was run by Charles F. Kettering, a prolific inventor whose name is now most commonly associated with the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research? Or that Langner was behind the Connecticut Stratford Shakespeare Theatre? All this is well documented here, and it's fascinating.

Somerset-Ward tells wonderful stories about the Westport theater's early years: skunks in the venting system, housewives aggressively recruiting subscribers without

knowing what the shows would be, a midwestern intern mistaking the J. C. Penney in the Westport phone book (the man himself) for the store where she could buy tires, productions that provided the inspiration for not one but two of America's great musicals (*Oklahoma!* and *My Fair Lady*). You feel the ups and downs of summer theater, especially on a stage that started life in the countryside but became more and more easily commutable from Broadway. It's a marvel that the place is not only still standing but is poised for a whole new life.

While this book is loaded with facts and photographs, it's a pretty clunky read. Somerset-Ward seems determined to recount what he considers the most important factoids of each season at the playhouse, leaving the reader to slog through some not-very-interesting stories to get to the wonderful ones. There are also sidebars, biographical sketches, and other asides, some of which run on for pages.

But despite my reservations, I'm glad *An American Theatre* is with us. Institutions such as the Westport Country Playhouse are rare these days, and it's good to have a comprehensive history of this very important one.

—THEODORE S. CHAPIN

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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### *IN THE COMPANY OF CROWS AND RAVENS.*

By John M. Marzluff and Tony Angell.  
Yale Univ. Press. 384 pp. \$30

Sociable, brash, noisy, curious, deceitful, intelligent, garrulous, territorial, thieving, technologically advanced—does this description remind you of anyone? Crows and humans share large brains, complex socialization schemes, impressive vocabularies, and other attributes. They also share something else, according to John M. Marzluff, a professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington, and writer-artist Tony Angell: a long history of interconnection and mutual benefit. The authors' systematic exploration of this history is handsomely complemented by dozens of Angell's pen-and-ink drawings.

When prehistoric humans first learned to hunt, crows and other members of the corvid

family (including ravens, magpies, and jackdaws) probably began sticking close by, hopping and flopping around the kills, ready to carry off scraps. Other scavenger birds, nature's sanitation department, also congregate around humans, but none so attentively as crows. Seagulls and pigeons don't come as close, for instance, or observe our behavior as intently as do crows.

While crows have watched us, we've watched them too. Their funereal plumage, merciless gaze, and ghoulish habits have often suggested macabre connections, and they were once widely believed to transport souls to the afterworld. Yet corvids are also folk heroes, the artful tricksters in both Native American stories and *Aesop's Fables*. In 15th- and 16th-century England, crows were considered intelligent, resourceful, and responsible citizens, "legally protected from destruction because of the janitor-



*The Hawaiian Crow is an endangered species.*

ial services they performed on city streets.” But attitudes changed with the Great Fire of London in 1666, when crows and ravens feasted on charred bodies. King Charles II authorized the birds’ extermination, and the one-time model citizens became despised enemies.

Europeans brought this contempt to the New World, and it persists to this day. Crows are the sort of vermin we can freely slaughter. They’re never out of season; there *is* no season. As Marzluff and Angell point out, a crow hunt entails no respect or admiration—hunters don’t eat their corvid prey, or stuff and display the trophies. In the 1930s and ’40s, “fearful of disease, convinced of [crows’] negative effects on game and grain, and annoyed by their noise,” government workers in many states dynamited roosts, killing 26,000 crows in a single night in Oklahoma and 328,000 in a winter in Illinois.

Certainly the crow diet—including garbage, corn, and baby birds—strikes us as uncongenial. Marzluff and Angell, however, remind us that scavengers help reduce the spread of disease, claim that raccoons and snakes devour far more songbirds than crows do, and point out that crows eat insect pests too. (Crows also eat sparrows’ eggs and young, to the delight of some people and the dismay of others.)

Despite our best efforts, the American crow population is on the increase. Marzluff and Angell suggest that we’re ultimately responsible, through our alterations of the landscape. Crows thrive on cleared agricultural land, in suburbs, and in cities. (Ravens, which need wilderness, are in decline.) The more trash we create, the more crows have to pick over. They’re thus both effect and symbol of our crowded, noisy, wasteful urban habitats, speckled with landfills and Dumpsters.

But Marzluff and Angell explain that it’s relatively easy to evict backyard crows and usher in songbirds instead, just by careful planting. Crows love to socialize on open lawns, whereas songbirds prefer rustling around in dense shrubbery. “Our studies suggest that small lawns, less than about a quarter of an acre . . . , surrounded by trees and shrubs, though still used by robins, towhees, juncos, sparrows, and small children, are rarely used by crows.” And, of course, native shrubs and smaller lawns also reduce the need for pesticides, herbicides, and watering.

What a pleasure to learn that the tools for change are as close as the gardening trug. Maybe we can transform our small portions of the natural world into habitats not just for songbirds but for the selves we wish to be: intelligent, resourceful, responsible citizens.

—ROXANA ROBINSON

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**TERRORS OF THE TABLE:**

***The Curious History of Nutrition.***

By Walter Gratzer. Oxford Univ. Press. 304 pp. \$30

We are what we eat.

Right?

As readers of this exhaustive (and exhausting) historical survey must conclude, the science behind that simple proposition remains speculative and incomplete. Over the past two centuries, so many fine researchers were showered with honors and titles and awards for getting the science totally wrong. One hundred years from now, people will look back on our nutritional pieties and marvel: They thought red meat was bad for you? They forced themselves to drink soymilk?

Gratzer, an emeritus professor at Kings College, London, loves human folly. His other books, *The Undergrowth of Science: Delusion, Self-Deception, and Human Frailty* (2000) and *The Oxford Book of Scientific Anecdotes* (2002), lead naturally to this volume, which follows the trail of mostly wrong ideas from the 18th century to the present, with a nod to the Greeks and Romans. Gratzer is justifiably fascinated by the cranks and crackpots who profited wildly from poisonous or useless elixirs, and by the earnest scientists who sacrificed their health and sanity—and the health and sanity of others—to better understand our nutritional needs. Take the 18th-century Italian abbot Lazzaro Spallanzani, who, for three days at a stretch, would hold tubes of minced meat and animals' gastric juices under his armpits, to simulate digestion.

My favorite crackpot—American, naturally—was Horace Fletcher, the Great Masticator, who launched a fad that swept the United States and Europe at the turn of the 20th century: Chew each bite 32 times, he proclaimed, and you will enjoy perfect health. “Chewing parties became popular in fashionable circles,” writes Gratzer. “These ‘munchcons,’ in which the participants were enjoined to chew with their heads low over the plate so that the tongue could hang down, were often coordinated by a conductor, who timed the mastication of each mouthful and rang a bell or struck a gong when the moment came to swallow.”

Among Fletcher's followers was Henry James—no wonder he chewed over everything so endlessly in his prose.

Though Gratzer appears more interested in anecdotes than in theory, you can't read this book without spotting a theme: We blame psychology and environment for everything, until science comes up with the real cause. Scurvy, blight of the 18th-century sailor, was attributed to low morale, bad air, and all kinds of other folderol, until it was finally proved to be a vitamin C deficiency. Gratzer's chapter on scurvy is especially painful to read, because doctors came so close, so many times, to understanding the disease, only to be thrown off the trail by making one false move, such as boiling lemon juice so it would keep better on long voyages, which sapped it of vitamin C.

Though our scientific knowledge has grown, the human body remains a vastly complex machine, making us prey to all kinds of dietary come-ons, along with what Gratzer calls “the higher quackery” of the pharmaceutical industry. Do we need anti-cholesterol drugs? Are we getting fatter because of what we eat, or are we eating more because we're getting fat from some other cause? Is too much salt bad? “People have such fear of food,” I heard Julia Child exclaim in a radio interview in 1992. Warning: This entertainingly scary book, especially the chapters on additives then and now, should make us all afraid.

—A. J. LOFTIN

## CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

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**CHASING THE RODEO:  
*On Wild Rides and Big Dreams,  
Broken Hearts and Broken Bones,  
and One Man's Search for the West.***

By W. K. Stratton. Harcourt.  
326 pp. \$25

Decades after his parents met at a rodeo in Guthrie, Oklahoma, and had a brief fling, W. K. Stratton sets out to explore the world of his father, whom he never laid eyes on. All he knows is that Cowboy Don, as his father was known, was a “rodeo bum,” the sort of man who wrangles stock and pitches hay and then blows his cash to enter rodeo events he never wins.

The quest to comprehend his father is awkwardly saddled to the book's feature attraction: the rodeos Stratton himself attends, from the mega-sized Cheyenne Frontier Days in Wyoming, to an event in tiny Leakey, Texas, where kids ride sheep in a “mutton bustin'” competition. As he tours the country's arenas, he struggles to define the authentic spirit of the rodeo and to reconcile its hardscrabble past with its glitzy future, at least as envisioned by corporate sponsors and PR spinmeisters. In Cheyenne, bulls and riders are nearly upstaged by pyrotechnic explosions and throbbing techno—yes, techno—music.



*A bareback bronc competitor takes a short, violent ride at the Cheyenne Frontier Days rodeo.*

Stratton scorns the dentists and insurance agents who “cowboy up,” tool around in four-wheel-drive pickups, and two-step at country-lite nightclubs. Yet he’s uneasily aware that, though raised in boots and a western hat, he’s now a cubicle dweller, a writer (not a *rider*, as he repeatedly clarifies during his travels), and very much a spectator. He gets the icons—country singer Willie Nelson keeps popping up like a mascot. He gets the red-state patriotism that brings crowds to their feet for Toby Keith’s song “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue (The Angry American).” He even gets his butt squeezed by a “cowboy bunny” groupie. But he doesn’t ever convey the texture of the rodeo life. *Chasing the Rodeo* is written from the stands.

My own father, for four years starting when he was 18, rode bulls and saddle broncs on the rodeo circuit; he managed to make a living during lucky stretches, and sometimes he still wears the first-place silver belt buckle he won for saddle bronc riding in 1953. He describes lean times, long miles, cantankerous companions, too much drinking, and a passionate obsession with the next ride, tempered with enough quiet dread to

produce “the leak of fear”—cowboys often have to relieve themselves three or four times shortly before their numbers are called. When Bill Lawrence, a stoic saddle-bronc star at the time, rested his boot on the corral fence before a ride, his foot jumped so nervously that his spur rowel jingled a continuous tune. My dad left rodeoing after a bronc bucked him off and jumped on him, badly injuring his head and back, and we attended only a handful of rodeos when I was a kid. He says he never has liked to watch other folks dance.

Times have changed enough that now rodeo competitors can earn big purses and sign up for health insurance. But sweat smells the same. Cowboys don’t talk much about the fear they have every time they lower themselves into the chute and give the nod, or what exactly enables them to overcome it. For a portrait of their life, though, I’m waiting for a book with jittery rowels and bull riders with mangled front teeth, in which a cowboy passes up a seductive woman outside Bartlesville, Oklahoma, so he can make Waxahachie, Texas, in time for tomorrow’s rodeo.

— SARAH L. COURTEAU

# HISTORY

***SOLDIERS TO CITIZENS:  
The GI Bill and the Making of the  
Greatest Generation.***

By Suzanne Mettler. Oxford Univ. Press. 252 pp. \$30

It's difficult to imagine how many postwar Americans would have made the leap from working class to middle class without the GI Bill. The educational funding made the dream of college a reality for millions of veterans, and the guaranteed low-interest loans allowed thousands of young couples to become homeowners for the first time. In *Soldiers to Citizens*, Suzanne Mettler argues that the legislation bestowed a less tangible benefit too: Veterans became more active citizens.

Mettler, a professor of political science at Syracuse University, documents her case primarily through a survey she conducted of 1,500 former GIs, and follow-up interviews with 28 of them. "Those veterans who utilized the provisions [of the GI Bill] became more active citizens in public life in the postwar years than those who did not," she reports. GI Bill beneficiaries were more likely to join fraternal organizations, labor unions, and service groups such as the Lions and Rotary International. Participation in those organizations made politics more accessible by teaching members about public issues and introducing them to office seekers.

Thanks in part to this experience, veterans who took advantage of the GI Bill were more likely to vote and to run for office.

Participation in civic groups didn't just make veterans better informed and more engaged; it prodded them to become more progressive, Mettler believes. Many of these groups brought together citizens of diverse social backgrounds, and better-off veterans became more sensitive to the plight of the underprivileged. "Such associationalism," she writes, "may help explain why public officials of the postwar era, who were themselves active in such organizations, were more responsive to the needs of average Americans than has been the case in recent decades."

Mettler has done a lot of spadework, and she generally supports her thesis that the GI Bill contributed to the so-called golden age of civic participation. Still, some of her reasoning seems a bit of a stretch. Her assertion that mingling at community events helped foster a more progressive politics is a case in point: Few civic organizations of the 1950s qualified as melting pots of ethnicity and class.

Though the book is laden with data and dry prose, the reminiscences of the veterans themselves make for engaging reading. Take the story of Henry Hervey, an African American and former Tuskegee Airman who attended Northwestern University on the GI Bill. After papering Chicago banks with résumés, he was



*Returning World War II veterans take advantage of GI Bill benefits at the University of Washington in 1946.*

offered work only as a mailroom clerk or janitor — "the same job offer I would have gotten if I had not gone to college." Hervey, concluding that the status quo needed shaking up, became a civil rights activist.

In its broad reach and magnanimous terms, the GI Bill — which celebrated its half-century anniversary last year — has no parallel on the U.S. political landscape today. A postsecondary education has become increasingly important, yet many students find college almost impossible to finance. Mettler reminds us that the last time we expanded the educational horizons of young Americans, and gave generously to them, they responded in kind.

—ALEXANDRA STARR

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**THE FAILURE OF THE FOUNDERS:**  
*Jefferson, Marshall, and the Rise of Presidential Democracy.*

By Bruce Ackerman. Harvard Univ. Press. 384 pp. \$29.95

Thomas Jefferson played a leading role in two of the great moments in the founding of the United States. First, he wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776, with help from John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Second, as the winner of the presidential election of 1800, he presided over the nation's first transfer of power from one party to another, from John Adams's Federalists to Jefferson's own Republicans. But in a third great moment—the framing of the Constitution in 1787—Jefferson has generally been deemed a nonplayer, far offstage as ambassador to France.

In the hands of Bruce Ackerman, however, Jefferson becomes the lead author of the American constitution—not the 1787 one, but its far superior successor of 1800. Ackerman, a professor of law and political science at Yale University, defines constitution making broadly, to include epochal moments when “We the People” exert our collective will to craft a “higher law” to govern the country—an idea he introduced at length in two earlier books, *We the People: Foundations* (1991) and *We the People: Transformations* (1998). When “We the People” declare a new tenet of higher law, there's no need for recourse to the cumbersome amendment process specified in the Constitution; instead, the Supreme Court recognizes the popular mandate of a victorious president and, through judicial rulings, stitches it into “the fabric of our higher law.” Though the phrases of the Constitution may be unchanged, they take on new meanings.

According to Ackerman, by electing Jefferson, the people implicitly enacted a new constitution in 1800—one giving precedence to “presidents claiming a popular mandate on the basis of their party's nationwide victory,” in contrast with the Constitution of 1787, which “gives center stage to congressional notables.” Ackerman makes no secret of his preference, repeatedly referring to the Constitution of 1787 and its framers as “stupid” and “silly” (for failing to anticipate operational problems with the

Constitution as well as political and social developments), and to the participants in the creation of the Jeffersonian constitution as “statesmen.” Which is not to say that there are no villains in the saga. John Marshall, chief justice of the Supreme Court throughout Jefferson's presidency and for many years afterward, is cast as a power-hungry, blundering lackey during John Adams's final weeks in office, and thereafter as a devious and intransigent yet ultimately unsuccessful leader of the Federalist Party's efforts to undermine the Jeffersonian constitution.

Reading history by Ackerman is like reading politics by Hunter S. Thompson. There's undeniable genius—fresh insights into events, personalities, and trends. There's swing-from-the-heels outrageousness that ranges from entertaining to obnoxious. And there are moments when the strands of theory aren't strong enough to support the story line—for instance, Ackerman hasn't yet settled on one set of convincing criteria for recognizing these epochal constitutional moments, an unavoidable obligation for his next book. The result is an engaging collection of discoveries, anecdotes, imaginings, and diatribes that's well worth reading, even though the parts don't quite coalesce into an entirely persuasive whole—at least pending his next volume.

—ROSS E. DAVIES

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**HEROES:**  
*Saviors, Traitors, and Supermen—A History of Hero-Worship.*

By Lucy Hughes-Hallett. Knopf. 496 pp. \$30

With his streaming hair and virile good looks, clad in his signature attire—a splendid red shirt topped by a poncho—Giuseppe Garibaldi swept into 19th-century Italy like a hero from a medieval romance. His timing, as befits a hero, was perfect. As uprisings flared from Milan to Sicily, Italians were waiting for a redeemer. Garibaldi was their man.

Except he wasn't: After skirmishing with the Austrians near Lake Como for a few weeks, most of his troops defected and he gave up. But no matter, writes Lucy Hughes-Hallett: “The man who dared to defy the might of an empire with his little band of poorly equipped men had proved himself worthy of the great role allotted

him.” Garibaldi was to experience many such defeats, but, combined with his extraordinary personal magnetism, they fed his myth, until all of Europe was enraptured. When he visited London in 1864, half a million people met his train. The crowd rushed against it with such force that the walls were torn off and the train fell apart.

No previous hero was a more popular celebrity than Garibaldi—only the fifth-century B.C. Athenian general Alcibiades could compete with him in glamour. Yet the public trivialized Garibaldi’s true claim to greatness, his unselfish devotion to the cause of Italian nationalism, and instead saw him as a sex symbol and even a marketing tool (his image helped sell Garibaldi biscuits).

The author, a critic for *The Sunday Times* of London, assembles the lives of eight men who stood in glorious, sometimes menacing isolation from their peers. Heroic status depended as much on the vagaries of public perception as on the hero’s own deeds; in some cases, perception trumped reality altogether. Just as Garibaldi’s heroism was widely misconstrued, that of others was simply manufactured. The 11th-century Spaniard El Cid (Rodrigo Díaz) and the 16th-century Briton Sir Francis Drake were self-serving mercenaries who, thanks to patriotic whitewashing, came to be hailed as national heroes after death.

Whereas these men had a seductive edge of danger, a touch of Achilles’ divine rage, Albrecht von Wallenstein, commander of the Holy Roman Emperor’s armies during the Thirty Years’ War in the 17th century, was wholly, savagely terrifying. “As a teenage student he was nicknamed ‘Mad Wallenstein.’ . . . He was one of a group who set upon a local man in the street and killed him.” The adult Wallenstein learned to hide his emotions, a talent that made him inscrutable and, hence, even more frightening. It was widely believed

that he had made a Faustian pact to ensure his invincibility in battle.

Each of the men spotlighted here was thought, in his day, to be capable of a feat that no one else could pull off. Only Alcibiades could save Athens, its people judged, even though they had once condemned him to death for sacrilege. Wallenstein alone could defend the enormous and unstable Holy Roman Empire.

In its subject and basic structure, Hughes-Hallett’s book recalls Thomas Carlyle’s lecture series *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, published in 1841. Carlyle’s “great man” theory of history fell out of fashion long ago, and the author doesn’t seek to revive it. Instead, she finds a deep ambivalence in hero worship. Heroism, she points out, is radically anti-democratic. The hero stands apart from common humanity by his gifts, whether they’re authentic or fictional. And the 20th century proved with dreadful clarity the link between the cult of the hero and authoritarianism. Adolf Hitler, invoking Wallenstein, scorned “half-measures,” while Benito Mussolini, who assumed Garibaldi’s epithet *il Duce*, declared, “Better to live one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep.”

Hughes-Hallett is a wonderful writer, and these stories—often-byzantine narratives of reversals and comebacks, schemes and counterschemes—are carried by the graceful vigor of her prose. Even so, *Heroes* feels overlong. One chapter in particular is compromised by the murkiness of the historical record: El Cid never comes fully to life. But these are minor flaws in a book that is otherwise thrilling and captivating. In the end, Hughes-Hallett rejects the lethally seductive Achilles for his Homeric foil, Odysseus, “a person heroic enough not to die but to live.”

—AMANDA KOLSON HURLEY

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### *WHO SHALL LEAD THEM?*

#### *The Future of Ministry in America.*

By Larry Witham. Oxford Univ. Press.  
246 pp. \$26

Based on reams of sociological data, *Who Shall Lead Them?* paints an expansive portrait

of America’s Protestant and Catholic clergy. Journalist Larry Witham examines the personal, theological, and societal challenges that today’s pastors confront, as well as the resourcefulness and commitment that many of them exhibit in undertaking what must rank as

## Current Books

one of the most arduous and ill-defined jobs in American society. Notwithstanding the book's subtitle, readers are generally left on their own to anticipate what the future holds, but Witham does succeed in providing a comprehensive, historically informed, and heavily empirical (if somewhat breathless) overview of the major concerns.

Among those concerns: long hours (53 per week for Catholic priests, 46 for Protestant ministers); denominational conflicts over the place of women and of gays and lesbians in the ministry; periodic congregational conflicts over leadership, sermons, or financial and social skills, which can result in a pastor's ouster; the diminished financial contributions to churches, and by extension the diminished resources available to clergy (40 percent of Southern Baptist pastors now hold separate jobs and preach on weekends); and, of course, the lingering fallout from the sex-abuse scandals. Add to this list the inevitable and longstanding conflicts that swirl over pastoral substance and style: Should clergy engage in political speech and activism? Can clergy be sectarian and ecumenical? Should the pastor be a leader or a servant?

The last question may be among the most crucial. Interestingly, Witham shows, a majority of clergy prefer a style of pastoral leadership that encourages lay participation and collaboration in decision making, especially in smaller congregations. Collaborative decision making these days is supplanting top-down managerial culture in many realms, even on Wall Street. But there's an important difference: A corporation's objectives, profit above all, are straightforward and clear-cut, whereas those of a pastoral ministry are amorphous and often mutually incompatible. A pastor must be preacher, biblical interpreter, liturgical expert, counselor, social activist, building manager, and financial planner. Which of these roles can be outsourced to laity and which cannot? If lay members are capable of assuming many of these tasks, what's left to prop up the sanctity of pastors?

Witham agrees that clergy must in some sense stand apart. "Just as ministry begins with the call," he writes, "it must keep some semblance of that divine connection, search, or faith throughout. Without this, clergy agree, ministry itself loses its integrity, and ministers

lose the power to be examples." For Protestant and Catholic churches alike, then, the major challenge of the future will be to define which elements must remain truly sacred.

—MICHELE DILLON

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### *WHAT IS THE GOOD LIFE?*

By Luc Ferry. Trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane. Univ. of Chicago Press. 320 pp. \$45

Contemplatives since the ancient Greek philosopher Thales have been pondering the question, What is the good life? Sages traditionally linked the good life to a reality outside the self, a reality that needed to be discovered. With the triumph of materialism in the 17th century, though, came the conviction that there's nothing beyond or behind individual experience.

Because there are no objective truths about human existence, we're free—or doomed—to create our own conception of the good life. We don't discover the good life; we invent it.

In this elegantly written but complicated work, Luc Ferry, the former education minister of France, attempts to resuscitate interest in what used to be the fundamental question of the philosophical enterprise. At the center of the text are several rich chapters on Nietzsche, a pivotal figure who vehemently rejects belief in a world beyond the scenes and yet cannot entirely talk himself out of a sense of connection to something eternal and absolute.

Looking to earlier thinkers who found ultimate meaning outside themselves, Ferry struggles to separate wisdom about the good life from metaphysical commitments, which he deems untenable. For example, the Stoics believed that happiness inhered in first coming to know the order of the universe and then bringing your life into harmony with it. An agnostic, Ferry wants to ignore the quasi-mystical idea of an underlying cosmological order and yet assimilate the Stoic lesson that living well has something to do with achieving harmony with the world.

Ferry also attempts to make the intriguing but difficult argument that transcendence exists within the immanence of human consciousness. Even granting that there is, so to speak, no main beam of existence outside the self, he says, the nature of the good life is still



something that we must discern, rather than invent. Moreover, glimmers of that life can be detected within the contours of our own experience: Ideals such as liberty “continue to seem superior to us and external to us, as they did in the time of religions, even when we reject the metaphysical framework that once permitted us to ground them on some sort of ultimate foundation.” Fascinating as it may be, this line

of reasoning falls short of the lucidity that characterizes the rest of the text.

In the end, Ferry boldly attempts to bring the intellectual traditions of humanism, religion, and materialism into dialogue with one another. At a time when most academic philosophy is technical and trivial, this volume stands apart.

—GORDON MARINO

## CONTRIBUTORS

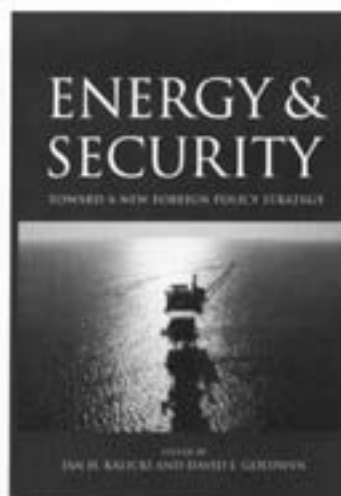
**Kevin Baker** is the author of a trilogy of historical novels set in New York City: *Dreamland* (1999), *Paradise Alley* (2002), and *Strivers Row*, to be published next spring. **Theodore S. Chapin**, the author of *Everything Was Possible: The Birth of the Musical Follies* (2003), is president of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization in New York. **Sarah L. Courteau** is associate editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*. **Ross E. Davies** is a law professor at George Mason University and the editor of *The Green Bag: An Entertaining Journal of Law*. **Michele Dillon** is a sociologist of religion at the University of New Hampshire. **Amanda Kolson Hurley** is associate editor of *Preservation* magazine and the author of *Catullus* (2004). **A. J. Loftin** is a writer and editor living in New York City. **Gordon Marino**, a professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College, is the coeditor of *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (1997) and the editor of *Basic Writings of Existentialism* (2004). **Roxana Robinson** is the author of a biography, three novels, and three collections of short fiction, including the newly published *A Perfect Stranger and Other Stories*. **Alexandra Starr**, a former Capitol Hill correspondent for *BusinessWeek*, has written for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic*, and *The New York Times*. **Terence Winch**, the son of Irish immigrants, is the author of a book of short stories, three books of poems, and, most recently, a collection of nonfiction stories, *That Special Place: New World Irish Stories* (2004).

**Credits** Cover, p. 49, *The Catchers in the Rye* (2001) by Zhong Biao, oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm, 51.2 x 38.2 inches, Art Scene China ([www.artscenechina.com](http://www.artscenechina.com)), Shanghai; p. 13, left, Photo by Peter Stackpole/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images; p. 13, right, © Larry Downing/Reuters/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; p. 14, NASA; p. 17, AP Photo/Stephen J. Carrera; pp. 18–19, Courtesy of *The Muslim Journal*, photo by Haroon Raja'ee; p. 25, © Olson Scott/Corbis/Sygma, All Rights Reserved; p. 29, Photo by CBS Photo Archive/Getty Images; p. 31, NBC-TV/The Kobal Collection; p. 32, Photo © 2005 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., All Rights Reserved; p. 33, ©1997 King of the Hill, All Rights Reserved, ©1997 Fox Broadcasting; p. 37, © Arben Celi/Reuters/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; p. 40, AFP Photo/Nikola Besevic; p. 43, Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images; p. 44–45, p. 45, inset, Courtesy of the Concord Free Library; pp. 46–47, AP Photo/Nick Ut; pp. 50–51, © Claro Cortes IV/Reuters/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; pp. 54–55, © Kadir van Lohuizen/Agence Vu; p. 57, AP Photo; p. 59, AFP Photo/Frederic J. Brown; p. 63, FeatureChina/Jerry Lu; pp. 66–67, © Carl de Keyser/Magnum Photos; p. 69, Photo by Greig Cranna; p. 73, Courtesy of Anne F. Thurston; p. 77, Photo by Andrew Wong/Getty Images; pp. 80–81, © Historical Picture Archive/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; p. 86, © Owen Franken/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; p. 93, Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images; p. 97, © Bettmann/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; p. 101, James King-Holmes/Science Photo Library; p. 105, Photo by Evening Standard/Getty Images; p. 106, Photo by GPO via Getty Images; p. 110, Courtesy of Eudora Welty House, Jackson, Mississippi; p. 115, © John Springer Collection/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; p. 117, Reproduced from *The World on Sunday*, by Nicholson Baker and Margaret Brentano, published by Bulfinch Press; p. 118, Courtesy of Yale University Press; p. 120, Illustration by Tony Angell, Courtesy of Yale University Press; p. 122, Photo by Michael Smith/Getty Images; p. 123, © Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection; Museum of History and Industry/Corbis, All Rights Reserved; p. 128, Courtesy of the National SCRABBLE® Association.

## PORTRAIT: Alfred Mosher Butts



The inventor of Scrabble, the word game that has colonized American culture, was no wordsmith himself. Alfred Mosher Butts (1899–1993), shown here circa 1983, had been downsized at a New York architecture firm during the Depression when he came up with the idea. He counted letters in *New York Times* articles and other sources to arrive at the letter distribution and repeatedly tested the game, dubbed Lexiko and then Criss-Cross Words, on his wife, Nina. In 1947 Butts partnered with entrepreneur James Brunot, who hit upon the name “Scrabble.” Slowly, the game gained popularity. In 1953, Selchow & Righter Company bought the licensing rights. The next year, sales hit nearly four million sets, and today, one in three American homes has a Scrabble set. Butts died in 1993, suffering from dementia but still able to recall that his wife had once played the word “quixotic” for 284 points.



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