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by Allister Sparks

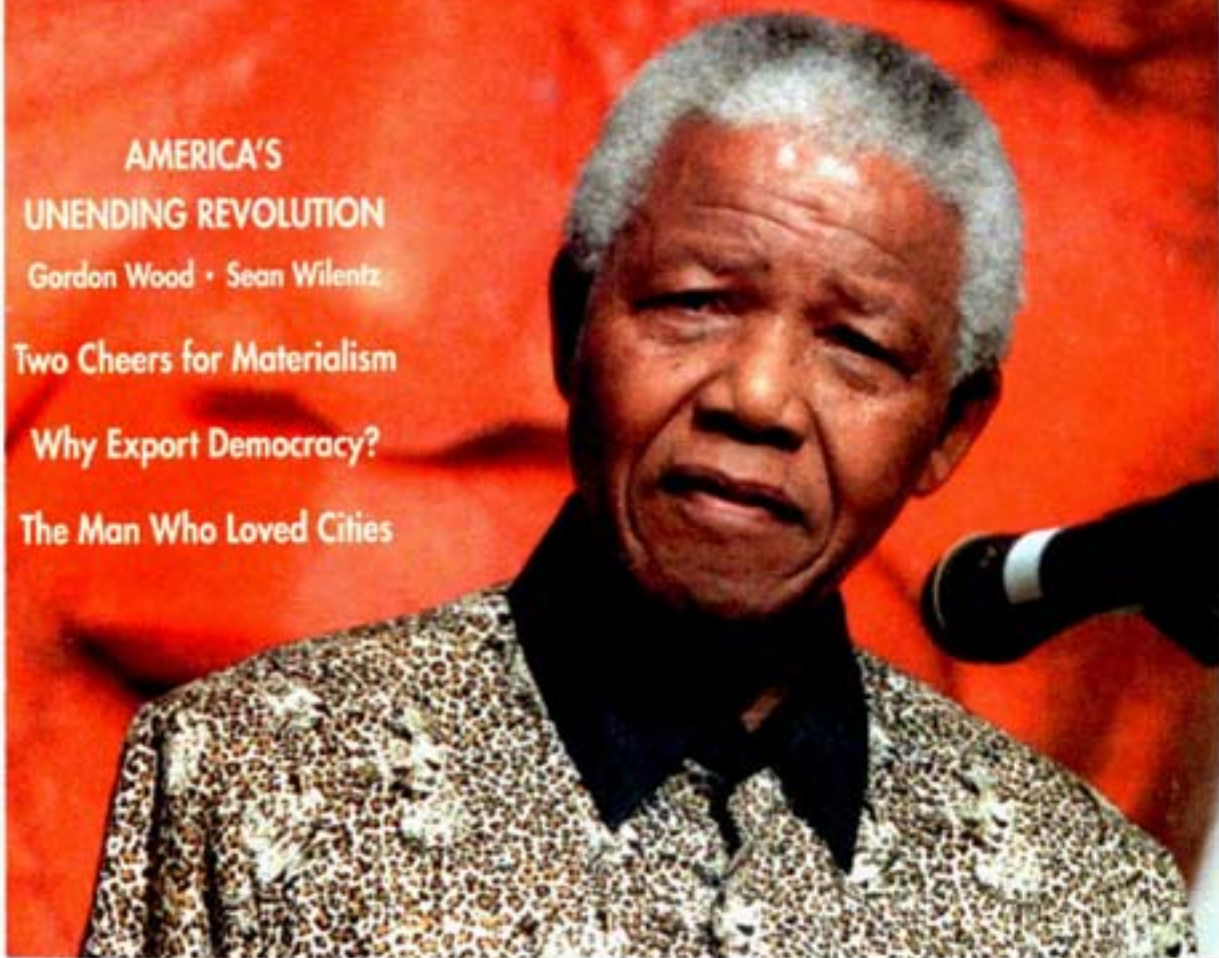
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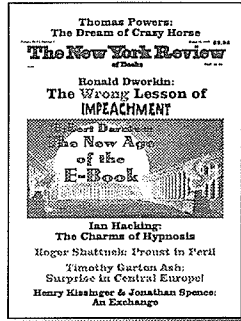
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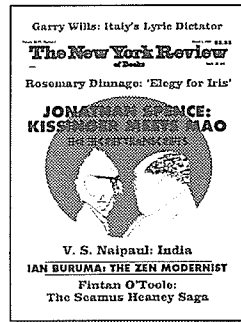
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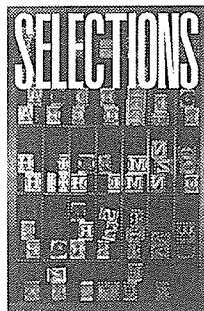
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

A new era is beginning at the Wilson Center, under the vigorous leadership of Lee Hamilton (see his "From the Center," p. 144), and here at the *WQ*.

In the future, *WQ* readers will see a variety of alterations, adjustments, and course corrections; a few are already visible in this issue. There will be a renewed emphasis on public questions—on those issues in the realm of politics and culture, religion, science, and other fields that bear upon our common life. Our commitment to pursuing the larger historical and cultural context of present-day concerns will remain at the heart of our efforts. At the same time, we will present a greater number of shorter offerings, better proportioned to the lives of busy, engaged readers.

I am very mindful of the special responsibilities the editor of this magazine bears. The *WQ* is not only a vehicle for ideas and information; it serves a community of readers, a community committed to the spirited pursuit of ideas, free of jargon, cant, and strident ideology. That community owes a great debt of gratitude to Jay Tolson, whose imaginative leadership during nine years as editor won the *WQ* national recognition as a unique quarterly magazine of ideas for a general audience. Now at *U.S. News & World Report*, he remains on our masthead as editor-at-large, and we count on him, as we do all other members of the *WQ* community, for comments, suggestions, and criticisms.

One of my first duties is a sad one, for I must report the loss of two members of the *WQ*'s circle. Charles Blitzer, director of the Wilson Center from 1988 to 1997, led the Center to its new home in the Ronald Reagan Building. Frank McConnell, a professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara, was a long-time member of the *WQ*'s Board of Editorial Advisers and a valued contributor to our pages. To their families and friends we offer our deepest condolences.

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COVER Nelson Mandela, October 29, 1998 (Photo: Adil Bradlow/PictureNET Africa). Design by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden.

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Too Much Democracy?

I think Hugh Hecló overestimates the dangers that democratization has unleashed ["Hyperdemocracy," *WQ*, Winter '99]. Ironically, he proposes solutions so weak that they are sensible only because the problems he identifies are less severe than he imagines.

The problem: Has policy debate grown worse and worse, more raucous and less deliberative in the past decades? I am not persuaded. Was policy debate superior when a small group of willful men blocked American entry into the League of Nations? When congressional committee chairs and House speakers handled much of the nation's business without consulting their House colleagues, let alone the public? When Lyndon Johnson's "treatment," not deliberation, decided votes? When James Reston and Walter Lippmann were so cozy with politicians that they could write Senator Arthur Vandenberg's foreign policy address one day and report it as journalists the next? Just when, and how, were the good old days good?

The solutions: I agree that there is promise in civic journalism, deliberative polling, and improved public broadcasting, but these are major reforms only (a) if the news media are the prime movers, rather than prime exploiters, of hyperdemocracy, which is doubtful, and (b) if governmental and nonprofit initiatives in the media are a powerful counterweight to the commercial media, which they are not. Public journalism, with strong backing from foundations, has been undertaken by commercial media, to be sure. That is encouraging, but in most cases the media have adopted it as an add-on special project rather than a basis for rethinking their mission from the ground up.

On civic education: Hecló adopts too quickly the bromide that educators should teach that "rights" must be balanced with "responsibilities." The rights revolution has expanded and strengthened civic life, but this news has not spread to our civics classes. Just as students should learn how a bill becomes a law, they should also learn how a felt injustice becomes a complaint that leads to a lawsuit. People's jeal-

ousy of their rights can become narcissistic, but civic education would be better if it took rights more seriously, not less.

Michael Schudson
Dept. of Communication
University of California, San Diego
San Diego, Calif.

In "Hyperdemocracy," Hugh Hecló's sharp analysis, a sleeping phrase caught my eye: "political creativity." We need that, he says, or we'll keep undoing politics even as we open it up to startling effect. He's right: we have to invent before we can find "solutions" to hyperdemocracy. But suppose we make it stronger: we're in a race to invent politics (as public deliberation) at a faster rate than the consumers of that possibility can do their work. Hecló says so about the Internet. Hyperdemocracy will be there, setting up shop. Will anything else?

Here, I was gratified to see him mention public journalism, since I have pushed the idea myself. But I would have been gladder for a detailed account of how Hecló sees it and similar ideas coming together, in something like an alternative public culture, where the people who aren't served well by hyperdemocracy—the majority, he says—invent a more genuine kind, and make it work. What does that culture look like? Where would it be found? How can it have an effect? Hecló could tell us, I think, since he knows so well the spreading culture of hype. I'll look forward, then, to Part Two: deliberation's answer to hyperdemocracy. Part One was superb.

Jay Rosen
Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communications
New York University
New York, N.Y.

What Hugh Hecló says about current American politics is admirable, particularly his beautiful description of the many complacent cynics today who distrust government: "they naively trust in the ultimate unimportance of their distrust."

But partisanship is nowhere evident in

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Hecló's analysis. His view is that of the nonpartisan moderate disgusted at excessive contentiousness and anxious about not being able to combine with others like himself. But is not this moderation like the consumer citizenship he complains of? It wants to pick and choose among policies, to live off the extremes while denouncing them, and to avoid "any larger, more active political commitment" that would force him to take sides.

The cure for the narrow principles of interest activists is not in unprincipled moderation. It is in the broader principles of party activists, the Democrats who want more government with compassion, the Republicans who want less, with individual responsibility. If I read Hecló right, he is opposed to the Left, with its culture of complaint, and also to the consumerism of the libertarians. He needs to decide which of the two is worse and then ally with the other. Deliberation in our democracy is inevitably partisan. An active citizen must decide, in general, whom to oppose and whom to try to persuade. Less active citizens, always the majority in a

mass democracy, will not do this because they do not think things through. For all the luminous intelligence in this article, and despite the accuracy of his overall judgment, Hecló is in danger of becoming their spokesman.

Harvey C. Mansfield
William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

Hugh Hecló attempts to unify an otherwise thoughtful critique of current problems in American politics under an untenable thesis: that the cause of what ails American democracy—decreased political participation, increased public cynicism, and policy gridlock—is too much democracy.

But the fact that our schools no longer teach much in the way of citizenship, no longer discuss current events, and pay only lip service to mediating and training institutions for the democratic participation of the young is hardly a symptom of greater democracy. The fact that our politics is run by a small

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band of consultants, closeted in their offices analyzing polls and digging up dirt to use as advertising themes to manipulate the masses, is not a symptom of greater democracy. That our politics has been increasingly dominated by mobilized narrow interests at the expense of the larger public interest may be evidence of pluralism run amok, but not of greater democracy. That we have a media that has grown increasingly cynical and insufficiently informative is due in part to the abuses of democracy by some of our leaders and, in part, to uncontrolled technological changes and insufficient training of modern journalists. It is not democratic values but consumerism or libertarianism run rampant that put a higher value on a multiplicity of choices in the marketplace than on societal integration.

The things Hecló correctly identifies as democratic reform—the end of segregation, the enfranchisement of blacks and the young, the tumbling of registration barriers, the mobilization of women, the accessibility of the court system, greater openness in the political process—have been largely salutary and hardly a cause of democratic decline.

By mixing changes that promote democracy with those that erode it under the banner of “hyperdemocracy,” Hecló undermines both the logic of his argument and the seriousness of many of the issues he raises.

His remedies also suffer. No one would quarrel with the desirability of civic education and civic journalism. But it is, for instance, hard to see how the Public Broadcasting Service (which combined with C-SPAN and CNN has a combined viewership of approximately four percent of the electorate) is going either to reach a broader public or, by itself, restore interest in public affairs. And while the problems posed by campaigns dominated by paid televised advertising must be addressed, “free time” has always been a better slogan than a remedy, given constitutional constraints and other obstacles.

All of which is to suggest that Hecló has raised some important issues, but within a framework that points toward remedies that are not commensurate with the problems the American polity faces.

Curtis Gans
*Director, Committee for the Study
of the American Electorate
Washington, D.C.*

Raising America's Children

The soft, agnostic tone in Ann Hulbert's essay ["The Century of the Child," *WQ*, Winter '99] on the cyclic changes in expert advice to parents contrasts sharply with the shrill certainty of Judith Rich Harris's declaration that variation in parental actions and personality makes little or no contribution to the diverse characters young children develop ["How to Succeed in Childhood"]. But prescriptions for child rearing change with time because the psychological qualities that render the attainment of dignity, status, power, and wealth more probable in a given society do not remain stable over generations. Each parental generation tries to guess what traits its children will need 20 years later and attempts to nudge them in the right direction. The most popular child development experts are those prescient enough to articulate the prevailing behavioral trends, and who place a rational veneer on what is primarily an emotionally based, unconscious prophecy. As Hulbert notes correctly, experts track the mood of the community, they do not shape its opinion. But that truth means that parents who fail to promote the skills, beliefs, and defenses that will be adaptive two decades hence place serious burdens on their children. A deep flaw in Harris's argument is the stubborn fact that American parents who do not encourage language talents in the first five years, before peers have any influence, are likely to have adolescent sons and daughters who will doubt their dignity and sense of accomplishment.

Child-rearing recipes for parents are either incomplete or incorrect because families create private and emotional effects that cannot appear on any film record. The shame felt by the daughter of an alcoholic mother or the pride experienced by one whose mother was elected to a city council affects a child's beliefs about herself and, therefore, her expectations of the future.

The documented psychological differences between six-year-olds raised by parents who never finished high school and six-year-olds raised by college graduates are dramatic proof that parental habits, emotions, and actions matter. Now we have to figure out how those facts alter the directions given to the child by biology and the local social context.

*Jerome Kagan
Dept. of Psychology
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.*

Contemporary parents face serious challenges in adapting our child-rearing techniques to the new world roles of women, the declining work roles available to youth, the increased ethnic and racial diversity of America, the aging of our own parents, the prevalence of divorce and remarriage, and the pressures of a fast-paced, consumerist society marked by a growing gap between rich and poor. Many of these challenges cannot be solved by individual parents, no matter how many advice books we read; they require changes in our socioeconomic and political institutions.

One reason that child-rearing advice has been so contradictory and unhelpful over the ages is that childhood is not a fixed category that we simply need to teach parents to meet. It is a socially constructed relationship to citizenship rights and duties, to the institutions that organize obligation or redistribute income, and to the prevailing relations of age, class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Parents are most effective when they understand the constraints under which they operate and stop expecting to learn some magical formula that will transcend these.

The historical and cross-cultural record reveals that children can thrive within an astonishing variety of family forms and parenting arrangements, but only if they live in societies where adults make a commitment to the welfare of the entire next generation, not just to their own "flesh and blood." That's why Harris is correct to call our attention to our political and social priorities, not just our family ones. Maybe parents should spend as much time organizing for social change as we do reading parental advice manuals.

*Stephanie Coontz
Dept. of History
Evergreen State College
Olympia, Wash.*

Brazil's Current Crisis

Kenneth Maxwell ["The Two Brazils," *WQ*, Winter '99] has presented a concise but profound panorama of the Brazilian situation. I can only offer a few observations on how the politics of Brazil helped create the current fiscal crisis.

Maxwell notes that reform requires changing an "oligarchic style" of politics. Many of Brazil's political problems stem from political institutions that appear almost "hyperdemocratic"; they allow almost any significant political force to gain representation in the Congress while

simultaneously making it very difficult for political parties to serve their usual function: allowing groups of people with similar views to express their opinions and formulate programs. Brazil's legislative elections utilize a system known as open-list proportional representation. Because voters cast ballots for individual deputies rather than party lists, politics becomes individualized and parties become fragmented and weak. Deputies formally represent whole states, but in reality they represent evangelicals, landowners, civil servants, private hospitals, advocates of the death penalty, or whoever else has enough votes to elect a deputy and enough money to finance a campaign. Because deputies owe little or nothing to their parties, they often switch to other parties during their legislative terms and have little reason to vote with their party leaders unless they are swayed by pork barrel inducements. In conjunction with Brazilian federalism, this system allows parties to proliferate, so presidents are unlikely to have reliable bases of congressional support. This gridlock is likely only to worsen in the future because, as Maxwell correctly notes, the militancy of civil society is rising. Deputies seeking reelection will either bring home the pork or be thrown out of office.

Thanks to passage of a constitutional amendment allowing reelection, Fernando Henrique Cardoso is now beginning his second term. Maxwell regards this amendment as the major success of Cardoso's first term, but I have to wonder. It took two years to persuade the Congress to approve the amendment, and because the Brazilian Congress can deal with only one issue at a time, reforms of pension programs and public administration were delayed. This lost time worsened the state's fiscal deficit and contributed to the currency crisis of last January. Cardoso's rationale for the amendment rests on the greater power it would give him over Congress, but Brazilian politics doesn't really work that way. Pork barrel programs rent rather than buy the loyalty of deputies, so the deals have to be redone for each new issue. As his new term begins, Cardoso is already a lame duck, because parties are already looking to position themselves for the next presidential election, and they need to separate themselves from an administration that is leading the country into recession. It will be a long four years.

*Barry Ames
Andrew Mellon Professor of Comparative Politics
University of Pittsburgh
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FINDINGS

Reviving the Public Intellectual

The academic world has been in agony ever since Russell Jacoby blamed it a dozen years ago for the disappearance of freelance “public intellectuals” in the mold of Lewis Mumford and Edmund Wilson, unaffiliated thinkers who could speak with authority on a variety of public issues. “The missing intellectuals,” he wrote in *The Last Intellectuals* (1987), “are lost in the universities,” caught in the tender trap of tenure, overspecialization, and comfortable irrelevance.

So true! So true! wailed many academics. But what to do?

Now a Florida university has come up with the obvious solution: a new Ph.D. program. “The world’s first doctoral program for public intellectuals is being launched in the reviving Renaissance atmosphere of South Florida, where Spanish influences are playing a major role in shaping the new artistic and intellectual life of America,” says the announcement from Florida Atlantic University, in Boca Raton. The new doctoral program “will combine theoretical and concrete analysis, exploring historical, conceptual and practical relationships among areas such as public policy, mass media, literature, aesthetics, ethics, gender, culture and rhetoric.”

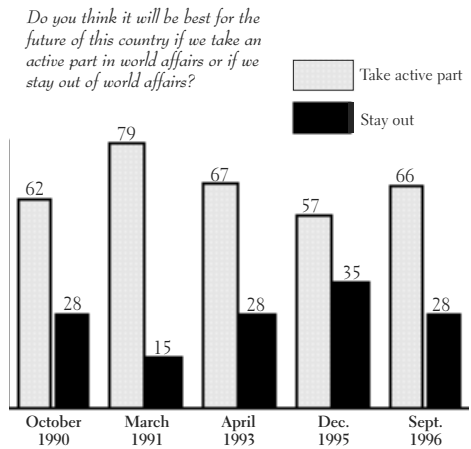
But all of the laments about the disappearing public intellectual strike Carlin Romano, literary critic of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, as absurd. The country already has plenty of potential members of the breed, able to comment intelligently on everything from the Balkans to the public schools. The problem, he asserts in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Feb. 19, 1999), is that they are ignored: the “‘prestige’ mass media do an appalling job of reporting and representing the flourishing intellectual culture of the United States.” Culture editors simply “don’t take the time to delve too deeply into academe.”

The media settle for *publicity intellectuals*, known quantities who have either thrust themselves into the limelight by relentlessly faxing and phoning their views to editors and reporters or have schmoozed their way to prominence on the Upper West Side of

Manhattan by forming contacts with writers and editors at the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and the *New York Review of Books*. It is a “back-scratching . . . system of favoring friends and neighbors that would draw damning editorials if run by politicians or businessmen,” Romano argues. The very people complaining most loudly about the disappearance of public intellectuals are the ones keeping them in the shadows.

What Neo-isolationism?

In surveys taken during the Cold War, Americans consistently agreed, by a roughly two-to-one margin, that the United States should take an active part in world affairs. In *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* (Brookings, 1999), authors Steven Kull and I. M. Destler show that, despite claims that neo-isolationism is now on the rise, Americans remain—by about the same margin—committed to engagement. At the same time, only 13 percent of those polled in 1996 wanted the United States to be the “preeminent world leader,” while 74 percent wanted it to do its “fair share in multilateral efforts” in the world.



How to Make a Nation

What makes a nation—a common language and ethnic identity, or strong political institutions? Criticizing the European Union in *Prospect* (Dec. 1998), writer and Wilson Center Fellow

Ian Buruma asks if institutions can bind a state together:

The best example of a multicultural, multilingual, multiethnic state is India. Muslims and other minorities in India do indeed have special legal rights. Muslims can choose to marry according to Muslim customary laws. These laws are not part of the Indian civil code, which is secular. But this solution is not perfect. Customary laws are used by conservative clerics to impose strict views on people who are too uneducated or too weak to resist them. Muslim women, for example, can easily be forced into marriages they do not want. Furthermore, the use of legal exceptions irritates members of the majority and can cause political unrest. Even though Hindus have their own customary laws, the “special treatment” for Muslims became a rallying point for the Hindu nationalist party, the BJP. The BJP wants to abolish customary laws; it maintains that India is a Hindu nation. [Philosopher Johann] Herder—and Margaret Thatcher—would say that this is only natural: the cultural majority claiming its national identity. And yet as soon as the BJP had a chance of becoming the ruling party in India, it dropped much of its Hindu chauvinist rhetoric in order to attract minority votes. Democracy proved stronger than cultural chauvinism.

Are democratic institutions alone enough to hold a state together? The Indian example shows that a liberal state can contain many peoples, with different cultures, languages and religions. However, although a state can consist of several nations, there are no examples of successful states without a dominant language, culture or religion. India is not a Hindu state, but it is impossible to imagine India without Hinduism.

Books and Digits

The eclipse of the “Gutenberg galaxy” has been predicted ever since the advent of electronic publishing. But sales of conventional books, those handy parcels of print between covers, are still thriving—thanks in part to such Internet outlets as Amazon.com. It turns out that there is no cyber versus paper face-off after all, Robert Darnton observes in the *New York Review of*

Books (March 18, 1999). If anything, the digitized book is languishing, no match for pages you can turn with your digits.

But Darnton, a historian of (among other things) reading, has discovered an ideal niche for the e-book: in scholarly publishing, where electronic text could be the answer to a growing economic—and academic—problem. Scholarly monographs have become “an endangered species,” say some, because



libraries, their budgets strained by the high price of periodical subscriptions, have cut orders drastically. (Over the past decade, library purchases of monographs have declined by almost a quarter; a subscription to *Brain Research*, for instance, costs \$15,203.) Thus fewer Ph.D. theses see the light of print. No book, no tenure—unless, Darnton proposes, electronic publishing steps in to deal with dissertations that deserve an audience.

He urges that e-monographs be carefully edited, reviewed, and produced in a technologically sophisticated way; dissertations should not merely be dumped onto the Web. “Veteran scholars” can help establish legitimacy for this new form, and Darnton writes as one ready to be a pioneer himself. “Instead of bloating the electronic book, I think it possible to structure it in layers arranged like a pyramid”: “a concise account of the subject” on top, expanded arguments next, documentation and commentary next, on down to a sixth layer of reader-editor-writer exchange. As he tells it, the e-book (really an a-b-c-d-e-f book) would be an adventurous bargain.

What Makes Technology Grow?

An excerpt from an essay by Paul M. Romer in *Outlook* (No. 1, 1998), Andersen Consulting's "journal on changing to be more successful." Romer is a Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a professor of economics in the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University.

The traffic was awful. The cabbie was rude. His radio blared music and static in equal measure. I faced at least an hour, maybe more, of jarring starts and stops. The long ride from the airport looked to be only a little less painful than spending the same amount of time under the dentist's drill.

Then I remembered that I had my portable compact disc player with me. (I bring it with me when I travel because I sometimes want to block out the noise of conversation on an airplane.) I slumped down, put on the headphones, closed my eyes, and concentrated on the achingly clear soprano of Loreena McKennitt. Everything changed. The ride was going to be less pleasant than a good meal with friends, but not by much.

As I appreciated the music, I realized that it was 50 years to the month since the invention of the transistor. This made me think once again about the kinds of changes I have seen in my lifetime.

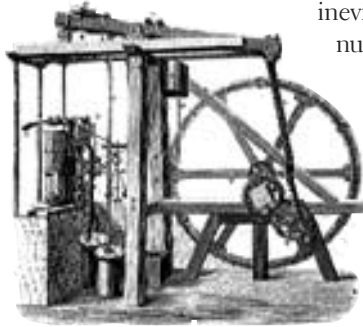
When I was a child, audio equipment was big, heavy, and expensive. It took 40 pounds of black transformers and glowing orange vacuum tubes to amplify a high-fidelity audio signal. Now, the transistor-based amplifier in my portable compact disc player weighs less than the two AA batteries that power it and costs less than one night in my hotel room in Manhattan.

As an economist, I frequently contemplate changes like these. Smaller and less expensive amplifiers are just one example of the countless improvements, large and small, in the standards of living that we have come to expect over time. One of the great intellectual challenges of our age is to understand the forces that generate these improvements.

I study an area of economics that tries to meet this challenge. This area, commonly referred to as New Growth Theory, has grown up in the last 15 years. It offers a perspective on economic growth that differs in important ways from the traditional view, suggesting that we cannot alter the rate of technological change. If we are even partly right, business leaders and government policymakers will need to rethink some of their basic assumptions about how they do their jobs.

In the past, social scientists and policymakers saw economic progress as the inevitable product of a small number of serendipitous discoveries. These discoveries, they believed, followed naturally from progress in science, and science itself developed according to its own logic and at its own pace. We know now that this explanation is wrong. Inventions such as the transistor radio or compact disc player do not flow naturally from basic discoveries like the transistor. Nor is the overall rate of technological progress in an economy limited or directed by the unvarying internal dynamic of the scientific disciplines.

In basic discoveries and applications alike, it is the incentives created by the market that profoundly affect the pace and direction of economic progress. When the incentives are stronger, growth is faster. When the incentives point in a new direction, both basic research and development efforts change course. As economic historian Nathan Rosenberg has shown, there are many cases in which basic science follows practical opportunities, not the other way around. The transistor caused the development of the field of solid-state physics. The



steam engine led to the development of thermodynamics.

In the traditional economic view, technological progress comes in two steps: the heroic discovery and the ensuing transformation of the economy. According to this theory, once John Bardeen, Walter Brattain, and William Shockley gave us a shove with their discovery of the transistor, we just followed Gordon Moore's famous law down the cost curve, like a skier going down a jump ramp. The digital information revolution followed automatically. There are many examples of this theory. For instance, James Watt invents the steam engine, then the industrial revolution just happens.

This account portrays key technologies such as the transistor or steam engine as scarce opportunities that are given to us by nature and are largely beyond our control. This account gets things exactly backward. It's not the opportunities in nature that are scarce: It's the human talent to pursue the many opportunities we face. Hundreds of examples show that we make progress in almost any area we put our minds to. Moreover, we don't make any progress if we don't put our minds to it.

The portable battery-powered compact disc player did not just happen. Engineers at Sony created it after the founder, Akio Morita, told them what he wanted.

Improvements in computer chips don't just happen either. Moore's Law, that computer chips double in power every 24 months (or every 18 months or every 12 months—take your pick), hides the enormous amount of human effort required to make better chips. It also obscures the fact that the rate of progress in semiconductors varies with the amount of effort that we supply.

Across the spectrum of technologies, there will always be enormous unexploited scope for innovation. When humans do set to work in unexplored areas, important new discoveries will emerge. Some of these developments will be science based, but others will be more prosaic and will seem obvious once someone works out the

details. Take overnight delivery at FedEx, just-in-time inventory management at Toyota, and discount retailing at Kmart and Wal-Mart. These examples may not seem glamorous, but in the aggregate, discoveries of this type probably account for the bulk of the increase in our standard of living. . . .

In the traditional account, the flip side of the heroic discovery is the critical roadblock. This, too, is vastly overrated. If it had been impossible to build transistors, audio equipment would still have improved over the course of my lifetime. Vacuum tubes would have become smaller, cheaper, and more reliable. Without the laser, we would not have had the compact disc player. But Morita still would have introduced the Walkman portable cassette player, and by now it would rely on digital magnetic tape, be as inexpensive as a Diskman, and reproduce sound just as accurately.

Early in his career, Robert Fogel, another prominent economic historian, emphasized the implications of this point for the United States. Before he did his calculations, historians believed that the invention of the railroad fueled the rapid growth of the early American economy. Fogel showed that if there had been no railroad, North Americans would have invested more extensively in canals, wagons, and roads. But the rate of the economy's growth, he concluded, would have been about the same.

There is far more scope for finding new ways to do things than any of us can imagine. When we look back, we can see all the crucial milestones along the particular path that we have followed, but we have no conception of what might have happened on the thousands of paths not taken. This does not mean that the physical world will be equally generous along every path that we explore. There are technical hurdles. For example, we have made relatively little progress improving batteries, and it's not for lack of trying. But this example just reinforces the point that there are many alternative paths and many ways to solve any problem.

To see why, turn Fogel's exercise upside down. Instead of taking a technology that



did develop and asking what would have happened in its absence, take a technology that did not develop and think about the strategies that we might have adopted to address the original problem.

Imagine, for example, that you live in a parallel universe where electric batteries are as easy to improve as transistors. Their storage capacity grows by a millionfold in a few decades. Each car, washing machine, and computer comes with its own lifetime supply of electricity installed in a tiny, lightweight battery.

If the inhabitants of this parallel world tried to imagine life in a world with batteries as crude as ours, they would surely conclude that there is no practical way to use electricity at all. They have no idea what a power line or an electrical outlet is. The idea of keeping each electrical appliance tethered to a generating station by a continuous loop of copper wire is too ridiculous to even contemplate. Because their cars and aircraft are battery driven, they believe that motorized transport is impossible. They have no conception of all the clever ways engineers have found to keep electrical consumption to a minimum in portable devices like my compact disc player.

Back now in our world, the lack of powerful batteries clearly did not bring growth to a halt. By the same token, technological successes like the railroad and the transistor did not cause growth. Our lives have gotten steadily better because something makes humans strive to make things better. That something is the marketplace and the special incentives it creates.

New Growth Theory identifies three special features that make growth possible. First, we live in a physical world that is filled with vastly more unexplored possibilities than we can imagine, let alone explore. Second, our ability to cooperate and trade with large numbers of people makes it possible for millions of discoveries and small bits of knowledge to be shared. Third, and most important, markets create incentives for people to exert effort, make discoveries, and share information.

According to New Growth Theory, all the natural opportunities available to us

would lie unexplored if we could not find a system for motivating and coordinating the efforts of large numbers of people. Bardeen, Brattain, and Shockley did not set out to make life more pleasant for someone stuck on a miserable taxi ride.

Nor did Morita. All they wanted to do was make a profit for . . . their companies. Yet in so doing, they and literally thousands of people like them unwittingly collaborated to improve the quality of my life.

The key to the remarkable story linking the transistor and my taxi ride lies not in Moore's Law or the physics of semiconductors. Nor can it be found in some set of unique abilities possessed by specific scientists or entrepreneurs. The key to the story is that humans have created a market system, supported by hybrid institutions like the university and the research and development lab. Together, these institutions turn self-interest into a powerful force for the improvement of everyone's lives. This human invention is far more important than the transistor or the steam engine, for it gives us all other inventions.

Once this is clear, growth and progress can be seen in an entirely different light. Leaders of firms or nations needn't just sit and wait for the next big thing to come along. They can take steps to make it more likely to happen. Nor can they presume that the last big invention will automatically cause growth to happen. They also must take the steps necessary to capitalize on previous discoveries.

We can thank the people who came before us for creating powerful institutions that motivate people to seek out big and small improvements. But we must not become complacent. At the level of the company or the nation, we need to focus less on making the next big discovery or the next sequence of little improvements.

Instead, we need to think about fine-tuning our institutions so that they work their way more rapidly down a never-ending string of small and large improvements. If these changes are made, companies and nations will see faster growth. In the long run, even slightly faster growth will lead to huge differences in total profits or income. . . .

Material Questions

A mansionette is rising in a muddy field. It could be anywhere. It has more bedrooms than a small hotel and bathrooms big enough to make an emperor smile. It has rooms that hadn't even been invented a few decades ago (the media room, the great room), and one or two others that were seen only in the homes of the truly wealthy. It has a red brick façade that can't decide whether it is supposed to be a Georgian manor or a French chateau, and there are three dozen just like it within a few blocks.

That house stands at the crossroads of two increasingly debated public questions that figure prominently in this issue of the WQ: materialism and suburban sprawl. Just as the prosperity of the 1950s and '60s produced a wave of "small is beautiful" revulsion at the era's material excesses, the 1990s are giving birth to new complaints, reflected in the titles of books such as *Luxury Fever* and *The Overspent American*. Our very success has cast us into a fresh debate over the cultural consequences of capitalism. The debate is joined in several places in this issue, including the essays on materialism, William H. Whyte, and "America's Unending Revolution," as well as our review of *Luxury Fever* (p. 139) and the Periodical Observer's, "Railing against the Auto" (p. 105). Even G. John Ikenberry's essay, "Why Export Democracy?" addresses the question, for the democracy he has in mind is not only political in nature but economic as well. Open international markets, he argues, can lead to freer domestic markets and (eventually) politics in some of the world's darker corners.

The logic of this sturdy liberal principle that political freedoms follow on the heels of economic ones, once a subject of great controversy, now seems all but unassailable—though one may have to wait a long time and wade through a sea of troubles before those

political freedoms are finally won. And this understanding that capitalism promises not just economic but political freedoms helps account for its global appeal.

The fact that the socialist alternative has vanished, however, has added to the intensity of the new criticism of materialism, and guarantees that it will be no passing thing. In the international arena, the criticism takes the form of attacks on the worldwide wave of Nikes, rap music, and fast food spreading out like a cultural *tsunami* from American shores. At home, it is voiced as a concern over "quality-of-life" issues, such as sprawl, environmental degradation, wasteful consumerism, and overwork.

In a surprising reply, novelist Salman Rushdie, who, to put it mildly, had no previous reputation as an apologist for American culture, wrote recently that the *tsunami* critics missed the point: "Sneakers, burgers, blue jeans, and music videos aren't the enemy. If the young people of Iran now insist on rock concerts, who are we to criticize their cultural contamination? Out there are real tyrants to defeat. Let's keep our eyes on the prize." The prize he had in mind was freedom, and he suggested in a sophisticated way that a world that wants it may just have to swallow a few Big Macs. Freedoms—the freedom to speak out and the freedom to consume gooey masses of meat and vegetables, for instance—are not easily divisible.

It's not just freedoms that may be indivisible. Historians during the past decade or so have been compiling a great deal of evidence reminding us of what should be obvious, that commerce and culture, two different forms of creativity, are not only inseparable but mutually supportive. In a recent history of the Renaissance, for example, British writer Lisa Jardine showed how the efflorescence of that era was intimately

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linked to its commercial vitality, how the acquisition of, say, a rare ancient manuscript was as much an act of conspicuous consumption as of intellectual curiosity. In other words, the animal spirits of acquisitiveness may be inseparable from those of cultural creativity. Jardine argues that “the world we inhabit today, with its ruthless competitiveness, fierce consumerism, restless desire for ever wider horizons, for travel, discovery and innovation, a world hemmed in by the small-mindedness of petty nationalism and religious bigotry but refusing to bow to it, is a world which was made in the Renaissance.”

Which brings us back to our mansionette. It represents something relatively new in the world that was made five centuries ago: the democratization of affluence. Affluence on a mass scale strained the conventions of wealth. In the Renaissance, and well into the 19th century, riches were restricted to a relative few and the strictures surrounding their disposition remained reasonably intact. “God nourishes them [Christians] to live, not to luxuriate,” John Calvin declared in the 16th century. But the prudential, self-denying embrace of the material world by Calvin, Martin Luther, and other Protestant reformers became in the hands of many of their later inheritors an ease with plenty, occasionally even a celebration of it. For many, religion’s reservations about wealth simply became irrelevant.

Secular attempts to grapple with the implications of widespread affluence have not been notably successful. This year marks the centennial of one of the first significant efforts in this vein, Thorstein Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class*. Robert Frank’s new *Luxury Fever* strongly echoes Veblen’s complaint in its charge that Americans are caught up in an irrational, costly, and ultimately unsatisfying race of competitive spending that never ends. Frank advances a package of policy ideas—a heavy progressive tax on consumption used to subsidize an array of worthy undertakings, such as the reduction of air pollution—under the aegis of an unusual argument: it would make us all *happier*, he says. But should happiness, that most elusive human want, be an aim of policy? The sources of happiness seem

more various—including family, faith, work, and, yes, all those things we buy—and double-edged than such a view allows. How we cope with affluence and its many byproducts, from suburban sprawl to an alarmingly low rate of personal saving, is clearly going to preoccupy the United States for a long time to come. But most likely these issues will be addressed like other public questions, more modestly, in narrower terms and on a case-by-case basis.

One broad quality-of-life issue that deserves more sweeping attention is the impact of our affluent, acquisitive way of life on the character of Americans’ deliberations about public questions—our political quality of life. “Embourgeoisement,” as the social scientists call it, may be a prerequisite for democratic beginnings, but the American example seems to suggest that it can eventually become problematic for democracy. By most measures the richest nation in the world, and by any measure the most bourgeois, the United States also has the lowest rate of voter participation among the industrialized nations. (Only Switzerland, with a bourgeois character to challenge that of the United States and, perhaps significantly, a federal structure as strong as America’s, has a lower one.) And the U.S. rate, now down to about 50 percent, is dropping.

Yet another cause for concern is that participation in the United States varies far more widely by income level than it does in other Western countries, with the well-to-do turning out in much greater numbers than the poor. At the same time, even our wealthiest citizens do not match the *average* European commitment to this simplest of civic obligations, just barely beating out Britain’s total turnout of 71.4 percent and falling far short of overall participation in countries such as Austria and Denmark.

Is all of this an accident? Does the American pursuit of plenty impose some upper limit on political commitment? And are poorer people, deprived of the ability to make meanings in the marketplace, as James Twitchell argues elsewhere in this issue, somehow also deprived of a sense of political creativity? Questions like these may be the ultimate quality-of-life issues.

—Steven Lagerfeld

Two Cheers for Materialism

It's the thing that everybody loves to hate. But let's face it, our author says, materialism—getting and spending—is a vital source of meaning and happiness in the modern world.

by James Twitchell

Of all the strange beasts that have come slouching into the 20th century, none has been more misunderstood, more criticized, and more important than materialism. Who but fools, toadies, hacks, and occasional loopy libertarians have ever risen to its defense? Yet the fact remains that while materialism may be the most shallow of the 20th century's various -isms, it has been the one that has ultimately triumphed. The world of commodities appears so antithetical to the world of ideas that it seems almost heresy to point out the obvious: most of the world most of the time spends most of its energy producing and consuming more and more stuff. The really interesting question may be not why we are so materialistic, but why we are so unwilling to acknowledge and explore what seems the central characteristic of modern life.

When the French wished to disparage the English in the 19th century, they called them a nation of shopkeepers. When the rest of the world now wishes to disparage Americans, they call us a nation of consumers. And they are right. We are developing and rapidly exporting a new material culture, a mallcondo culture. To the rest of the world we do indeed seem not just born to shop, but alive to shop. Americans spend more time tooling around the mallcondo—three to four times as many hours as our European counterparts—and we have more stuff to show for it. According to some estimates, we have about four times as many things as Middle Europeans, and who knows how much more than people in the less developed parts of the world. The quantity and disparity are increasing daily, even though, as we see in Russia and



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALETHA RAPPEL

China, the “emerging nations” are playing a frantic game of catch-up.

This burst of mallcondo commercialism has happened recently—in my lifetime—and it is spreading around the world at the speed of television. The average American consumes twice as many goods and services as in 1950; in fact, the poorest fifth of the current population buys more

than the average fifth did in 1955. Little wonder that the average new home of today is twice as large as the average house built in the early years after World War II. We have to put that stuff somewhere—quick!—before it turns to junk.

Sooner or later we are going to have to acknowledge the uncomfortable fact that this amoral consumera-ma has proved potent because human beings *love* things. In fact, to a considerable degree we live for things. In all cultures we buy things, steal things, exchange things, and horde things. From time to time, some of us collect vast amounts of things, from tulip bulbs to paint drippings on canvasses to matchbook covers. Often these objects have no observable use.

We live through things. We create ourselves through things. And we change ourselves by changing our things. In the West, we have even developed the elaborate algebra of commercial law to decide how things are exchanged, divested, and recaptured. Remember, we call these things “goods,” as in “goods and services.” We don’t—unless we are academic critics—call them “bads.” This sounds simplistic, but it is crucial to understanding the powerful allure of materialism.

Our commercial culture has been blamed for the rise of eating disorders, the spread of “affluenza,” the epidemic of depression, the despoliation of cultural icons, the corruption of politics, the carnivalization of holy times like Christmas, and the gnat-life attention span of our youth. All of this is true. Commercialism contributes. But it is by no means the whole truth. Commercialism is more a mirror than a lamp. In demonizing it, in seeing ourselves as helpless and innocent victims of its overpowering force, in making it the scapegoat du jour, we reveal far more about our own eagerness to be passive



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in the face of complexity than about the thing itself.

Anthropologists tell us that consumption habits are gender-specific. Men seem to want stuff in the latent and post-midlife years. That's when the male collecting impulse seems to be felt. Boys amass playing marbles first, Elgin marbles later. Women seem to gain potency as consumers after childbirth, almost as if getting and spending is part of a nesting impulse.

Historians, however, tell us to be careful about such stereotyping. Although women are the primary consumers of commercial objects today, they have enjoyed this status only since the Industrial Revolution. Certainly in the pre-industrial world men were the chief hunter-gatherers. If we can trust works of art to accurately portray how booty was split (and cultural historians such as John Berger and Simon Schama think we can), then males were the prime consumers of fine clothes, heavily decorated furniture, gold and silver articles, and of course, paintings in which they could be shown displaying their stuff.

Once a surplus was created, in the 19th century, women joined the fray in earnest. They were not duped. The hegemonic phallogocentric patriarchy did not brainwash them into thinking goods mattered. The Industrial Revolution produced more and more things not simply because it had the machines to do so, and not because nasty producers twisted their handlebar mustaches and whispered, "We can talk women into buying anything," but because both sexes are powerfully attracted to the world of things.

Karl Marx understood the magnetism of things better than anyone else. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), he wrote:

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls. . . . It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

Marx used this insight to motivate the heroic struggle against capitalism. But the struggle should not be to deter capitalism and its mad consumptive ways, but to appreciate how it works so its furious energy may be understood and exploited.

Don't turn to today's middle-aged academic critic for any help on that score. Driving about in his totemic Volvo (unattractive and built to stay that way), he can certainly criticize the bourgeois afflictions of others, but he is unable to provide much actual insight into their consumption practices, much less his own. Ask him to explain the difference between "Hilfiger" inscribed on an oversize shirt hanging nearly to the knees and his rear-window university decal (My child goes to

Yale, sorry about yours), and you will be met with a blank stare. If you were then to suggest that what that decal and automotive nameplate represent is as overpriced as Calvin Klein's initials on a plain white T-shirt, he would pout that you can't compare apples and whatever. If you were to say next that aspiration and affiliation are at the heart of both displays, he would say that you just don't get it, just don't get it at all.

If you want to understand the potency of American consumer culture, ask any group of teenagers what democracy means to them. You will hear an extraordinary response. Democracy is the right to buy anything you want. Freedom's just another word for lots of things to buy. Appalling perhaps, but there is something to their answer. Being able to buy what you want when and where you want it was, after all, the right that made 1989 a watershed year in Eastern Europe.

Recall as well that freedom to shop was another way to describe the right to be served in a restaurant that provided one focus for the early civil rights movement. Go back further. It was the right to consume freely which sparked the fires of separation of this country from England. The freedom to buy what you want (even if you can't pay for it) is what most foreigners immediately spot as what they like about our culture, even though in the next breath they will understandably criticize it.

The pressure to commercialize—to turn things into commodities and then market them as charms—has always been particularly Western. As Max Weber first argued in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), much of the Protestant Reformation was geared toward denying the holiness of many things that the Catholic church had endowed with meanings. From the inviolable priesthood to the sacrificial holy water, this deconstructive movement systematically unloaded meaning. Soon the marketplace would capture this off-loaded meaning and apply it to secular things. Buy this, you'll be saved. You deserve a break today. You, you're the one. We are the company that cares about you. You're worth it. You are in good hands. We care. Trust in us. We are here for you.

Materialism, it's important to note, does not crowd out spiritualism; spiritualism is more likely a substitute when objects are scarce. When we have few things we make the next world holy. When we have plenty we enchant the objects around us. The hereafter becomes the here and now.

We have not grown weaker but stronger by accepting the self-evidently ridiculous myths that sacramentalize mass-produced objects; we have not wasted away but have proved inordinately powerful; have not devolved and been rebarbarized, but seem to have marginally improved. Dreaded affluenza notwithstanding, commercialism has lessened pain. Most of us have more pleasure and less discomfort in our lives than most of the people most of the time in all of history.

As Stanley Lebergott, an economist at Wesleyan University, argues in *Pursuing Happiness* (1993), most Americans have "spent their way to happiness." Lest this sound overly Panglossian, what Lebergott

means is that while consumption by the rich has remained relatively steady, the rest of us—the intractable poor (about four percent of the population) are the exception—have now had a go of it. If the rich really are different, as F. Scott Fitzgerald said, and the difference is that they have longer shopping lists and are happier for it, then we have, in the last two generations, substantially caught up.

The most interesting part of the book is the second half. Here Lebergott unloads reams of government statistics and calculations to chart the path that American consumption has taken in a wide range of products and services: food, tobacco, clothing, fuel, domestic service, and medicine—to name only a few. Two themes emerge strongly from these data. The first, not surprisingly, is that Americans were far better off by 1990 than they were in 1900. And the second is that academic critics—from Robert Heilbroner, Tibor Scitovsky, Robert and Helen Lynd, and Christopher Lasch to Juliet Schor, Robert Frank, and legions of others—who’ve censured the waste and tastelessness of much of American consumerism have simply missed the point. Okay, okay, money can’t buy happiness, but you stand a better chance than with penury.

The cultural pessimists counter that it may be true that materialism offers a temporary palliative against the anxiety of emptiness, but we still must burst joy’s grape. Consumption will turn sour because so much of it is based on the chimera of debt. Easy credit=overbuying=disappointment=increased anxiety.

This is not just patronizing, it is wrongheaded. As another economist, Lendol Calder, has argued in *Financing the American Dream* (1999), debt has been an important part of families’ financial planning since the time of Washington and Jefferson. And although consumer debt has consistently risen in recent times, the default rate has remained remarkably stable. More than 95.5 percent of consumer debt gets paid, usually on time. In fact, the increased availability of credit to a growing share of the population, particularly to lower-income individuals and families, has allowed many more “have nots” to enter the economic mainstream.

There is, in fact, a special crippling quality to poverty in the modern Western world. For the penalty of intractable, transgenerational destitution is not just the absence of things; it is also the absence of meaning, the exclusion from participating in the essential socializing events of modern life. When you hear that some ghetto kid has killed one of his peers for a pair of branded sneakers or a monogrammed athletic jacket you realize that chronically unemployed poor youths are indeed living the absurdist life proclaimed by existentialists. The poor are the truly the self-less ones in commercial culture.

Clearly what the poor are after is what we all want: association, affiliation, inclusion, magical purpose. While they are bombarded, as

we all are, by the commercial imprecations of being cool, of experimenting with various presentations of disposable self, they lack the wherewithal to even enter the loop.

The grandfather of today's academic scolds is Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), the eccentric Minnesotan who coined the phrase “conspicuous consumption” and has become almost a cult figure among critics of consumption. All of his books (save for his translation of the *Lexdaela Saga*) are still in print. His most famous, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, has never been out of print since it was first published in 1899.

Veblen claimed that the leisure class set the standards for conspicuous consumption. Without sumptuary laws to protect their markers of distinction, the rest of us could soon make their styles into our own—the Industrial Revolution saw to that. But since objects lose their status distinctions when consumed by the hoi polloi, the leisure class must eternally be finding newer and more wasteful markers. Waste is not just inevitable, it is always increasing as the foolish hounds chase the wily fox.

Veblen lumped conspicuous consumption with sports and games, “devout observances,” and aesthetic display. They were all reducible, he insisted, to “pecuniary emulation,” his characteristically inflated term for getting in with the in-crowd. Veblen fancied himself a socialist looking forward to the day when “the discipline of the machine” would be turned around to promote stringent rationality among the entire population instead of wasted dispersion. If only we had fewer choices we would be happier, there would be less waste, and we would accept each other as equals.

The key to Veblen's argumentative power is that like Hercules cleaning the Augean stables, he felt no responsibility to explain what happens next. True, if we all purchased the same toothpaste things would be more efficient and less wasteful. Logically we should all read *Consumer Reports*, find out the best brand, and then all be happy using the same product. But we aren't. Procter & Gamble markets 36 sizes and shapes of Crest. There are 41 versions of Tylenol. Is this because we are dolts afflicted with “pecuniary emulation,” obsessed with making invidious distinctions, or is the answer more complex? Veblen never considered that consumers might have other reasons for exercising choice in the marketplace. He never considered, for example, that along with “keeping up with the Joneses” runs “keeping away from the Joneses.”

Remember in *King Lear* when the two nasty daughters want to strip Lear of his last remaining trappings of majesty? He has moved in with them, and they don't think he needs so many expensive guards. They whittle away at his retinue until only one is left. “What needs one?” they say. Rather like governments attempting to redistribute wealth or like academics criticizing consumption, they conclude that Lear's needs are excessive. They are false needs. Lear, however, knows otherwise. Terrified and suddenly bereft of purpose, he bellows from his innermost soul, “Reason not the need.”

Lear knows that possessions are definitions—superficial meanings, perhaps, but meanings nonetheless. And unlike Veblen, he knows those meanings are worth having. Without soldiers he is no king. Without a BMW there can be no yuppie, without tattoos no adolescent rebel, without big hair no Southwestern glamorpuss, without Volvos no academic intellectual, and, well, you know the rest. Meaning is what we are after, what we need, especially when we are young.



What kind of meaning? In the standard academic view, growing out of the work of the Frankfurt school theorists of the 1950s and '60s (such as Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer) and later those of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, it is meaning supplied by capitalist manipulators. What we see in popular culture, in this view, is the result of the manipulation of the many for the profit of the few.

For an analogy, take watching television. In academic circles, we assume that youngsters are being reified (to borrow a bit of the vast lexicon of jargon that accompanies this view) by passively consuming pixels in the dark. Meaning supposedly resides in the shows and is transferred to the sponge-like viewers. So boys, for example, see flickering scenes of violence, internalize these scenes, and willy-nilly are soon out jimmying open your car. This is the famous Twinkie interpretation of human behavior—consuming too much sugar leads to violent actions. Would listening to Barry Manilow five hours a day make adolescents into loving, caring people?

Watch kids watching television and you see something quite different from what is seen by the critics. Most consumption, whether it be of entertainment or in the grocery store, is active. We are engaged. Here is how I watch television. I almost never turn the set on to see a particular show. I am near the machine and think I'll see what's happening. I know all the channels; any eight-year-old does. I am not a passive viewer. I use the remote control to pass through various programs, not searching for a final destination but making up a shopping basket, as it were, of entertainment.

But the academic critic doesn't see this. He sees a passive observer who sits quietly in front of the set letting the phosphorescent glow of mindless infotainment pour over his consciousness. In the hypodermic

analogy beloved by critics, the potent dope of desire is pumped into the bleary dupe. This paradigm of passive observer and active supplier, a receptive moron and smart manipulator, is easily transported to the marketplace. One can see why such a system would appeal to the critic. After all, since the critic is not being duped, he should be empowered to protect the young, the female, the foreign, the uneducated, and the helpless from the onslaught of dreck.

In the last decade or so, however, a number of scholars in the humanities and social sciences have been challenging many of the academy's assumptions.* What distinguishes the newer thinking is that scholars have left the office to actually observe and question their subjects. Just one example: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a psychology professor at the University of Chicago, interviewed 315 Chicagoans from 82 families, asking them what objects in the home they cherished most. The adult members of the five happiest families picked things that reminded them of other people and good times they'd had together. They mentioned a memento (such as an old toy) from their childhood 30 percent of the time. Adults in the five most dissatisfied families cited such objects only six percent of the time.

In explaining why they liked something, happy family members often described, for example, the times their family had spent on a favorite couch, rather than its style or color. Their gloomier counterparts tended to focus on the merely physical qualities of things. What was clear was that both happy and unhappy families derived great meaning from the consumption and interchange of manufactured things. The thesis, reflected in the title of his co-authored 1981 book, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*, is that most of the "work" of consumption occurs after the act of purchase. Things do not come complete; they are forever being assembled.

Twentieth-century French sociologists have taken the argument even further. Two of the most important are Pierre Bourdieu, author of *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), and Jean Baudrillard, whose books include *The Mirror of Production* (1983) and *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994). In the spirit of reader-response theory in literary criticism, they see meaning not as a single thing that producers affix to consumer goods, but as something created by the user, who jumbles various interpretations simultaneously. Essentially, beneath the jargon, this means that the Budweiser you drink is not the same as the one I drink. The

*This reconsideration of consumption is an especially strong current in anthropology, where the central text is *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (1979), by Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. It can also be seen in the work of scholars such as William Leiss in communication studies; Dick Hebdige in sociology; Jackson Lears in history; David Morley in cultural studies; Michael Schudson in the study of advertising; Sidney Levy in consumer research; Tyler Cowan in economics, Grant McCracken in fashion; and Simon Schama in art history. There are many other signs of change. One of the more interesting recent shows at the Museum of Modern Art, "Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life," actually focused on the salutary influence of consumer culture on high culture.



meaning tastes different. The fashion you consider stylish, I think is ugly. If we buy the package not the contents, it is because the package means more.

The process of consumption is creative and even emancipating. In an open market, we consume the real and the imaginary meanings, fusing objects, symbols, and images together to end up with “a little world made cunningly.” Rather than lives, individuals since midcentury have had *lifestyles*. For better or worse, lifestyles are secular religions, coherent patterns of valued things. Your lifestyle is not related to what you do for a living but to what you buy. One of the chief aims of the way we live now is the enjoyment of affiliating with those who share the same clusters of objects as we do.

Mallcondo culture is so powerful in part because it frees us from the

strictures of social class. The outcome of material life is no longer pre-ordained by coat of arms, pew seat, or trust fund. Instead, it evolves from a never-ending shifting of individual choice. No one wants to be middle class, for instance. You want to be cool, hip, with it, with the “in” crowd, instead.

One of the reasons terms like Yuppie, Baby Boomer, and GenX have elbowed aside such older designations as “upper middle class” is that we no longer understand social class as well as we do lifestyle, or what marketing firms call “consumption communities.” Observing stuff is the way we understand each other. Even if no one knows exactly how much money it takes to be a yuppie, or how young you have to be, or how upwardly aspiring, everybody knows where yuppies gather, how they dress, what they play, what they drive, what they eat, and why they hate to be called yuppies.

For better or worse, American culture is well on its way to becoming world culture. The Soviets have fallen. Only quixotic French intellectuals and anxious Islamic fundamentalists are trying to stand up to it. By no means am I sanguine about such a material culture. It has many problems that I have glossed over. Consumerism is wasteful, it is devoid of otherworldly concerns, it lives for today and celebrates the body, and it overindulges and spoils the young with impossible promises.

“Getting and spending” has eclipsed family, ethnicity, even religion as a defining matrix. That doesn’t mean that those other defining systems have disappeared, but that an increasing number of young people around the world will give more of their loyalty to Nike than to creeds of blood, race, or belief. This is not entirely a bad thing, since a lust for upscale branding isn’t likely to drive many people to war, but it is, to say the least, far from inspiring.

It would be nice to think that materialism could be heroic, self-abnegating, and redemptive. It would be nice to think that greater material comforts will release us from racism, sexism, and ethnocentrism, and that the apocalypse will come as it did at the end of romanticism in Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, leaving us “Scepterless, free, uncircumscribed . . . Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless.”

But it is more likely that the globalization of capitalism will result in the banalities of an ever-increasing worldwide consumerist culture. The French don’t stand a chance. The untranscendent, repetitive, sensational, democratic, immediate, tribalizing and unifying force of what Irving Kristol calls the American Imperium need not necessarily result in a Bronze Age of culture. But it certainly will not produce what Shelley had in mind.

We have not been led into this world of material closeness against our better judgment. For many of us, especially when young, consumerism *is* our better judgment. We have not just asked to go this way, we have demanded. Now most of the world is lining up, pushing and shoving, eager to elbow into the mall. Getting and spending has become the most passionate, and often the most imaginative, endeavor of modern life. While this is dreary and depressing to some, as doubtless it should be, it is liberating and democratic to many more.



The Man Who Loved Cities

by Nathan Glazer

William H. Whyte seems fated to be known as *The Organization Man*. His death, on January 12, 1999, inspired numerous reflections on his sociological bestseller of 1956. Recognized as a benchmark in its own time, *The Organization Man* gave new meaning to a watchword of the decade, “conformity”: Whyte’s book put a carefully tailored suit of clothes on a vaguely defined but worrisome phenomenon of midcentury America. He identified what he saw as a “major shift in American ideology” away from an individualist Protestant Ethic. But his book was not a nostalgic lament. Rather, Whyte’s mission was to reveal the dilemmas at the heart of a new group ethos—which he

called the Social Ethic—that he saw emerging in the corporate and social world of the postwar era. The organization man was expected to be loyal to his organization, and the organization to be loyal to him. This was hardly a recipe for stability, however. He was required to pull up roots at a moment's notice and relocate himself and his family wherever the corporation thought it needed him. For these “transients,” a new ideology of adaptive harmony beckoned.

The “tremendous premium on ‘adjustment,’” on the “co-operative,” on the “social,” promised to make life and work proceed smoothly in “an age of organization”—and, Whyte observed, often did indeed help to do so. Yet he believed that the new group imperative, enshrined in social science and pop psychology and management theory, had also become “an ethic that offers a spurious peace of mind” and that should be resisted. And could be resisted: Whyte was convinced that “we are not hapless beings caught in the grip of forces we can do little about.” The burden of his book was that “the fault is not in organization . . . it is in our worship of it. It is in our vain quest for a utopian equilibrium, which would be horrible if it ever did come to pass; it is in the soft-minded denial that there is a conflict between the individual and society. There must always be, and it is the price of being an individual that he must face these conflicts.”

Four decades later, amid alarms about “downsizing,” remembering Whyte has meant revisiting the well-known classic of his career: what changes have occurred in the relationship between corporations and those who serve them since Whyte first described the rather uninspiring bond? A great deal, was the not very surprising consensus. On the *New York Times* op-ed page, Virginia Postrel, the editor of the libertarian magazine *Reason*, and the sociologist Arlie

Hochschild rendered opposing verdicts on the transformations that have left us with a world in which neither newly lean corporations nor those who serve them feel very deep loyalties.

We can conceive of the change as opening new vistas of freedom, as Virginia Postrel did. (Consider the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley, no organization men they.) Or one can still find Whyte's portrait of the unanchored organization man affecting and relevant, as Hochschild did. And one can argue, as the sociologist and social critic Richard Sennett does in his new book *The Death of Character*, that the decay of the old ties uniting corporations and employees has introduced new strains into the life of the uncertain organization man and woman. This late-century anxiety is different from the old conformist strictures, which could so easily crimp creativity and autonomy, but it is no less damaging.

There is no question that Whyte's book had an enormous impact when it appeared. When the paperback came out, I was an editor at the then-young Anchor Books—which had also published the other great sociological bestseller of the 1950s, David Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* (of which I was a junior author). Sales of *The Organization Man* were explosive. It was remarkable in the exhaustiveness of its research. Who else would have read “every single one of the social notes” that appeared in a suburban newspaper over three-and-a-half years (“believe me,” Whyte wrote, “that's a lot of social notes”), in order to find out whether meaningful patterns emerged from the parties and other gatherings that took place? Whyte did, and made a significant discovery: that physical layout—arrangements of cul de sacs, courtyards, driveways—dictated “a set of relationships . . . that were as important in governing behavior as the desires of the individuals in them.” *The Organization Man* wove

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such data into an ambitious and very readable analysis that shed light on the erosion of the entrepreneurial ethos so central to American identity. It was misleading, Whyte emphasized, to see the problem as a new demand for conformity. The real danger was an alluring, and unrealistic, promise of group harmony, which all too easily tempted corporate Americans to surrender their independence.

Whyte's book identified tensions between the demands of organizational loyalty—which meant an often dizzying degree of mobility—and the desire for stability that certainly have not disappeared from corporate life in America. Yet events have moved beyond the book, as Whyte himself moved beyond it. The truth is that *The Organization Man* was more a prelude than the pinnacle of his career. Whyte deserves to be remembered, I believe, more for a second endeavor that was in many ways less sweeping than his signature book—a project that quite literally kept him much closer to the ground.

In the 1960s and 1970s, after leaving *Fortune*, where he'd been assistant managing editor, Whyte emerged as one of America's most influential observers of the city and the space around it, an observer whose distinctive contribution to our understanding of the American metropolis lay in his avoidance of anything so grandiose as a vision. Whyte, who became a distinguished professor at Hunter College of the City University of New York, advised Laurance S. Rockefeller on environmental issues and served as a planning consultant for various cities. What he set out to do was to become the best kind of expert, concerned with improving the way we live by paying close attention to the details: how we build our suburbs, how we choose sites for our houses, how we arrange our streets and plazas. This was a man who couldn't wait, on his many visits to many cities, to rush to a downtown street corner at midday and count the passersby! It was his way of taking a city's pulse.

Whyte began his career as an analyst, and became an activist. He turned his

attention to the fate of cities and their surrounding countryside in the late 1950s, when the suburban boom was well under way, and when the errors of planners and developers were beginning to become evident to sharp observers. In his writing on the city, Whyte ranks with Jane Jacobs, though her efforts to show the way cities work when they work well are better known. Indeed, they both began writing on the city in the same volume, *The Exploding Metropolis*, a joint work by the editors of *Fortune* (where Whyte and Jacobs were working at the time) published in 1958. Whyte edited the book, and also contributed an introduction and two chapters, "Are Cities Un-American?" and "Urban Sprawl?" Jacobs wrote a chapter titled "Downtown Is for People," which set forth the main lines of her criticism of postwar city rebuilding, which she went on to develop in her classic 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Whyte's second career grew naturally out of the blockbuster that launched him. Part of *The Organization Man* is devoted to examining one of the large planned developments sprouting up on the suburban fringes in the 1950s. These new bedroom communities were "the packaged villages that have become the dormitory of the new generation of organization men." Whyte viewed them, and so (he found) did their self-conscious inhabitants, as "social laboratories" where "we can see in bolder relief than elsewhere the kind of world the organization man wants and may in time bring about." What most interested him was the way the transient inhabitants went about creating, "through a sort of national, floating co-operative, . . . a new kind of roots"—a kind of tie that gave them security and at the same time encroached on their autonomy.

Social connections in these classless communities, Whyte showed, were all-pervasive yet shallow, linking wives and children into a conveniently encompassing support system that demanded and rewarded constant group participation, from cof-



A Whyte's-eye view of the world: a 1988 study showed where New Yorkers paused in front of Alexander's Department Store.

fee klatches to school boards. "Suburbia is the ultimate expression of the interchangeability so sought by the organization," Whyte wrote, and of the social adaptability required to thrive within it. When the time came to move, families could be sure they would be spared a jolt in settling into another, not very different habitat. The suburban development in question was Park Forest, near Chicago, which plays an important role in the history of American sociology. (Herbert Gans was also studying it for his master's thesis at the University of Chicago, and he went on to write a classic work on the new planned suburb, *The Levittowners*.) Whyte moved on from Park Forest to ask the key question: Was this the best way for our cities to expand? He asked it in a pragmatic spirit, rather than in a despairing one.

It was easy enough to denounce the suburbs, the eating up of fields and farmland for individual plots to serve single-family houses, the homogeneity of the new communities, the absence of many urban amenities and of

urban diversity. Such attacks were all too common, as were the parallel denunciations of the crowded city, with its noise, dirt, packed subways, and helter-skelter mix of housing. Whyte could appreciate both critiques. But he was skeptical of the received answers of the time, whether they issued from another major city and landscape observer, Lewis Mumford, or emerged in the work of the era's great visionary architect, Le Corbusier.

To Mumford, who was an admirer of the compact feudal city and a leader of the "garden city" movement, and to other critics, what was happening to the city and countryside was

simply capitalism run wild, development without the restraint that sound community living required. Whyte was no enemy of capitalism and the free market. In studying what had gone wrong, he was as critical of the planners and the "new town" vogue, which Mumford believed could save us, as he was of shortsighted developers. Together, he believed, they made a terrible team. In *The Last Landscape* (1968), the book Whyte published the year before he began helping the New York City Planning Commission draft a comprehensive plan for the city, he criticized the diagnoses and the utopian desires that he felt were leading America astray:

New town proposals are generally prefaced with a sweeping indictment of the city as pretty much of a lost cause. We tried, the charge goes, but the city is a hopeless tangle. Medical analogies abound. The city is diseased, cancerous, and beyond palliatives. The future is not to be sought in it, but out beyond,

where we can start afresh.

The possibility of working with a clean slate is what most excites planners and architects about new towns. Freed from the constraints of previous plans and buildings and people, the planners and architects can apply the whole range of new tools. With systems analysis, electronic data processing, game theory, and the like, it is hoped, a science of environmental design will be evolved and this will produce a far better kind of community than ever was possible before. . . .

To offer all this, a new town would really have to be a city. . . . But these are not to be like cities as we have known them. There is not to be any dirty work in them. There are not to be any slums. There are not to be any ethnic concentrations. . . . Housing densities will be quite low. There will be no crowded streets. . . . It will have everything the city has, in short, except its faults.

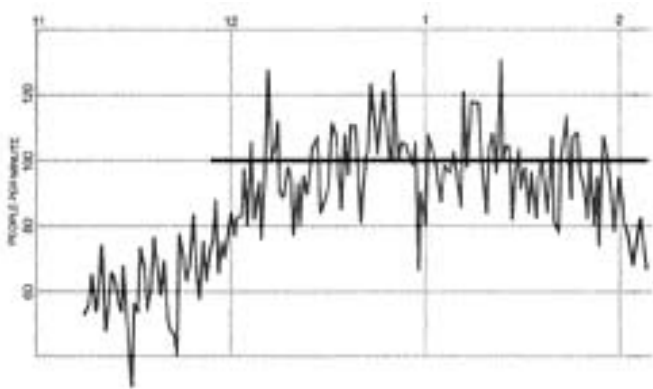
[But] you cannot isolate the successful elements of the city and package them in tidy communities somewhere else. . . . The goal is so silly it seems profound.

But denunciation was not Whyte's style. Rather, the question was what could be done, and he believed that much could. His 1964 book *Cluster Development* was a handbook on how developers could plot their new suburban tracts to save land, reduce the need for expensive roads, bring houses somewhat closer together, with no loss to what new suburb dwellers were looking for. His most substantial work, *The Last Landscape*, lays out in detail the many mechanisms, public and semipublic and private, by

which urban sprawl could be contained and the pleasures of the countryside saved.

As that book showed, Whyte's specialty was realism, not utopianism or alarmism. He did not simply wring his hands in despair or cry in outrage, though there was much to be outraged by. Instead, he aimed at what was practically possible, and he showed that a great deal was. For example, he observed that the trouble wasn't so much that America lacked countryside as that it was "becoming a hidden countryside." And unsightly billboards did not deserve all the blame. Greenery itself, as cleared land became second-growth forest, sealed off open vistas from the eye. "Landscape is not beautiful if you do not see it" was Whyte's point. He was just as practical about open spaces in the city. They were not the salvation so many planners believed, but they were well worth salvaging—and patchwork reclaiming was what it would take, Whyte insisted. "The most pressing need now," he wrote, "is to weave together a host of seemingly disparate elements—an experimental farm, a private golf course, a local park, the spaces of a cluster subdivision, the edge of a new freeway right-of-way." *The Last Landscape* remains a remarkably useful book.

Whyte's forte in his study of the city was close observation, indeed very close obser-



A connoisseur of sidewalks, Whyte bolstered his case for wider ones with this graph of heavy pedestrian traffic on Lexington Avenue near Grand Central Station.

vation. He used time-lapse photography to capture the daily reality of urban places—parks, storefronts, sidewalks. He minutely analyzed what drew people, what repelled them, and how they were affected by small changes in the urban environment. It was the “eye-level view, the way people see it,” not the bird’s-eye view favored by grand planners, that interested Whyte. Thanks to him, we now understand that people are

was to revise our thinking about urban density. He took issue with the prevailing wisdom: planners and critics, he felt, had gone too far in attacking urban crowding and disorder. According to the reigning view, the key to improved planning was to thin out the city and insist on more open space. But Whyte argued that density worked—it made the city attractive. His midday pedestrian counts downtown were

his gauge of a city’s prospects: if fewer than 1,000 people passed in an hour, “the city could pave the streets with gold for all the difference it would make. The city is one that is losing its center or has already done so.”

In the 1930s, Mumford had written that New York was saved by the Depression, because the city would have ground to a halt had it continued to build skyscrapers and increase the number of jobs downtown. Nonsense, said Whyte. See how energetically people behave in crowds. They manage and, more than that, they love the easy access to so many facilities and specialized providers that their numbers make possible. Indeed New York later added tens of millions of square feet of office space, with almost no increase in public transit facilities, in a succession of postwar building booms. Far from grinding to a halt, as Mumford expected, the city thrived. It became clear that the planning theorists had missed

some important things. In his *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980), and in many lectures and consultations with city officials, developers, and planners in which he tried to put his insights to good use, Whyte pointed out how much had been overlooked.

It was Whyte who helped to identify and



William Whyte at work

not repelled by crowding—up to a point—but excited by it, eager and able to adapt to it. Much of his work was pure scientific ethnography, but much of it gave hints and guidance on how we should build and rebuild in cities.

Possibly Whyte’s greatest achievement

remedy a fundamental misunderstanding of the life of city and streets that planners of the 1960s embedded in the zoning codes of New York and other cities. The codes rewarded office tower developers who pulled their buildings back from the street, creating spaces rather grandiloquently called plazas. The idea was to open up crowded city streets, admitting light and air. But the new plazas often became little more than dead zones between streets and building lobbies, spaces that derelicts and other undesirable people were only too happy to occupy. Other plazas became all but inaccessible, to protect them from just such users. Whyte pointed out that the plazas broke up the continuous street front that is an identifying characteristic of the good city, providing entertainment and a sense of security for the strolling pedestrian.

The key to reclaiming these plazas, Whyte explained, was to attract more people to them. Then the derelicts and unappealing users would be crowded out or stay away. His research uncovered small but key details that draw people: movable seats are important, for example, and the availability of food and drink, even from a pushcart, is helpful. Any fixed seating—a designer’s or architect’s arrangement of space, whatever it was and whatever its formal virtues—imposed itself on those who tried to use the space. People wanted to feel in control, and one way they could feel in control was to be able move their chairs, whether to get closer to someone to whom they were talking, or further away from someone to whom they didn’t want to talk, or to catch a ray of sun, or simply to shift around for no reason at all. And so the lightweight, unattached chair became a fixture in the New York City plazas and similar city spaces elsewhere.

For an example of Whyte’s ideas at work, it is hard to do better than New York City’s Bryant Park, recently restored after years of neglect. Lying along 42nd Street and behind the city’s grand public library, the park was originally cut off from the street, physically and visually isolated from

passing pedestrians and motorists by shrubs. The design worked in New York’s earlier, more placid days, creating a sense of shelter and privacy for harried New Yorkers. But in a high-crime city it was a disaster, providing a well-concealed haven for miscreants. Now the park has been opened up and transformed into one of the best-used open spaces in New York City. If you can find an empty chair, you can move it wherever you want, and there are almost as many food vendors as pigeons.

The *Exploding Metropolis* was recently reprinted—40 years after its original appearance!—by the University of California Press. Whyte is restored to the title page as editor (the original volume was “by the editors of *Fortune*”). It says something about Whyte’s enduring contribution that in 1999 *The Organization Man* is out of print, but his books on the city and on open spaces are still available. In his last book, *City: Rediscovering the Center* (1988), Whyte wrote with typical realism that “I am eschewing prophecy in this book. It is hard enough to figure out what is happening now, let alone what might or might not 20 years hence.” But he was optimistic that “the center is going to hold.”

Indeed, the signs since then are that, thanks not least to advice he had offered 20 years before in *The Last Landscape*, downtown revitalization is alive and well—and often it is much the sort of motley enterprise he favored. As Whyte urged then, invoking San Francisco’s waterfront as a model, even touristy rehabilitation can work. “Almost every city with a waterfront has a pier or shoreside structure that could be refashioned for restaurants and shops,” he pragmatically observed. “They are slightly fraudulent—the seafood is apt to be flown in from somewhere else and not very well prepared—but the view is good, and people do love the honky tonk.” *The Exploding Metropolis* and the works that followed are urban history, but they are more than that. Whyte’s work remains a living and usable handbook for improving our cities, our countryside, and our lives.

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AMERICA'S UNENDING REVOLUTION

How did a deferential republic become a mass democracy and a commercial colossus? A crucial transformation of America, historians agree, was under way during the early Republic, but they have debated the nature of this “transition to capitalism” and its political implications. Our budding capitalists, it now seems clear, were the country’s enterprising laborers, not its leisured few. And the democratic ideas that spurred them on were vigorously contested—as they still are.



36 *Gordon S. Wood explores the creation of capitalism*

47 *Sean Wilentz navigates the formative debates over democracy*

Was America Born Capitalist?

by Gordon S. Wood

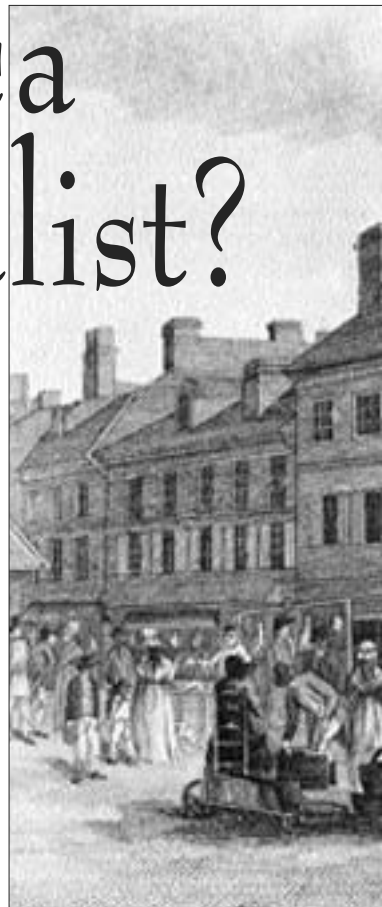
Of all the “isms” that afflict us, capitalism is the worst. According to many scholars, capitalism has been ultimately responsible for much of what ails us, in both the past and the present, including our race problem, our grossly unequal distribution of wealth, and the general sense of malaise and oppression that academics in particular feel. It is not surprising therefore that scholars should be interested in the origins of such a powerful force, especially one that seems to affect them so personally.

The trouble is that we scholars cannot agree on the nature of the beast. Some identify it with a general market economy; others, following Marx, with a particular mode of production, involving a bourgeoisie that owns the means of production and a proletariat that is forced to sell its labor for monetary wages; still others, following Weber, with a system of calculative and secularized rationalism; and still others, with simple hard work and a spirit of development. As has often been pointed out, the way in which scholars define the term *capitalism* usually determines the results of their analysis.

Despite the confusion of definition, however, nearly everyone seems to agree with Marx and other theorists on the way in which capitalism originally developed in the West. Most scholars seem to believe that the sources of the transition from feu-

dalism to capitalism lay in the changing nature of rural society. Only when the farming population increased its agricultural productivity to the point where it could allow an increasing proportion of its members to engage in manufacturing and at the same time provide a home market for that manufacturing—only then, it is assumed, could the takeoff into capitalistic expansion take place.

For this reason, American historians have tended to focus on the agricultural productivity of early New England, where presumably American capitalism first developed. Of course, from almost the beginning of professional historical scholarship in the late-19th century, many American historians assumed that nearly all early American farmers, especially those in New England, were incipient cap-





The scene in 1799 at the corner of Third and Market in Philadelphia.

italists, eager to make money and get land and get ahead. Most colonial farmers, it seemed, were involved in trade of various sorts—sending tobacco and wheat to England and Europe, selling fish, food-stuffs, and lumber to the West Indies, and exchanging an array of goods among themselves. For these historians, usually labeled “liberal” or “market” historians these days, explaining the origins of capitalism in America has never been an issue: America has always been capitalistic.

Three decades or so ago a group of historians, generally labeled “social” or “moral economy” historians, began challenging this view of early America as a modern market-oriented capitalistic world. According to these scholars, including James Henretta, Alan Kulikoff, Christopher Clark, and Michael Merrill

(among others), the colonial farmers, particularly the New England farmers, did not possess a capitalistic mentality after all. The colonial farmers were not much interested in markets and were not primarily interested in working for profit. For these historians, the farmers’ disregard for the bottom line is something to be cherished. The less capitalism the better, as far as they are concerned.

These moral economy historians have mounted a major challenge to the older view that Americans were born free, equal, and capitalistic in the 17th century. All of them, in one way or another, are seeking, in the words of Henretta, a professor of history at the University of Maryland, “to confound an uncritical ‘liberal’ interpretation of



A cooper

American history,” primarily by demonstrating that “capitalist practices and values were not central to the lives of most of the inhabitants of British North America before 1750.” Many American farmers, especially in the South and middle colonies, may have been producing for distant markets, but most New England farmers were not.

To be sure, many colonial farmers produced “surpluses” that they sold to distant markets, but the very term suggests that this sort of production was not normal or primary. Most of their output was for family or local consumption, not for sale in the market. The anthropologically minded moral economy historians, borrowing an important distinction Marx made, argue that most of the northern farmers were not producing for exchange; they were producing for use. Farmers were involved in a household mode of production in which they sought only to satisfy their family needs and maintain the competency and

independence of their households. They sought land not to increase their personal wealth but to provide estates for their lineal families. Indeed, providing for their families and transmitting their accumulated property and customary beliefs from one generation to another were the major preoccupations of these farmers. They were certainly not major exploiters of a wage-earning labor force.

The economy that resulted, these historians say, was inevitably a moral one. Household interests and communal values overrode the acquisitive and exploitative instincts of individuals. The farmers were enmeshed in local webs of moral and social relationships that inhibited capitalistic behavior. Self-aggrandizement gave way to concern for one’s family and neighbors, and community-regulated “just prices” were often more important than what the market would bear. Not the Atlantic world but their tiny communities were the places where most of these farmers’ exchanges occurred. Most of them may not have been technically self-sufficient, but the towns and small localities in which they lived more or less were.

Rather than relying on the market, farmers met their needs by producing their own goods for consumption and by swapping or exchanging goods and services within their local communities. They charged each other for these goods and services, but the prices were set by custom, not by the market, and in the absence of much specie or coin, the charges were usually not paid in cash but were instead entered in each person’s account book. Through these numerous exchanges, farmers built up in their localities incredibly complicated networks of credits and debts—“book accounts”—among neighbors that sometimes ran on for years at a time. Although litigation could and did result from these obligations, such credits and debts were based

>GORDON S. WOOD, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is Alda O. Way University Professor and professor of history at Brown University. He is the author of *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992), which won the Pulitzer Prize for history. Copyright © 1999 by Gordon S. Wood.

largely on mutual trust, and thus they worked to tie local people together and to define and stabilize communal relationships. Therefore, instead of seeing the New England farmers as would-be entrepreneurs waiting for markets to rescue them from stagnation, these social historians see them as pre-modern husbandmen trying to avoid market participation in order to preserve their moral and communal culture.

This “transition to capitalism” debate, which has gone on now for several decades, is no petty ivory-tower dispute; it actually goes to the heart of what kind of people we Americans are or would like to become. The moral economy historians in particular have been very explicit about this. They have more at stake than just recapturing an idyllic past. For them, such an 18th-century communal world offers a noncapitalist vision of what still might be, in the words of Michael Merrill, coeditor with Sean Wilentz of *The Key of Liberty: The Life and Democratic Writings of William Manning* (1993), a vision of

a lived and viable alternative to capitalist relations, institutions and practices. . . . Alongside the world of capital and its ways we would point to an alternative world of labor and its ways; alongside the world of cities built on money and contract we would point to an alternative world of the countryside built on personal credit and mutual obligation; alongside a government designed to secure to the few the opportunity to rule the many. . . we would point to an alternative government designed to secure to the many the chance to rule themselves.

This debate over the origins of capitalism has meaning not only for us Americans but for a world seeking to acquire the prosperity of the capitalist West. In the struggle to invent capitalism and market societies, does Eastern Europe or China have anything to learn from the

way it originally happened in America? Is the rise of capitalism inevitably linked to the development of a democratic society? Is it possible that anything that happened in New England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries can have any significance for the world today?

Whatever answers ultimately emerge to such large political questions, we certainly know much more now about the behavior and values of the early New England farmers than we did before. Especially helpful in the debate has been the work of Winifred Barr Rothenberg, a professor of economics at Tufts University. In *From Market-Places to a Market Economy* (1992), Rothenberg has cleared the air of a lot of cant by simply concentrating on some basic questions about the rural New England economy that can be empirically investigated. Marketplace economies, she says, have existed for thousands of years; people have always bought and sold goods, even over long distances, without experiencing market economies. Only when the market separates from the political, social, and cultural systems constraining it and becomes itself an agent of change, only when most people in the society are involved in buying and selling and think in terms of bettering themselves economically—only then, she contends, can we talk of the beginnings of a market economy. Throughout the colonial period, she suggests, Americans had only a marketplace economy, not a market economy. By analyzing the behavior of the prices of farm commodities, farm labor, and rural savings, Rothenberg has been able to date the emergence in the New England countryside of an authentic market economy. She places it in the last two decades of the 18th century, following the American Revolution.

Although Rothenberg saw herself writing in opposition to the moral economy historians, whom she affectionately calls her “dear enemies,” her work actually has helped to reconcile the differences between these “dear enemies” and most



A blacksmith

market historians, including herself. Backed by Rothenberg's impressive empirical investigations, scholars now seem to have attained a remarkable amount of agreement over the behavior of people in early America, even if they cannot agree on what to call that behavior. Although most are doubtful that capitalism came over on the first ships, they realize that commercial activities in the New World were present from the beginning. Although historians recognize that a new stage in America's commercial development was reached in the middle of the 18th century, many seem to agree that it was the American Revolution above all that gave birth to something that can be called capitalism.

Indeed, writes Allan Kulikoff, a neo-Marxist who teaches history at the University of Northern Illinois and has tried to mediate the debate, "the American Revolution may have been the most crucial event in the creation of capitalism." James Henretta, probably the most influential of the moral economy historians, cites Rothenberg's findings in support of his thesis "that the emergence of a new system of economic behavior, values, and

institutions occurred at the beginning of the 19th century." Moreover, both the market historians and the moral economy historians agree that New England farmers engaged in local exchanges throughout the 18th century. If these local exchanges could be seen as variants of market behavior, then the differences between the two groups of historians would tend to collapse. Kulikoff admits as much when he says that "the two sides contend over the degree of local self-sufficiency and the extent of market exchange rather than the fact of exchange."

The problem seems to be the commitment of the moral economy historians to Marx's distinction between producing for use and producing for exchange, a distinction that seems very dubious. When the social or moral economy historians come to examine the actual behavior of the New England farmers, they keep falling back on this distinction to explain why the farmers were not really market oriented—in effect relying on their ability to decipher the motives of these rural folk. What seems to be the farmers' profit seeking or land speculation the moral economy historians dismiss as merely the farmers' looking after the needs of their families. No matter how sharp or avaricious the farmers might be—and even the moral economy historians admit that they could indeed be sharp and avaricious—these characteristics apparently did not turn them into entrepreneurs; as Henretta says, "there was no determined pursuit of profit."

Many of these moral economy historians seem to have a caricatured image of an entrepreneur or capitalist as someone who thinks about nothing but the bottom line and has an all-consuming drive for profits that rides roughshod over the needs of his family or his relationship with the community. If this is what it takes, then very few farmers in history have ever been this kind of selfish, profit-maximizing individualist.

It is these historians' deep aversion to capitalism that lies behind their overdrawn images of capitalists. This aversion

requires evil-intentioned individuals; it is no easy matter morally condemning people who are well intentioned and have no sense of the bad and exploitative consequences of their actions. Although many of these moral historians have a lingering commitment to Marxist theory, they have not found it very useful in explaining the origins of capitalism in early rural New England. They have had difficulty deciding, for example, whether the small-producer farmers who relied mostly on family labor belong in the category of “exploiters” or “exploited.”

Michael Merrill has tried to solve the problem by absolving the New England farmers of capitalist behavior altogether. Realizing that the long-standing identification of capitalism with commercial enterprise and a general market economy is disastrous for any moral condemnation of capitalism (there being these days, it seems, no alternative to markets), Merrill has sought to define capitalism as just one particular market economy among many. “Capitalism, properly speaking,” he says, “is not just an economic system based on market exchange, private property, wage labor, and sophisticated financial instruments.” These are necessary but not sufficient features. “Capitalism, more precisely, is a market economy ruled by, or in the interests of, capitalists.” In other words, capitalism is antidemocratic. It involves politics, power, and the exploitation of one class by another—in particular, in the early Republic, the exploitation of the farmers, artisans, and laborers by those whom Merrill calls “the monied classes.”

Since the American economy, however market-oriented and intensely commercialized it may have been, seemed to remain

under the control of small producers and not the so-called capitalistic moneyed classes in the decades following the Revolution, Merrill can make his astonishing claim that the American Revolution was “a profoundly anticapitalist enterprise.” The burgeoning and prosperous economy of the early Republic, far from representing “an emergent, radically new, capitalist order,” was, Merrill says, in reality only “the expansion of a dynamic, profoundly anticapitalist, and democratic old order.”

This is an unconventional argument, to say the least, and it seems unlikely that it will take hold: it runs too much against the grain of our traditional identification of



A sawyer

early-19th-century capitalism with a free-enterprise market economy, an identification shared by nearly all the “transition-to-capitalism” historians. But it does have the merit of helping us to understand more precisely what we mean by capitalism in the early Republic and to see more clearly how the transition in New England from farming to manufacturing and business enter-

prise took place. Merrill suggests that his small producer class includes most artisans as well as farmers and laborers. Against these democratic anticapitalists he places the capitalists, or “the monied classes,” composed of “merchants, financiers, or budding master manufacturers.”

The problem arises with this last group, the “budding master manufacturers.” We today might readily agree that these master manufacturers (soon to be labeled businessmen) are capitalists or future capitalists, but in the 18th century should they be separated from the rest of the artisans? Contemporaries in the early Republic, including the master manufacturers themselves, did not think so. They still thought of these master

manufacturers, however wealthy, however many employees they had working for them, as men who worked for a living in a craft that involved manual labor, and thus they grouped them with the other laborers in the society. The Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers, organized in 1789, was composed of men who ranged from among the wealthiest property-holders in the city to the poorest. All, however, were still regarded as workingmen.

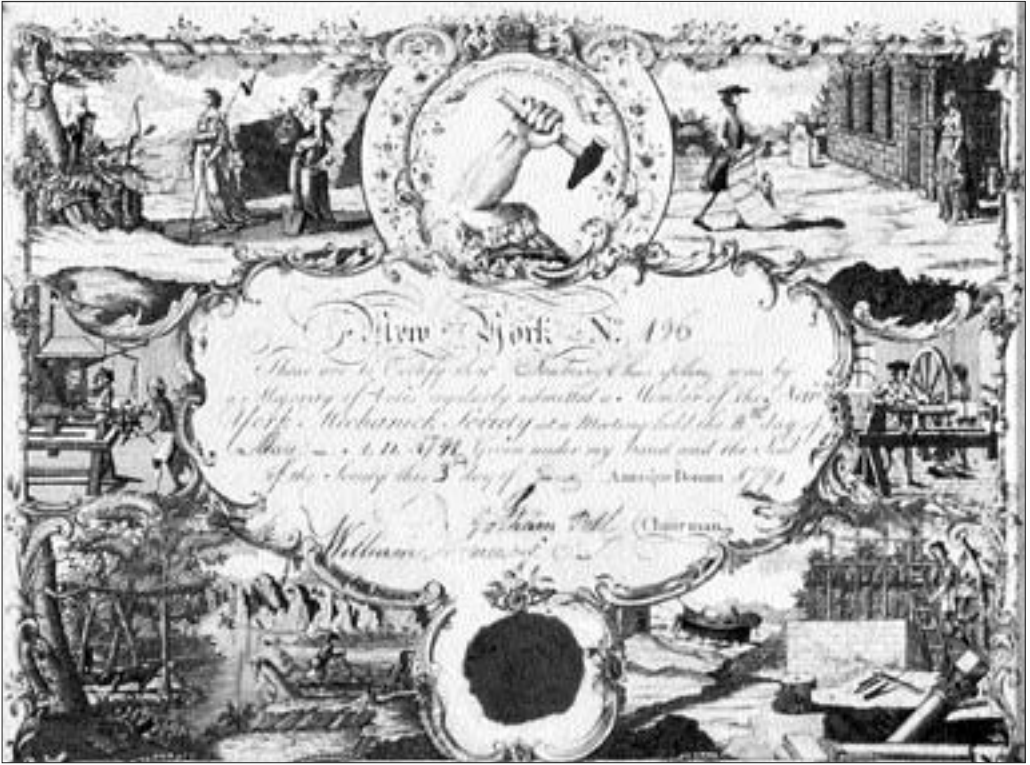
The issue for the society of the early Republic was not who was a capitalist, but rather who was a laborer. As John Adams put it in 1790, “the great question will forever remain, who shall work?” Adams was speaking out of a 2,000-year-old tradition of horizontally dividing the society between those aristocrats or gentlemen who did not have to labor for a living and the rest of the society that did. It is almost impossible for us today to appreciate the degree of contempt and scorn felt by aristocrats or gentlemen throughout history for those who had to work. Aristotle simply assumed that those who engaged in trade or labored, particularly with their hands, were ignoble and were incapable of elevated or virtuous thoughts. In the eyes of many 18th-century gentlemen, labor was still associated with pain and meanness, and for most of them manual productivity lacked the superior moral value it would soon acquire. It was, in fact, this traditional contempt for labor that had sustained and justified slavery from time immemorial; indeed, in a world that despised labor, slavery was accepted as a matter of course.

Even by the late 18th century, Americans still tended to divide themselves into the leisured few and the laboring many. Although many artisans and mechanics were claiming to be among the middling sort, most aristocrats or gentlemen still tended to lump together into the ignoble and mean category of “laborers” a wide variety of craftsmen and mechanics. They thus mingled in their minds wealthy masters with journeymen and apprentices, and indeed the lowliest and poorest of workers. Despite a growing appreciation of the value of labor

and heightened egalitarian sentiments in the 18th century, many gentry, in other words, still clung to the ancient prejudice against labor, especially manual labor. As long as artisans or mechanics continued to work for a living with their hands, or even to run a business that involved employees working with their hands, they found it very difficult to claim genteel status, however rich and elevated in other respects they may have become.

Walter Brewster, a young, struggling shoemaker of Canterbury, Connecticut, was very different in many ways from Christopher Leffingwell, a well-to-do manufacturer of Norwich, Connecticut, who owned several mills and shops and was his town’s largest employer. Yet both Brewster and Leffingwell still saw themselves as “laborers” having to work for a living. They shared a common resentment of a genteel world that had humiliated them and scorned their “laboring” status from the beginning of time. Thus both men naturally allied in political movements on behalf of artisans and understandably sought to identify their “laboring interest” with “the general or common interest” of the whole state. In time, of course, the once vertically organized artisans would split apart horizontally, separating into rich master businessmen (or employers) and poor journeymen and apprentices (or employees). But this important development would come haltingly and confusedly, and we distort our understanding of the 18th century if we anachronistically rush it.

Perhaps we can help to clarify what was happening in the early Republic by focusing on William Manning (1747–1814), the self-educated common New England farmer whose writings Merrill and Wilentz have recently edited. Manning has often been celebrated by left-leaning historians as a plebeian critic of capitalism and a forerunner of the later working class. But what if he is not quite what these historians have said he is? What if he is in fact one of the contributors to the rise of capitalism in New England? Since Manning did represent the beginnings of



A 1791 certificate of membership in the New York Mechanick [sic] Society.

American democracy, his being as well an unsuspecting agent of capitalism may help us clarify the relationship between capitalism and democracy in the early Republic. Manning's ideas of labor may also help us understand better the eventual connections between democracy, capitalism, and the anti-slavery movement.

Manning, writing in the 1790s under the pseudonym "Laborer," realized only too keenly that for ages leisured aristocrats had held workers like him in contempt. Therefore, in response to the traditional view of work as demeaning and contemptible, he offered a vigorous defense of labor as the source of property and productivity in the society. As vivid as Manning's writings were, however, they were not unusual: attacks on the leisured aristocratic few and defenses of labor by mechanics, farmers, and other laborers like Manning became increasingly common in post-Revolutionary America. Indeed, the Americans' celebration of work in these

years was far more successful in conquering the culture, at least in the northern states, than comparable efforts in Europe. By the early decades of the 19th century, there were very few gentry left in the northern United States who could openly admit that they did not work for a living, in other words, who could openly admit any longer that they were fundamentally different from the likes of William Manning, Walter Brewster, or Christopher Leffingwell.

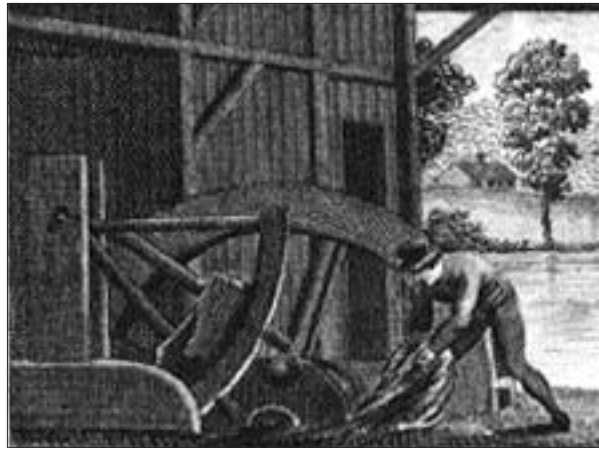
We are only beginning to appreciate the historical character of work and the way its changing meanings at the end of the 18th century contributed to the development of capitalism and to the separation of the free, labor-capitalist North from the aristocratic, slave-holding South. Sooner or later, the North's celebration of work was bound to lead to a condemnation of slavery and the aristocratic southern society that sustained it. Democratic capitalism, the extolling of

free labor, and anti-slavery were linked in the North, and together they created the growing cultural chasm between the democratic North and the cavalier South that led to the Civil War.

Manning, writing in the 1790s, of course had no idea that he was participating in the cause of capitalism or democracy or anti-slavery. All he could see was a great social struggle in which “the whole contention lies between those that labor for a living and those that do not.” In Manning’s opinion, those who did not have to work were mainly big, leisured merchants engaged in international commerce, professionals, executive and judicial officers of government, “and all the rich who could live on their incomes without bodily labor.” They were the kinds of men who had a “sense of superiority” and who “generally associate together and look down with too much contempt on those that labor.”

Although Manning at times included stockjobbers and speculators in his category of the leisured, he was scarcely thinking of those who did not labor for a living as “capitalists.” Rather, his leisured few, numbering what he took to be about one-eighth of the population, were those traditionally referred to as aristocrats or gentlemen. Most such gentlemen did not work for a living, in any traditional meaning of the term, or if they did, they worked solely with their heads. Instead, as Manning realized, the incomes of such leisured gentry “lie chiefly in money at interest, rents, salaries, and fees that are fixed on the nominal value of money,” which is why these gentry were generally opposed to paper money and its inflationary effects.

Although we might want anachronistically to designate as capitalists some of Manning’s leisured few, those Federalist leaders (and they were essentially the men Manning had in mind) were not really the persons most responsible for the emergence of the dynamic capitalistic economy of the early Republic. Indeed, the Federalists represented much more the old aristocratic order than they did the capitalist future. We make a big mistake thinking that capitalism was created mainly by



Alexander Hamilton and a few stockjobbers, speculators, and wealthy merchants.

If any group was most responsible for the burgeoning capitalist economy of the early Republic, it was, as historian Joyce Appleby has reminded us, the northern members of the Republican party and all the commercially minded artisans and farmers who were striving to get ahead—“laboring” men such as Walter Brewster, Christopher Leffingwell, and William Manning. These were the sort of men who eventually became what self-made Boston printer, publisher, and editor Joseph T. Buckingham in 1830 called the “middling class”—“the farmers, the mechanics, the manufacturers, the traders, who carry on professionally the ordinary operations of buying, selling, and exchanging merchandize.” These middling men, said Buckingham, were those who, in contrast to “the unproductive poor and the unprofitable rich,” worked for a living and whose “unextinguishable desire for more” gave “birth to invention, and impart[ed] vigor to enterprise.”

Manning was one of these enterprising types. As Merrill and Wilentz concede, he certainly was no “injured little yeoman” uninvolved in a commercial economy. He was much more than a small farmer in his little developing town of Billerica; he was as well an improver and a smalltime entrepreneurial hustler. He ran a tavern off and on, erected a saltpeter works that produced gunpowder during the Revolutionary War,



From sheep-shearing to loom at the Brandywine Woollen Mill, circa 1815.

helped build a canal, bought and sold land, constantly borrowed money, and urged the printing of money by state-chartered banks, seeking (not very successfully, it seems) every which way to better his and his family's condition. By themselves Manning's commercial activities may not be much, but multiply them many thousandfold throughout the society, and we have the makings of an expanding capitalist economy.

Although some of the Federalist leaders whom Manning called the leisured few may have invested in businesses, by themselves these aristocratic gentry were never numerous or wealthy enough to finance the rise of capitalism. As historian Bray Hammond pointed out 40 years ago, America in the late 18th century, unlike the Old World, had a severe shortage of capital, the popular solution to which was banks, lots of them. In the early Republic, the capitalists whom most American entrepreneurs and borrowers, including Manning, actually relied upon were all those bankers in the proliferating state-chartered banks. These New England banks sold shares in bank stock to thousands of ordinary citizens, often, as economic historian Naomi Lamoreaux has pointed out, "getting people with savings with accumulations as small as \$100 to invest their resources in bank stock." These proliferating banks, in turn,

issued hundreds of thousands of dollars of paper money, supplying much of the capital that fueled the economy of the early Republic.

Manning knew a great deal about modern paper money, and, like many other antifederalist and Republican entrepreneurs in these years, he fervently defended paper money and state banks; he may even have invested in a bank. As historian Janet Riesman has said, it was Manning and others like him, more than the Federalist "moneyed men," who saw that the primary source of America's wealth lay in its "internal productivity." They came to appreciate that it was the energy and hard work of America's laboring people, and not any great resources of specie, that supported the credit of the bank notes. Although men such as Manning do not fit Merrill and Wilentz's caricature of capitalists as "profit-maximizing individualists who believed in the universal justice of commercial markets," nevertheless he and his hard-working northern Republican "laborers" were the main force behind America's capitalist market revolution. For good or ill, American capitalism was created by American democracy.

In the end, it was precisely because men such as Manning were not "profit-maximizing individualists" that they were able to create a viable capitalist society. Only in recent decades have we

come to appreciate the full significance of what we call a civil society—that network of social associations and organizations that stand between the individual and the state and that help to temper and civilize the stark crudities of a market society, indeed, that make a viable market society possible. One of the remarkable results of the American Revolution was the sudden emergence in the early Republic of this sort of rich associational life. In the several decades following the Revolution, hundreds and thousands of voluntary associations of all kinds sprang up, particularly in New England, where American capitalism was born.

Probably the most important of these voluntary associations were the new evangelical religious organizations—Baptists, Methodists, New Divinity Congregationalists, and dozens of other sects—that in three decades or so transformed the religious landscape of America. Most of the evangelicals in these new associations were not unworldly or anticapitalist. Quite the contrary, it was the involvement of people such as

Manning in these religious associations that helped make possible the rise of capitalism. Evangelical religious passion worked to increase people's energy as it restrained their selfishness, got them on with their work as it disciplined their acquisitive urges. Even the New Divinity Calvinism to which Manning subscribed recognized, as historians William Britenbach and James D. German have pointed out, that "wicked self-interest was no threat to a moral economic order." The New Divinity theology that dominated much of New England "admitted a sphere within which self-interest was morally legitimate"; it gave people confidence that self-interested individuals nevertheless believed in absolute standards of right and wrong and thus could be trusted in market exchanges and contract relationships. Those who assume that a capitalist society requires mainly selfish individuals preoccupied with the bottom line do not understand the sources of America's capitalism in the early Republic. It's time that we recognize who the capitalists in America really are: we have met the enemy and it is us.

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Striving for Democracy

by Sean Wilentz

Americans, including many historians, like to think of the period from the end of the War of 1812 to the outbreak of the Civil War as an ebullient, egalitarian era, the age of the common man, when ordinary workingmen and farmers came into their own as full-throated citizens and voters. It was a time, so the story goes, when age-old prejudices linking virtue with property holding finally dissolved. Men of humble back-

ground who worked with their hands could aspire one day to gain wealth and social standing—and even, like Andrew Jackson or Abraham Lincoln, to become the nation’s head of state. It was all a far cry from the high-blown, deferential New World republic that the Revolutionary generation had envisaged. Instead of a cultivated gentry elite, it would be the People—“King Numbers,” in the disdainful phrase of the disgruntled Virginia aris-



Election Day, Philadelphia (1815), by John S. Kimmel, a classic tableau of political harmony in the “Era of Good Feelings”

ocrat, John Randolph of Roanoke—who would guide the nation’s destiny. Democracy, a word that greatly troubled the Framers in Philadelphia in 1787, became a shibboleth for partisans of almost every persuasion.

More skeptical scholars have questioned this colorful, egalitarian tableau. Some have pointed out important anti-democratic features of the period. In several states, for example, expansion of the suffrage for white men before 1860 was accompanied by an abridgement of the suffrage and other political rights for free blacks, as well as (in the one state where such rights had existed, New Jersey) for women. Egalitarian with respect to class, these historians argue, the era was just the opposite with respect to race and gender. Moreover, although officeholding became less attached to family influence and noblesse oblige than it had been after the Revolution, politics remained firmly in the control of coteries of well-connected local partisans. Other historians have argued the opposite: that an excess of democracy opened the way for the rise of demagogues, whose agitation degraded politics and led directly to the Civil War.

For all of their differences, these impressions, popular and academic, share a misleading assumption that what Americans of the time called democracy was something coherent and unified. That assumption owes much to the influence of Alexis de Tocqueville, whose *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840) continues to color most accounts of the period. Because Tocqueville was chiefly interested in understanding what American democracy had to teach France, he tended to render American realities as ideal types, in glittering epigrammatic generalizations. Even when he drew important distinc-

tions (none more important than his contrast between southern slavery and northern freedom), his discussions of American politics and manners always returned to his ruminations about this thing called democracy. Yet there was no one American democracy in the early 19th century. When Americans spoke about democracy, they articulated clashing ideals. Those clashes, the deepest legacy of the early Republic, unleashed in peculiarly American ways issues of class, race, and region. Any account that glosses over those conflicts slights how much the early national period tells us about our unsettled and contentious political life even today. For what is most distinctive, finally, about American democracy is that it is not so much an ideal as an argument.

In the early Republic, two battles over democracy dominated public affairs, and in time became the warp and woof of national politics. First, there was a struggle over how economic power should be organized in a democracy. Second, conflict arose over increasingly different northern and southern conceptions of democracy.

The first debate—over politics, privilege, and economics—had supposedly been settled by the Jeffersonian victory in 1800. Among other things, that triumph thwarted Alexander Hamilton’s plans for an American version of the British state, based on a strong military establishment, backed by a centralized system of taxation. The second battle, Americans hoped, had been laid to rest by the compromises over slavery worked out in the constitutional debates of 1787–88. Yet the democratizing politics of the early 19th century helped revive these issues dramatically during the misnamed Era of Good Feelings—the decade or so after 1815. That revival set the stage for both the political party battles

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In The Downfall of Mother Bank (1833), President Jackson is hailed for removing government deposits from Nicholas Biddle's Bank of the United States.

of the Jacksonian era and the sectional battles that culminated in southern secession and the Civil War.

The close of the War of 1812, historians have long noted, stirred a nationalist spirit that was celebrated from one end of the country to the other. Having escaped defeat at the hands of the British, Americans proclaimed that their Revolution had been vindicated. They set to work on plans to build up their economy and expand their empire of liberty. With the virtual demise of the Federalist Party after the New England Federalists' disastrous anti-war Hartford Convention in 1814, partisan conflict, so worrisome to the founding generation, seemed dead at last. "Equally gratifying is it to witness the increased harmony of opinion which pervades our Union," the newly inaugurated President James Monroe declared in 1817. "Discord does not belong in our system."

Yet the very election that elevated Monroe to the White House showed the depth of America's discord. In the spring of

1816, the Fourteenth Congress passed a compensation act that roughly doubled congressional pay—and created a tidal wave of populist revulsion. Congress, the critics declared, had made a selfish salary grab that violated the simple habits of republicanism. In the elections later that year, voters wreaked havoc on congressional incumbents. All told, more than half of the members of the House of Representatives judiciously declined to stand for re-election, while only 15 of the 81 who had supported the Compensation Act of 1816 were returned to Washington. Three states—Ohio, Delaware, and Vermont—elected entirely new congressional delegations. (The redoubtable young Speaker of the House, Henry Clay of Kentucky, held his seat only after completing a barnstorming tour to apologize abjectly to his constituents.) Even in an era when normal congressional turnover rates were high, it was a huge political awakening, one that John Randolph likened to the "great Leviathan roused into action." Although not explicitly concerned with economic issues, the controversy foretold future eruptions over the



John C. Calhoun

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Congress got the message, hastily repealed the hated Compensation Act, and preserved (or so President Monroe believed) the new nationalist consensus. But the next decade brought fresh political battles, at the local as well as the national level, which left politicians scrambling to reach accommodation with their constituents. In New England and New York, where once-powerful Federalists had been severely weakened by their opposition to the War of 1812, suffrage agitation at the grassroots and in state capitals led to the toppling of old property restrictions and other checks on popular government. Older states in the upper South shared in the agitation—but did so, significantly, to a lesser degree and with far less immediate results.

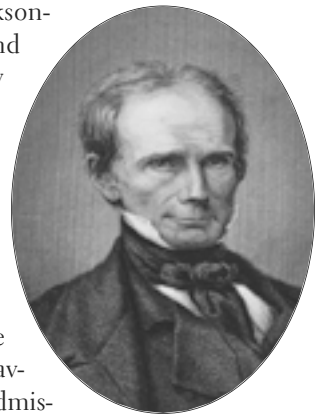
More furious and widespread political insurgencies followed in the wake of the calamitous financial panic of 1819. In the Northeast, farmers ruined by bank failures and workingmen paid off in now-worthless scrip rejected claims by their preachers and politicians that an inscrutable Providence had caused the depression. Anti-bank legislation and a variety of debtor relief efforts quickly followed. Further west, similar unrest rocked every state except Louisiana and Mississippi. Impoverished farmers and other rural debtors demanded more radical forms of legislative relief than petty enterprisers and imperiled bankers wanted to provide. Plebeian democratic outrage against banks and moneyed men, dormant since the 1790s, revived. Banks, above all, were the villains, wrote the editor of the *Cleveland Register*, because they enabled speculators

to steal the hard-won earnings of honest and industrious farmers in order to create “moneyed aristocracies [*sic*].”

This growing sense of outrage—what the South Carolinian John C. Calhoun called “a general mass of disaffection”—utterly shattered the nationalist Republican consensus hailed by Monroe. After the panic, in particular, Old Republican attacks on banks and capitalist commerce gained a new lease on life. And those ideas now received backing from more than just the nostalgic, arcadian gentlemen admirers of Randolph and John Taylor of Caroline. The critics included hard-bitten debtors and workingmen, along with a new generation of self-styled democratic politicians, including the likes of Martin Van Buren, Felix Grundy, and, in time, Andrew Jackson.

Democratic reform, advancing more swiftly and dramatically in the North than in the South, became an additional vehicle for some of these same new politicians and their followers. The harmonious, nationalist “one-party” coalition, buckling under pressure from the bottom and the top, fell apart completely following the election of 1824, when Jackson’s supporters charged that the nationalist John Quincy Adams had won the presidency by making a “corrupt bargain” with Henry Clay. Fresh realignments loomed.

There was, however, another momentous crisis of the period that cut across the emerging political battle lines in ways that appalled nationalists and proto-Jacksonians alike, and that profoundly affected the course of democratic development: the congressional debates from 1819 through 1821 over the extension of slavery and the admission of Missouri to



Henry Clay

the Union. A close reading of those debates shows that fundamental ideological and political shifts were under way, caused by the renaissance of slavery in the cotton South after 1800—a development the Revolutionary generation could not have foreseen. “The Missouri debate shocked Americans,” one recent account of the period observes, “by revealing a resurgent slavery on a collision course with an aroused antislavery North.” That northern arousal, aimed at restricting slavery’s expansion by admitting Missouri as a free state, spread far beyond the halls of Congress.

The restrictionist cause gained a following only gradually after Representative James Tallmadge of New York introduced two amendments, in February 1819, barring slavery in Missouri. At first, restrictionist views appeared chiefly in the writings of the aging New Jersey patrician Elias Boudinot, the editorials of Theodore Dwight in the *New York Daily Advertiser*, and the speeches of New York’s antislavery senator Rufus King. By the late summer of 1819, however, the increasingly bitter debates in Washington, combined with lurid reports of atrocities committed by proslavery men in Missouri, began raising the temperature of northern public opinion to a fever pitch.

In New Jersey, an antislavery meeting chaired by Boudinot made plans for future action across the North. These efforts found their headquarters in New York City, where, on November 13, more than 2,000 citizens gathered to approve antislavery resolutions and establish Revolutionary-style committees of correspondence to communicate with allies in other states. By December, according to one New Hampshire congressman, it had become “political suicide” for any free-state officeholder “to tolerate slavery beyond its present limits.” From New Jersey, Boudinot reported that the protests appeared “to have run like a flaming fire thro our middle states and cause[d] great anxiety.”

Much of that anxiety was, naturally,

centered in the South. The violence of the southern reaction in Congress to Tallmadge’s proposals had laid to rest, once and for all, the lingering myth that many of the South’s leading citizens harbored deep antislavery convictions. Significantly, however, there was no mass popular response on anything approaching the scale of the northern mobilization. In part, ordinary southerners were much less alarmed at the controversy than either their northern counterparts or their slaveholder representatives in Congress were. And in part, southern politicians were wary of sponsoring too much public discussion of the issue back home, lest the slaves somehow overhear it and get their minds foolishly and dangerously set on freedom. “Public meetings will be held and legislative resolutions will probably be passed,” the *Richmond Enquirer* correctly predicted about the North late in 1819. “But in the slave-holding states, not one meeting, not one resolution.”

Nationalist Republicans and their emerging Jacksonian adversaries were just as upset as the slaveholders were about Northern unrest. While John Calhoun—still a leading nationalist, not yet



Martin Van Buren

the chief theoretician of states’ rights—led the public efforts to calm southern fears, President Monroe and his allies (including the Philadelphia banker Nicholas Biddle) worked skillfully behind the scenes to check both pro- and antislavery activists. In New York, the young and ambitious Martin Van Buren smoothly acted to neutralize Senator Rufus King as an antislavery tribune. And finally, when southern die-hards refused to let the matter rest even after the House approved Missouri statehood with slavery, Henry Clay cobbled together a compromise

that linked Missouri's admission to the Union with Maine's. Slavery was also to be banned in any state admitted from the Louisiana Purchase territories north of latitude 36°30'.

Calhoun, Biddle, Van Buren, Clay: with the exception of Andrew Jackson, the list of moderate compromisers in the Missouri debates reads like the general staffs of the opposing parties in the other national political struggles to come in the 1830s. Divided over so many of the economic and political issues inflamed by mass protests since 1815, these moderates were united on the need to keep sectional animosities at bay. They were determined to suppress the slavery issue in national affairs. And so American politics would unfold over the next 30 years, as party leaders made the conflicts over economics and privilege the premier points of party rhetoric, while checking the conflicts over slavery.

In the national political mainstream, what remained of antidemocratic sentiment seemed to disappear in the 1830s and 1840s, so much so that, as Tocqueville observed, even "the wealthy man" who harbored "a great distaste for [his] country's democratic institutions" could be found "boasting in public of the blessings of republican government and the advantages of democratic forms." Yet the major parties did fight, passionately, over what democracy meant.

The followers of Andrew Jackson—who once described himself as an upholder of "good old jeffersonian democratic principles"—proclaimed that all history had been a battle between the few and the many. Democracy, by these lights, was the chief political weapon of "the great labouring classes," namely ordinary farmers and workmen, in their battles against monopolists, "paper bank" financiers, and other moneyed, would-be aristocrats. (By classing slaveholders among the farmers, the Jacksonians solidified their southern base.)

The Whigs, meanwhile, were no less emphatic in calling themselves (as one of their chief publicists, Calvin Colton, wrote) "uncompromising *American Demo-*

crat[s]." But the Whigs celebrated a supposed harmony of interests between the few and the many. Democracy, in the Whig view, arose not out of social conflict but by the individual exertions of moral, prudent citizens, in an America that was, as Colton put it, "a country of *self-made men*, than which nothing better could be said of any state of society."

Beneath this divide, meanwhile, sectional differences on the subject of democracy also widened, as the South's growing connection to slavery stunted democratic development. This stunting was caused largely by the fact (so obvious that it often goes unnoticed) that the bulk of the dependent southern work force, the slaves, were not simply un-enfranchised but relegated to what the Harvard University sociologist Orlando Patterson has called "social death." Labor issues, increasingly contested by northern workers in the 1830s and 1840s, lay outside the purview of southern political controversy, at least as far as the slaves were concerned.

Moreover, the intellectual cornerstone of the slaveholders' democracy was the traditional precept that personal dependency rendered a man dangerous to the polity and unfit for citizenship. That precept was quickly losing favor in the more expansively democratic North. It was this very principle, which Calhoun, J. H. Hammond, and other incipient southern nationalists lauded as part of the genius of southern institutions, that led many free-soilers and incipient Republicans to castigate the South as a cryptoaristocratic "mudsill democracy."

Southern politics was, to be sure, democratic enough to stimulate fractious disputes. Some engaged rival factions of elite families and some pitted the planters against nonslaveholding yeomen, tenants, and laborers. Still, southern politics became structured ever more in ways that thwarted challenges to the slaveholders' dominion. The imposing power of the masters accounts for why battles over suffrage reform and representation lasted

much longer in some of the older southern states than they did in the North. As late as 1857, for example, North Carolina's 50-acre property requirement for voting in state senate elections disfranchised an estimated one-half of the state's voters. Many other constitutional provisions and electoral codes helped keep southern political offices, from governors to county sheriffs, firmly in the hands of the slaveholders or their personal clients.

Southern social and cultural norms reinforced the slaveholders' political power. With its widely dispersed rural citizenry and relatively poor inland transportation networks (apart from the rivers and other cotton routes), the South proved less hospitable to the sorts of independent political organizing and discussion that blossomed in the North. On those few occasions, other than election days, when ordinary citizens would gather in public—above all, compulsory militia musters—local notables often presided, and used the opportunity for political proselytizing. Much of that proselytizing had to do with slavery, as rival politicians tried to surpass each other in portraying themselves as defenders of white men's equality, states' rights, and the peculiar institution. Should anyone dare to speak or write too rashly (or, in time, too publicly) against slavery, thereby raising the specter of slave insurrection, the slaveholders quickly gained popular and legislative support to suppress the miscreants, their assemblies, and their publications.

The backwardness of southern democracy was, it should be emphasized, only relative. Northern politics, at least party politics in the 1830s and 1840s, was run primarily by small clusters of insiders, chiefly lawyers and other professionals, who were adept at screening out discomfiting public opinions and their advocates. Anyone naive enough to look for a participatory democracy of white men in the party machinations of the

Jacksonian and antebellum North is bound to be quickly disillusioned. Nevertheless, compared with the South, democracy in the North was flourishing. No one class or class fraction held sway over politics as the slaveholders did in the South. A much greater variety of ethnic and, more important, religious loyalties, cutting across class and geographical lines, made northern politics more complex and vibrant. It was this fluidity that made possible the rise of popular political movements such as the Liberty and Free-Soil Parties, successors to the pro-restrictionist movement of the Missouri crisis. Despite their unanimity, the Whig and Democratic parties faced enormous difficulties in their efforts to keep the slavery issue out of national debates.

Indeed, the great irony of national politics after 1830 was that mainstream efforts to suppress debates over slavery only widened the breach between North and

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 You are hereby respectfully **CAUTIONED** and advised, to avoid conversing with the **Watchmen and Police Officers of Boston,**
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Keep a Sharp Look Out for KIDNAPPERS, and have TOP EYE open.
APRIL 24, 1851.

With placards like this, the Vigilance Committee of Boston helped make slavery a Northern issue.

South. Politicians of both major parties thwarted Calhoun and the sectionalist nullification movement in 1832. They also backed efforts to silence the abolitionists. Yet in the North, attacks on the fairly small abolitionist minority (by raucous, sometimes pro-southern mobs as well as by the slaveholders themselves) made non-abolitionists ask whether slavery could coexist with democratic institutions. Between 1836 and 1842, the continuing controversy over the Gag Rule, which automatically squelched any discussion of antislavery petitions in Congress, heightened northern fears that an arrogant slaveholder aristocracy was trying to impose its will on the entire country. And after 1840, when one wing of the abolitionist movement joined forces with Whig and Democratic dissidents and entered electoral politics, the machinery of mass democracy helped expand the antislavery cause into a sectional political crusade.

The planters, for their part, became increasingly unnerved at the boldness of northern criticism and the failure of northern political leaders to squelch it. While clamping down on any hints of homegrown antislavery dissent, they oversaw the final, pained completion of white male suffrage and more equal representation in the South—with the explicit aim, voiced by Henry Wise of Virginia, of enhancing the “common safety” against “our Northern brethren on the subject of slavery.” Having forged a democracy built on slavery, they would brook no interference. In the mid-1840s, convinced that they needed additional political bulwarks, Calhoun and his allies set about securing Jackson and Van Buren’s Democratic Party as their own. Thereafter, in a point-counterpoint long familiar to historians, northern democracy and southern democracy crystallized as antagonistic political forces, and the fighting turned lethal.

The Civil War settled the issue of slavery, as bequeathed by the early national period. It did not, however, settle America’s arguments over democracy. In the controversies

over populism in the 1890s, the Great Depression in the 1930s, and the War on Poverty in the 1960s, Americans would return to their debates over how economic power and privilege ought to be squared with political democracy. And in the continuing controversies over racial justice, states’ rights, and civil rights, from the close of Reconstruction to the present, we have struggled with the abiding effects of slavery and the outcome of the Civil War. At times, political alignments have resembled those of the Jackson era, most notably during the ascendancy of the New Deal coalition. But at other times (though the party labels might change), sectional differences have been more pronounced, as with the rise of a southern-based conservative Republican Party since the 1960s.

Here, finally, is the full and lasting legacy of the early Republic. The old impressions of the bustling, democratizing new nation certainly carry a measure of truth. Politically, as well as economically, changes that were well under way by 1815—including the linking of capitalism and democracy highlighted by Gordon S. Wood and other scholars—decisively reshaped the country and have continued to shape American political perceptions and behavior ever since. But no one of these changes or linkages can account for the politics of the early Republic and after, just as no one image of democracy can stand as the single, agreed-upon American way. Whatever our agreements—about the illegitimacy of kingship and aristocracy, or about popular sovereignty and the rule of law, or about the sanctity of private property—ours has been a democracy ever in conflict, ever unfinished, on the subject of what a proper American democracy should be. Those conflicts arose with the democratizing movements that followed the American Revolution, and they have survived, in different forms, for nearly two centuries. In that respect, whether we consider the Americans of that long-ago time as friends or as enemies (or as both), they are us.

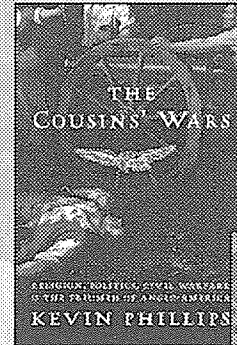
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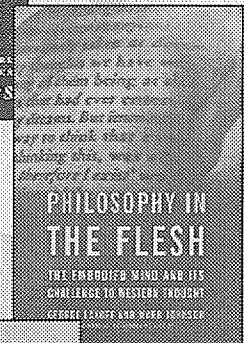


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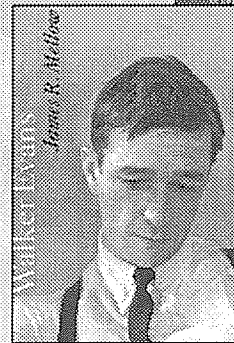
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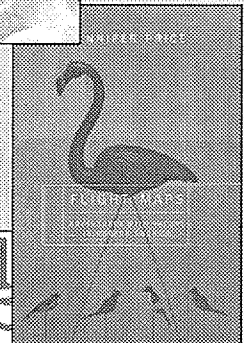
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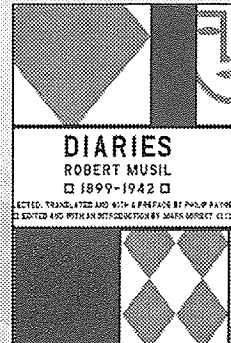
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Why Export Democracy?

The “hidden grand strategy” of American foreign policy is reemerging into plain view after a long Cold War hibernation.

by G. John Ikenberry

To hear critics tell it, the American preoccupation with promoting democracy around the world is the product of a dangerous idealistic impulse. In his recent book, *Diplomacy* (1995), Henry Kissinger cautions against this neo-Wilsonian impulse, under which American foreign policy is shaped more by values than by interests. He joins a long line of American writers, from Walter Lippmann to George Kennan to Charles Krauthammer, who call on the United States to check its idealism at the water's edge and accept the necessity of a more sober pursuit of American national interests abroad. At best, in their view, the American democratic impulse is a distraction, a nettlesome inconvenience that forces the nation's leaders to dress up needed measures in democratic rhetoric. At worst, it unleashes a dangerous and overweening moralistic zeal, oblivious to or ignorant of how international politics really operates. It fuels periodic American “crusades” to remake the world, which, as President Woodrow Wilson discovered after World War I, can land the country in serious trouble.

This “hardheaded” view, however, is a misreading of both past and present. The American promotion of democracy abroad, particularly as it has been pursued since the end of World War II, reflects a pragmatic, evolving, and sophisticated understanding of how to create a stable and



In the spring of 1989, the Goddess of Democracy rises over Tiananmen Square.

relatively peaceful world order. It amounts to what might be called an American “liberal” grand strategy. It is a strategy based on the very realistic view that the political character of other states has an enormous impact on the ability of the United States to ensure its security and economic interests. It is also an orientation that unites factions of the Left and the Right in American politics. Conservatives point to Ronald Reagan as the great Cold War champion of the free world, democracy,

and self-determination—but rarely recognize him as the great Wilsonian of our age. Liberals emphasize the role of human rights, multilateral institutions, and the progressive political effects of economic interdependence. These positions are parts of a whole. Although “realist” critics and others complain about drift and confusion in U.S. foreign policy, it actually has a great deal of coherence.

The American preoccupation with promoting democracy abroad fits into a larger liberal view about the sources of a stable, legitimate, secure, and prosperous international order. This outlook may not always be the chief guiding principle of policy, and it may sometimes lead to error. Still, it is a relatively coherent orientation rooted in the American political experience and American understandings of history, economics, and the sources of political stability. It thus stands apart from more traditional grand strategies that grow out of European experience and the so-called realist tradition in foreign policy, with its emphasis on balances of power, *realpolitik*, and containment.

This distinctively American liberal grand strategy is built around a set of claims and assumptions about how democratic politics, economic interdependence, international institutions, and political identity encourage a stable political order. It is not a single view articulated by a single group of thinkers. It is a composite view built on a variety of arguments by a variety of supporters. Some advocate promoting democratic institutions abroad, some lobby for free trade and economic liberalization, and others aim to erect ambitious new international and regional economic and security institutions. Each group has its own emphases and agendas, each may think of itself as entirely independent of the others (and occasionally even hostile to them), but over the years they have almost inadvertently complemented one another. Together, these efforts have come to constitute a liberal grand strategy.

It has, however, been a largely hidden strategy. After President Wilson’s spectacular failure to create world order through the League of Nations after World War I, liberal internationalism was badly discredited. And the charge that Wilson and his followers were sentimental idealists was not unjustified. “In the conduct of foreign affairs,” writes Wilson biographer Arthur S. Link, Wilson’s “idealism meant for him the subordination of immediate goals and material interests to superior ethical standards and the exaltation of moral and spiritual purposes.” But Wilson overshadowed the more general liberal internationalist tradition that began to flourish in America and Britain at the turn of the century and that was chiefly concerned with the rising com-

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plexities of modern society, the savageness of war, and the need for more systematic forms of international cooperation.

No matter. It was easy to conclude that the liberal doctrine had failed, and in fact a great and single statement of that doctrine was never produced. But in the shadows it remained a strong presence in the practical work of American officials, especially as they sought in the first few years after World War II to reconstruct Europe and open the postwar world economy. This presence was felt not only in the creation of the United Nations, but in the launching of other international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the apparatus of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, all designed to secure what President Harry S. Truman called “economic peace.” American officials laid the foundation of a liberal democratic order on principles of economic openness, political reciprocity, and the management of conflicts in new multinational institutions.

The realities of the Cold War soon overpowered the thinking of American officials, however, and after 1947 the doctrine of containment—with its rousing urgency and clarity of purpose—soon cast liberal internationalism into shadow again. But the principles and practices of Western order came earlier and survived longer. Today, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the five chief elements of liberal grand strategy are again re-emerging in a clearer light.

The Amity of Democracies: Woodrow Wilson was probably the purest believer in the proposition that democracies maintain more peaceful relations, and his great optimism about the prospects for democracy around the globe after World War I accounts for his exaggerated hopes for world peace. “A steadfast concert of peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants,” he declared in 1917.

Wilson’s claim was only the most emphatic statement of a long tradition in American diplomacy holding that the United States will be able to trust and get along best with democracies. This was the view, for example, that largely inspired the U.S. effort to remake Japan and Germany along more democratic lines after World War II. In the minds of the era’s American leaders, including President Truman, the fundamental cause of both world wars was the rise of illiberal, autocratic states.

Scholars have identified a number of reasons for the general amity of democracies. They point out that elected legislatures and other democratic structures often limit the ability of leaders to mobilize societies for war, that the norms of peaceful conflict resolution that democracies develop at home carry over into foreign dealings, and that democratic institutions generate more honest and reliable information about government intentions than nondemocracies do. And because democracies

are built on shared social purposes and a congruence of interests, these scholars add, such societies generally limit the rise of conflicts strong enough to lead to war.

Out of the postwar experience has come another layer of understanding about the importance of democracy. These new insights are not woolly-headed notions about the brotherhood of all democracies but hard observations about the mechanics and principles that govern the affairs of nations. Not only are democracies more peaceably inclined toward one another, they are also better suited to making international agreements and international institutions work. Why? Their success is not just a product of some ineffable trust. It occurs because they are accustomed to relations based on the rule of law rather than on political expediency, and because their openness provides their potential international partners with a set of something like verification tools. The partners can see their internal workings and judge for themselves whether promises and commitments are being kept. They can even hope to influence the other's policies. And they can be assured that the complicated political life of a democracy makes abrupt and unwelcome changes of policy unlikely.

This conviction about the value of democracy runs through much American foreign policy thinking in the 20th century. In 1995, Anthony Lake, then director of the National Security Council, declared:

We led the struggle for democracy because the larger the pool of democracies, the greater our own security and prosperity. Democracies, we know, are less likely to make war on us or on other nations. They tend not to abuse the rights of their people. They make for more reliable trading partners. And each new democracy is a potential ally in the struggle against the challenges of our time—containing ethnic and religious conflict; reducing the nuclear threat; combating terrorism and organized crime; overcoming environmental degradation.

Free Trade, Free Countries: Liberals see trade and open markets as a kind of democratic solvent, dissolving the political supports of autocratic and authoritarian governments.

Trade fosters economic growth, the argument goes, which encourages democratic institutions. Hardly anybody doubts that the first part of this proposition is correct. Even the opponents of free trade rarely argue that it doesn't promote growth. Instead, they say that it disproportionately hurts certain groups, or causes social disruptions, or poses a threat to national security.

But does economic growth encourage democracy? The classic case that it does was made by political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset in the 1950s. Lipset argued that economic development tends to increase the general level of education, which promotes changes in political culture and political attitudes. These, in turn, encourage democracy. Most important, economic development creates a rising middle class, with a

far greater degree of immunity to the appeal of class struggle and anti-democratic parties and ideologies.

There are many other reasons to accept the prosperity-democracy connection, not least that experience tends to bear it out. Not all democracies enjoy high levels of prosperity, but there is a strong correlation. Political scientists Thomas J. Bolgy and John E. Schwarz offer another reason why this is true: “only under conditions of prosperity and capitalism” are leaders likely to “accept defeat peacefully at the polls, secure in the knowledge that they will have fair opportunities to regain political power, and opportunities for economic benefit when they are out of power.”

The liberal emphasis on trade takes a very materialist view: economics shape politics. It is a far cry from starry-eyed idealism. It has a long history in official American foreign policy thinking, showing up as early as the 1890s as part of the rationale for the American Open Door policy, which declared this country’s opposition to economic spheres of influence in Asia and around the world.

More recently, the trade emphasis has been at the heart of American efforts at “engagement” with politically unpopular regimes—whether South Africa during the 1970s and ’80s, the Soviet Union, or lately China. Trade and market openings are only the tip of a liberalizing wedge—often to the surprise of the antidemocratic leaders who eagerly grasp the opportunity to trade with the United States and its partners.

The Importance of Interdependence: “Prosperous neighbors are the best neighbors,” an FDR-era Treasury official once declared. This aphorism expressed another constant in American thinking about international relations. Free trade and open markets don’t just promote economic advancement and democracy. They also promote a stable world political order. An open economic order would discourage the ruinous economic competition, trading blocs, and protectionism that had been a source of depression and war during the 1930s. Reviewing that tortured decade in his 1948 memoir, Franklin Roosevelt’s secretary of state, Cordell Hull, put it simply: “Unhindered trade dovetailed with peace; high tariffs, trade barriers, and unfair economic competition, with war.”

Just as important as promoting peace, the American vision of openness—a sort of economic one-worldism—would lead to an international order in which the need for American hands-on management would be modest. The system would, in effect, govern itself.

The “prosperous neighbor” formula conveys only one of the reasons for believing that trade promotes peace. Again, there are some very realistic arguments behind the proposition. As countries engage in more and more trade, their economies evolve. Industries and sectors that enjoy a competitive advantage in foreign markets thrive, while those that cannot withstand foreign competition wither. The economy grows

more specialized, carving out a niche in the larger international marketplace. It also grows more dependent, needing both foreign markets and foreign goods. In the language of political science, trade creates “mutual dependencies.” No longer can the state easily determine and act upon narrow nationalistic economic interests. Now it has a stake in the stability and functioning of the larger international order.

At the same time, economic change creates new vested interests with a stake in economic openness and a supportive international political order. Studies of Japan and other industrial countries show that corporations that invest overseas not only develop an interest in international conditions that support those investments but also become a new voice back home advocating the opening of the domestic market.

In the traditional American view, trade also helps “socialize” other nations. Nowhere has this been more explicit than in the Clinton administration’s approach toward China. In 1997, President Bill Clinton explained:

China’s economic growth has made it more and more dependent on the outside world for investment, markets, and energy. Last year it was the second largest recipient of foreign direct investment in the world. These linkages bring with them powerful forces for change. Computers and the Internet, fax machines and photo-copiers, modems and satellites all increase the exposure to people, ideas, and the world beyond China’s borders. The effect is only just beginning to be felt.

Apart from the litany of glittering new technologies, these are the very words a Wilson, a Roosevelt, or a Truman might have spoken.

International Institutions: Institutions matter. American policymakers in the 20th century have generally assumed that international institutions limit the scope and severity of conflicts. States that agree to participate in such institutions are, in effect, joining a political process that shapes, constrains, and channels their actions.

It should come as no surprise that Americans believe in institutions. At the heart of the American political tradition, after all, is the view that institutions can help overcome and integrate diverse and competing interests—states, regions, classes, and religious and ethnic groups. Separation of powers, checks and balances, and other constitutional devices were created as ways to limit power.

It is this deeply held belief that has made American officials so eager to build and operate international institutions, from the League of Nations to the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and a host other post-World War II organizations. Identify a new international problem, and it won’t be long before American policymakers have imagined an institution to deal with it.

Multilateral institutions have been one of the most important innovations in the postwar world: they concentrate resources, create continuity in American leadership, and avert the political backlash that would otherwise be triggered by heavy-handed American foreign policy unilateralism.

The Value of Community: A final liberal claim is that a common identity among states—not just power and interests—is important as a source of order. It's not only that politically similar states are more likely to understand each other, but that their values are liberal and democratic, which creates common norms about how to resolve conflicts.

American foreign policy thinkers have been attracted to this liberal view, but the specific ways they have sought to identify and develop common identity and community have varied. Emerging from World War I, Woodrow Wilson believed that the world stood on the brink of a great democratic revolution, and so it seemed obvious to build order around the idea of a universal democratic community. But the democratic revolution never came, as Russia



A 1919 cartoon from the American Economist

lapsed into totalitarianism and even Continental Europe failed to develop the democratic qualities Wilson expected.

The lesson that Wilson's successor took from this experience was not that Wilson was wrong about the importance of democracy, but that universalism was a bridge too far. Democracy was not as easily spread or as deeply rooted as Wilson had assumed. Building order around like-minded democracies was still a goal of Roosevelt's and Truman's, but the realm of world politics that would fit within this order and the way the order would be institutionalized differed after World War II. The community would exist primarily within the Atlantic world, and its institutional foundations would be more complex and layered.

The vision of an Atlantic union can be traced to the turn of the century and a few British and American statesmen and thinkers, such as Lord Bryce, who was the British ambassador to Washington, Admiral

Alfred T. Mahan, and Henry Adams. Their ideas remained very much in the air over the following decades. Writing in 1943, Walter Lippmann declared that the “Atlantic Ocean is not the frontier between Europe and the Americas. It is the inland sea of a community of nations allied with one another by geography, history, and vital necessity.”

In recent years, American officials have returned to this theme. During the Cold War, it was relatively easy to talk about the unity of the “free world,” whose chief membership requirement was a commitment to anticommunism. But after the collapse of communism, the Bush administration was quick to remind America’s allies that theirs was more than a defensive alliance against communism—it also embodied shared values and a sense of community. President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker both delivered major speeches evoking the Euro-Atlantic community and the “zone of democratic peace.” The Clinton administration mounted a similar appeal in making the case for expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The question now is how spacious the definition of democratic community should be. Samuel Huntington, a Harvard University political scientist, has famously warned of a coming “clash of civilizations” that will pit “the West against the rest.” His notion of democratic community is rather narrow, restricted chiefly to the Atlantic world. Others suggest more generous interpretations, seeing democracy as something that runs along a gradient and is not confined to the West. Durable democratic institutions do require a congenial democratic culture and civil society, but these are not confined to only a few national, religious, and ethnic settings.

The five principle elements of liberal grand strategy I have outlined are compatible, even synchronous. They have rarely been thought of or championed as a single package, but they did come together in the 1940s. Today, with the end of the Cold War, they appear again as the elements of a distinctive American grand strategy.

Those who equate grand strategy only with “containment” and “managing the balance of power” will not recognize these characteristic qualities of U.S. foreign policy as parts of a liberal strategy. They will only acknowledge the arrival of a new American grand strategy when a new threat emerges to refocus attention on the balance of power. But this is an intellectually and historically impoverished view, and it misses huge foreign policy opportunities. If grand strategy is defined as a coherent set of foreign policies aimed at the overall strengthening of the country’s position in the world, then the promotion of democracy and the other liberal order-building impulses constitute such a grand strategy. It doesn’t have the simple appeal of containment, but it is a grand strategy nonetheless.

What is striking about American foreign policy is how deeply

bipartisan liberal internationalism has been. Reagan and Bush pursued policies that reflected a strong commitment to the expansion of democracy, markets, and the rule of law. The Reagan administration's involvements in El Salvador, the Philippines, Chile, and elsewhere all reflected this orientation. So did its shift from the Nixon-Kissinger embrace of "permanent coexistence" with the Soviet Union toward a more active promotion of human rights and democracy. Reagan and his allies (with a few notable exceptions, such as UN ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick) embraced the traditional liberal internationalist creed: more democracies means fewer threats to the United States.

Today, Republican and Democratic leaders alike favor a foreign policy agenda organized around business internationalism, multilateral economic and security organizations, and democratic community building. It is a coalition not unlike the one that formed in the 1940s when the United States was contemplating the shape of the postwar world. Its members don't all have the same motives or interests. Some pursue democracy, the rule of law, and human rights as ends in themselves; others see them as a way to expand and safeguard business and markets; still others see indirect payoffs for national security. But this is nothing new. Out of the mix of motives and policies still comes a meaningful whole.

The United States may be predestined to pursue a liberal grand strategy. There is something in the character of the American system that supports a general liberal strategic orientation. Behind it stand an array of backers, from U.S. corporations that trade and invest overseas to human rights groups to partisans of democracy to believers in multilateral organizations. Democracies—particularly big and rich ones such as the United States—seem to have an inherent sociability. They are biased, by their very makeup, in favor of engagement, enlargement, interdependence, and institutionalization, and they are biased against containment, separation, balance, and exclusion.

It may be, as some critics argue, that Americans have been too optimistic about the possibilities of promoting democracy abroad. But this sober consideration does not diminish the overall coherence of liberal grand strategy. The last British governor of Hong Kong, Christopher Patton, captured this truth about America's role in the promotion of democracy: "American power and leadership have been more responsible than most other factors in rescuing freedom in the second half of this century. America has been prepared to support the values that have shaped its own liberalism and prosperity with generosity, might, and determination. Sometimes this may have been done maladroitly; what is important is that it has been done." America has not just been spreading its values, it has been securing its interests. This is America's hidden grand strategy, and there is at least some evidence that it has been rather successful.

The Status of the Dream

by Allister Sparks



Taking the oath of office, May 10, 1994

Nelson Mandela is soon to leave office after five history-making years as president of South Africa. The magnitude of the challenges his government faced—and of the progress it made—is only now becoming clear, for South Africa has been in the throes of three revolutions at once.



The inaugural scene. "It is not the kings and generals that make history, but the masses of the people," Mandela once said.

The inauguration of President Nelson Mandela on May 10, 1994, was the most stirring experience of my life. After more than 40 years of writing against apartheid, of exposing its iniquities and cruelties and the sheer lunacy of it, here at last was a kind of vindication, a kind of triumph. More than that, for the first time I felt the stirrings of a sense of national identification. It is a terrible thing to feel alienated from one's own people, and that I had felt my whole life. In my first book, published a decade ago, I had written that although I was a fifth-generation white South African, I felt myself to be "emotionally stateless": I could not identify with the land of my birth because it stood for things I abhorred; I felt no sense of pride when I heard my national anthem or saw my national flag.

Now here, in the grand amphitheater of Pretoria's Union Buildings, stood the tall, frail figure of Nelson Mandela, the miracle man, the liv-

With the country's second post-apartheid election due in June, there are some in South Africa, on both left and right, who are writing Mandela's covenant off as a failure.

ing martyr who had withstood 27 years of incarceration by one of the world's most heartless regimes, taking the oath of office. It was a clear, cloudless day, the bright-brittle sunlight crisp in the thin, high-velde air, with just the first chill touches of the Southern Hemisphere autumn. But from the crowd there throbbed an exuberant warmth. A hundred thousand people thronged the lower slopes of the hillside that sweeps gently down from the Union Buildings into the city, dressed in everything from rags to work clothes to tribal skins and feathers, come to see their hero take power from the oppressors. And up here in the amphitheater, in all its finery, stood a multinational crowd of extraordinary sartorial and political variety.

I had been to only one presidential inauguration before, a thin and soulless affair at which the tough militarist Pieter W. Botha was installed in the presence of just one foreign leader—the Angolan rebel, Jonas Savimbi. Now, the whole world was here: Hillary Clinton and Al Gore and Fidel Castro, John Major and Yasir Arafat, the kings of Belgium and Greece, Swaziland and Lesotho, the Duke of Edinburgh and the lord chamberlain to King Hussein of Jordan, Israelis and Arabs, Iranians and Turks and Greeks and Russians, Europeans and Asians and Latin Americans, and, of course, the whole of Africa. The pariah state had

emerged like a butterfly from its cocoon into the sunlight of international acceptance.

The Old Man stepped forward and the great crowd hushed. Tall and thin and still, with that immobile face, so like his own wax likeness in Madame Tussaud's, with not a muscle moving, not a flicker of emotion, until after the oath—and then the smile that everyone has come to know, broad, beaming, radiant. Then back

into its immobile mode once more for the speech. A speech that seemed aimed at all the alienated souls of Alan Paton's beloved country. The closing words, slow and measured, booming out across the great crowd: "We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world." And then the pledge, from a man who had once told the judge who was about to sentence him to life imprisonment that he was prepared to die for the cause of non-racialism. "Never, never, never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another, and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world."

A military band began playing the lilting harmony of the new national anthem, "Nkosi sikelel iAfrika" (God bless Africa), and I felt the hairs stand up on the nape of my neck. My first experience in all my three score years of a sentiment that was, what, patriotism? Six jet fighters, which only a few short years before had been strafing Mandela's men in the bush of Angola, flew low overhead trailing long smoke streamers in the colors of the new national flag, followed by six helicopter gunships flying the flag itself. Down below, a jazz band struck

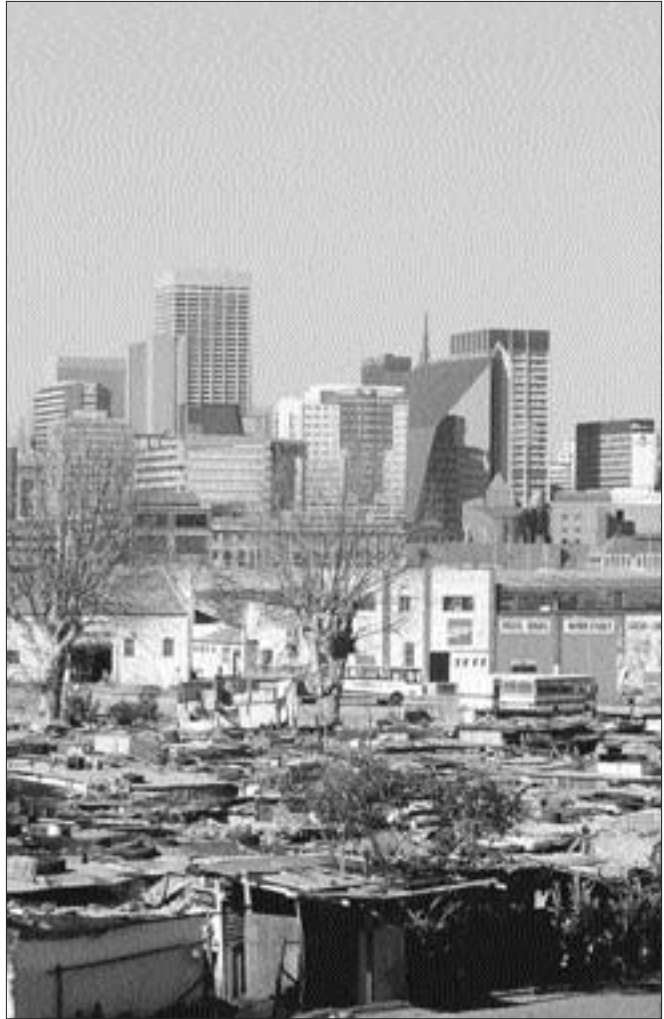
> ALLISTER SPARKS has covered his country as a print and broadcast journalist for 47 years. He was editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* in the 1970s, reported for the *Washington Post* and *Britain's Observer* in the 1980s, and most recently has been editor of television news for the *South African Broadcasting Corporation*. He is the author of two best-selling books about South Africa, *The Mind of South Africa* (1990) and *Tomorrow is Another Country* (1995). Copyright © 1999 by Allister Sparks.

up. The great crowd burst into song, swaying and jiving to the music and forming snakelike trains that wove through the crowds holding the new flag high in the air. The occasion turned, as is wont to happen in Africa, from formal ceremonialism into an impromptu music festival.

A rainbow nation. What a wonderful promise in a world riven by ethnic conflicts. What a stunning turnaround for a country bedeviled by half a century of institutionalized racism. Gripped by the symbolism of it, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel laureate, was moved to predict that South Africa, with its own intersection of First and Third World populations, would transform itself from global pariah into global role model. "Once we have got it right," Tutu said, "South Africa will be the paradigm for the rest of the world."

But promises are one thing, fulfilling them another. Today, five years later and with the Mandela presidency drawing to a close, is the rainbow nation becoming a reality? Can South Africa, with its long history of racial intolerance, really buck the global trend and become a truly nonracial, multiparty democracy? Is nonracialism itself in any event not a pipe dream that ignores the hard realities of human nature? Is democracy not something that can exist in only a handful of developed countries with a high degree of homogeneity and what the social scientists call social balance?

With the South Africa's second postapartheid election due on June 2, there are some, on both left and right, who are writing the 80-



A squatter camp in the shadow of the Johannesburg skyline is a reminder of the continuing poverty of many South Africans.

year-old president's covenant off as a failure. With unemployment rising and the wealth gap between whites and blacks still painfully wide, it is easy to find disenchanting blacks who will tell you that Mandela has done too much to appease the whites and that for them "nothing has changed." Many are irked, too, by what they see as an unrepentant attitude among whites and a resentful reluctance to have any of the social and economic privileges they acquired under apartheid diminished. "Take note that we blacks are terminally fed up," fumed columnist Jon Qwelane in a recent article.

Sadly, an opposite criticism comes from the Democratic Party (DP), residual home



The case of the Sharpeville Six, black activists who were convicted of a political killing, was one of many rallying points in the last years of apartheid. The apartheid government eventually commuted their sentences.

of white liberalism and a party with a brave anti-apartheid record. In February 1998, the party brought out a stinging pamphlet called *The Death of the Rainbow Nation*, in which it accused the Mandela government of “a creeping reintroduction of race policies” under the guise of “corrective action” to redress the cumulative disadvantages suffered by blacks under apartheid. There was more. The government had polarized the political debate by accusing predominantly white opposition parties, including the DP, of sabotaging transformation. Noting that a new affirmative action law requires employers to draft a

plan showing how they intend to advance blacks in their workforce and then to submit annual progress reports to the government, the DP pamphlet complained that this measure has effectively reintroduced a system of racial classification and criminalized “color-blindness.” Somewhat extravagantly, it warned that “racial legislation is a very slippery slope: apartheid, American segregation, and Nazi Germany all had small beginnings.” The Afrikaners’ National Party—now renamed the New National Party (NNP) in a half-hearted attempt to distance itself from its past—has similarly labeled affirmative action racist, but its words have a hollow ring.

Meanwhile, John Pilger, a left-wing Australian journalist who was banned from the country for 30 years, has returned to

make a television documentary called *Apartheid did not Die*, the central theme of which is that Mandela’s African National Congress (ANC) has sold out to big business and embarked on policies that leave the misery of the black masses untouched. On the right, Lester Venter, a former political correspondent of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, has published a book called *When Mandela Goes*, predicting a future of increasing disarray that leads the unhappy black masses to oust the ANC and vote in a new socialist workers party in 2004, with disastrous results.

Of course, South Africa has never lacked for doomsday prophets. Even at the time of the 1994 election, many international journalists arrived with their video cameras primed for a bloodbath, and when it didn't happen, they packed up and flew to Rwanda, where conveniently there was one. But what is even more responsible for the excessively gloomy assessments is a gross underestimation of the task that has confronted the new majority government over these past four-and-a-half years. It has been infinitely more complex and difficult than anyone imagined. South Africa is not simply undertaking a sociopolitical revolution, working to democratize the modern world's most deeply entrenched system of institutionalized racism and political authoritarianism, daunting though that is in itself. It is attempting three simultaneous revolutions rolled into one.

Even as it tackles the task of trying to integrate a society divided by several hundred years of white domination and 45 years of apartheid ideology, the new government must also undertake a gigantic economic revolution. It has been seeking to transform South Africa from an isolationist siege economy into a player in the new global market—a task that has destabilized a whole chain of emerging economies, from Russia and Malaysia in the east to Brazil in the west.

At the same time, South Africa is having to move urgently from an economy based on agriculture and mining to one based on exports of manufactured goods. This is the third revolution. The country's gold resources, once the richest in the world, are dwindling, and the price of gold is falling. In 1980, one-sixth of South Africa's total economic output was from gold; today it is a paltry three percent. South Africa's indus-

tries, meanwhile, have mostly been geared toward import substitution. Only a few, notably Rothmans, a major tobacco transnational; South African Breweries, which is the world's fourth-largest beer manufacturer; and the country's highly rated wine and fruit-canning enterprises, have been significant exporters. At the same time, the new government is withdrawing the fat agricultural subsidies the apartheid regime paid to its white farming constituents, many of whom are now succumbing to the hard realities of a climate that is arid in many regions.

What compounds the difficulty is a crippling conflict between the requirements of these simultaneous revolutions. On the one hand, the ANC faces the political imperative of having to deliver more jobs and better pay to its expectant and long-deprived constituencies. On the other hand, the harsh reality of competitive participation in the global market is that it leads to increased unemployment and pressure on wages, at least in the short term. In seeking to transform South Africa from producer of primary goods to manufacturing exporter, the government has to deal with the fact that the old economy required an abundance of cheap, unskilled labor, while the new one requires a smaller but highly skilled work force—and the apartheid regime, as a matter of policy, prevented the black population from acquiring skills. The purpose of the policy was not only to protect white jobs but to attempt the Sisyphian task of reversing the relentless influx of rural black people to the cities. They were sup-

Black people were deliberately given a separate and inferior education, barred from the major universities, and prohibited by law from doing skilled work.

posed to stay in their own little tribal “homelands,” which were one day supposed to become independent, leaving the greater part of the country as the white man’s land.

The result was that black people were deliberately given a separate and inferior education (most, in fact, got no education at all). They were barred from the major universities. They were prohibited by law from doing skilled work. Until 1979 they were not allowed to join trade unions, so they could not acquire skills by becoming apprentices. They were not allowed to form partnerships or companies. They could not establish businesses, except simple shops selling perishable produce—and even then their trading licenses had to be renewed annually. It must be the only instance in history in which a government deliberately crippled the skills base of its country’s working class. Cyril Ramaphosa, the trade union leader who became the ANC’s chief constitutional negotiator and is now a tycoon, has described this planned neglect as the worst of all apartheid’s crimes against humanity. Its legacy is now the new democratic regime’s greatest liability.

Seen in that daunting context, as well as the short space of time—there have been not yet 2,000 days to turn around the cumulative inequalities of more than 300 years—the criticisms of the new democratic regime look either self-serving or downright malicious. Certainly the charge that “nothing has changed” is nonsense. Radical change is visible

everywhere, particularly in the big cities, and most especially in the one where I have lived for the past 40 years.

I arrived in Johannesburg in February 1959, and immediately found myself both repelled and fascinated by the curious mix of vitality and tension that seemed to permeate the atmosphere of this extraordinary city. For Johannesburg was then, and still is, the cutting edge of the country’s racial and cultural interactions, the place where its First and Third World elements are drawn together by the irresistible magnet of a dynamic economy. I had grown up on a farm in the backwaters of the Eastern Cape Province, alongside the country’s largest black reserve, where I had come to know tribal people in all their slow and amiable ways. Now I was in the big city, where the black folk were sharp and streetwise and the whites brash and on the make. Though I had spent time in London, working for the big Reuters news agency on Fleet Street, this was different, with none of Europe’s assured maturity and depth of culture and courtesy. I found it frightening but also fascinating, for I realized from the start that it was a place of primal issues and moral challenges, a place to engage the passions like no other on earth. If I wished to understand my country, this was where to do it.

Quickly I came to realize that the essential character of Johannesburg stemmed from the fact that it was really an overgrown mining camp. It had that instant and transient air about it, as though everyone had come there for a quick buck and nothing was meant to last. The city had sprung into life only 68 years before, scarcely six months after a penniless gold prospector

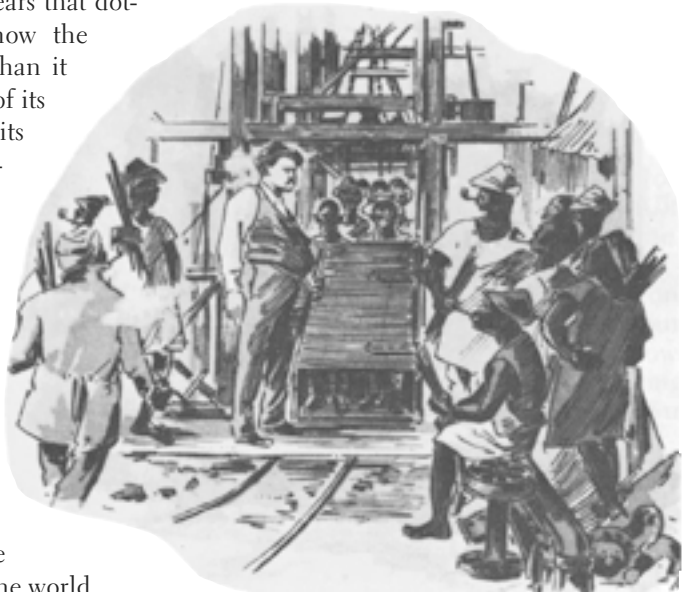
Johannesburg was then, and still is, the cutting edge of the country’s racial and cultural interactions, the place where its First and Third World elements are drawn together by the irresistible magnet of a dynamic economy.

stumbled upon a rocky outcrop that proved to be the signpost to the world's richest gold deposits. Because the gold was deep underground and expensive to mine, an elaborate financial structure soon followed. It took less than a year to establish the city's first stock exchange. Brothels and bars arrived almost simultaneously. The boom was so headlong that no one bothered to record which official, speculator, or digger had been honored in the city's name. It thus became the city of the unknown Johannesburg.

The city still had a honky-tonk atmosphere when I arrived, an impression accentuated by the yellow mine dumps and ungainly mine headgears that dotted its periphery. Somehow the city seemed a lot bigger than it really was, partly because of its pace and partly because its black population, numbering two-thirds of the total, lived beyond its fringes in dormitory townships and thronged its streets by day. It was regarded as a skyscraper city, even though its tallest building, Eskom House, was only 12 floors high. But the paradox was that unlike every other metropolis in the world, this one died at night. At 5 p.m., when businesses closed, the inhabitants fled to their segmented ghettos, the blacks to their dormitory townships and the whites to their high-walled suburban homes. The central city streets fell silent, dark, and sinister.

I had come there to work as a copyeditor on the country's biggest morning newspaper, the *Rand Daily Mail*, which under a new editor was showing signs of becoming the first crusading paper for racial justice in South Africa's history. It was a challenging time for such a venture. African colonies were reaching for their independence, and as British prime minister Harold Macmillan warned during a visit to South Africa in

1960, the "winds of change" were beginning to blow through the continent. In the black population a new assertiveness was stirring. But in South Africa a new prime minister, Hendrik F. Verwoerd, had taken power and was beginning to elaborate the apartheid ideology and implement it with intensified thoroughness. Every day brought news of more forced removals as the bulldozers flattened black residential areas deemed too close to the "white" city, leaving their residents to be dumped on a stretch of open veldt a sanitary distance away in a new conglomerate to be called South Western Townships—Soweto.



"A busy, eager, restless, pleasure-loving town," as one visitor wrote in 1897, Johannesburg was built on grueling labor in the gold mines.

So the great multiracial metropolis was being segmented into a series of self-contained, inward-looking ethnic enclaves. But the African independence movement was pumping adrenaline into the young black intelligentsia, who were churning out books, poetry, and powerful pieces of protest theater. Many were journalists working for a black publishing house run by the disowned son of a pioneer mining magnate. The publishing house was just two blocks from the *Rand Daily Mail* offices, and some of us would meet up



Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd in 1960

with the black journalists at a drinking establishment known simply as Whitey's Place. It was illegal for blacks to enter bars or to buy or consume "white" liquor, even beer, but speakeasies like Whitey's, called shebeens, flourished everywhere and became the network for a whole subculture of black social life and interracial bonding. The shebeen queen who ran the joint paid the local police protection money, inflating the prices, but the clientele paid up cheerfully.

They were raucous, racy places, sometimes violent, and it was here that I came to know a whole generation of black journalists, writers, and artists, many of whom were doomed to die early, rot in jail, or wither away in exile. They were a colorful lot, the journalists writing in a Damon Runyon style of ribald township slang and sometimes affecting a pseudo-American accent gleaned from the movies. Only some years later did a spirit of anti-Americanism creep into the black community, as the Soviets began training and aiding the exiled ANC's guerrilla fighters.

I became political correspondent of the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1961, and for the next few years sat in the press gallery of the all-white Parliament in Cape Town listening to Verwoerd expound on the philosophy of apartheid in two-hour marathons. It was an eerie experience. He had been a professor of applied psychology, trained in Germany dur-

ing the 1930s, and he brought a chilling intellectualism to the crude racism that had propelled the Afrikaner National Party to power in 1948. Ethnicity, he explained with paternalistic patience, was the way of human nature, and any attempt to create a multiracial nation was not only fallacious but deadly dangerous. Apartheid, by contrast, was the way of liberation: each ethnic "nation" had a God-given right to its own identity and its own country, and so the white South Africans were prepared to give each black nation its own homeland even as they claimed their own for themselves. It sounded so plausible in that isolated, all-white chamber, cut

off like an ocean liner from the pulsating polyglot reality of the society outside. The packed ranks of Verwoerd's party supporters, hugely dominant in that Parliament and becoming more so with every election, sat in fascinated silence as they listened to him give this veneer of respectability to their bucolic prejudices. Outside the bulldozers crunched on, the tensions rose, and the ANC was outlawed.

There followed the bleakest of times. Verwoerd was assassinated in 1966, stabbed to death spectacularly in his seat of power by a deranged white parliamentary messenger. His police minister, John Vorster, took over. No intellectualism here, simply ruthless repression and increasing authoritarianism. Black voices were silenced as the ANC, its leaders imprisoned or exiled, tried to muster the resources to mount a guerrilla war against Africa's most powerful military establishment. The price of gold climbed in international markets and South Africa prospered, by political disaster and economic windfall, it was said. The country entered a triumphalist phase, soon reflected in the architecture of its cities. Real skyscrapers arose, 20, 30, 50 floors high, palaces of chrome and glass and conspicuous affluence. A Dallas on the African veldt. The centerpiece, the headquarters

of a bank, was a towering glass creation designed by a New York architect in the shape of a diamond.

Yet, as always, the reality of the city's heterogeneous character refused to disappear. The new extravaganza was located on a racial boundary called Diagonal Street, and across the road stood a row of decrepit two-story buildings officially licensed as "black shops" selling used clothes, cheap cuts of meat, and the herbal medicines that African healers prescribe. To their horror, the owners

of the sparkling diamond palace found this tacky strip obscenely mirrored in their glass. Since the business community at that time was trying to present itself to overseas critics as an agent of reform, it could hardly send for the removal squads. The best it could do was present the baffled shop owners with gifts of free paint, but to little avail. The heterogeneous reality of South Africa had triumphed against the odds, as it has continued to do.

It is these images that I hold in my mind as I listen to the protestations that "nothing



Taking over as prime minister in 1966, John Vorster inaugurated a grim new era of apartheid.



New customers enjoy the shopping in Johannesburg's upscale Sandton neighborhood.

has changed.” For today the city has changed again, more radically than ever before. Today Johannesburg has abandoned its pretensions to being a Dallas or a Minneapolis. It has become an African city, a huge Nairobi, with blacks thronging its streets, taking over its shops, moving into its apartments, and giving the whole a less glitzy, more Third World aspect. Black consumers now account for more than 90 percent of central city trade. Hillbrow, a high-rise apartment quarter that was once the residential heartland of young white Johannesburg and the center of the city’s nightlife, is now overwhelmingly black. From this core, blacks have spread outward into suburbia, to Yeoville and Brixton, to Mayfair and Vrededorp, and even into the most affluent suburbs, Houghton and Sandton. The demographic tide has swept in, and with poetic justice Soweto has taken over the city from which it was once expelled.

As the tide flows, many whites are withdrawing deeper into suburbia, their security walls rising ever higher, office blocks and all-purpose shopping centers following them to make it increasingly unnecessary ever to enter the city center. To that extent, a residual apartheid persists. There has also been a

fair amount of white emigration, a flight spurred by a postapartheid rise in the crime rate and a perceived loss of career opportunities because of the government’s affirmative action policies. No official figures are available, but one educated guess puts the number of white emigrants at perhaps 75,000 since 1994. Not significant overall, but it has meant a loss of valuable skills in professional sectors such as medicine, law, and the engineering sciences.

Inward and upward. As black South Africans have moved in from the townships, they have moved up, enjoying a new social mobility undreamed of before, into the boardrooms of big companies such as the mining giant Anglo American Corporation; into companies of their own, such as the highly successful Kagiso Media Limited; and, not surprisingly, into commanding positions in government departments and parastatal corporations such as Eskom, the national electricity supplier, and Transnet, the umbrella body controlling the national transportation network. Blacks are occupying middle-management and junior management positions, doing supervision and strategic planning and a host of other jobs that were closed to them before. They are driving Mercedes-Benzes and BMWs and moving into big homes and in every way emulating the nouveau

riche lifestyles of the white moneyed elite that preceded them. Their children now go to the same suburban schools, play on the same sports teams, and go to the same cafes and cinemas and rock concerts as the white kids. To that extent, an incipient rainbow nation is taking shape.

What is happening, of course, is that a new class re-stratification is taking place, overlaying the old distinctions based purely on race. A multiracial middle class is emerging, growing socially more distant from the predominantly black working class and the huge underclass. A recent survey conducted for the advertising industry showed that 43 percent of people in the upper-income bracket were now black, and predicted that in five years' time blacks would be a majority. At the same time, white affluence is shrinking, some working-class whites are joining the big black trade unions, and a sprinkling of white beggars are appearing on the streets. For the first time since the Great Depression, poor-whiteism, the searing experience that hit the poorly educated white Afrikaner community particularly hard (and began the process of legally enforced job discrimination that culminated in apartheid) has shown its face again.

It is in this new class formation that the seeds of discontent lie. It is not that nothing has changed, but that things have not changed for enough people. The gap between the new multiracial middle class and the huge underclass is as wide as the old one between white and black, and it is growing wider. The trouble with this is the jealousy it arouses. Why should some blacks prosper so conspicuously while others continue to languish in poverty? What happened to African socialism and the fellowship of the oppressed?

Unemployment is estimated variously at 25 to 45 percent, depending on whether one counts informal sector activities, and

the country is losing 70,000 jobs a year. There are seven million people living in sprawling squatter camps, South Africa's favelas, on the fringes of the cities, and the millions of rural poor are still as destitute as ever. But even for them, there have been some significant improvements. In 1984, a comprehensive study of poverty in South Africa produced the appalling statistic that the average rural black South African woman had to walk eight miles every day of her life to fetch water and firewood. Today, after five years of ANC rule, three million of those rural dwellers have ready access to tap water and nearly two million have electricity in their shacks. They may still be desperately poor, but for those two million the quality of life has been transformed in a fundamental way.

And then there is education, formerly segregated and hopelessly unequal for blacks, especially in the rural areas. It is free and compulsory for all today, and though this has been accomplished amid great confusion and blown budgets, every school in the country is now integrated, most with large black majorities.

By far the most important achievement, though, has been on the political front: the enfranchisement of the black majority and the entrenchment of a democratic constitution. Sitting today in the press gallery where once I spent all those hours listening to Hendrik Verwoerd drone out his crazy fantasies of "separate freedoms," I sometimes get the feeling that what is before me now cannot possibly be real. The change is too great. The building and furnishings, even the procedural rituals, are still the same, and the same old ghosts still stalk the corridors and haunt my head. But where before there were serried ranks of white males, all alike in their dark suits and closed faces and immovable ideas—except for the solitary woman,

With poetic justice, Soweto has taken over the city from which it was once expelled.

the brave and combative liberal, Mrs. Helen Suzman—today the whole of South Africa’s multihued population is represented.

A system of proportional representation with no minimum cutoff line has meant that seven political parties are represented. In a National Assembly of 400 members the ANC alliance holds 252 seats, having won 63 percent of the national vote in 1994. (It also dominates the Senate, Parliament’s upper house.) Next in line is the party of the old regime, the New National Party, with 82 members, followed by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi’s Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party with 43. The remaining parties have fewer than 10 seats each: the far-rightist Afrikaner Freedom Front, the Democratic Party, the black militant Pan-Africanist Congress, and the tiny African Christian Democratic Party.

The chamber presents a kaleidoscopic picture of ethnic and sartorial variety: colorful saris, flowing African gowns, long white Muslim robes, gaudy head scarves, and of course the dark suits. One-third of the members are women, including the sari-clad speaker and her deputy. The mood is much less inhibited: the honorable members some-

times cheer, clap, or even sing. There has even been a fistfight on the floor of the Assembly—not, as it happens, involving the new African lawmakers, but between two white Afrikaners, one representing the new regime and the other the old. At moments of special enthusiasm, some of the women are liable to break into ululation. When Mandela was first installed in his seat of power, an *imbongi*, or praise singer, was in attendance, clad in skins and beads to prance and chant the new president’s history and virtues. Here, certainly, is a rainbow legislature.

The change of content is even more striking than the visual picture. In the old Assembly the white men, every one a self-appointed amateur ethnologist, would talk endlessly about the black South Africans who were not present—what they were like, how they thought, what their real aspirations were, how they were different in their wants and ways. Now the black people are there to speak for themselves with a riveting authenticity. The old sense of unreality that used at times to overwhelm me has gone. With that has come a new openness, for what has happened is much more than just the abandoning of apartheid and the enfranchising of the black majority. It has also been a change from authoritarianism



Voting for a new South Africa in April 1994, the country’s first free democratic election

to democracy to a degree unique in Africa and equaled in only a handful of developed countries. The new Parliament gives expression to one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, with an entrenched Bill of Rights guaranteeing all the fundamental human rights, including the right to life, liberty, and freedom of expression. The result has been some of the most progressive decision making in the world, including the prohibition of the death penalty and legalization of abortion.

The meetings of Parliament and its committees are open to the public and the news media. Analyzing South African politics used to require divining skills similar to those of Soviet-era Kremlinologists. By contrast, today's ministers are highly accessible, both formally and informally. A year after Mandela's installation, my wife and I happened to be vacationing in Cape Town. As we returned from the beach one day, she remarked that she had never been on the grounds of Tuynhuys, the gracious old Dutch-gabled presidential office building alongside Parliament. Impulsively, and as something of a test, I suggested we knock on the door and ask to see the president's media spokesman, a long-standing friend. Not only did the spokesman invite us in to look around, but we were shown into the president's office and chatted with senior aides, still dressed in our beach clothes.

As a journalist, I have found the openness of the government and the commitment to media freedom the most liberating and encouraging features of the new regime. Not that there were censors in our newsrooms under apartheid. The control system was more insidious than that. There were 120 pieces of legislation that one way or another restricted what could be published on pain of pros-

The Assembly chamber presents a kaleidoscopic picture of ethnic and sartorial variety: colorful saris, flowing African gowns, long white Muslim robes, gaudy head scarves, and of course the dark suits.

ecution; the effect was a form of self-censorship imposed by the journalists themselves. The worst of these laws effectively silenced the authentic black political opposition by prohibiting the publication of any information about it—except for the damning statements issued by the government itself—or the quoting of anything said by opposition leaders. Some newspapers, particularly the *Rand Daily Mail*, which was internationally acclaimed for its courage at the time, tried hard to negotiate this minefield and present a more balanced picture to the public, but it was a hazardous business. During my own four-year editorship of the paper during the 1970s, I was in court six times.

What was particularly galling in those years was that, while some newspapers did their best to expose the injustices of apartheid, the national public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), became the most blatant propagandist of the regime and its odious ideology. It was initially modeled on Britain's BBC, but soon after the National Party came to power it subverted the SABC's independence. The party packed the board of directors with political appointees, who in turn filled all key editorial positions with ideologically reliable apparatchiks. No journalist who was not a true believer could hope to work there. No critical item ever made it on the air. Moreover, no other broadcaster was per-

The one conspicuous failure during the Mandela years has been in bringing about economic revolution.

mitted to operate, giving the SABC a monopoly in both radio and television.

It is difficult to exaggerate the impact of this systematic brainwashing on white attitudes over three decades following the 1960 banning of the ANC and other black political organizations. To illustrate the point, a 1982 opinion survey showed that 80 percent of whites believed the government line that communism, not black discontent, was the greatest threat to South Africa's future; 81 per cent of whites supported cross-border military attacks on ANC bases in neighboring countries; and a staggering 71 percent believed that South African blacks were basically content and had no reason to try to overthrow the apartheid regime. The prevailing white view, instilled by years of managed news reporting, was that South Africa was not facing a domestic threat but an external one, a "total onslaught" directed from the Soviet Union. To detoxify such a group mindset obviously requires a transformation of the media that helped create it.

That process has begun. Today the media scene is substantially changed. The 120 laws are dead letters. In their place is a near-equivalent of the American First Amendment: a constitutional clause guaranteeing freedom of speech and a free press. Whereas in the past all of the country's newspapers were white owned, today one of the four big publishing companies is black controlled, and four major dailies and two weeklies have black editors. The greatest change, however, has been in broadcasting. The SABC today has a multiracial board of directors with a black chairman. It has a black

chief executive, and the heads of both radio and television news are black. At the same time, to prevent another political hijacking of the airwaves, the SABC's monopoly of broadcasting has been ended. South Africa now has 16 public, 15 commercial, and 82

community radio stations, and three television broadcasters putting six channels on the air.

It has to be said, though, that there needs to be greater tolerance of the freedoms the new constitution guarantees. Perhaps through a sense of insecurity, many in the new regime are hypersensitive to criticism and quick to lash out with intemperate attacks, often aimed at the media. Although this has not reached the level of overt threats, there is a worrying tendency to equate criticism with racism and to imply that black journalists have a duty to support the new regime. At the same time some of the new black news directors at the SABC are too close to the ANC leadership for comfort, raising the concern that as the heat of campaigning mounts in this election year, we may see the new commitment to editorial independence begin to waver. But even if it does, at least the public broadcaster won't be the only voice on air. The democratization of the airwaves has gone too far for South Africa ever again to be without alternative voices.

The one conspicuous failure during the Mandela years has been in bringing about economic revolution. Fulfilling the government's pledge to improve the quality of life for South Africa's people—to create jobs for the unemployed, to build a million houses in five years for the seven million homeless, to provide health care for all and education for every child, to bring clean water and electricity and telephones to the rural poor—requires one thing above all. Growth. To stop unemployment from becoming exponentially worse, simply to

stay in the same place, the country needs an average growth rate of five percent a year for several years, a pace not seen for more than two decades.

Under the direction of a Reserve Bank governor, Chris Stals, inherited from the old regime, South Africa has followed an excessively conservative monetary policy that has made reducing inflation and defending the currency the top priorities, not growth and jobs. High interest rates, which reached an unprecedented 25.5 percent last October, have cut inflation from 22 percent in the late 1980s to seven percent at the end of last year. But coupled with labor inflexibility (the Labor Relations Act makes it difficult to

mid-1998. A billion dollars left the country in the third quarter of that year, while currency speculators attacked South Africa's currency, the rand.

Part of the economic problem is structural, stemming from the socioeconomic distortions caused by apartheid and aggravated by the exigencies of the global free market. It is no easy task trying to transform a sophisticated economy shaped to provide a First World lifestyle for five million whites to one supplying 40 million South Africans with the basic necessities of life—and to do that without shattering the country's entrepreneurial and skills capacity by triggering a white exodus. There is an enormous financial burden involved in



With unemployment widespread, creating jobs will be a top post-Mandela priority.

fire incompetent workers) and a notoriously high crime rate, steep interest rates have deterred risk investment, particularly direct foreign investment, and brought growth to a standstill.

The high interest rates have attracted foreign investment, but this is speculative, easy-come-easy-go money. It left South Africa vulnerable to the wave of nervousness about emerging markets that swept the world in

advancing the black population, and, because of the income gap, only a small number of taxpayers bear this burden. Five percent of South Africans contribute 80 percent of the tax revenue. But it is true, too, that the country did little in the way of advance “think-tanking” about the economic aspects of the triple revolution it is now embroiled in. Economic issues were hardly debated at the great all-party Negotiating Council that drafted the country's post-apartheid constitution. They

were eclipsed by the huge drama of black enfranchisement.

Moreover, the country's politicians are not well equipped intellectually to deal with the economic revolution. Even as the ANC was legalized in 1990, its ideological universe collapsed. Although there was great variation in the degree of its members' commitment to socialism, there is no doubt that the fall of communism and the discrediting of socialist economics generally left the ANC in an ideological vacuum. This has made the economic transition doubly difficult for it. Nor was there help to be had from the New National Party, which for the first two years formed a government of national unity with the ANC. It, too, had no coherent vision of how the economy should be reformed; for years it had run a siege economy designed chiefly to survive international sanctions, and it had a history of massive intervention in the economy in order to maintain white dominance.

Under the circumstances, the ANC has shown a commendable pragmatism. The only economic policy it had when it came to power was a pledge contained in its Freedom Charter, drafted at a "congress of the people" in 1955, to nationalize key sectors of the economy. "The national wealth of our country . . . shall be restored to the people," the charter read. "The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks, and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole. All other industries and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people." The charter also pledged that "all the land [shall be] redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger."

At the time of Mandela's release from prison in 1990, the Freedom Charter was still holy writ, and soon after he came home Mandela recommitted himself to the nationalization pledge. I wrote an article at the time criticizing his statement and pointing out that the nationalization of Zambia's copper mines in 1974 had crippled that desperate country's economy. President Kenneth Kaunda had borrowed heavily to compensate the mining companies, after which the copper price crashed,

leaving Zambia with an enormous debt to service from depleted copper earnings. It has never recovered. Mandela telephoned me after reading the article. "Come and have lunch with me," he said. "I want to discuss this matter with you."

We lunched and talked in his Soweto home. It was evident he understood little about economics, but he told me he wanted to study the matter further. Today the nationalization pledge is dead and buried. Instead, the government has adopted from Germany the concept of a social market economy which is embodied in a catch-all growth, employment, and redistribution (GEAR) policy. The key financial ministers and their departmental heads have shown themselves to be fast learners. They have moved, though perhaps too timidly, to remove the exchange controls and trade barriers that were put in place during the sanctions years, and to negotiate new trade agreements. This has opened the way for South Africa to enter the global market, but it has also exposed the country's soft underbelly—its inflexible, poorly skilled, and underproductive labor market.

Through all the complexities of the economic revolution, one conclusion seems self-evident: to succeed in the global marketplace and at the same time reduce the burgeoning unemployment problem, the government's logical course would be to emulate the newly industrialized countries of Southeast Asia and follow a low wage-high employment policy. That would increase competitiveness and encourage direct foreign investment by manufacturers seeking access to the huge African continental market. But for a liberation movement that has pledged to free its people from the gross inequalities of apartheid deliberately to hold down black working-class wages while allowing the rich white entrepreneurial class to grow richer is politically unthinkable. It is also politically impractical, for the labor unions are too strong and the ANC is bonded in a Siamese-twin relationship with them. Indeed, it is in a tripartite alliance of long standing with the labor

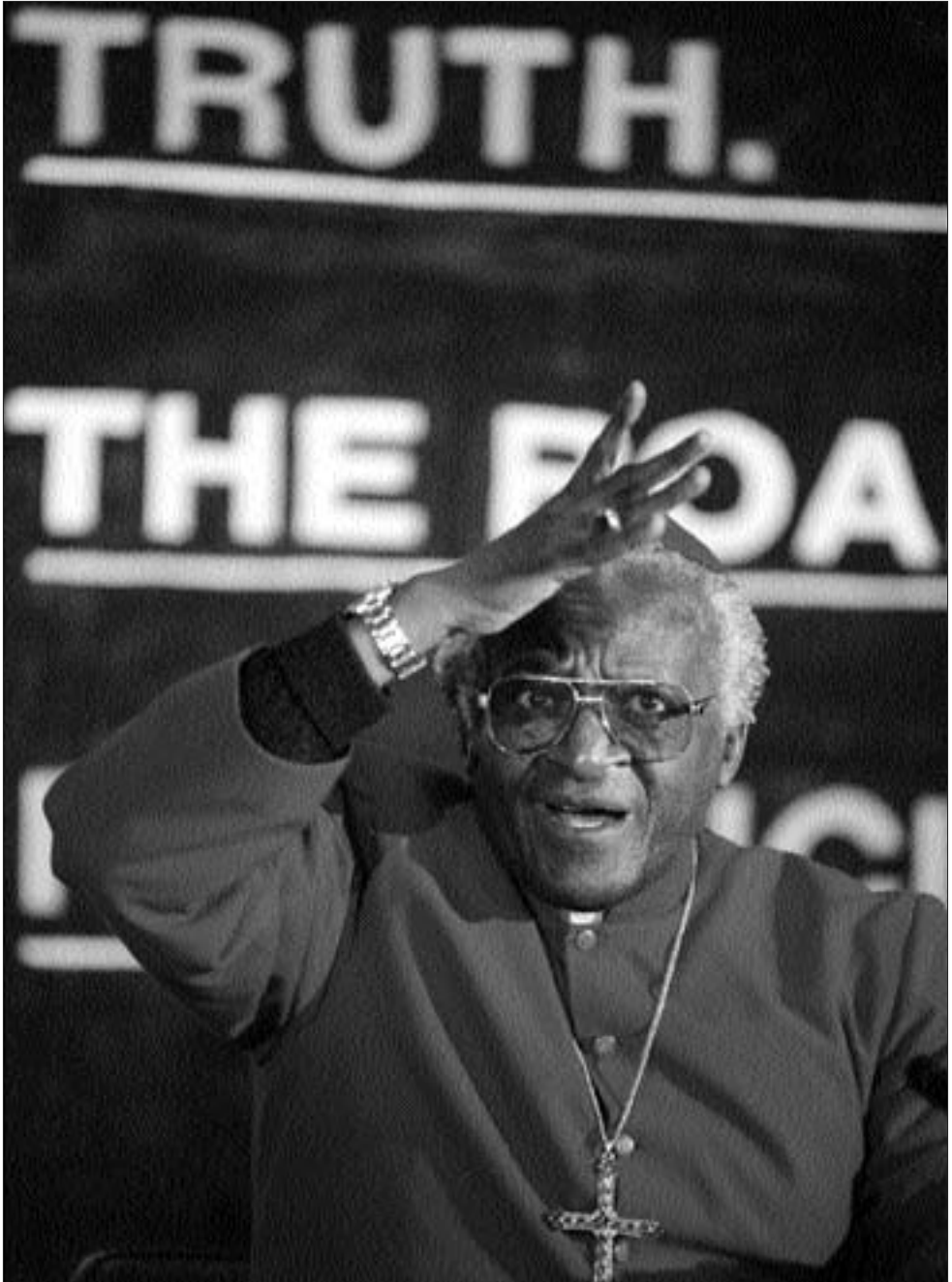


Memories of apartheid: a Soweto scene from 1980

movement, as embodied in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party. While the Communist Party is small, Cosatu is by far the best-organized and most muscular political organization in the country. It is generally reckoned to be powerful enough to block any strategy of economic development that would hurt the interests of organized workers. Certainly the ANC would hate to see Cosatu break away from the alliance and turn itself into a socialist workers party, for it could quickly become a formidable challenger for power.

As the winds of economic change blew more icily through the Southern Hemisphere in the winter of 1998, when first Japan and then

other Asian economies triggered a flight of investment capital from all emerging markets, South Africa suffered a triple whammy: the gold price fell, layoffs increased, and speculative raids on the rand sent it plummeting 26 percent in two months. Both Cosatu and the Communist Party began calling loudly for the scrapping of GEAR, but the government held its ground. At Cosatu's national congress in June, both Mandela and his heir apparent, Deputy President Mbeki, chided the unionists for their disloyalty. "Why do we still call each other comrade?" Mbeki asked pointedly, while Mandela warned that public attacks on ANC policy by other alliance members could have serious implications. "GEAR is the fundamental policy of the ANC," he declared, wagging



Archbishop Desmond Tutu opens the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Its final report implicated not only the white regime but ANC members, Inkatha leader Buthelezi, and others in human rights violations.

a finger at his audience. “We are not going to change it because of your pressure.”

More significantly still, the ANC leaders told Cosatu members they would not get a block allocation of seats on the ANC ticket in the 1999 election, as they did in 1994.

Their aspiring candidates would have to be nominated by their local ANC branches, meaning they would have to demonstrate their comradely fidelity or they would be out. That implicit threat stated, Mbeki went on to tell the unionists bluntly that the government

If there is ever to be a true spirit of national unity among South Africa's diverse racial groups, then there must first be a great act of reconciliation between the victims of oppression and the perpetrators.

would not accede to their demands for a moratorium on layoffs, and indeed intended to amend the rigid Labor Relations Act to allow for special low youth wages and to make it easier for employers to dismiss some workers. Unpopular stuff, but the chastened unions accepted it. "ANC Tells Cosatu To Jump

In Lake," ran one front-page headline after the congress. An exaggeration, certainly, but also an acknowledgment that the government had shown political courage in facing up to a difficult issue.

Encouraging though that was, it is still unclear whether South Africa is capable of weathering the storms of globalization and domestic economic transformation. To succeed, it must attract substantially more direct foreign investment, and a major deterrent here is South Africa's wretched crime rate. Although the tales of hijackings, robbery, and rape have become more lurid in the retelling abroad, the crime rate is bad and foreign corporations are reluctant to put their personnel at risk. South Africa has always been a violent place. But whereas in the past the worst violence was largely confined to the black ghettos and ignored by the public media, now it has spread into the central city areas and into suburbia, hitting both the white population and the front pages. There is no doubt, too, that it has worsened as it has widened.

There are many reasons for this, the most critical being the collapse of effective policing. For generations, the South African police were the frontline troops in the enforcement of the laws of segregation and oppression. In the final years of turbulence, through the 1980s, the conflict between police and protesters escalated into something close to a civil war, during which the police were given extraordinary powers of

indefinite detention without trial and during which they raided and tortured and killed with relish. They did so in the indoctrinated belief that they were fighting a holy war for *volk* and fatherland against the evil forces of communist terrorism. Then suddenly their political leaders did a deal with these supposedly heinous enemies, who in a few short years became their new bosses—leaving many of the police bewildered, disillusioned, and in many cases bitterly angry. Some have quit the force, going into the one form of activity they know best, which is organized crime. Others are simply dispirited and unmotivated.

At the same time, the ending of isolation and of sanctions has seen the country's borders open and a flood of new arrivals enter. Only half a dozen airlines used to fly into the pariah state; now scores land daily from all parts of Latin America, Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Europe, North America, and other parts of Africa. They bring with them the drug trade and international drug syndicates, which were quick to spot the opportunities presented by a country with a weakened law enforcement system. Drugs and cars and guns. There is a brisk trade in stolen vehicles smuggled across South Africa's porous borders into corrupt and poverty-stricken countries to the north, where they are exchanged for drugs that are brought back to be sold or re-exported. And there is a proliferation of guns in a region that has seen four long guerrilla wars over the past 30 years.

Getting on top of the crime wave requires rebuilding the police force and establishing

a bond of trust between it and the public—a bond that has never before existed in South Africa, for the police have always been seen as the people’s oppressors. It will be a slow and painstaking task, but without it there will be no end to the crime, and without controlling the crime there will be no economic revolution—and without that there will be no rainbow future.

If there is ever to be a true spirit of national unity among South Africa’s diverse racial groups, then there must first be a great act of reconciliation between the victims of oppression and the perpetrators. And reconciliation, all the great religions tell us, can come about only if there is

tion. Thus, the archbishop’s commission became a giant public confessional. In three years it investigated 31,000 cases of human rights abuses during the apartheid era, and last October it came up with a report of one million words.

South Africans have seen on their television screens a burly security police torturer, Captain Jeffrey Benzien, squat on the back of a black victim lying facedown on the floor and demonstrate how he pulled a wet bag over the man’s head to suffocate him to the edge of death. They have heard others testify how they “tubed” political prisoners, pulling a strip of rubber tubing over the prisoner’s nose and mouth and sometimes keeping it there too long, so that the victim died.



Benzien testifies about torture before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

first confession and atonement. Hence the establishment of a remarkable institution called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by that prince of compassion, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. You cannot have Nuremberg trials after a negotiated settlement, with executions and imprisonment of the guilty, and so South Africa settled for a kind of deal—the exchange of truth for amnesty. Those who committed atrocities could make their confessions and be indemnified from prosecu-

When the victims suddenly voided their bladders, one torturer explained, “then you knew they had gone to another place.” They have heard officers in a special chemical warfare unit explain how they developed special poisons that could be sprinkled on the clothing of black leaders, and how they tried to develop a pill that would render black women infertile and so cut the black birthrate. They even considered developing a drug that would damage Mandela’s brain and render him mentally ineffectual before

his release from prison.

The cascade of horror has been numbing. As Antjie Krog, a prize-winning Afrikaner poet who headed SABC Radio's reporting team covering the Truth Commission, wrote last year, "Week after week; voice after voice; account after account. It is like travelling on a rainy night behind a huge truck—images of devastation breaking in sheets on the windscreen."

After 20 years of cover-up, South Africans have learned at last who killed the Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko; how his head was bashed against a prison cell wall, causing fatal damage to his brain. And how Matthew Goniwe, a young activist of the 1980s who was a friend of mine, one of the brightest and most charming young people I have ever known, was abducted on a lonely road one night in 1985 along with three friends, all of them dragged into the bushes, beaten unconscious, stabbed to death, their bodies and faces mutilated and burned to conceal their identities. One of Matthew's hands was cut off and kept in a bottle of formalin to terrify black political prisoners during interrogation. "What kind of person, what kind of human being," asks Krog, "keeps another's hand in a fruit-jar on his desk? What kind of hatred makes animals of people?"

But the most horrifying stories by far came from a two-year court trial of the apartheid regime's chief assassin, Colonel Eugene de Kock. A squarely built man with thick-lensed spectacles, De Kock was found guilty of murdering 65 people and sentenced to 212 years' imprisonment. He has applied for amnesty and has still to appear before the Truth Commission's special Amnesty Committee. He may yet go free. But his accounts of what he did have burned themselves into the pages of South African history.

Now 48, De Kock has been in the killing business all his adult life. He began in the 1960s, fighting in a South African police unit sent to Rhodesia to help Ian Smith in

Diplomats call it the WHAM question—What happens after Mandela?

his futile bid to stave off black majority rule in that neighboring country. De Kock perfected his brutal methods fighting guerrillas in Namibia and Angola, returning in 1985 to Pretoria, where he was given command of a special

unit code-named C-10. Its task was to undertake covert operations against "enemies of the state," meaning supporters of the ANC. It was there that De Kock's unique talent for violence earned him the nickname "Prime Evil." Over the next eight years he and his unit, consisting largely of turned ANC guerrillas called *askaris*, killed scores of people; De Kock told the court he didn't really know how many. Senior police officers around the country would telephone him and give him the names of people they wanted "taken out." Some of the killings were wantonly savage. Once De Kock cleaved a victim's head open with a garden spade.

Members of the unit usually disposed of bodies by wrapping them around a stick of dynamite and blowing them to smithereens. They mailed poisons and booby-trapped bombs hidden in pens, manuscripts, tape recorders, and radios to exiles living in Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zambia. They blew up the headquarters of the South African Council of Churches and the Congress of South African Trade Unions in Johannesburg, as well as the ANC headquarters in London. And they were rewarded by the authorities. De Kock became one of the most highly decorated officers in the South African Police Force.

It is difficult to judge how this outpouring has affected the South African public. For some black people, it seems to have been cathartic to be able to tell their stories and to hear the confessions. For others, it has been infuriating to see the guilty get amnesty and walk free. Many whites accuse the commission of being a witch hunt and of stirring up hatreds that will make reconciliation impossible. Some have react-

ed with fury and sent death threats to Tutu and the other commissioners. The New National Party threatened to take the commission to court for bias. Yet others have tried to ignore it with a sullen withdrawal. But for a few, mainly white Afrikaners, there is a deep sense of guilt and soul-searching, for theirs was the ruling group and these confessing monsters are their own people. Antjie Krog, the Afrikaner poet, speaks for them.

"Some of us may deny it," Krog said at an event marking the publication of her book, *Country of My Skull*, last July, "but deep down Afrikaners know the truth. We are embarrassed, we are deeply ashamed and isolated in our clumsy, lonely attempts to deal with our guilt." Saying the Truth Commission had shattered the self-image of Afrikaners, she added: "We now know exactly what we as Afrikaners are. A people capable of indescribable evil. But also a people of an honesty to walk the road of this country and this continent."

A few weeks later a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, Dr. Ockie Raubenheimer, invited Tutu in his capacity as chairman of the Truth Commission to preach in Raubenheimer's suburban Johannesburg church. It was a significant invitation: the Dutch Reformed Church, the main denomination of the Afrikaner community, was a pillar of support for the apartheid system, earning for itself the sobriquet of "the National Party at prayer." Raubenheimer, moreover, was a chaplain in the Defense Force and thus an integral part of the regime's repressive machinery, while Tutu was a symbol of enmity to Afrikaners throughout the apartheid years. Now the two were together before a congregation of Afrikaner notables.

The service began cautiously enough, with Raubenheimer speaking of the Afrikaners' role in the past, saying there was much to be proud of but there had also been some mistakes. But after Tutu's sermon, in which the little archbishop referred to the "evil deeds" of the past and the need for a leader to step forward and help the people come to terms with what had been done, Raubenheimer unexpectedly stepped forward. "I am not scheduled to speak now and

actually I am not sure what I am going to say," he began. Then, turning to Tutu, he said: "As a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church for 20 years, as a chaplain in the Defense Force, I want to say to you we are sorry. For what we have done wrong we ask the Lord for forgiveness." He ended in a whisper, choked by tears. Tutu got up, put his arm around the distraught minister, and for an emotion-charged moment the two men stood there hugging each other as the congregation rose to its feet and applauded.

Perhaps this was a beginning.

South African diplomats call it the WHAM question—What happens after Mandela? The question itself, and the frequency with which it is asked, echo the old doomsday expectations, a feeling that somehow the new South Africa is too good to be true, that it happened only because of one magic man, and that without him it will surely return to its predestined road to disaster.

On the contrary, South Africa is about to undergo the most predictable and orderly succession outside British royalty, and certainly one unique in Africa, with the ANC certain to win the June elections overwhelmingly and 56-year-old Thabo Mbeki long since anointed to succeed Mandela. As deputy president, Mbeki has effectively been running the country for the past two years, with Mandela increasingly in the role of constitutional monarch. Moreover, with a master's degree in economics from the University of Sussex, he is better qualified than Mandela to deal with the most pressing issues now facing South Africa. Nor will the June election cause any significant shifts. The most comprehensive opinion poll in the first quarter of 1999 indicated that ANC support was holding steady at 54 percent, just nine points down from its 1994 level, which is impressive given the level of political excitement during that "liberation" election. The only real change is likely to be a shake-up among the opposition parties, with both the holdovers from the apartheid era, the New National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party, now in free fall: the NNP down by more than half to a miserable nine



A ceremonial event in Durban before the end of apartheid saw Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi (left) in good spirits. Long a political rival of the ANC, Buthelezi may win a top post in the next government.

percent support in the poll, and Inkatha likewise down, from over 10 percent to five percent. Only the Democratic Party has shown growth, from just under 2 percent to six percent, but this is mainly white support that has shifted from the NNP and has little relevance to the predominantly black electoral power center. So, for the next five years at least, Mbeki will rule from an unassailable support base.

Two other factors also set this succession apart from the general African pattern. One is Mandela's decision to retire after only one term as president, in a continent where politicians tend to cling to power for life or until it is wrested from them in a coup. The other is that several of Mandela's ministers, all old comrades, have followed suit and announced that they too will not be available for re-election, thus giving Mbeki a freer hand to choose his own team. These are positive indicators of an intrinsic democratic culture lacking elsewhere in Africa.

Of course, stepping into the shoes of such a moral colossus is not a role to be envied. Comparisons are inevitable and bound to

haunt Mbeki. The two men are also sharply different, in stature and in style. While Mandela is tall and regal, Mbeki is a small man. He also lacks Mandela's natural charisma. Although affable in company and very good in one-to-one situations, he is uncomfortable in crowds and does not project well before them.

Mbeki is in truth an enigma. He is polished, urbane, and highly able. He is a consummate politician who has spent his whole life in the ANC since joining its Youth League at the age of 14, and who served the organization's president-in-exile, Oliver Tambo, as chief aide, troubleshooter, and ambassador-at-large. He is an experienced diplomat who knows the ways of the world and is at ease in the company of its major leaders. He is a man of superior intelligence with a fine British education. He is cultured and highly literate, an authority on Shakespeare and on the poetry of Yeats, which he often quotes. He writes his own speeches, some of which have a literary elegance, as when he berated



Heir-apparent Thabo Mbeki, currently deputy president, shares the spotlight with Mandela.

Africa's power-hungry dictators last August for their greed and corruption and appealed for an "African Renaissance" to restore the continent's dignity and self-respect. "The thieves and their accomplices," he said, "the givers of the bribes and the recipients are as African as you and I. We are the corrupter and the harlot who act together to demean our continent and ourselves."

But despite all this ability, there is somewhere within Mbeki a hint of insecurity. More than any other ANC leader, he has shown a hypersensitivity to criticism and been particularly touchy in his dealings with the media. It has also become a matter of concern among many analysts that he has surrounded himself with aides and officials who are less than impressive, people whose main attribute appears to be their personal loyalty to him. "Not for Mbeki," wrote political scientist Robert Shrire of Cape Town University in a recent article, "the Kennedy and Roosevelt style of leadership where strong and independent personalities are brought into the presidential team." Mbeki's team is composed of courtiers rather than advisers.

Coupled with this is a dislike of face-to-face conflict. Even in the parry-and-thrust

of parliamentary debates, Mbeki avoids verbal jousting and never shows anger. He prefers to operate behind the scenes, where he is an acknowledged master of the strategic move who skillfully sidelined all competitors for the position he now holds. In all this, Mbeki's style and personality differ markedly from Mandela's. Where Mandela's leadership style is transparent and collegial, Mbeki's is likely to be less open, resembling the upper levels of a business where a small coterie of leaders make decisions which they expect those below them to obey. The decision making is also likely to be more strategically focused.

Some analysts believe the difference between the two men stems from their different experiences during the long years of struggle against apartheid. Indeed, there are three different sets of experience that have produced three markedly different political cultures within the ANC. They do not always mesh comfortably. There are those who served long sentences together on Robben Island, the political prison offshore near Cape Town, a harsh experience that induced humility and

encouraged a strong sense of equality and comradeship despite what are sometimes sharp ideological differences. Then there are the “internals,” the activists of the black townships and the trade unionists who formed a loose alliance called the United Democratic Front that took to the streets and confronted the apartheid regime’s security forces during the great black uprising of the 1980s. Because of the looseness of their alliance, they developed an elaborate system of collective decision making and had a strong aversion to any cult of leadership or any one person having overriding authority. Third, there are the exiles, who lived a peripatetic and often precarious existence scattered about the globe, many associated with the ANC’s efforts to wage a guerrilla war against the apartheid regime. It meant that being in the good graces of an individual leader could decide whether you were located in relatively comfortable circumstances, such as a posting in Europe or North America, or given an uncomfortable and even dangerous assignment somewhere in the African bush. So, individual loyalty became a primary consideration. More important still, the exiles were vulnerable to infiltration by agents of the apartheid regime, and over time the devastating successes of these spies engendered a paranoia within the ANC’s exiled leadership. It discouraged openness and led to a more imperial kind of decision making that emphasized obedience to rules and orders from the top as essential to survival.

Mandela, with his easy style of leadership, comes from the prison experience; Mbeki, with his touch of paranoia and his more insider-oriented leadership style, comes from the exile group, having spent 30 of the most formative years of his life abroad.

What do these differences portend? Mbeki’s South Africa will probably be a little less open, and to that extent less democratic, than Mandela’s. But it is also likely to be more strongly focused on the critical issues facing South Africa, on the flagging growth rate, on crime and unemployment. Mbeki’s

strategic approach is to seek consensus for what he wants to do by neutralizing opposing factions through co-optation or isolation of their leading figures. So stand by for an offer of a deputy presidency to Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party, which would help end the endemic black-on-black violence that has ravaged KwaZulu/Natal province for nearly two decades; and for the appointment of Sam Shilowa, general secretary of Cosatu, as minister of labor, to open the way for more flexibility in labor policy. There will be more emphasis on discipline

Mbeki’s South Africa will probably be a little less open, a little less democratic, than Mandela’s. But it is also likely to be more strongly focused on the critical issues facing South Africa.

and conformity, and less tolerance of indiscretions and individuality. Expect, too, more focus on socioeconomic transformation, less on racial reconciliation. Mbeki has, rightly in my opinion, identified the main future political threat to stability as more likely to come from the unfulfilled black masses than from white right wing counterrevolutionaries, who were Mandela’s big worry.

But the key question is: Will, can, Mandela’s successor fulfill his promise of creating a rainbow nation? It is difficult enough to follow in the footsteps of a giant; to realize another’s dream seems even more unlikely. Except that this is really a collective dream, for the ANC has been committed to the principle of nonracialism since its formation 87 years ago. So the question really is: What, after five years, is the status of the dream?

Are the doomsayers right, or is it still on track?

There can be no doubt that South Africa today is still a country of great ethnic diversity riven by social inequality and historical resentments. There can be no doubt, too, that the transition has encountered unexpected obstacles, especially on the economic front, compounding old problems and throwing up new ones. It is a dauntingly difficult place. But South Africa is also a country of great energy and enterprise, a regional superpower with enormous potential both for itself and as a stabilizing force in the world's most marginalized continent. I believe the same fundamental dynamics that drove it toward a negotiated settlement that the rest of the world thought impossible are still operating and will continue to propel it forward.

First of all, the country is too economically integrated, its races too mutually interdependent, for ethnic dismemberment ever to take place. It was this interdependence that defeated history's most determined effort to enforce ethnic partition; if it had been even remotely possible, half a century of apartheid would have achieved it. Second, unlike most African countries, South Africa has no dominant ethnic group, which means there is no political advantage to be had in whipping up tribal nationalisms. The Zulus are the largest tribe, but even they number only one-sixth of the total population. Thus any political party that defines itself in ethnic terms, as Inkatha has done, runs the risk of taking itself out of contention for national political power. Only one of South Africa's nine political parties can be identified in ethnic terms, and that is Buthelezi's Inkatha. It has lost more than half its support since 1994 and could even lose control of its only regional powerbase, the provincial government of KwaZulu-Natal, in this year's elections.

The third and most important factor is the decline of any prospect of a white counter-revolution. This was the most real, and feared, danger at the time of the 1994 election, when right-wing Afrikaner extremists formed themselves into militia movements that threatened to link up with the Afrikaner-led Defense and Police Forces and take over

the government by force of arms. But the threat was defused when an attempted putsch in one of the tribal "homelands" collapsed ignominiously. Mandela then met with the putative leader, former Defense Force chief general Constand Viljoen, and persuaded him to campaign for his separatist cause by constitutional means instead. Since then, Mandela's reconciliatory approach and the general moderation of the ANC's policies have reduced white fears, if not yet many whites' complaints about the loss of preferential treatment. Most Afrikaners have adapted to the new South Africa with a surprising ease and speed, a fact reflected in the dramatic decline in support for the New National Party.

Finally, with the experience of four years of secret talks and another four of formal negotiations leading up to the end of the old order, this deeply divided society has developed a culture of negotiation that has made it a world leader in the art of conflict resolution. South Africans have been called in as consultants in the conflicts of Northern Ireland, Rwanda, and Nigeria. At home, sophisticated consultative councils have been established to resolve labor disputes and to formulate consensus policies on a range of issues. Negotiation and consensus seeking have become the *modus operandi* of the ANC government, and Mbeki, who was the first ANC exile leader to hold secret talks with Afrikaner dissidents and the apartheid regime's secret service agents back in 1987, is its prime practitioner.

In sum, I believe the signs point to a continuation of South Africa's miraculous transformation from apartheid state to rainbow nation. There are still many problems to be overcome, but ethnic conflict is not the fundamental one. Those posed by the new global market are the most dangerous. If South Africa fails, the cause will be the defeat of its economic, not its political, revolution. But looking back at the perils of 1994, there can be no doubt that we are through the worst. And when you have escaped Armageddon, it is no time to become a pessimist.

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

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Farewell to the Culture Wars?

A Survey of Recent Articles

With the end of President Clinton's impeachment trial in February, it was the American people's turn to have their psyche and values probed. Commentators across the spectrum tackled the question of what the events of the preceding year revealed about the nation's morality. The culture wars, it suddenly seemed to many on both the right and the left, just might be over. Not everyone greeted this development with joy. Still, what was striking about the premillennial bout of self-scrutiny was how nonmillennarian the mood in general seemed to be.

"America the O.K." was the title of an early assessment by senior editor Gregg Easterbrook in the *New Republic* (Jan. 4 & 11). The article was subtitled "Why Life in the U.S. Has Never Been Better," and it proved to be only the first of many upbeat verdicts. As Easterbrook noted, he was bucking a long tide of pessimism among pundits and politicians of all stripes. The culture wars, with their warnings about moral decline and about moralistic oppression, have been good for both left and right agendas. But according to Easterbrook, many signs point to social and moral improvement on a significant scale (although poverty persists, and the international scene is rife with problems). He canvassed the good news: less crime, a notable decline in "drink, drugs, and fooling around." Economically, Americans have never been better off, and "the family-breakup wave may have crested." (A few years ago, half of all marriages were expected to end in divorce; now, only 40 percent are.) Easterbrook emphasized that there is no single sweeping explanation for all the upturns, but there is a modest conclusion to be drawn: "that intractable or 'impossible' dilemmas can be solved. Our efforts matter."

A month later, David Whitman, a senior

writer at *U.S. News & World Report*, joined Easterbrook in making optimism about America's soul a real trend, not the "taboo subject for intellectual debate" of old. In the *New Republic* (Feb. 22, 1999), he augmented Easterbrook's evidence that Americans act less, not more, immorally than they did 25 years ago. They give more money to charity. More adults and teens belong to churches and synagogues. Cheating has not become ubiquitous. Political corruption is waning. Legal segregation has ended. Sexual discrimination has vastly decreased. So why are people so convinced that things are grim in general? Because there is an "optimism gap" (the title of Whitman's recent book)—an "I'm O.K., they're not" syndrome at work. People, while personally optimistic, see decline all around them. It is time, Whitman proposed, that Americans extend their generous opinion of their own morals to their neighbors.

Cultural sanguinity has come a little less readily to the media on the right end of the spectrum. For if the culture wars are over—as they, too, are ready to admit—the terms of the peace, as the battle over Clinton's fate revealed, sit less well with conservatives. Paul Weyrich, head of the Free Congress Foundation, waxed the most apocalyptic in February. "If there really were a moral majority out there, Bill Clinton would have been driven out of office months ago," he declared, concluding that "we probably have lost the culture war" to politically correct liberals. "The culture we are living in becomes an ever-wider sewer. In truth, I think we are caught up in a cultural collapse of historic proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics."

Weyrich's lament had precedents, in William Bennett's sermonic warnings about the

death of outrage in his book by that title about the Clinton scandal, and in the disillusioned dismay expressed by William Kristol, editor of the conservative *Weekly Standard*. How could ordinary citizens have so failed to live up to the virtuous, traditionalist reputations ascribed to them by their champions on the right? As Alan Wolfe (author of *One Nation, After All*, a study of middle-class morality) observed in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* (Feb. 22, 1999), it had been a neoconservative tenet that only the “new class” of elite liberals were supposed to be decadently relativistic about “values.” Now, according to the polls, the populace at large was not only forgiving of their president’s private sins but content with his public leadership and disinclined to link the two. As Gertrude Himmelfarb, professor emerita at the City University of New York, wrote in an essay on the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page (Feb. 4, 1999), “conservatives used to think that ‘the people’ are ‘sound,’ that only occasionally are they (or more often their children) led astray by the ‘elites’ in the media and in academia. That confidence has now eroded.”

Meanwhile, however, in Kristol’s own pages America’s soul was getting higher marks. In “Good & Plenty: Morality in an Age of Prosperity” (Feb. 1, 1999), senior editor David Brooks rejected the diagnoses of “our heroes on the right, to the effect that America is in cultural decline . . . corroded by easygoing nihilism . . . depraved by radical egalitarianism.” A visit to Plainfield, Connecticut—a town dependent on gambling for its livelihood, but up in arms about the arrival of a striptease club and porn shop—led him to a defense of America’s unmoralizing, piecemeal, pragmatic brand of decency. “Moral standards don’t necessarily rise and fall all at once, in great onslaughts of virtue or vice,” and plenty of “social indicators . . . are moving in the right direction: abortion rates are declining, crime is down, teenage sexual activity is down, divorce rates are dropping.” The new language of virtue is more medical than judgmental: “health codes instead of moral codes” are our arbiters of behavior. But this “lower-case morality,” if somewhat superficial, is also peaceful, and it is perfectly responsible. And it is not countercultural at all. On the contrary, Brooks pointed out, the essence of the 1960s spirit was utopian, and this morality is modest, utilitarian, and

bourgeois. “Well, my fellow right-wingers, you wanted bourgeois values? You got ‘em.”

Or at least they are making a comeback. “Society has begun a process of ‘remoralizing’ itself and walking back from the cultural abyss it faced,” Francis Fukuyama, professor of public policy at George Mason University and the author of the forthcoming *Great Disruption*, announced in an essay on the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page (Feb. 11, 1999). Fukuyama accepted the conservative diagnosis that the 1960s marked a moral downturn, as evidenced by lots of “indicators of social dysfunction, including crime, welfare dependency, divorce, illegitimacy and drug use.” But he proposed to interpret it “as the product of something other than a sudden, unexplainable loss of values.” Moral norms did change, most importantly in the realm of sex and the family, but they did so in response to radically improved birth control and a market demand for female labor. “Since changes in moral norms were heavily influenced by broad technological and economic forces, some values are very unlikely to return to their old form.” Which still leaves plenty of room for moral re-norming, and on terms that show how much liberals have learned from conservatives, Fukuyama insisted. “Family values,” after all, is far from a fundamentalist rallying cry these days.

But that rallying cry, Charles Murray noted on the *Journal’s* editorial page (Feb. 2 1999), seems not to be having much effect where, arguably, it most urgently needs to be heard, among the underclass. The number of Americans who “demonstrate chronic criminality” is larger than ever. Among young black men not in school, the proportion who have dropped out of the work force is rising, and now stands at 23 percent. The illegitimacy rate may be declining, but the illegitimacy ratio—the percentage of babies born to unmarried women—rose during the 1990s; it stands at 67 percent among blacks, and 32 percent for the nation as a whole.

Murray, like Himmelfarb, refused to join the chorus of cheerfulness. But where he lamented the bottom minority that is missing out on the national regeneration, she celebrated “the minority that resists the dominant culture, that abides . . . by traditional values and that is unembarrassed by the language of morality.” In fact, to judge by the media outpouring, that language is the lingua franca of the day.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Madison's Futile Argument

"Madison's Audience" by Larry D. Kramer, in *Harvard Law Review* (Jan. 1999), Gannett House, 1511 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Historians and legal scholars seeking to understand the intent of the Framers of the Constitution have long looked to James Madison's *Federalist No. 10*, in which he argued that the "mischief of faction" could be overcome through enlargement of the Republic and the proliferation of interests. They have assumed that his brilliant argument decisively shaped the founding document. But Kramer, a New York University Law School professor, argues that Madison's theory "played essentially *no* role" at all in the making of the Constitution.

The Virginian began to conceive his novel ideas in 1786, the year before the Constitutional Convention. His thinking came in two stages. First, after examining six systems of government, he concluded that all had the same fatal weakness: too little central authority. To prevent encroachments by the states, he decided, the federal government would need independence as well as a veto over all state laws. Then, in April 1787, a month before the convention, he formed the idea of an "extended republic" that would later provide the substance of *Federalist No. 10*: that the very size of the Union would create a Congress of such variety that no faction could dominate, and which could therefore be able, by use of the veto, to dispassionately screen out bad laws produced in states where a factious majority did reign. The national veto was the key to Madison's whole scheme.

Although "the idea that society consists . . . of a multiplicity of competing interests is practically axiomatic today," Kramer notes, it wasn't in the 18th century, when society was usually conceived as "an organic entity" made up of a few "discrete orders or estates." By making faction the basic social force and its regulation "the

principal task'" of government, Madison was performing "an intellectual feat of considerable originality," Kramer notes. It is the idea that led many later observers to conclude that the Framers were taking a bold leap into modernity.

But only George Washington even knew about Madison's theory before the convention, Kramer says. Madison tried to make the case for it in Philadelphia, but he was a poor orator with a weak voice. And his theory "was simply over the heads" of most delegates. "Madison repeatedly presented his theory in the early weeks of the Convention to silence and incomprehension. Thoughtful, vigorous exchanges among the delegates were common, including between Madison and others, but never on [his new ideas], which were simply ignored. . . . With rare exceptions, other notetakers neglected or misrecorded what Madison said in this regard, and other speakers—including Madison's ostensible allies and supporters—continued to make points either uninfluenced by or inconsistent with Madison's theory. . . . Madison lost every proposal he made based on it." He left the convention discouraged.

What the Framers did that summer in Philadelphia, they "did without Madison's theory," Kramer concludes. Nor did *Federalist No. 10* have any significant effect on the ratification of the Constitution. It was not widely read, and its "excessively dry and academic style of writing" further diminished its impact. After ratification, Madison abandoned his argument, and his essay "simply vanished" until 20th-century scholars rediscovered it. They have used it to justify the expansion of federal powers, "usually at the expense of the states," writes Kramer. "If the Constitution embodies Madison's theory it has come to do so only . . . as a reflection of our present intellectual tastes."

Learning from the Christian Right

"Oh, Woe Is Us! Well, Maybe Not" by Paul Starobin, in *National Journal* (Jan. 16, 1999), 1501 M St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

To hear many pundits and professors tell it, American democracy is ailing, with half the

electorate not even bothering to vote and Big Money's political influence growing ever



Christian Right demonstrators brought their message for America to Washington in 1981.

stronger. How could a grassroots movement these days even hope to get off the ground? Well, says Starobin, senior writer at *National Journal*, “Cast aside all prejudices, and consider the reaffirming achievement of the Christian Right over the past two decades.”

Look at how—despite the continual scorn of the national press and the academy—the Christian Right “has triumphed in placing its signature concern with traditional moral values and behavior at the center of political and cultural debate.” Its footprints are everywhere, from the emphasis on personal responsibility in the 1996 welfare reform law to the declining rates of abortion and illegitimate births.

The Christian Right, says Michael E. McGerr, a professor of American history at Indiana University, Bloomington, “may well have

done more to revitalize grass-roots democratic action than any other group in the last 10 years.”

Starobin limns some lessons for other groups:

- **Institutions are important.** Despite all the talk of televangelism, “[the] Christian Right could not have become a mighty political player without a network of neighborhood churches.” The Christian Coalition, founded by Pat Robertson in 1989, handed out 46 million “voter guides” in churches across the nation in 1996.

- **Think locally.** “Back in the 1970s, when Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority and other Christian Right leaders began urging their flocks to become politically active, the GOP was dominated by . . . Main Street and Wall Street. Through organizational work at every level of politics . . . the Christian Right became, within a decade, arguably the most powerful faction in the party.” In 1994, when the GOP won control of Congress, evangelicals cast 29 percent of its total vote.

- **Ignore the national media.** The Christian Right was first ignored by the national news media, then subject to largely scornful and uninformed scrutiny after it proved itself a force in the 1980 presidential elections. “The sneers . . . didn’t hurt the Christian Right at all—because the movement possessed its own media subculture of radio stations and cable-television networks.”

- **Count on small donors.** “The Christian Right’s success also shows that, when motivated, small donors can and will participate in a political movement in sufficient numbers to sustain the cause.” In the 1988 Republican presidential primaries, candidate Robertson raised \$19.4 million in individual donations averaging \$106 per contributor, compared with George Bush’s \$22.3 million raised and an average donation of \$695.

“Fans of popular democracy,” Starobin concludes, “should credit the Christian Right with showing that the American experiment is still—happily—alive to the possibility of achieving change through collective action. And rival groups should be studying its playbook.”

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

A Superpower’s Hubris

“The Lonely Superpower” by Samuel P. Huntington, in *Foreign Affairs* (Mar.–Apr. 1999), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, the United States briefly stood astride

the world, unchallenged by any other major power. That “unipolar” moment,

highlighted by the Persian Gulf War, has passed—but Washington doesn't realize it, argues Huntington, the noted Harvard University political scientist.

U.S. officials talk and act as if America rules the world unchallenged, he asserts. "They boast of American power and American virtue," and "lecture other countries on the universal validity of American principles, practices, and institutions." Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, for instance, has called the United States "the indispensable nation" and said that "we stand tall and hence see further than other nations." But the cooperation of other nations is always needed in dealing with major global problems, Huntington writes.

In its misguided effort to exercise benign hegemony over the world, the United States, he says, has used two principal tools: economic sanctions and military intervention. But other nations have grown more reluctant to join in sanctions, costing the United States dearly in dollars when it goes it alone, and in credibility when it fails to enforce the sanctions. As for military action, he says that bombing and cruise missile attacks achieve little, while more serious military intervention would require allied support and a willingness to accept casualties. "Neither the Clinton administration nor Congress nor the public is willing to pay the costs and accept the risks of unilateral global leadership," Huntington writes.

During the Cold War, many countries welcomed the United States as their pro-

sector. Today, however, he says, many of them view the United States as a threat—not a military threat but "a menace to their integrity, autonomy, prosperity, and freedom of action."

On issue after issue, from UN dues and sanctions against Libya to global warming and the use of force against Iraq and Yugoslavia, America "has found itself increasingly alone, with one or a few partners, opposing most of the rest of the world's states and peoples," Huntington says. He quotes an unnamed British diplomat: "One reads about the world's desire for American leadership only in the United States. Everywhere else one reads about American arrogance and unilateralism."

U.S. leaders should rid themselves of the illusion that the rest of the world naturally shares American interests and values, and cease their arrogant boasts and demands, Huntington contends. Instead, they should use American power to promote U.S. interests in the world, taking advantage of America's temporary status as sole superpower and employing its resources to win other nations' help in dealing with global issues.

The U.S. relationship with Europe, in particular, "is central to the success of American foreign policy," the author thinks, "and given the pro- and anti-American outlooks of Britain and France, respectively, America's relations with Germany are central to its relations with Europe. Healthy cooperation with Europe is the prime antidote for the loneliness of American superpowerdom."

The Pinochet Perplex

"The Pinochet Dilemma" by Ricardo Lagos and Heraldo Muñoz, and "The Long Arm of the Law" by Anne-Marie Slaughter, in *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1999), 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; "Something's Got to Give" by Jeremy Rabkin, in *The National Interest* (Spring 1999), 1112 16th St., N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Does the case of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet signal a welcome advance in the rule of international law—or an ominous new threat to democratic self-government?

Slaughter, a Harvard Law School professor, sees it as progress. Thanks to Pinochet's detention in Britain last fall, at

the request of a Spanish magistrate pursuing him for crimes against humanity, she says, ex-dictators "everywhere may henceforth face the prospect of being held accountable for their crimes in office." The case "marks the integration of domestic and international law. Both Spanish and British courts have been willing to inter-

pret and apply international treaties and customary international law directly and as part of domestic law.”

Qualified support for this view comes from Lagos, an official in the democratic Chilean government formed after Pinochet stepped down in 1990, and Muñoz, a political scientist and former Chilean ambassador. They add that “the new rules may also discourage those very same dictators from peacefully handing over power.” (Pinochet enjoyed amnesty under a 1978 law and a seat in Chile’s Senate after he left office.) And Pinochet’s ordeal abroad has had unfortunate effects at home, they note, “reawakening the deep divisions” in Chile and making him “the undisputed leader of the Right . . . [and] once again the central actor in Chilean politics.” Chile’s government, which first protested Pinochet’s arrest, is now calling for him to be returned to Chile for trial.

Lagos and Muñoz look to the International Criminal Court (ICC) that was part of a proposed treaty adopted by a UN conference in Rome last summer (and opposed by the United States) as an aid to navigating the turmoil created by the extension of international law. Even so, they conclude, it would be best if nations dealt with their tyrants themselves. International law should only be called upon as “a backup instrument.”

Rabkin, a political scientist at Cornell University, has no kind words for the Pinochet precedent. “There has long been a customary rule of international law,” he notes, “that courts of one country will not sit in judgment on the sovereign acts of, or the officials exercising sovereign power in, another country.” To do otherwise would be to infringe national sovereignty and invite war. The only exceptions, Rabkin says, are cases in which the defendant’s home country does not object, as in the Nuremberg trials.

Chile “will not go to war with Britain or Spain,” he notes. “But the notion that ‘international law’ will now hold evil-doers of all lands to account is absurd. . . . [No] one expects European Union countries to hold a top Chinese leader to account for massacres in Tibet . . . or American officials for extradition to Sudan, which has been threatening to charge them with war crimes.” International law without the foundations of international government would be the height of injustice, a “selective, inconsistent” law administered by bureaucrats. And Americans, he argues, should pause at the prospect of handing over fellow citizens—from military personnel accused of war crimes to alleged drug dealers—to international courts where they would not enjoy the precious protections accorded them as citizens by the U.S. Constitution.

A Politicized Military?

“A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976-96” by Ole R. Holsti, in *International Security* (Winter 1998-99), MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

The talk of a “crisis in civil-military relations” keeps growing louder. In 1997, the volume soared when *Wall Street Journal* reporter Thomas E. Ricks published *Making the Corps*, depicting his Marine subjects as increasingly alienated from the “soft” values of civilian society. Holsti, a Duke University political scientist, using poll data to gauge the civil-military breach, suggests that things may not be quite as bad as they seem.

True, his surveys of senior military officers show, there is growing partisanship in the traditionally neutral armed forces. In 1976, nearly half the officers polled called themselves independents and only a third were Republicans; by 1996, independents were

down to 22 percent, Republicans up to 67 percent.

When officers were asked about their ideological orientation, the striking change was among the segment calling themselves “somewhat liberal,” which shrank from 14 percent in 1976 to three percent in 1996. Yet the proportion calling themselves “very conservative” also fell, from a high of 17 percent in 1984 to 10 percent in 1996.

Indeed, comparing the views of top officers with those of civilian “opinion leaders” on particular questions of policy yields a somewhat more complex picture. As expected, the military leaders are much more socially conservative (on questions such as gay rights, for example), yet



Two cultures? An Army trainee in combat gear encounters some civilians near Fort Polk, Louisiana.

they are only somewhat more economically conservative. More significantly, there is no consistent evidence that the gaps are widening, and in a few cases the views of the two groups seem to have been converging since the end of the Cold War. About 77 percent of both groups now think it is vital to enlist the United Nations in settling international disputes, for example, up from 64 percent of civilians and 56 percent of officers in 1976. (However, fewer and fewer

consider “fostering international cooperation” very important: 57 percent of civilians in 1996, 40 percent of officers.)

Still, the growing partisan character of the military is a cause for concern, Holsti says. It is probably without precedent in U.S. history. But he thinks that most of the solutions advanced so far, from restoring conscription to restarting Reserve Officers’ Training Corps programs at elite universities, simply aren’t practical.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Semiconductor Jujitsu

“Reversal of Fortune? The Recovery of the U.S. Semiconductor Industry” by Jeffrey T. Macher, David C. Mowery, and David A. Hodges, in *California Management Review* (Fall 1998), Univ. of California, S549 Haas School of Business #1900, Berkeley, Calif. 94720-1900.

During the 1980s, the woes of the U.S. semiconductor industry became a symbol of America’s alarming competitive plunge. In 1989, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Commission on Industrial Productivity, reflecting widespread expert sentiment, issued a report saying the industry was too “fragmented.” Yet since then, semiconductor makers have made a dramatic recovery—assisted, ironically, by that very “weakness.”

In the United States—in contrast to Japan and Western Europe—the semiconductor industry consists of numerous, relatively small firms, from industry leader Intel to Micron and other, more specialized companies. The U.S. firms dominated the world market until the mid-1980s, when Japanese producers, concentrating on the dynamic random access memory (DRAM) devices that supply computer memory power, surged into the lead, observe Macher, Mowery, and

Hodges, a doctoral student, professor of business and public policy, and emeritus professor of engineering, respectively, at the University of California, Berkeley.

State-aided Japanese giants such as Hitachi and Toshiba enjoyed an access to capital that U.S. firms lacked, and in the fierce race to develop higher-capacity memory devices and sell them cheaply, they drove many of their American competitors out of the DRAM business by 1985. Analysts who regarded DRAM production as an indispensable “technology driver” for semiconductor manufacturing painted a gloomy picture of the U.S. semiconductor industry’s future. And indeed, the U.S. global market share fell from almost 62 percent in 1980 to a low of 37 percent in 1989.

But the industry’s “fragmented” nature, a handicap in DRAM competition, turned out to be an asset. U.S. semiconductor makers were able with relative agility to shift their focus to higher-end products that played to American strengths in innovation, the authors say. “U.S. firms have reoriented their strategies . . . to concentrate on logic and microcomponent products, where foreign competition was less intense,” and they could exploit their ties to computer software devel-

opers in coming up with new products.

That strategic repositioning, together with improvements in the quality of the products and in the manufacturing process itself, helped the U.S. industry regain global leadership in semiconductors by 1993, the authors say. By 1997, U.S. chip makers such as Intel and Texas Instruments controlled more than 50 percent of the world market, while Japanese firms, now facing DRAM competition from South Korea and Taiwan, saw their market share slip to 29 percent.

But the American “reversal of fortune” may not be permanent, the authors warn. Although worries about industry fragmentation proved groundless, there is reason for concern about the state of basic scientific research, which fuels commercial advantage in technology industries. Today, Bell Labs and the other huge corporate labs that did much of the fundamental research underlying semiconductor technology concentrate on short-range corporate goals, while the leading semiconductor firms themselves focus their research on new-product development. Hitachi and other major overseas competitors, the authors note, still do “considerable” long-range research.

Markets versus Democracy

Writing in *The Nation* (Oct. 19, 1998), John Gray, a professor of European thought at the London School of Economics, argues that democracy and the free market are not reliable allies.

The late-20th-century political fad for the free market arose at a time when memory of it had faded. Mid-Victorian laissez-faire was short-lived (some historians have made the hyperbolic claim that there was never such an episode). The free market came about in England as a result not of slow evolution but swiftly, as a consequence of the unremitting use of the power of the state. Through the enclosures, the Poor Laws and the repeal of the Corn Laws, a Parliament in which most people were unrepresented turned land, labor and bread into commodities like any others. Yet as the franchise was widened, the needs of ordinary people were able to find political expression. The free market withered away gradually, through the natural workings of democratic political competition. By the time of the First World War, the economy had been largely re-regulated.

The short history of the free market in 19th-century England illustrates a vital truth: Democracy and the free market are rivals, not allies. ‘Democratic capitalism’—the vacuous rallying cry of neoconservatives everywhere—signifies (or conceals) a deeply problematic relationship. The normal concomitant of free markets is not stable democratic government but the volatile—and not always democratic—politics of economic insecurity.

Leadership 101

“Can Leadership Be Taught?” by Peter Coy, in *Cornell Magazine* (Nov.–Dec. 1998), Cornell Alumni Federation, 55 Brown Rd., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850–1247.

Tired of hearing how their graduates excel as analysts but are lacking in the right stuff as future captains of industry, more and more of the nation’s business schools are trying to teach that elusive quality called *leadership*.

One sign of the swelling interest was the emergence of an academic journal on the subject, the *Leadership Quarterly*, now a decade old. In 1994, the Harvard Business School launched a required leadership course for its first-year students. Other top business schools also have established leadership programs.

“The problem for scholars is that as a rigorous science, leadership ain’t physics,” notes Coy, an associate economics editor of *Business Week*. “For starters, like pornography, it resists definition.” Leaders come in all shapes and sizes—pacifistic or warlike, idealistic or cynical, cerebral or intuitive. Nor is any particular style of leadership guaranteed to work. “Al Dunlap was a big success with his slash-and-burn tactics at Scott Paper,” Coy observes, “but flopped when he tried the

same thing at Sunbeam.”

Randall S. Peterson, of Cornell University’s Johnson Graduate School of Management, cites research showing that the CEO’s personality seems to explain less than one-tenth of the variation in a company’s performance. However, the boss may have a considerable *indirect* impact. In a paper last year, Peterson and two co-authors examined Coca-Cola, IBM, and seven other big companies that had done well under certain CEOs and poorly under others. They concluded that the CEO’s personality affects the “group dynamics” of top management, which in turn affects profits.

That seems something that future CEOs should know, but, like most theoretical findings in this field, it obviously leaves a great many questions about leadership unanswered; for example, what is it about a CEO’s personality that matters, and how do you teach it?

Given this void, many business schools are concentrating their “leadership” efforts not



Can this be taught?

on academic inquiry but on skills training. Students themselves often say they learned more about leadership from being in a crisis of some sort than from any academic course.

Picking up that cue, business schools simulate situations that demand leadership and invite students to rise to the occasion. Just like in the real world.

Government's Invisible Hand

“The Strength of a Weak State: The Rights Revolution and the Rise of Human Resources Management Divisions” by Frank Dobbin and John R. Sutton, in *American Journal of Sociology* (Sept. 1998), 5835 S. Kimbark, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

In the early 1970s Washington launched an “employment rights” revolution, with landmark legislation and regulation in the realms of equal employment opportunity, occupational health and safety, and fringe benefits. Many large employers established specialized offices to cope with their new obligations. Then, a curious shift in rationale for these offices took place. Sociologists Dobbin and Sutton, of Princeton University and the University of California, Santa Barbara, respectively, explain.

Employers were not legally forced to establish new personnel offices or other specialized units. But the new laws did create abstract rights and proscribe various abuses without specifying how employers were to comply. Precisely because of that uncertainty, Dobbin and Sutton argue, employers hired “expert” staffs and created new offices as the best protection against costly lawsuits.

In the mid-1960s, about 35 percent of the 279 organizations the authors examined (including publicly traded businesses, nonprofit groups, and government agencies in three states) had personnel or human resources management offices. By the mid-1980s, 70 percent did. (By then, 35 percent also had benefits offices, more than 30 percent had health and safety offices, and 40 percent had equal employment units.)

By the early 1980s, however, personnel managers were singing a new tune about their function. In keeping with an emerging human resources management movement, they were justifying their offices not as defenses against lawsuits but as vehicles for enhancing organizational productivity.

“The new human resources management movement,” the authors point out, “was championing diversity as the key to expanding markets and improving innovation, safety and health programs as the key to winning employee commitment and renovating antiquated technologies, and benefits programs as a means to reducing alienation and improving worker attitudes.” So compelling was this rationale, say Dobbin and Sutton, that even when the Reagan administration cut back enforcement of employment rights, employers kept creating more such specialized offices anyway (while, in some cases, circumventing the law on the rights themselves).

Changing the rationale was a typically American response, the authors say. In a culture so hostile to government regulation, employers soon come to pretend that they really are only responding to the demands of the market. The authors think the government would do a better job if Americans overcame their “collective amnesia.”

SOCIETY

Railing against the Car

“Transitory Dreams: How New Rail Lines Often Hurt Transit Systems” by Jonathan E. D. Richmond, in *The Taubman Center Report* (1998), Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138; “Dense Thinkers” by Randal O’Toole, in *Reason* (Jan. 1999), 3415 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Ste. 400, Los Angeles, Calif. 90034-6064.

More than a decade ago, Portland, Oregon, often cited as a model of city planning, built a light-rail system connecting downtown and the

suburbs, hoping to cut automobile congestion and air pollution. In Portland, as in other cities that followed its example, it hasn’t worked out

that way, argues Richmond, a research fellow at Harvard University's Taubman Center.

Portland officials originally forecast that the rail line, which opened in 1986, would serve 42,900 daily weekday riders in its seventh year; instead, it drew only 23,700. Not only that, most of the riders (two-thirds in 1996) had merely shifted over from buses. In the dozen cities Richmond studied, suburb-to-downtown bus service—potentially a cheaper, more effective alternative, he says—generally was discontinued with the advent of the new rail line. In no city did the new rail service “noticeably improve highway congestion or air quality,” he says. In fact, only San Diego's South Line light rail, with “high ridership, low costs, and effective system integration,” appears to have been a worthwhile investment.

O'Toole, an economist currently teaching conservation policy at Yale University, says that “reverence” for light rail may well be “*the* defining characteristic of the New Urbanism,” which he portrays as no longer the plaything of architects and planners but an amalgam of interest groups that “is quietly sweeping the nation.” Advocates want to curb low-density suburban development (“sprawl”) and create high-density urban neighborhoods in which people can work, shop, play, and live without having to rely on the automobile.

“Far from delivering urban zones from the curse of ‘auto-dependent’ lifestyles,” O'Toole contends, “New Urbanist policies” in Portland and other cities have led to increased highway congestion and worse air pollution, as well as other ills. Doubling population density, he says, cuts per capita driving by no more than 10 percent. In Portland, planners' most optimistic scenario is that by 2040, car use will have fallen from 92 percent of all area trips to 88 percent. O'Toole's conclusion: “since planners assume a 75 percent increase in population, this translates to a massive expansion in traffic and congestion—they figure three to four times the current number of congested road miles.”

Richmond, in his study, found that three cities—Pittsburgh, Houston, and Ottawa—had achieved “dramatic successes” by building transitways open only to buses (in Houston's case, to carpools and vanpools, as well). The Pittsburgh East Busway, for instance, has the same ridership as that city's three-times-larger light-rail system.

For all of New Urbanism's high profile today, O'Toole doubts that the effort to prop up central cities will succeed. “The ‘decline’ of cities that officials worry so much about,” he says, “is due to the fact that cars, telephones, and electricity make it possible for people to live in lower densities—and most choose to do so.”

‘Orientalism’ Reconsidered

“Edward Said's ‘Orientalism’ Revisited” by Keith Windschuttle, in *The New Criterion* (Jan. 1999), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.

It is hard to exaggerate the cultural influence of Edward Said and his celebrated 1978 work, *Orientalism*, observes Windschuttle, author of *The Killing of History* (1997). Whether the subject is European art, literature, cinema, music, or history, critics now routinely pay obeisance to the ideas of the Palestinian American professor of literature at Columbia University. In the “postcolonial” theory he helped inspire, Eurocentric derogations of “the Other” extend not only to Islam and Arabs but to other Others, such as Native Americans and Africans. Windschuttle, however, believes that the postcolonial guru's main claims about Orientalism are “seriously flawed.”

Orientalism is a critique of the centuries-old academic field of Oriental studies, the study of cultures in the Arab world. Said claims that Western scholarship prepared the way for the extension of colonial rule over the Middle East and North Africa. But aside from invoking Michel Foucault's notion that knowledge always generates power, Windschuttle says, Said fails to provide any historical evidence about “the actual causal sequence” that led to English or French imperialism in the 19th century. (Historians usually point to desires for trade, investment, and military advantage as causes.) And what about the Germans, who produced prominent Orientalists but “never went on to become an imperial power”?



Women of Algiers in Their Apartment (1834), by Eugène Delacroix

Said claims that Oriental studies produced a false description of Arabs and Islamic culture, in the mistaken belief that their “essential” qualities could be defined. Portraying Islamic culture as static in time and place, as “‘eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself,’” gave Europe a sense of cultural and intellectual superiority, and a rationale for Western imperialism, Said maintains.

But in “ascribing to the West a coherent self-identity that has produced a specific set of value judgments—‘Europe is powerful and articulate: Asia is defeated and distant’—that have remained constant for the past 2500 years,” Windschuttle writes, Said himself is guilty of the very “essentialism” he condemns.

In actuality, Windschuttle says, Europeans have drawn their identity from their own heritage, seeing themselves as “joint heirs of classical Greece and Christianity,” each tempered by later developments. The notion that cultures need a geographical Other to define themselves is simply false.

Moreover, when Said criticizes “essentialist” Orientalists for assuming that Islam has possessed a unity since the seventh century that can be read, via the Koran, into, say, modern Egypt or Algeria, he is making “a curious argument,” Windschuttle says. Looking to “the origins of a culture to examine its founding principles is hardly something to be condemned. This is especially so in the case of Islam where the founding book, the Koran, is taken much more literally by its adherents than the overt text of the Bible is taken by Christians today.”

However, if Western ideas about Islamic peoples were limited to stereotypes derived from the Koran and these peoples’ early history, Windschuttle says, Said “would be right to complain.” But they are not. As a matter of fact, he points out, citing Bernard Lewis’s survey in *Islam and the West* (1994), Oriental studies scholars were among the first to overcome Europeans’ initial theological and ethnic prejudices and “to open the Western mind to the whole of humanity.”

False Witnesses

“Getting to the Source: Hetty Shepard, Dorothy Dudley, and Other Fictional Colonial Women I Have Come to Know Altogether Too Well” by Mary Beth Norton, in *Journal of Women's History* (Autumn 1998), Dept. of History, Ohio State Univ., 106 Dulles Hall, 230 W. 17th Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43210-1367.

It appears that “women’s history has finally joined the mainstream,” says Norton, a historian at Cornell University and author of *Founding Mothers and Fathers* (1996). But she detects a few dismaying impurities in the new tributary. Examining several recent documentary readers aimed at undergraduates, Norton finds that certain “diaries” or “memoirs” of colonial women included in the books are 19th-century fakes. And two of them, she points out, were previously exposed as such.

In *American Women Writers to 1800* (1996), editor Sharon M. Harris included excerpts from a purported colonial diary by “Dorothy Dudley.” It was actually written for an 1876 book compiled by the Ladies Centennial Committee of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Norton says, and was an imaginative re-creation of a local colonial woman’s life that was not intended to fool historians. “In 1976,” she says, “I pointed out that the contents of the ‘diary’ resembled no other 18th-century woman’s journal in that it focused almost exclusively on public events and revealed an author with remarkable access to other people’s correspondence.”

Harris also was taken in (as Norton says she herself once was, to an extent) by a purported 1859 memoir of the American Revolution by one Sidney Barclay. In 1995, scholar Sarah Buck, in “an excellent piece of historical detective work,” exposed

it as “‘an inspired hoax,’” showing, Norton says, that the people and places the “memoir” mentions are mostly fictitious, and “the attitudes it expresses are those of the antebellum rather than the revolutionary years.” But while acknowledging Buck’s exposé, the editors of a series of books for young readers, Judith E. Greenberg and Helen Carey McKeever, nevertheless published an edited version of the “memoir” under the title, *Journal of a Revolutionary War Woman* (1996).

Another document that Norton argues (at some length) is fake is a “Puritan Maiden’s Diary” purportedly kept by “Hetty Shepard” during 1675–77. Robert Marcus and David Burner include passages from it in the latest edition of *American Firsthand* (1998), a reader widely used in basic survey courses in American history. “I am fifteen years old to-day,” the diarist writes in her first entry—in defiance of the fact, Norton says, that “most 17th-century people did not know the year of their birth (much less the day).”

Even if the 19th-century author of the diary “had not made so many obvious errors, historians should have been more skeptical,” Norton maintains. Women in 17th-century America simply did not keep diaries, she explains, because they lacked three essentials: paper (which was scarce and expensive), a high degree of literacy, and leisure—“all of which most American women did not achieve until the 19th century.”

How Welfare Lost Its Good Name

“The Invention of ‘Welfare’ in America” by Michael B. Katz and Lorrin R. Thomas, in *Journal of Policy History* (1998: No. 4), Saint Louis Univ., P.O. Box 56907, St. Louis, Mo. 63156-0907.

In the early 20th century, *welfare* was a proud term, signifying the best in modern social policy. How it came to connote the worst, write Katz, a historian at the University of Pennsylvania, and Thomas, a doctoral student there, is an instructive tale.

During the New Deal era, when America’s welfare state emerged, the term *welfare* seldom appeared in public without being accompanied by an adjective enhancing its meaning of “well-being.” *Social welfare* or *public welfare* referred to a broad array of gov-

ernment programs intended to ensure economic security. *Welfare* “retained its Progressive Era association with modernity, progress, science, and efficiency, and with services rather than relief” for the poor, the authors observe.

The Committee on Economic Security, appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934, called for a comprehensive program of “social welfare activities,” including insurance for unemployment, old age, and sickness; expanded public health programs; pensions for the uninsured elderly; and aid for “fatherless children.” This, say the authors, is what “welfare,” at its inception, was: an expanded system of social insurance coupled with public assistance for those ineligible for coverage. By replacing “the old poor laws and their invidious distinctions” with Aid to Dependent Children as part of a broad concept of “welfare” to which Americans were entitled as citizens, Katz and Thomas write, the committee thought that the stigma of family assistance could be erased.

Eventually, it was hoped, public assistance would become “almost unnecessary,” the authors note. Even in 1950, this expectation “did not appear unreasonable.” Amendments to the Social Security Act in 1939 and 1950 extended social insurance to widows and their children, as well as to many domestic

and farm workers originally excluded. Meanwhile, labor unions were winning medical insurance, pensions, and other fringe benefits for more and more Americans.

But Cold War controversy over whether the “welfare state” was “socialistic” or even “un-American” rubbed off on the word *welfare*, and as more of the “deserving poor” became eligible for social insurance, those left on public assistance—chiefly unmarried mothers with children—“inherited the degraded mantle” of past “relief” efforts. Welfare cheating scandals didn’t help matters. And the rolls of those receiving aid, later renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), rose 41 percent during the 1950s, with recipients disproportionately black, and 169 percent during the 1960s.

By the mid-1960s, the definition of *welfare* had narrowed, becoming synonymous with AFDC, and identified with the “undeserving poor.” After 1973, the value of “welfare” benefits, in constant dollars, plummeted. By 1996, a Democratic president was proud to claim that by abolishing AFDC, America was “ending welfare as we know it.” But America did not end welfare as we *used* to know it, the authors note. Welfare in the form of social insurance, especially Social Security, for those who weren’t so down-and-out, “remained unasailable.”

The DNA Case against Jefferson

“The Thomas Jefferson Paternity Case,” letters from E. A. Foster et al., in *Nature* (Jan. 7, 1999), Porters South, 4 Crinan St., London N1 9XW, England; “The Tom-and-Sally Miniseries (Cont.)” by Lewis Lord, in *U.S. News & World Report* (Jan. 18, 1999), 1050 Thomas Jefferson St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

How certain is it that Thomas Jefferson fathered at least one child by his slave Sally Hemings?

Since dropping their scientific bombshell last November making Jefferson seem, in all likelihood, guilty in the paternity case (see *WQ*, Winter ’99, pp. 115–116), pathologist Eugene A. Foster and his colleagues have returned to the pages of *Nature* to elaborate.

They reiterate that the simplest—and, in their view, on the basis of the available historical evidence, the most probable—explanation of the DNA data (matching the

Jefferson male line’s Y chromosome with the Hemings male line’s) is that Jefferson fathered Sally Hemings’s last son, Easton. However, Foster and his colleagues point out, that is not an absolute certainty, as the headline on the original *Nature* story misleadingly suggested. It is possible, they note, that Jefferson’s brother, Randolph, or any of Randolph’s five sons could have fathered Sally Hemings’s later children.

Herbert Barger, a retired Pentagon supervisor and genealogist married to a Jefferson descendant, had helped Foster’s project by

persuading descendants of Field Jefferson, the president's uncle, to take part. According to *U.S. News & World Report* senior writer Lewis Lord, Barger had expected that the DNA tests might link Samuel and Peter Carr, sons of Thomas Jefferson's sister, to Hemings. Grandchildren of Thomas Jefferson had said the Carr brothers probably fathered Hemings's children. But Foster and his colleagues found no DNA match between the Carr and Hemings lines.

Barger now suspects, according to *U.S. News*, that the father of Hemings's children was Randolph Jefferson, who lived 20 miles from Monticello, or his sons, who were in their teens or twenties when the children were born. He cites a Monticello slave's memoir that said Randolph "used to come among black people, play the fiddle, and dance half the night." He also quotes a letter in which Thomas Jefferson invited his brother to Monticello nine months before Easton's birth. However, Lucia Cinder Stanton, a Monticello historian who has been examin-

ing Jefferson documents for two decades, tells *U.S. News* that Randolph can be definitely placed at Monticello only three times between 1790 and 1815. Thomas Jefferson, in contrast, always happened to be at Monticello when Hemings conceived a child.

Yet another possibility is outlined by Gary Davis, of Evanston (Illinois) Hospital, in a letter in the same issue of *Nature*: that Thomas Jefferson's father or grandfather, or one of his paternal uncles, fathered a male slave who had one or more children with Sally Hemings.

Foster and his colleagues call Davis's theory "interesting." However, they conclude: "When we embarked on this study, we knew that the results could not be conclusive, but we hoped to obtain some objective data that would tilt the weight of evidence in one direction or another. We think we have provided such data and that the modest, probabilistic interpretations we have made are tenable at present."

PRESS & MEDIA

Four-Star TV News

"Local TV News: What Works, What Flops, and Why" by Tom Rosentiel, Carl Gottlieb, and Lee Ann Brady, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (Jan.-Feb. 1999), 2950 Broadway, Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. 10027.

Everyone knows that "tabloid" local TV news shows can reap high ratings, but a study of 61 stations in 20 cities finds that "quality" newscasts can sell, too.

Five of the eight local stations that the study judged tops in journalistic quality had rising ratings (as did four of the worst seven stations), report Rosentiel and Gottlieb, the director and deputy director, respectively, of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, which conducted the study, and Brady, senior project director at Princeton Survey Research Associates, which helped.

"The stations least likely to be rising in ratings," say the authors, "were those in the middle, which were often hybrids—part tabloid and part serious. This suggests that audiences . . . are segmenting," with one group panting for "revelation, scandal, and celebrity," and another wanting "a more sober, information-based approach."

More than 8,500 stories from some 600 broadcasts were scrutinized in the study. The stations were then ranked according to "quality," and the results compared with the stations' Nielsen ratings over a three-year period.

Just what makes good newscasts? They "should accurately reflect their whole community, cover a wide variety of topics, cover what is significant, and balance their stories with multiple points of view, a variety of knowledgeable sources, and a high degree of community relevance," the authors say.

Big-city stations do a worse job journalistically than those in medium-sized markets, according to the study. "Stations such as WABC in New York were doing overblown 'exposés' into bizarre body piercing," the authors observe, while two stations in Evansville, Indiana (pop.: 126,272), were doing a good job of covering their community—and doing well in the ratings, too. Evansville, in fact,

boasted the highest-quality station in the study—WEHT, an ABC affiliate—as well as the third best, WEVV, a CBS affiliate.

Most local TV newscasts “are far from

excellent,” providing coverage that is “superficial and reactive,” the authors note. But “there is a wider range of quality out there than many critics might think.”

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Henry VIII's 'Middle Way'

“The Making of Religious Policy, 1533–1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way” by G. W. Bernard, in *The Historical Journal* (June 1998), Cambridge Univ. Press, Journals Dept., 40 W. 20th St., New York, N.Y. 10011–4211.

Who was the architect of King Henry VIII's religious policy after he broke with Rome in 1533? Thomas Cromwell, say many historians of the Tudor era. Henry was only “the plaything of factions,” dominated during that decade by Cromwell, his principal adviser.

Bernard, a historian at the University of Southampton, England, paints a different picture, one of a determined king who knew his own theological mind very well.

“A break with Rome was being threatened and ideas that could justify it were being

aired,” Bernard says, “as early as 1527,” when the king began his effort to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon (who had not produced a son), and marry Anne Boleyn. This was well before Cromwell's rise to prominence. That the actual break with Rome did not take place until after Cromwell's rise was not due to kingly indecision. Henry had to lay the groundwork in his own realm first, Bernard points out.

After the break did occur, Henry “was deeply involved in efforts to define true religion,” Bernard notes.

“Many prefaces, petitions, and letters reveal his participation in debates.” The king, he argues, skillfully and consistently sought “a middle way” between the papists and religious radicals such as the Sacramentarians (who regarded the sacraments as merely symbolic) and the Anabaptists (who opposed infant baptism). “He was anti-papal, against the monasteries, against superstitious and idolatrous abuses, but he was also opposed to novelties, to justification by faith alone, and upheld something like traditional teaching on the mass.”



King Henry VIII does not need much help from his advisers to tram-
ple Pope Clement VII, in this painting from the period.

By the mid-1530s, Henry's bishops in the Church of England were split over various theological issues. He chose "repeatedly to gather bishops and theologians together and to cajole and to persuade them to reach an agreement on the principles of true religion," Bernard says. Inevitably, this meant compromise, ambiguity, and even contradiction—which Henry "skillfully used . . . to advance" his own complicated religious convictions on such matters as freeing departed souls from purgatory.

Cromwell, whose own theological beliefs are hard to discern, says Bernard, was "immensely useful" to Henry. But by 1540, his reputation as a radical Protestant had made him a liability, especially since the king was considering an alliance with Catholic France or the Holy Roman Empire. So Cromwell was dismissed, and executed as a heretic and a traitor. But this, Bernard writes, did not usher in "any sustained conservative inquisition," or end Henry's determined quest for "a middle way."

Confronting the Void

It is not only unbelievers who confront the problem of meaninglessness, Michael Novak, author of *The Experience of Nothingness* (rev. ed., 1998), points out in *Society* (Jan.–Feb. 1999).

*It is an oddity that those who seek God become quite familiar with the experience of nothingness. It isn't new to them. They have, in a way, more to say about it than the innocent atheist, who seems surprised by the night and sometimes (like the poet Dylan Thomas) rages, rages against it, and sometimes (like Bertrand Russell in *Mysticism and Logic*) marches around it with empty boasts of defiance. Nothingness is familiar terrain traversed in great inner pain. . . .*

The prophets, saints, and mystics who have shaped our moral traditions—essentially Jewish and Christian or, as we say, "Western"—were quite well experienced in nothingness, meaninglessness, emptiness. They did not build up our moral sense upon illusions, but upon every experience of irrationality, terror, oppression, lack of faith, and emptiness of heart that any human is likely to face.

A Repenting Church

"Jews and Catholics: Beyond Apologies" by David Novak, in *First Things* (Jan. 1999), 156 Fifth Ave., Ste. 400, New York, N.Y. 10010.

When the Vatican issued a statement on the Holocaust last year, many American Jewish leaders criticized it as a whitewash. Although the Vatican condemned the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, and even spoke of "the sinful behavior" of certain members of the church, it stopped short of an official apology. Novak, a professor of Jewish studies at the University of Toronto, argues that the Jewish response "reflects a misunderstanding not only of Catholic theology but of Jewish theology as well." The Catholic Church is undertaking something "more prolonged and more painful than any mere apology."

The most criticized part of the Vatican's

statement was a quotation from Pope John Paul II: "In the Christian world—I do not say on the part of the church as such—erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long, engendering feelings of hostility toward this people." The critics objected to the pope's apparent exclusion of the church as an institution worthy of criticism.

When a Catholic says "the church," Novak argues, there are two possible meanings. In both cases, an "apology" would be inappropriate. At one level, the church is "a collection of fallible human beings." But

individual Catholics who took no part in the Nazi atrocities have nothing to apologize for, and individual Catholics who did take part have no one to apologize to, since the murdered “are hardly in a position to absolve anyone.”

At another level (as when the pope says “the church as such”), Novak observes, a Catholic understands “the church” to refer to its magisterium, or teaching authority. Catholics see that “as expressing God’s will beginning with Scripture and extending into the ongoing development of church doctrine.” Since the magisterium is the highest authority on what is true or false, right or wrong, it cannot be in error—and the church, understood in this sense, therefore cannot apologize for being in error.

That claim may seem arrogant to many outside the fold, Novak notes, but Jews should be able to understand it, since “on this score, Judaism is no different. . . . The Jewish tradition presents itself as the greatest revelation of God’s truth that can be known in the world. That is why we call ourselves ‘the chosen people.’”

In religious traditions such as Judaism and Catholicism, he says, the criticism must

come from within, through reinterpretation of past teachings. While the magisterium cannot err, church teachings can be improperly formulated, leading to, in the pope’s words, “erroneous and unjust interpretations”—and requiring reinterpretation. That is what John Paul II and the Vatican have been doing.

Indeed, Novak writes, they have been doing more: engaging in what the Vatican statement called “an act of repentance,” adding, in parentheses, *teshuvah*, the Hebrew word for repentance. For Catholicism, as for Judaism, Novak observes, “the relationship with God is primarily a communal affair, not merely a relationship between an individual person and God.” So, while there is no *moral* collective responsibility, “there still is an *existential* sense of collective sorrow and shame when other members of the community—even those as estranged from the community as the Nazis were—commit sins, especially sins having great public consequences.”

“To expect an apology rather than *teshuvah*,” Novak concludes, “is to call for something quite cheap when there is the possibility of something much more precious.”

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

The New Riddle of the Universe

A Survey of Recent Articles

Astronomers have long known that the universe is expanding, and, until now, they assumed that gravity was slowing the enlargement down. But recent observations of distant exploding stars have shown that instead the expansion may be *accelerating*—and this has cosmologists scratching their heads in wonder. Writing in *Scientific American* (Jan. 1999), a half-dozen astronomers and cosmologists ponder the astonishing development.

Craig J. Hogan, Robert P. Kirshner, and Nicholas B. Suntzeff, astronomers at the University of Washington, Harvard University, and Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory in La Serena, Chile, respectively, belong to one of the two teams that have tracked a few score of the supernovae (exploding stars), in

galaxies hundreds of millions of light-years away. Such blasts occur when a dead star becomes a natural thermonuclear bomb; these took place four to seven billion years ago. The big surprise was that the supernovae were “fainter than expected,” and therefore farther away, the astronomers say. Though the difference in brightness was slight—only 25 percent less than forecast—it was “enough to call longstanding cosmological theories into question.”

“Taken at face value,” the three astronomers write, “our observations appear to require that expansion [of the universe] is actually accelerating with time.” But that cannot happen if the cosmos is made up exclusively of normal matter, because “gravity must steadily slow the expansion.” It could happen, however, if all the empty space in the uni-

verse were filled with an unknown form of matter or energy whose gravity *repelled* rather than attracted.

That weird idea runs counter to the big bang theory, as well as the inflation theory that shores it up. The big bang theory, which holds that the universe has been expanding for about 12 billion years, assumes that matter is spread out evenly and is governed by only one force, gravity. To correct for certain shortcomings in the theory, cosmologists in the early 1980s adopted inflation theory, which, borrowing ideas from particle physics, holds that there was an early period of very rapid expansion after the big bang.

But a decade ago, notes physicist Lawrence M. Krauss, of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, it became clear that when the visible contents of the universe were added up, the collective gravitational force was not enough to bring the outward impulse from the big bang into eventual balance. That balance would be necessary if the universe were to avoid expanding forever or, alterna-

tively, collapse in a fiery “big crunch.” So cosmologists concluded that invisible matter (“dark matter”) must exist in space, exerting sufficient gravitational force to make up the deficit.

But if, as astronomers’ recent observations of exploding stars suggest, the expansion of the universe is speeding up, then even the unseen matter is not enough. A kooky form of antigravity matter or energy apparently must exist, or else the universe will keep expanding forever.

Physicists Martin A. Bucher, of the University of Cambridge, and David N. Spergel, of Princeton University, do not rule out the latter possibility, and contend that inflation theory can be modified to take an eternally expanding universe into account. Krauss, however, believes that the other alternative—that the universe is “filled with an energy of unknown origin”—is more likely. In either case, he observes, “a dramatic new understanding of physics” is now required.

Digging Up Doubt

“Why Settle Down? The Mystery of Communities” by Michael Balter, and “The Slow Birth of Agriculture” by Heather Pringle, in *Science* (Nov. 20, 1998), American Assn. for the Advancement of Science, 1200 New York Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Archaeologists have long believed that the rise of farming, which occurred about 10,000 years ago, after the last Ice Age ended, led to the first human settlements. As nomads shifted away from hunting and gathering, it was thought, they needed to be near their crops and animals, and so had to stay put and form stable communities. New evidence from digs in Turkey, as well as new discoveries about ancient agriculture around the world, are casting strong doubt on the idea that agriculture and settlements emerged together in a single “Neolithic Revolution.” So report *Science* contributing correspondent Balter and Pringle, a science writer based in Vancouver, British Columbia.

In recent years, an Anglo-American army of 90 excavators has descended on Çatalhöyük, a sprawling, 9,000-year-old village near the modern Turkish city of Konya, and has been slowly sifting through its multi-layered remains. Discovered in 1958, Çatalhöyük was hailed initially as the world’s

oldest known city, with shared institutions, a division of labor (made possible by farm surpluses), and a dependence on agriculture. But today, the archaeologists, led by Ian Hodder of Cambridge University, have tentatively reached a different conclusion: that Çatalhöyük, though it may have harbored as many as 10,000 people, was not a “city” at all but a decentralized community of extended families, with very little division of labor and only limited agriculture. The occupants still heavily relied on hunting and gathering.

Excavations by a University of Istanbul team at another site, a smaller village in Central Anatolia that appears to be about 1,000 years older than Çatalhöyük, have produced even stronger evidence against the idea of a single Neolithic Revolution, Balter notes. This settlement, home to several hundred people at its height, “has a more complex arrangement of buildings than Çatalhöyük. A large collection of mud-brick houses is partly surrounded by a stone wall, and [there is] a

large cluster of public buildings that may have been a temple complex, as well as a pebbled street running through the settlement.” The houses and the street are arranged exactly the same way in 10 successive layers of occupation, yet most of the vegetative remains and all of the animal remains were wild. In short, the occupants of this fairly large and highly stable settlement subsisted mostly on hunting and gathering. That “goes against every paradigm we have ever had,” Guillermo Algaze of the University of California, San Diego, points out.

A further assault on the Neolithic Revolution has come from researchers using new techniques involving tiny plant fossils to study early agriculture, Pringle says. Their work has pushed back the dates of both plant domestication and animal husbandry around the world. While some villages in the Near East came into existence before agriculture, settlements in many other regions came thousands of years after crops. Either way, the strong causal link between farming and settled village life that archaeologists have long imagined seems to have snapped.

In Search of Objectivity

“Objective Visions” by Bruce Bower, in *Science News* (Dec. 5, 1998), 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Objectivity is a fighting word in the current “science wars.” Postmodernist sociologists and philosophers claim that it’s only a

socially constructed idea masking scientists’ shared assumptions and self-interested drives for power and prestige. Scientists themselves insist that it is a scientific lodestar. What both sides tend to ignore, maintains *Science News* writer Bower, is the history of objectivity in science.

In assuming that objectivity has one fixed meaning, many on both sides of the science wars are making a mistake, historians tell him. “Objectivity has had and continues to have different meanings,” says Lorraine Daston, director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. Among its modern ones: empirical reliability, procedural correctness, emotional detachment, and absolute truth.

The term *objectivity* “did not acquire its current cachet in science until the 19th century,” Bower points out. Eighteenth-century scientists relied more on imagination, especially the informed imaginations of acknowledged geniuses such as Dutch anatomist Bernhard Albinus. His 1747 atlas of the human body portrayed not the skeletons he had carefully reassembled but an “improved” depiction based on his insights.

Between about 1830 and 1920,



A drawing from Bernhard Albinus’s 1747 *Tabulae Sceleti et Muscolorum Corporis Humani*. Albinus felt the elaborate backgrounds gave his engravings a three-dimensional effect.

according to Peter L. Galison, a historian of science at Harvard University, that sort of approach declined, as scientists sought to remove overt signs of imagination—now the province of poets and artists—from their work. They were pushed by both the collapse of major theories (e.g., the Newtonian theory of light) built the old way and the availability of new devices, such as the camera. In this new era of “mechanical objectivity,” it was thought better to illustrate atlases, for example, with a blurred photograph of a distant star or a fragment of a fossil than to present an imaginative reconstruction.

Scientists busied themselves standardizing their instruments, clarifying their basic concepts, and adopting an impersonal style of writing—all to make it easier for other scientists to understand their work. Facts were no longer “malleable observations but . . . unbreakable nuggets of reality,” writes Bower.

In the medical and natural sciences, however, another shift occurred by about 1920, as a door opened to trained imagination and informed judgment.

Today, rigid standards of quantitative

rigor tend to be most strongly valued in embattled and divided disciplines such as experimental psychology, contends Theodore M. Porter, a historian of science at the University of California, Los Angeles. Scientists in more secure disciplines, such as in the small community of experimental high-energy physics, operate, in contrast, much more informally. With only a few particle accelerators available, and experimenters continually adjusting their equipment, independent replication of experimental results is difficult. As a result, influential physicists often assess the skills and trustworthiness of the experimenters themselves in order to reach a collective judgment on whether particular findings merit acceptance.

“Scientists employ techniques and ways of thinking which are powerful and effective, but which are often hard to articulate,” Porter says. “In science, as in political and administrative affairs, objectivity has more to do with the exclusion of personal judgment and the struggle against subjectivity than with truth to nature.”

Superfund Waste

“How Costly Is ‘Clean’? An Analysis of the Benefits and Costs of Superfund Site Remediations”

by James T. Hamilton and W. Kip Viscusi, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*

(Winter 1999), Univ. of Pennsylvania, The Wharton School, 3620 Locust Walk,

Ste. 3100, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104-6372.

It’s no secret that cleaning up a Superfund hazardous waste site is a very expensive proposition. Is it worth it? Hamilton, a professor of public policy at Duke University, and Viscusi, a professor of law and economics at Harvard Law School, add their voices to those who say that in many cases the answer is no.

Examining a representative sample of 150 out of the 1,388 Superfund sites, and using Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) risk assessments and 1990 census data about the populations in the surrounding areas, the two researchers calculate that at most of the sites, the number of expected cancer cases resulting from contamination is relatively low. Overall, at the 150 sites, \$2.2 billion is being spent to avert 731 cancer cases—an average of \$3 million per case. But even that figure is misleading, say

the authors. At half the locations, the risk amounts to less than one-tenth of a cancer case per site. And at 101 of the 145 sites with any averted cancer cases, the cleanup costs would be more than \$100 million per averted case.

Why are the cleanups so inefficient? In part, say the authors, because the EPA has focused on the cancer risk to an individual who becomes contaminated at the site (even though there were residents on only 14 of the 150 sites), rather than on the number of cancer cases expected to arise in the area’s population. The inefficiency also is due, Hamilton and Viscusi say, to the fact that Congress, wanting to prevent the Reagan administration from favoring polluters, as it allegedly had been doing, directed the EPA in 1986 legislation to require permanent cleanups, not mere containment of hazardous wastes.

The law also set stringent cleanup standards.

Congress should allow the EPA more discretion, the authors conclude, and the

agency, in selecting a remedy for a particular site, should not always insist on restoring sites to pristine condition.

ARTS & LETTERS

The Literature Gene?

“Darwin and Dickens” by Nick Gillespie, in *Reason* (Nov. 1998), 3415 Sepulveda Blvd., Ste. 400, Los Angeles, Calif. 90034-6064.

The post-structuralist literary critic—who is quite sure that all texts have no fixed meaning, that between the signifier and the signified always falls the shadow—has been much in evidence in English departments in recent decades. But a new rival has been sighted: the evolutionary critic, who approaches literature and literary theory with Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in hand.

One such critic is Joseph Carroll, an English professor at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. In *Evolution and Literary Theory* (1995), he applies the principles of evolutionary psychology—which holds that much human behavior is governed by the imperative of passing on one’s genes—to classic literary works. Take *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë’s classic tale about the stormy relationship between the founding

Heathcliff and Catherine Linton (née Earnshaw). Raised as brother and sister, they struggle, according to the conventional interpretation, with quasi-incestuous desires. But current ethological research, Carroll points out, shows that unrelated boys and girls raised as siblings are “genetically programmed” to find sexual relations distasteful. There’s no smoldering sexual tension between Heathcliff and Catherine, Carroll insists. They are merely guilty of “infantile tantrums.”

Carroll’s approach is “basically traditionalist” in subject matter and method, observes Gillespie, a *Reason* senior editor. Other evolutionary critics are more trendy, bringing Darwinian insight to literary theory. For instance, Alexander Argyros, author of *A Blessed Rage for Order* (1992), looks upon art

The Biological Great Gatsby

Bert Bender, an English professor at Arizona State University, writes in the *Journal of American Studies* (Dec. 1998) about the heretofore little-noticed “biological undercurrent” in *The Great Gatsby* and other works of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Readers familiar with F. Scott Fitzgerald’s early work might recall that in those years just before the Scopes trial he wrote of Victorians who “shuddered when they found what Mr. Darwin was about”; or that he joined in the fashionable comic attacks on people who could not accept their “most animal existence,” describing one such character as “a hairless ape with two dozen tricks.” But few would guess the extent to which his interest in evolutionary biology shaped his work. He was particularly concerned with three inter-related biological problems: (1) the question of eugenics as a possible solution to civilization’s many ills, (2) the linked principles of accident and heredity (as he understood these through the lens of Ernst Haeckel’s biogenetic law), and (3) the revolutionary theory of sexual selection that Darwin had presented in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871). . . . The principles of eugenics, accidental heredity, and sexual selection flow together as the prevailing undercurrent in most of Fitzgerald’s work before and after *The Great Gatsby*, producing more anxiety than love from the tangled courtships of characters he deemed both beautiful and damned.

as “simply the result of [an] incongruity between a rapidly evolving cultural world and our evolutionary heritage.” The creation and interpretation of literature, he maintains, are part of a “gene-culture coevolution, a positive feedback system,” in which genes set the basic rules for culture while “cultural practice creates selective pressure for the survival of certain genes.” In the imagined realm of literature, it seems, humans can test out various possible survival strategies.

Handicapped by its narrow focus and required technical background, evolutionary criticism is unlikely to become a full-fledged academic “movement,” Gillespie thinks. But the evolutionary critics may at least do some good by championing some things that are currently out of vogue in the academic literary world, such as “the scientific method, rational analysis, and the idea that there is something approaching an objective, knowable reality.”

A New Turn in Chinese Painting

“China’s Other Cultural Revolution” by Charles Ruas, in *Art in America* (Sept. 1998), 575
Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012.

Once the Communists came to power in China in 1949, heavy-handed socialist realism in art was in, and traditional Chinese calligraphy, or ink painting (*guohua*), was out. During the calamitous Cultural Revolution of 1966–76, Mao Zedong’s regime went much further, trying to wipe out all traditional Chinese approaches to art, in favor of militant propaganda conforming to Mao’s every exalted thought.

“The Chinese people,” notes Ruas, a writer and critic, “learned to loathe and fear traditional Chinese forms,” since to do otherwise was to risk one’s life. But since the early 1980s, as the hold of communist ideology has weakened and the regime has relaxed its grip on the economy, Chinese officials—turning to their nation’s Confucian heritage for ideological strength in the face of Western decadence—have made an about-face, encouraging the traditional style of art.

“Suddenly,” Ruas writes, “ink painting was sanctioned for its ‘Chineseness’ but shorn of its historical and ideological context, its roots in the ideal of the Chinese literati, those elite masters of calligraphy and painting with their high Confucian moral and intellectual standards, and their sense of history.”

Surveying the modern part of the massive historical survey of Chinese art exhibited last year by the Guggenheim museums in New York and Spain, Ruas notes that the neo-traditionalist ink and watercolor paintings done since 1980 “hark back . . . to the experimentation of the Shanghai school which began in the last century and lasted through World War

II.” Ironically, this school was not free of Western influence: just the opposite, in fact. In the mid-19th century, Ren Xiong (1823–57) and other artists in the wealthy, Westernized port city of Shanghai incorporated Western influences in both technique and subject matter into traditional Chinese brush-and-ink painting. The Western taste for realism is seen in such works as an undated scroll self-portrait by Ren Xiong, and in his brother Ren Yi’s individualist portrait of a fellow artist in *The Shabby Official* (1888).

The calligraphy of today’s neo-traditionalists “can be powerful and expressive,” Ruas says, “but the subject matter often reiterates time-worn political clichés, as illustrated by Shi Dawei’s 1993 portrait of Mao standing next to an old peasant.” Other artists, showing a strong Western influence, “plunge directly into



Self-Portrait (undated) by
Ren Xiong

abstract compositions with great technical mastery.”

Missing from the Guggenheim exhibition (mounted with the cooperation of the Chinese Ministry of Culture), Ruas points out, was the work of the more rebellious contemporary Chinese artists from the gen-

eration that knew the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square. Boldly experimenting with modern techniques, they “continue in the spirit of those artists who, earlier in the century, employed oil painting to communicate their alienation and protest.”

No Biography, Please

To the disinterested reader, John Updike writes in the *New York Review of Books* (Feb. 4, 1999), literary biography may “perform useful work.” For the novelist, however, it’s a different story. Updike explains his “decided reluctance to be, were I ever invited, a subject” of a literary biography.

A fiction writer’s life is his treasure, his ore, his savings account, his jungle gym, and I marvel at the willingness of my friends William Styron and Joyce Carol Oates to cooperate in their recently published biographies. As long as I am alive, I don’t want somebody else playing on my jungle gym—disturbing my children, quizzing my ex-wife, bugging my present wife, seeking for Judases among my friends, rummaging through yellowing old clippings, quoting in extenso bad reviews I would rather forget, and getting everything slightly wrong.

Who Reads?

“Who Reads Nonfiction?” by Beth Luey, in *Publishing Research Quarterly* (Spring 1998), P.O. Box 2423, Bridgeport, Conn. 06608-0423.

Millions of Americans have bought Stephen Hawking’s *Brief History of Time* (1988) and other high-profile works of serious nonfiction (some of them, like Hawking’s tome, all but impenetrable). Some big hits, such as Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos* (1980), have been glossy coffee-table books tied to public TV shows; others, such as Allan Bloom’s *Closing of the American Mind* (1987), just happened to strike a cultural nerve. But such stunning successes give a misleading impression of the dimensions of the audience for nonfiction, says Luey, director of the Scholarly Publishing Program at Arizona State University. All the regular readers of serious nonfiction in America, she estimates, form a population only about the size of Arizona’s.

Much less is known about nonfiction readers than about readers of “quality” fiction, Luey observes. Folks who read literature and general fiction number about 16 million. A 1989 study showed that 59 percent are female, and 49 percent have attended college. Forty percent are in their thirties or for-

ties, and almost as many of the rest are younger as are older.

Readers of serious nonfiction are a much smaller band: no more than four million, by Luey’s rough estimate. And the realistic maximum potential audience for “a solidly written, well-promoted book” is probably no more than, say, 20 percent of that total, counting both cloth and paperback sales. “Only illustrated books directly linked to television series are likely to have hardcover sales of a million or more,” she says. The usual initial print run of an unknown author’s first trade book is 5,000 to 10,000 copies.

Luey’s informal research (including questionnaires returned by 53 people) suggests the nonfiction audience is, like the fiction one, about three-fifths female, but generally “better educated, and wealthier.” The nonfiction audience also may be much grayer than the fiction one: only 13 percent of her respondents were 35 or younger.

Her survey participants “are avid readers by any definition,” Luey notes. More than

half read 30 books or more a year, and more than a fourth read at least a book a week. And her respondents have a simple solution to the

problem of “poor writing (variously defined as condescending, wordy, and pompous)”: when they encounter it, they stop reading.

OTHER NATIONS

Has Democracy Come to Ethiopia?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Since the murderous dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam took flight in 1991, ending 17 years of communist rule, Ethiopia has gone democratic, at least in appearance. It now boasts a written constitution, a three-branch federal system based on nine (ethnic) states, an elected national parliament, political parties, and an independent press. Does reality match the appearance? Paul B. Henze, a Washington-based RAND Corporation consultant, maintains in the *Journal of Democracy* (Oct. 1998) that it does. Two other scholars, invited to comment by the journal’s editors, accuse him of a whitewash.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, born nearly four years ago, “now operates within a constitutional and legal framework that possesses all the universally recognized characteristics of a democratic system,” says Henze, who has written several books about Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa region.

True, the political process is dominated by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi’s Ethiopian People’s Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPDRF), rooted in the northern province of Tigre, whose military forces overthrew Mengistu’s regime. But opposition leaders have simply declined to participate in the political process, both during the transition to the new republic and since, Henze says. When elections were held for the new 525-member parliament in 1995, most opposition parties refused to put up candidates. In 1993, many opposition politicians strongly objected to holding the referendum in the province of Eritrea that resulted in its independence, after three decades of civil war.

Efforts by foreign embassies, pro-democracy organizations, and others to encourage opposition leaders to join the political process have only strengthened their “perva-

sive rejectionism,” Henze says. Unfortunately, Ethiopians’ historical experience “has not taught [them] to grasp the concept of constructive criticism.”

International human rights organizations have condemned the EPDRF for various alleged abuses, including the detention of thousands of militants, some of them allegedly tortured, and the arrests of dissenting journalists. But Henze argues that injustices are “inevitable” in Ethiopia’s circumstances. “What is noteworthy is that the country’s leaders have resorted so seldom and so briefly to repressive actions and that they have consistently maintained their commitment to creating a more open, tolerant, humane, and prosperous society.”

The critics have focused, for the most part, on conflicts involving intellectuals in the capital city, Addis Ababa, Henze says. The issues are of little importance to most of Ethiopia’s 59 million people, 85 percent of whom are peasants. Moreover, the interest of the vast majority in opposition activity has waned, he says, “as the pace of recovery, reform, educational expansion, and economic development has accelerated.” Ethiopia’s gross domestic product grew at an average rate of 6.9 percent between 1992 and 1997, when production of coffee, its chief export, reached an all-time high. “Most elements of the opposition continue to avoid participation in elections in order to avoid exposing their lack of support among the electorate,” Henze believes.

Richard Joseph, a political scientist at Emory University, Atlanta, charges that Henze has distorted the idea of democracy to justify “what are at best semi-authoritarian practices.” Joseph cites a 1998 review by Human Rights Watch which charged that by sponsoring 16 ethnic political parties, the

regime purposely split the opposition and “ensured a quasi-monopoly of power.” The review also said that the boycotted elections were indeed unfairly conducted.

Eager to get financial aid from Western countries and international organizations, all African regimes today “claim either to be democratic, or in transition to democracy,” Joseph observes, “just as, 20 years ago they all claimed to be pursuing ‘development,’ ‘nation-building,’ and ‘political integration.’”

John W. Harbeson, a political scientist at City University of New York, agrees. While the EPDRF represents a big improvement over Mengistu’s regime, its constitutional

structure is merely a façade covering “an essentially bureaucratic-authoritarian regime dependent upon the EPDRF’s superior military muscle,” he says.

“The EPDRF’s leadership, whose core Tigrean constituency represents perhaps 10 percent of the population, has used its military supremacy to secure political hegemony,” without much regard for rebuilding the political system on a democratic foundation, according to Harbeson. No doubt the opposition parties deserve some of the blame, he concludes, but the larger responsibility for the absence of true democracy in Ethiopia today lies with the ruling party.

The Dis-United Kingdom

“The Rise of English Nationalism” by Robin Harris, in *The National Interest* (Winter 1998–99), 1112 16th St., N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036; “Identity Crisis,” in *The Economist* (Oct. 3, 1998), 25 St. James’s St., London SW1A 1HG.

For most of the United Kingdom’s 292-year history, no clear distinction was made between being British and being English. But that may be changing. “Though most of the rest of the world has not yet grasped it, Britain is now Balkanizing,” contends Harris, a freelance writer who served in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s government.

Consider the English football (soccer) fans. When the English national team played in the World Cup final in 1966, the stadium in London was a forest of waving Union Jacks, symbol of the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. During last summer’s Cup competition in France, however, it was the Cross of Saint George, the national flag of England, that was “streaming from giant banners, painted on the faces of lager-louts in a hundred English urban centers, finally worn by chanting mobs in the back streets of Marseilles.” Higher on the social scale, Harris says, “grumbles about the Scots” are increasingly common.

The feelings are mutual. A survey last June showed that most Scots regard themselves as Scottish rather British, and believe an independent Scotland is inevitable. On May 6, Scots are to go to the polls to elect their own devolved parliament within the United Kingdom, the first such legislative body since 1707, when the independent parliaments of

Scotland and England agreed to merge. The new parliament is the gift of Prime Minister Tony Blair, who hopes Scottish voters will opt for his Labor Party rather than the secessionist Scottish National Party.

The decline of empire and the extensive secularization of what was once a self-consciously Protestant state have weakened the bonds holding Britons together, Harris argues. In addition, political correctness has made suspect “all of the more recognizable features of Britishness—language, history, tradition, ethnic homogeneity.” Last summer’s football hooligans no longer possessed, he says, “a sufficiently compelling British national identity, and they wanted to flaunt . . . a new identity that they had made their own.”

But while English football fans may wave the flag of Saint George, the *Economist* points out, “they also love to belt out choruses of ‘Rule Britannia.’” The London-based newsmagazine cites a recent survey showing that while 84 percent of Britons identify very or fairly strongly with England, Scotland, or Wales, 78 percent also identify with Britain. “Those trying to create an alternative English nationalism to the muscular, xenophobic and racially exclusive variety,” the *Economist* says, “take heart from this willingness to embrace a variety of national identities.”

Moscow's Reborn Cathedral

"The Life, Death and Resurrection of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow" by Andrew Gentes, in *History Workshop Journal* (Autumn 1998), Oxford Univ. Press, Great Clarendon St., Oxford OX2 6DP, England.

Thirty stories high, with five gold (or imitation gold) domes, the rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Savior now stands imposingly in the center of Moscow. Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and others hail it as a symbol of pride and hope, while critics deride it as an expensive (\$300 million) piece of kitsch, a Disneyesque distraction from painful reality, present and past. Whatever the replica cathedral is, it is only the latest chapter in a history of efforts by Russian leaders to turn the site into a monumental expression of ultimate belief.

On Christmas Day 1812, as he was pursuing what remained of Napoleon's shattered army westward into Europe, Tsar Alexander I decreed that a cathedral would be erected in Moscow to thank God and mark the Russians' sacrifices, writes Gentes, a doctoral candidate in Russian history at Brown University. Five years later, ceremonies were held at a site on the Sparrow Hills, the highest point in the city. But a 10-year attempt to build the church on the unsuitable soil there failed.

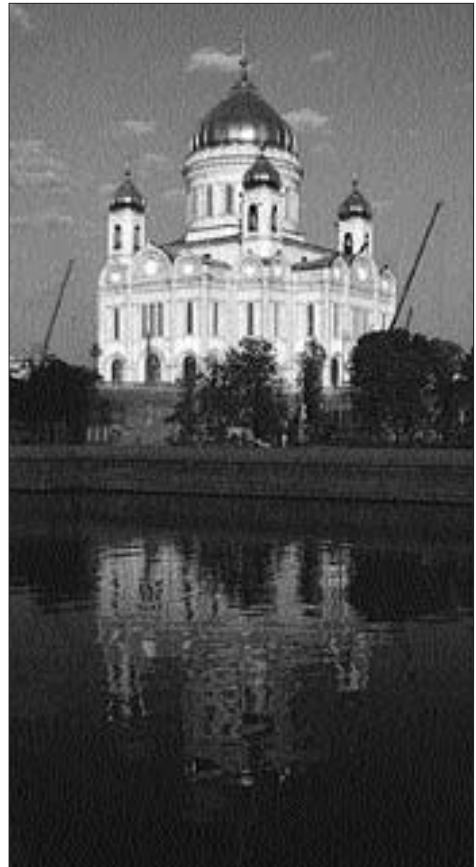
In 1838, under Tsar Nicholas I, construction began again, on more solid ground, at a site just southwest of the Kremlin, next to the Moscow River. The work was slowed by funding problems, but in 1881 the colossal edifice—nearly 340 feet high, with 2,500 square yards of interior floor space, and able to accommodate 7,200 worshippers—was finally completed. With huge wall murals, sculptures, and paintings by renowned artists, the cathedral was "as much an art gallery as a church," Gentes notes.

But after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the cathedral—standing for both the old monarchical order and the competing ideology of Orthodox Christianity—posed "a double threat," Gentes observes. The Bolsheviks deprived it of heat, damaging the wall murals, and ransacked the building for its art and other treasures. In December 1931, on Stalin's order, the cathedral was destroyed.

To replace it, the communist leaders envisioned a "Palace of Soviets," which would then have been the world's tallest

building, slightly higher than the Empire State Building; an enormous Lenin statue on top would have been three times the size of the Statue of Liberty. But construction was plagued by problems and halted in 1941 when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. After the war, the gigantic palace never got off the ground—a failure that has been likened to that of the communist regime itself. In the late 1950s, the site was made into a swimming pool.

Interest in rebuilding the cathedral surfaced during the late 1980s, in the glasnost era. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian leader Boris Yeltsin joined Mayor Luzhkov and Patriarch Alexei II in embracing the idea. Construction began in 1994, and the rebuilt cathedral was opened to the public last year. During Luzhkov's 1996 re-



The fully restored Cathedral of Christ the Saviour

election campaign, his billboards proclaimed the edifice “a symbol of Russian Renaissance.” Muscovites apparently agreed.

Critics, however, called it a waste of rubles, or worse. “With its marble-covered reinforced concrete structure, its projected fake-stone sculptured reliefs and its computer-outlined frescoes,” said one Western

academic, the cathedral “is the ultimate symbol of this Epcot-ization process, tragically erasing real historical understanding.” In Gentes’s view, the replica cathedral’s “inauthenticity” shows “the futility of trying to establish links with the imperial past.” The entire project, he concludes, reveals “a reluctance to come to terms with the Soviet period—to pretend . . . it never happened.”

Liberalizing Japan

“The Privilege of Choosing: The Fallout from Japan’s Economic Crisis” by Masaru Tamamoto, in *World Policy Journal* (Fall 1998), World Policy Institute, New School University, 65 Fifth Ave., Ste. 413, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Beneath Japan’s seeming indecision over how to revitalize its economy, sagging since 1990, is a society on the verge of a grand transformation, observes Tamamoto, a Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute, New York, and a visiting professor in the Faculty of Law at Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto.

During the “bubble” years of 1985–90, there was much talk of Japanese-style capitalism, supposedly superior to the U.S. brand. Now, Tamamoto says, Japanese pundits acknowledge there is only one basic type—and that Japan has an over-regulated version. Deregulation alone won’t solve the problem, however. The Japanese will be forced to give up the “protected life” and strong “sense of community” they have come to know.

Pointing toward this transformation, Tamamoto maintains, are many apparently discrete changes already in effect or in the works. Some are seemingly minor, such as letting superior students skip grades, and making taxi fare schedules more flexible. Others are clearly earthshaking. A plan to cut back government bank deposit insurance, for example, will likely lead to the government allowing more uncompetitive banks to fail.

An even more fundamental change concerns the powerful Japanese government bureaucracy. In the post-1945 order, that institution has acted not only in an administrative capacity but as the nation’s legislature and judiciary. Now, however, the bureaucracy is losing the Confucian “mandate of heaven,” Tamamoto writes. Recent arrests and indictments of Ministry of Finance officials and other bureaucrats have strengthened reform-minded politicians such as Naoto

Kan, who leads the opposition Democratic Party. Three years ago, Kan was appointed minister of health and welfare in a coalition government. For nearly a decade, the ministry had claimed it could not locate records pertaining to a criminal negligence suit brought against it by hemophiliacs infected with HIV. “Kan ordered that the records be found, and they were produced within a few days,” Tamamoto notes. “Resignations and indictments followed.” This affair “accelerated the demand for transparency and accountability”—two new words in the Japanese political lexicon.

The aging of Japanese society is another force for change, Tamamoto says. By 2020, one in four Japanese will be over 65. Despite its prowess in certain export sectors, the Japanese economy is full of inefficiencies, and the only way to make the economy grow will be to increase productivity by sweeping them away.

In Japan, lacking a tradition of liberal individualism, the social change will be profound. Corporate lifetime employment is on the way out; seniority is giving way to merit in fixing compensation. As “the community becomes less a source of protection, welfare, and an ordered life,” Tamamoto writes, the Japanese will become more individualistic—more concerned with individual rights, and more inclined to take risks. Inequality of results will become more acceptable.

Most Japanese remain oblivious to the direction in which their country is headed, Tamamoto observes, and “would be unlikely to approve the kind of society that is being forged.”

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

The Ambitious Generation

Yale Univ Press. P.O. Box 209040, New Haven, Conn. 06520. \$26.

Authors: *Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson*

Today's teenagers are often portrayed by the media as apathetic slackers in baggy pants who lack the skills and motivation to succeed in the adult working world. On the contrary, say Schneider, a professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, and Stevenson, an adviser to the U.S. Department of Education. Far from being unmotivated, "90 percent of high school seniors expect to attend college, and more than 70 percent expect to work in professional jobs." In the 1950s, by contrast, only 55 percent of seniors expected to attend college and just 42 percent aimed for a professional career. Many teenagers set their sights *too high*, say the authors. They have "limited knowledge about their chosen occupations, about educational requirements, or about future demand for these occupations." They get poor guidance from school authorities and their parents. Perhaps 56 percent become "drifting dreamers" with grandiose visions of career achievements.

Schneider and Stevenson base their findings on the Alfred P. Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development, which tracked and surveyed more than 7,000 students from 1990 to 1995. Similar studies from previous decades suggest that teenagers of, say, the 1950s, made the transition to adult responsibility much more quickly. For better or worse, many people in the earlier generation were already several years into their working life by age 21. Many had started families and assumed adult responsibilities.

According to the authors, kids today may also be handicapped, paradoxically, by the cornucopia of choices they have. There are a "greater number of jobs, more new types of jobs, and many jobs without well-established career lines," particularly in technology and mass entertainment. At the same time, students at many high schools must navigate through a bewildering array of course electives. Often without their realizing it, the choices they make may hurt their chances of achieving their chosen career goal, either by keeping them from taking relevant courses or, simply, by not positioning them properly to gain admission to their chosen college.

Most high schoolers today rightly equate

higher earning potential with increased education, but the Sloan study reveals considerable confusion about the correlation between education and career. Students who aspire to be doctors, lawyers, judges, and college professors, for instance, are "most likely to underestimate the amount of education required for their job choice." They also typically choose the wrong type of advanced degree needed—a Ph.D. for a physician, for example. Their choice of colleges is also hit-and-miss: 70 percent of students beginning two-year colleges expect eventually to transfer and get a bachelor of arts degree. The odds are strongly against them. Schneider and Stevenson also cite considerable anecdotal evidence suggesting that students often wind up at colleges ill suited to their career goals.

What's to be done? The most obvious remedies would provide adolescents with better tools for developing their career goals, and better advice about how best to achieve those goals. Schneider and Stevenson find that many parents, teachers, and counselors have narrowly focused attention on getting a letter of admission without thinking adequately about either choosing the *appropriate* school or the preparation needed to gain admission to it. Parents should know what classes their high school-aged children are taking—making sure that they are fulfilling requirements and preparing adequately for continuing education—and should also steer children toward jobs and internships that will help them learn to navigate through the adult working world. The authors also encourage schools to support extracurricular activities, which can help students identify and nurture interests, and to step up assistance with curriculum choices. They applaud developing programs that explain to students the connections between high school and college, allowing them to form coherent plans for higher education.

Schneider and Stevenson found that many people changed their career plan. But those who had developed a coherent plan—even if it was modified over time—were most successful at making the often difficult transition between teenager and adult.

“Solutions for a Water-Short World”

Population Reports, Series M, No. 14, Population Information Program, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, 111 Market Place, Ste. 310, Baltimore, Md. 21202-4012. 31 pp. No charge.

Authors: *Don Hinrichsen, Bryant Robey, and Ushma D. Upadhyay*

“Water for Big Cities: Big Problems, Easy Solutions?”

Paper written for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars' Comparative Urban Studies

Project on Urbanization, Population, Security, and the Environment.

Authors: *Peter Rogers, Hynd Bouhia, and John M. Kalbermatten*

Water, water everywhere—but not enough to drink, especially in the developing world. Today, more than 160 million people in 18 countries, mostly in Africa and the Near East, face chronic, widespread shortages. Some 294 million people in 13 other countries may experience temporary or limited shortages. Population specialists at Johns Hopkins University and elsewhere expect the situation to get worse.

“Population growth alone,” write the authors of the *Population Reports* study, “will push an estimated 17 more countries” (including India), with a projected total population of 2.1 billion, into those two water-short categories within the next 30 years. China, which has 22 percent of the world's population but only seven percent of all freshwater runoff, only narrowly misses inclusion in that group. “Despite periodic flooding in the south, along the Yangtze River,” the authors point out, “China faces chronic fresh water shortages in the northern part of the country.”

While the study stresses the impact of population growth (and advocates family planning efforts), it notes that demand for freshwater is also increasing as a result of industrial development, increased reliance on irrigated agriculture, massive urbanization, and rising living standards. On a worldwide basis, agriculture accounts for about 69 percent of all annual water use; industry, 23 percent; and domestic purposes, eight percent.

The Near East is the region in the world most lacking in water, every year withdrawing more water from its rivers and aquifers than is being replenished. Jordan and Yemen annually withdraw 30 percent more water from groundwater aquifers than is replenished. Saudi Arabia has been forced to mine fossil groundwater for three-fourths of its water needs. Virtually all the rivers in the region are shared by several nations, and water is a major political issue.

Four Persian Gulf states—Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—observe the study's authors, have resorted to desalinization, the conversion of seawater to

fresh water. But that is far too expensive for most practical purposes.

“As the world becomes predominantly urban, while agriculture depends more and more on irrigation,” observe the *Population Reports* authors, “it will be difficult for cities to meet the rising demand for freshwater.” Rogers, a professor of environmental engineering at Harvard University, and his fellow authors note that in big cities of developing countries, about 30 percent of the population (500 million people) lacks access to safe water, and 50 percent lacks adequate sanitation.

In most cases, say Rogers and his colleagues, some simple, effective remedies are available: (1) reduce the loss—through leaks, theft, broken meters, or failure to bill—of the often large amount of water (50 percent in Cairo, for instance, during the 1980s) that enters the system but generates no revenue; (2) discourage waste, by imposing fees for excessive water use, encouraging use of water-efficient fixtures and industrial processes, “and, above all, adopting sanitation systems that place minimal demands on [the] water supply” (instead of, as in most urban water systems, using most of the water “that is collected, treated to drinking water standards, and delivered to the customers at great cost” merely to flush toilets, immediately turning it into sanitary wastewater, dangerous and expensive); and (3) divert water to more efficient municipal use by imposing fees on agricultural irrigation.

Of course, these “easy” solutions are not so easily implemented, the authors note. “The major problem facing big cities is not technical or financial, but institutional.” Different authorities oversee water use and waste disposal, and each city, region, or country may have its own governing body for each function. It is not a formula for rational planning. “The essential ingredient for instituting the necessary improvements,” Rogers and his colleagues conclude, “is political will, both at [the] national and [the] local level.”

CURRENT BOOKS

The Great Other

RUSSIA UNDER WESTERN EYES

By Martin Malia. Harvard Univ. Press. 514 pp. \$35

by *S. Frederick Starr*

If you read only one book on post-Soviet Russia, this might be it. Not because the author lays out the intricate developments since 1991; he scarcely mentions them, and even passes over Gorbachev's perestroika era in a couple of pages. The value of this study, rather, is at a more fundamental level. Through a series of striking historical essays, the author helps European and American readers understand how they think about Russia, and the ways in which that process shapes what they think of the country.

Martin Malia, a historian at the University of California, Berkeley, is as much at home in the history of European politics and philosophy as he is in Russian history, which he has been studying for four decades. He is one of the handful of Western students of Russia whom the events of recent years have stimulated and recharged intellectually rather than overwhelmed or defeated. Here, he begins with the indisputable truth that the Western image of Russia has shifted radically over the past three centuries. In an engaging series of chapters, Malia defines four archetypal Western notions of Russia's identity.

In the 18th century, Russia was seen as an integral part of Europe—its easternmost country, to be sure, and one that happened also to extend into Asia, but a thoroughly European “enlightened monarchy” nonetheless. Never mind that Russia was vigorously expanding its empire and extending the institution of serfdom to provide the money to pay the army. This was typical of the absolutist states that held sway in France, Prussia,

and Austria at the time.

Western philosophes loved the fact that Catherine II was introducing enlightened legislation at every turn. Inveterate enthusiasts such as Voltaire and Diderot can be excused their hyperbole, but even the sober English jurist William Blackstone and the utilitarian Jeremy Bentham held this optimistic view, as did Thomas Jefferson, who went so far as to install a bust of Tsar Alexander I in the entrance hall at Monticello.

During the first half of the 19th century, this benign image gave way to the view of Russia as “the great Other,” the westernmost country of despotic Asia, extending ominously into Europe. “Scratch a Russian and you'll find a Tartar,” one overexcited French visitor declared in 1838. Karl Marx long shared this view, and expressed it like a true cold warrior in writings that later communists preferred to suppress.

In the Western mind of the 1850s, a third Russia arose—one that participated fully in the great work of liberal reform and economic modernization sweeping Europe, a Russia that was gradually converging with the rest of Europe. This “modernizing Russia” had defects galore, but wasn't the government in St. Petersburg in the period 1856–1864 introducing reforms modeled after those introduced earlier in Prussia? And didn't Russia abolish serfdom two years before the United States abolished slavery, and with none of the bloodshed of the American Civil War?

Finally, in the decades before and after



Catherine II (left) dividing Poland with Frederick II of Prussia

1900, a fourth image emerged, this one shaped by Russia's great writers and philosophers. This was the Russia with "soul," a distinct and profound land whose leading thinkers understood better than other Europeans the claims of the irrational and the limits of reason. As the works of Dostoyevsky, Berdyaev, and others reached Western readers, backward Russia emerged as a kind of antidote to Europe's infatuation with liberalism, capitalism, science, and the cult of reason.

After presenting this schematic but thoroughly credible overview, Malia then drops a bomb: "Russia's behavior offers only a partial explanation for the uneven response to her presence in Europe since Peter; . . . the full explanation must be sought in forces acting within the body politic of the West. Russia has at certain times been demonized or divinized by Western opinion less because of her real role in Europe than because of the fears

and frustrations, or the hopes and aspirations, generated within European society by its own domestic problems."

Restated in the currently fashionable terminology, Malia is arguing that the West constructed its images of Russia, and that with the exception of the third image—of Russia in the late 19th century as a European country gradually converging with its western neighbors—all these constructions depend on gross overstatement and outright distortion of Russia's actual behavior. Catherine II's Russia was not as nice a place as her promoters in Paris and London claimed, and the Russia of Nicholas II was far less threatening to Europe than Russophobes claimed, more paper tiger than bear. The enthusiasm about Russian "soul" told

more about the mentality of the disciples of the nihilist philosopher Nietzsche, the irrationalist writer Stefan George, and the sociologist Ferdinand Toennies than it did about most Russians.

All well and good. But what about Lenin, Bolshevism, and the mass horrors of the Stalin era? Surely these attest to Russia's "otherness," if not its fundamentally despotic and "Asiatic" essence. Not so, argues Malia. Instead, he offers two striking lines of explanation for the Soviet era, both of them highly controversial.

First, he insists that Lenin's philosophy of dictatorship was thoroughly European, for it was the natural and inevitable expression of Marx's messianic and utopian dream. Russian radicalism, the author points out, was "in constant symbiosis with German and French radicalism." The very equation of freedom with equality, which Lenin used to rationalize his party dicta-

torship, had its roots in the European Enlightenment. Lenin's "achievement" was to take seriously the romantic and Promethean element in Marxism and push it to its logical conclusion. Stalin merely followed Lenin. Whatever the differences between Stalinism and Nazism, which Malia recounts in an interesting if overlong aside, they must both, for better or worse, be accepted as expressions of fundamentally European impulses.

Malia's second line of argument flows from his discussion of Stalinism and Nazism. Together, he suggests, they constitute the "great blind alley of our century," and the Soviet experiment as a whole is a "hiatus in Russian and world history." Of course, it is too early to judge whether this hopeful obiter dictum is correct, but it clears the way for Malia's very brief yet trenchant concluding discussion of Russia today.

Shocking though it may be in an era when academic historians like to think of themselves as dispassionate social scientists, Malia's book reveals him to be an unreconstructed and unapologetic moralist—a thorough researcher and elegant analyst, to be sure, but at bottom a moralist. He urges us to acknowledge that the "West" by which we choose to define ourselves is far broader, less rational, more contradictory, more filled with messianic ideology of its own, and, in the 20th century, more sinister than most of us would like to believe. And he challenges us to look into ourselves before peering into Russia. The very notion of "Russia versus the West" misstates the reality in a way that can only become self-fulfilling.

An unlikely comparison comes to mind, one that would probably make Malia wince. For all their many differences, Malia in *Russia under Western Eyes* and Edward Said in his study of Western constructs of the Arab world, *Orientalism*, have certain points in common. Both aim the flashlight at the perceiver rather than the perceived, and both argue that Europeans and Americans have failed to move beyond their own dreams and insecurities to comprehend the "Other" on its

own terms. Both are concerned not with the diversity and contradictions within that "Other" but rather with its supposed essence. Where they differ, of course, is that for Said the world of Arabs and of Islam truly is an "Other," while for Malia the world of Russia is simply a distinctive part of the European and Western self.

So how does all this bear on Russia today? Why should *Russia under Western Eyes* have any claim to our attention as a source of insights on the Russia of Yeltsin, Luzhkov, the oligarchs, and mafioso capitalism? First, because it cautions modesty. More often than not, the West has misread Russia—not because it is a "riddle wrapped in an enigma," but because we in the West have been too quick to impose our aspirations and anxieties on Europe's easternmost country as if it were a tabula rasa. Facile American claims to be fostering "democracy and free markets" are probably as naive as the various schemes that Bentham mailed off to St. Petersburg nearly two centuries ago. Similarly, confident assertions that "Russia has never known freedom" and "Russians only understand force" fly in the face of positive developments that proceeded for three-quarters of a century before the tsarist state collapsed under the strain of World War I. The Russian reality today eludes both the West's utopian fantasies and its grim fatalism, just as it has for three centuries.

Beyond this, Malia draws a refreshingly positive conclusion from his overview of Russia's interaction with the rest of Europe since the era of Peter I. Leaving aside the "great blind alley" of communism, Russia's history since the early 18th century has been a process of drawing steadily closer to the rest of Europe. By the 19th century, its writers, scientists, and artists were making signal contributions to European culture as a whole, often leading the way. Nor should this be surprising, for Russia is, in Malia's words, "one national culture within European civilization." Henry Adams wrote of Russia's "receding ice cap" a century ago. After the long and tragic Soviet

hiatus, the icecap is again receding today, however slowly.

Here is Malia's epilogue to Russia's history in the 20th century: "Only eight years after Communism's demise it is clearly too early to assert that, this time, Russia will complete her real convergence with the West. But it is not too early to assert that, in

the normal course, she hardly has anywhere else to go." Assuming a clear-eyed and realistic understanding of what the West is, this may be about right.

> S. FREDERICK STARR is chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

Freudian Mystique

*DR. FREUD:
A Life.*

By Paul Ferris. Counterpoint. 464 pp. \$30

*FREUD:
Conflict and Culture.*

Edited by Michael S. Roth. Knopf. 272 pp. \$26

*OPEN MINDED:
Working Out the Logic of the Soul.*

By Jonathan Lear. Harvard Univ. Press. 345 pp. \$35

by Howard L. Kaye

Sigmund Freud may have been the dominant intellectual figure of this century, but the last two decades have seen a serious erosion of our culture's regard for the man and his work. Once acknowledged as essential reading for an educated public and as an exemplary guide to living in a disenchanted world, Freud the therapist, the scientist, and the philosopher is increasingly met with either hostility or indifference. In light of the forceful criticisms that have been directed against Freud's character and the scientific value of his theories, how ought we now to assess the man, his work, and his cultural legacy?

In *Dr. Freud*, Paul Ferris approaches this question in the guise of a neutral bystander at the Freud Wars. Seeking neither to deify nor to vilify, Ferris, a novelist and biographer, purports to offer an even-handed, fair-minded account of Freud's life and the controversies surrounding his contributions. But this is merely a pose. Ferris's Freud is an ambitious, ruthless,

unscrupulous, sex-starved (and therefore sex-obsessed) Jew. Every charge, every piece of gossip surrounding Freud's life, however implausible and unfounded, is given credence here, because, as the author acknowledges, he finds such a man more interesting and "believable." When he finally runs out of rumors, Ferris the novelist simply invents new ones, such as his fantasy of sexual temptation between Freud and his early patient "Katharina": "Perhaps his celibate state sharpened Freud's curiosity in the girl of eighteen and her sexual history. Perhaps [Freud's wife] Martha caught a hint of this. . . . It is just possible that [Freud's friend Oscar] Rie . . . saw Freud and Katharina together and wondered. . . . Rie could have used the telephone installed at the inn to send a message [to Martha] . . . that she come at once and give Sigmund a nice surprise." So what if there is no evidence to support such a story? "The truth," Ferris insists, "is what you want it to be."

Beyond crediting Freud with encourag-

ing greater openness and honesty in sexual matters, Ferris has little to say about Freud's work and its cultural impact. In contrast, these topics are the focus of *Freud: Conflict and Culture*, a collection of essays edited by historian Michael S. Roth, curator of the Library of Congress's controversial Freud exhibit, which closed earlier this year. With an impressive list of contributors, including Peter Gay, Robert Coles, and Oliver Sacks, this volume considers the development of Freud's thought, the spread of his ideas professionally and in the broader culture, and the current controversies surrounding his work.

Like Roth's Library of Congress exhibit, most of the 19 essays are essentially sympathetic to Freud as a brilliant writer, an influential cultural figure, or a respectable scientist. Even Sacks, who signed a petition protesting the exhibit, praises Freud's early neurological work and holds out the possibility of a rapprochement between neurobiology and psychoanalysis. Still, dissenting voices are powerfully present. Two of Freud's most prominent critics, Frank Cioffi and Adolf Grünbaum, repeat their oft-stated attack on the scientific status of Freud's claims, and analyst Muriel Dimen forcefully summarizes the feminist critique of psychoanalysis.

More ambiguous and more revealing is the critical stance taken by psychiatrist Peter Kramer. Acknowledging that Freud's work inspired his interest in psychiatry, Kramer describes how his professional training and his reliance on psychoactive medications have moved him further and further from Freud. Having traveled so far from his original interests, Kramer experienced the recent attacks on Freud as a "relief," absolving him from feelings of "infidelity." He remains ambivalent, though, feeling a certain nos-

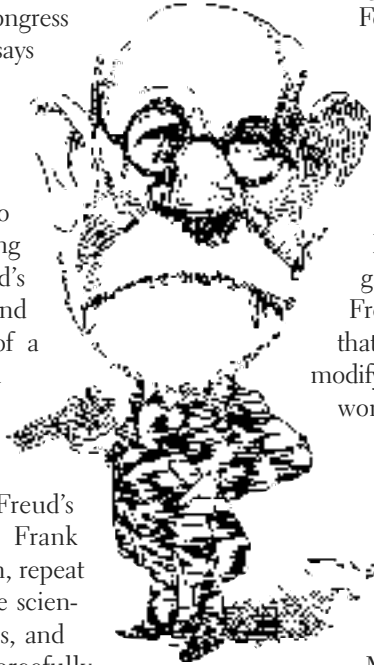
algia for the admired Freud of his youth, whose works contained so "much that explained our own behavior."

While occasionally illuminating, the essays in this collection are too brief, too narrow in focus, and too varied in subject either to deepen our understanding of Freud's work or to justify our continued engagement with it. The real question worth pursuing is the one raised by Roth but left unexplored by his contributors: in light of the scientific and biological criticisms of Freud's work, what can we still learn from reading his texts?

Fortunately, this question is taken up by philosopher and psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear in *Open Minded*. Lear's lead essay, first published in the *New Republic* during the flap over the Library of Congress exhibit, grapples head-on with the Freud-bashers. Acknowledging that there is much to criticize, modify, and reject in Freud's own work and in the subsequent development of psychoanalysis, Lear still finds many of the charges brought against Freud to be unwarranted. The much-publicized claims by Jeffrey Masson (that Freud betrayed

the victims of childhood sexual abuse by disbelieving their stories) and by Frederick Crews (that Freud betrayed parents by creating or reinforcing their children's imagined memories of sexual abuse) cancel each other out. More important, both claims distort Freud's true position: a recognition of the reality of both experience and fantasy, and an understanding of the power of the mind to blend the two.

Equally flawed are the efforts of Grünbaum and his followers to demonstrate the obvious: that Freudian theory is not "scientific" on the model of a hard science such as physics. Psychoanalysis faces problems of testability and falsifiability,



but so does every discipline that deals with the interpretation of human meanings and motives—philosophy, history, sociology—yet most people do not seek to dismiss the social sciences and humanities as a result.

That day may not be so far off, however, for what really lies behind the Freud Wars is, in Lear's words, a "war . . . over our culture's image of the soul." Will we manage to persuade ourselves that we are machines whose behavior is transparently driven by rational choice, social demands, or biological processes? Or will we continue to view ourselves as complex and often opaque creatures, who make and pursue meanings—both meanings that we reflect on and consciously choose and meanings that are hidden from our view? In Lear's view, Freud, as part of a tradition extending from Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine through Shakespeare, Nietzsche, and Proust, has made "the most sustained and successful attempt to make these obscure meanings [our motivated irrationality] intelligible." In doing so, Freud contributes to the human capacity to be "open-minded": "the capacity to live nondefensively with the question of how to live" and then to reshape our lives accordingly.

After locating Freud within this philosophical tradition, Lear explores some of the ways in which such Freudian concepts as transference and internalization can illuminate aspects of the work of others in the tradition, particularly Plato and

Aristotle. Reciprocally, Lear then shows how works such as Aristotle's *Poetics*, Plato's *Republic*, and even Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* can be drawn on to refine and clarify problematic aspects of Freud's own work.

Lear aims to breathe new life into both philosophy and psychoanalysis by initiating a dialogue between them on the fundamental questions of who we are and how we should live. Unfortunately, the book, which mostly consists of previously published essays, falls short of that lofty goal. Nevertheless, the best of *Open Minded*—like the best of the Roth volume—makes clear that while the clinical Freud might be dead, Freud's understanding of our messy inner lives and complex cultural worlds remains valuable.

Ironically, such a view returns us to Freud's own position. The "treatment of the neuroses," he wrote in *The Question of Lay Analysis* (1926), may not be the most important application of psychoanalysis. Instead, its greatest contributions may lie in the study of "human civilization and its major institutions such as art, religion, and the social order." If Freud is to influence a second century, these are the realms in which he will live on.

> HOWARD L. KAYE is Professor of Sociology at Franklin and Marshall College and author of *The Social Meaning of Modern Biology* (1997).

The New American Frontier

AN EMPIRE WILDERNESS:

Travels into America's Future.

By Robert D. Kaplan. Random House. 384 pp. \$27.50

by Michael Lind

What if a distinguished American foreign correspondent returned home to explore and explain the United States, using interpretive skills developed by studying other societies? That is the

premise of Robert Kaplan's study of the United States at the turn of the millennium, *An Empire Wilderness: Travels into America's Future*. A contributing editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Kaplan has written

influential and widely admired books about countries torn by ethnic strife and poverty, including *Balkan Ghosts* (1994) and *The Ends of the Earth* (1997). In *An Empire Wilderness* (parts of which appeared in the *Atlantic*), Kaplan employs his trademark combination of firsthand observation, social analysis, and historical interpretation to try to make sense of a country as puzzling as any he has visited as a foreign correspondent: his own.

Kaplan's exploration of the United States concentrates on the country west of the Mississippi, from the border of Mexico to the Pacific Northwest. He finds signs of the American future in an ethnic mix changed by Latino and Asian immigration, and in a reorientation of American regional consciousness along a North-South axis in which the Canadian and Mexican borders are becoming less important. Two West Coast metropolitan areas strike him as models of alternative American urban futures: Portland, Oregon, symbol of a tidy and humane urbanism, and Orange County, a dystopia outside Los Angeles spawned by the car. Kaplan prefers the pedestrian-friendly urbanism of Portland to the sprawl of Los Angeles, while admitting that the latter model of urban life in North America is likely to prevail.

At his best, Kaplan convincingly illustrates the influence of geography on society and politics. For example, he observes that "the different responses of California and Texas to the Mexican challenge are geographically determined: while major urban attractors such as Los Angeles are close to the Mexican border, which makes California vulnerable to illegal immigrants, Texas is not quite in the same situation (El Paso's population is only 515,000, compared to 3.5 million for only the city of Los Angeles)." Where a less thoughtful journalist or scholar might have been content to observe that Omaha, St. Louis, and Kansas City "all are river cities in the flat middle of the continent," Kaplan describes the important distinctions: "Unlike St. Louis, Omaha has been able to annex its emerging suburbs in

order to prevent their separate incorporation. So while St. Louis is a feudal assemblage of 92 separately incorporated cities, Omaha is overwhelmingly Omaha. Only four southern suburbs are beyond its grasp, and everyone, not simply poor blacks and Mexicans, attends Omaha's public schools."

Yet Kaplan's attempts to draw analogies between cultures and historical eras are sometimes strained. The friendliness of a Texas waitress inspires a theory of geographic determinism: "Indeed, Texas constitutes just another friendly desert culture, similar in its fundamentals to what I encountered in Arabia and other places, where great distances and an unforgiving, water-scarce environment weld people closely to one another at oases, while demanding a certain swaggering individualism out in the open—as well as religious conservatism."

The dangers of analogy become apparent when Kaplan, who has written incisively on the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, scans the United States for signs of incipient Balkanization. An Arizona map showing Indian reservations, military bases, and other areas reminds the author of maps of Bosnia, prompting him to speculate: "Should the social disintegration I saw in Tucson's south side ever become pervasive while our governing institutions become infirm and border crossings from Mexico increase substantially, the broken lines on a map that today appear abstract could have deadly consequences." Like both proponents and many critics of multiculturalism, Kaplan contemplates the end of a common American national identity: "Perhaps, as America becomes increasingly a transnational melange—becoming more like the rest of the world as the rest of the world becomes more like us—we will come to resemble some Old World societies in this respect: instead of a nation, we will become a 'community of communities' on the same continent."

A skeptical reader will wonder whether the United States is really more of "a

transnational melange” in the 1990s than it was in the 1890s, when enormous European diasporas in America had their own newspapers, neighborhoods, religious institutions, and political machines. Apart from a pool of Spanish-speakers that would quickly shrink without continual Latin American immigration, there is no single foreign-language bloc comparable to the once-enormous German-speaking population of the United States. To judge from today’s high rates of intermarriage across ethnic and racial lines, not only assimilation but amalgamation is occurring more rapidly than it did in the past. As Kaplan himself notes, “A third of all U.S.-born Latinos and more than a quarter of all U.S.-born Asians in the five-county greater Los Angeles region intermarry with other races. Almost one out of ten blacks in greater Los Angeles intermarries, a percentage high enough to create significant changes in black racial identity in years to come.”

Kaplan is much more persuasive when he writes about the secession of elite neighborhoods within regions, “as wealthier Americans increasingly live their lives within protected communities, heavily zoned suburbs, defended corporate enclaves, private malls, and health clubs.”

Indeed, a case can be made that class divisions are growing in the United States, even as the historic disparities between regions and races continue to narrow. “But what if such wide, rigid class distinctions reemerge—with a deepening chasm between an enlarged underclass and a globally oriented upper class—while the dialogue between ruler and ruled becomes increasingly ritualistic and superficial? Will the form of democracy remain while its substance decays?” The real danger facing the United States may be not that it will be split along regional lines into five or six countries, but that it will fissure along class lines into two nations.

Although weakened somewhat by misleading analogies and apocalyptic pessimism, Kaplan’s tour of his own country is an impressive synthesis of observation and analysis that confirms the author’s standing as one of this country’s leading intellectual journalists. Whether or not *An Empire Wilderness* is, as advertised in the subtitle, “travels into America’s future,” Robert Kaplan has provided a rich and rewarding account of his travels into America’s present.

> MICHAEL LIND is the Washington editor of Harper’s Magazine.

History

THE HAUNTED WOOD:

Soviet Espionage in America—The Stalin Era.

By Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev. Random House. 402 pp. \$30

VENONA:

Decoding Soviet Espionage in America.

By John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr. Yale Univ. Press. 487 pp. \$30

One of the peculiarities of the Cold War was that the battle over its causes and consequences began even as it was being waged. On the one side were the orthodox historians

who maintained that Soviet aggression was to blame. On the other were the revisionists who argued that the United States was the culprit: our hysterical fear of communism turned the Soviet Union into an enemy and provoked a witch-hunt of innocent Americans at home.

With the collapse of the Soviet empire and the opening of the archives, the revisionist line, never very persuasive, has been given a fresh pasting. These two new books go some way toward clearing up the question of Soviet espionage in the United States. Both show that Stalin and company were treating the United States as an enemy long before the Cold War began.

Weinstein is no stranger to Cold War con-

troversies: his earlier work, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case*, enraged the American Left by demonstrating that Alger Hiss was in fact a Soviet agent. Vassiliev is a former KGB agent. Based on thousands of classified Soviet documents, their book suggests that New Deal Washington was riddled with Americans spying for the Soviet Union. Congressman Samuel Dickstein, Treasury official Harry Dexter White, State Department official Laurence Duggan, FDR's personal assistant Laurence Lauchlin—these are just a few of the dramatic personae who figure in Weinstein and Vassiliev's narrative. The American Left, foremost among its champions the *Nation* magazine, long maintained the innocence of suspects such as Duggan. But by drawing on Soviet documents, the authors are able to show definitively that Duggan and other spies delivered numerous secret government documents to their Soviet handlers, thereby giving Stalin a window into the workings of official Washington.

While Weinstein and Vassiliev's book is solid fare, Haynes and Klehr's is better. Haynes, a historian in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress, and Klehr, a professor at Emory University, Atlanta, offer a superbly detailed and scholarly examination of Soviet espionage. The authors focus on American decryptions of Soviet cables during World War II. These cables, only recently declassified, indicate that the Communist Party of America did not, as revisionist historians maintain, act independently of Moscow, focusing on social work. Instead, according to Haynes and Klehr, the Venona transcripts "expose beyond cavil the American Communist party as an auxiliary of the intelligence agencies of the Soviet Union."

Defenders of Hiss and other spies argue that the Soviet cables cannot be trusted. They say that the agents, trying to impress their bosses back home, embellished or downright invented sources. Haynes and Klehr say this is bunk. They detail the intricate recruiting process and note that "a faked or exaggerated source would show up quickly and might entail severe consequences for the offending officer. In most cases Moscow expected the delivery of actual or filmed documents of reports written personally by the source."

The implications of these findings are not trivial. Had American spies not handed over atomic secrets, Haynes and Klehr argue, Stalin would not have been able to build the bomb so quickly and might have hesitated before authorizing North Korea's incursion into the South. What is more, the authors contend, President Harry S. Truman's efforts to ferret out spies during the late 1940s were no overreaction, but a necessary corrective to years of indulgence toward Soviet skullduggery.

Neither of the books succeeds in plumbing the motivations of Moscow's American spies. Surely one reason for the readiness of Americans to betray their country was the naive belief that the Soviet Union was the only power in the 1930s standing up to fascist Germany. Nevertheless, these two books shatter the fable of communist innocence in America.

—Jacob Heilbrunn

**THE PRIDE OF HAVANA:
A History of Cuban Baseball.**

By Roberto González Echevarría.
Oxford Univ. Press. 464 pp. \$35

As a boy in the late 1940s and early '50s, I whiled away my time poring over sports magazines and baseball books, soaking up the lore and memorizing names, dates, and sta-



tistics. As a long-suffering Boston Red Sox fan, I continue to follow the game and live through the curse that has plagued the team ever since the Babe was sold to the hated New York Yankees. But sometime in the 1960s, politics replaced baseball as my favorite diversion, and I now while away more time with C-SPAN than with ESPN.

González Echevarría, a scholar of Latin American literature at Yale University, has served up a tureen of politics and baseball, with a little foreign affairs to spice the mix, that would have been on my menu had my obsessions coexisted. *The Pride of Havana* is a massively detailed chronicle of the history of baseball in Cuba, written with the passion of a fan of the country and of the game.

González Echevarría makes a convincing case that America's national pastime is also Cuba's national pastime. Baseball was played on the island as early as it was played in the United States, and by the turn of the century, it had replaced bullfighting at the center of the Cuban psyche. It has been organized in clubs, schools, and leagues both amateur and professional. At various times in the last hundred years, Cuban baseball has been a professional opportunity for African American ballplayers who were then barred from the U.S. major leagues, a threat to the majors (which, facing the possibility of a competing professional league on the American continent, used their congressionally granted monopoly power to try to drive Cuban baseball out of business), a spring training and barnstorming site for American teams, and a breeding ground for future American stars. It has also been a calling card for a Cuban who ultimately made his mark outside sports: Fidel Castro, who, according to the author, hardly played at all and was decidedly mediocre.

Cuba has always shown a fascination with things American (if not a preference for them), and the story of Cuban baseball is as much a metaphor for the love-hate relationship between Cuba and the United States as it is a sports story. Indeed, it appears now that baseball may become the wedge toward normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations in the same way that table tennis was for U.S.-China relations. The idea that the United States and Cuba share a national pastime will make the frosty relations look sillier than ever.

González Echevarría's book is part baseball history, part U.S.-Cuban relations, part race relations, part sorry tale of American arrogance and power, and part memoir and love story. Perhaps that's the problem. The author cares deeply about his subject, but the detail ultimately overwhelms the story. In the end, I fear, González Echevarría will have pleased neither his academic colleagues nor the maniacal fans of Cuban baseball, mostly because he has tried so hard to please both.

—Marty Linsky

**BETTY FRIEDAN AND
THE MAKING OF 'THE FEMININE
MYSTIQUE':**

*The American Left, the Cold War,
and Modern Feminism.*

By Daniel Horowitz. Univ. of
Massachusetts Press. 400 pp. \$29.95

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan identified a malaise among American women, a frustration stemming from the isolation and intellectual emptiness of postwar suburban life. Friedan urged women to transcend their roles as wives and mothers and seek additional fulfillment in purposeful work. *The Feminine Mystique* served as a catalyst for the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and its author was founding president of the National Organization for Women and went on to achieve fame as a speaker and writer in behalf of women.

Friedan has said that the book grew out of her own frustrations with suburban domesticity, but Horowitz, drawing on archival sources and interviews with Friedan's friends and associates (though Friedan herself, among others, declined to cooperate), insists on different origins. He maintains that Friedan's ideas about women's equality stemmed from her left-wing labor journalism in the 1930s and 1940s, and that her freelance writing for women's magazines in the 1950s continued to show glimpses of this radicalism.

A historian at Smith College who has written about American consumer culture, Horowitz carefully delineates the links between the Popular Front feminism of the Old Left and the New Left feminism of the 1960s, thereby casting doubt on the claims

of novelty that many have made about social movements of the 1960s. In the process, he illuminates important details of Friedan's early life by mining everything from her papers while a student at Smith College to her articles for the labor press.

At times bold and at others repetitious and contradictory, Horowitz tries both to unearth Friedan's early radicalism and to criticize *The Feminine Mystique* for its diminished, "lily-white," middle-class perspective. He thinks Friedan's opus denies her activities in behalf of blacks, workers, and other disfranchised groups—activities of which she ought to "be proud." He criticizes the book for not condemning capitalism by name and for not focusing "more fully on the issues of power, racism, systematic oppression of women, and politics."

Determined to resolve what he sees as a central contradiction between Friedan's own account of her life and his reconstruction of her story, Horowitz presents numerous possible explanations. Some of these, such as the lingering reverberations of McCarthyite persecution, might explain changes in emphasis from earlier drafts to the final *Feminine Mystique*. But in asserting that Friedan

engaged in a kind of "dissimulation" and created an alternate "persona" in the course of writing the book, Horowitz goes too far. Friedan's shift in emphasis might have had less to do with "dissimulation" than with a genuine discovery that postwar suburbanization and domesticity threatened to circumscribe women's horizons.

The single-mindedness of Horowitz's larger endeavor—to expose Friedan as a victim of false consciousness—keeps him from delving deeply into sources and aspects of Friedan's intellectual maturation that promise to be truly revealing: the influence of psychology on her interpretation of women's plight; her critique of consumerism; her particular brand of feminism, which rejected anti-male sentiment and embraced both family lives and careers for women; and her description of a postwar retreat into the personal sphere, caused in part by disappointments and terrors on the world scene. Horowitz points us down some of these avenues, but holds firm to his belief that Friedan, having been his kind of radical in her early years, must have decided to hide her true self.

—Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn

Religion & Philosophy

LETTER TO A MAN IN THE FIRE: *Does God Exist and Does He Care?*

By Reynolds Price. Scribner. 112 pp.
\$20

In 1994, the novelist Reynolds Price published a book about a terrifying struggle with spinal cancer that had left him unable to walk. The memoir, *A Whole New Life*, was a tale of resurrection from near-death laced with anger at the numbly uncaring treatment of his doctors. It won him, as such books do, a large and responsive audience among those similarly afflicted. One of those readers, a man in his thirties named Jim Fox who had been forced to drop out of medical school because of a recurrence of cancer, wrote Price in the spring of 1994 asking him the two questions posed by the subtitle of this book.

A contemporary American novelist might seem an odd person to direct such questions to. Fox undoubtedly chose Price because of a remarkable episode in *A Whole New Life* in which Price claims to have found himself, in something more tactile than a vision, standing in the Sea of Galilee, Jesus himself washing the "puckered scar" of unsuccessful surgery on his back. Jesus tells Price that his sins are forgiven, and Price has the temerity to ask if he is cured as well. Jesus answers, somewhat jauntily, "That too." Price offers this story unapologetically, insisting that it is not a dream or a metaphor.

But beyond this anecdote, and what it says about the religious conviction of its teller and the outside chance of a miracle cure for Fox as well, Price was a good per-

son to approach. Price's 11 novels, beginning in 1962 with *A Long and Happy Life*, cannot be called religious, in that they deal less with divine love than human, less with faith than faithlessness. Yet he has published two volumes of translations from the Bible (*A Palpable God*, 1978; *Three Gospels*, 1996) and has spent a lifetime reading and thinking about the nature of this God to whom he has always felt a personal access.

In his reply to Fox, Price makes no more serious argument for God's existence than that "my belief in a Creator derives largely from detailed and overpowering personal intuition, an unshakable hunch," and what he calls "demonstrations," of which the Sea of Galilee was the most dramatic. Most of the other demonstrations are closer to Wordsworthian "spots of time"—"moments of sustained calm awareness," as Price puts it, "that all of visible and invisible nature (myself included) is a single reality, a single thought from a central mind." To an unbeliever, this seems a fittingly modest approach, given the unlikelihood that Price might succeed where all others have failed in constructing an inarguable proof that God exists.

As to the question of whether God cares, Price suggests that part of the reason this question is so troubling has to do with our notion of God the Father. Price notes "how seldom the oldest strata of Hebrew scripture call God our father," and suggests that our inability to comprehend a God who is less than fully attentive to the world's suffering (and, indeed, often seems to pour it on with those he favors) has to do with our confusing his love for his creation with a benign paternal love. Even those believers who are not among the overtly suffering more often than not know God's inattentiveness, Price concedes, in the form of unanswered prayers. "I've come more and more," he writes, "to wish that scriptures of Judaism and Christianity—and a great many more modern clergy and counselors—had forthrightly confronted the silence at the very heart of any God we can worship." That divine silence apparently extended to Jim Fox, who died at 35 in February of last year.

—Robert Wilson

**ISAIAH BERLIN:
*A Life.***

By Michael Ignatieff. Metropolitan Books. 356 pp. \$30

Ideally, a biography of Isaiah Berlin should be as engaging as the man himself—no small challenge, considering Berlin's brilliance as a lecturer, author, and conversationalist. Ignatieff has more than met the challenge. He has written an intimate, intelligent, and succinct life of one of the more widely loved men of this century. Like Berlin, Ignatieff has Russian roots, is a political philosopher in his own right (and an accomplished novelist and memoirist as well), and shares with his subject a fine liberal temperament. Indeed, the making and sustaining of such a temperament during a century when liberal ideals faced grave threats from all sides serve as the guiding themes of this biography.

Ignatieff shapes the facts of that life (1909–97) into the story of a charmed, almost blessed existence. Even though political upheavals forced Berlin's family to flee first from his native Latvia to St. Petersburg, and then from Petersburg to London, Berlin had a comfortable, secure, almost Nabokovian childhood. Berlin felt the distinction of outsider status from his earliest years, but that sense of difference was never humbling or humiliating. If the Berlins were Jews, distantly related to the founder of the devoutly pious Lubavicher Hassidim, they were largely assimilated residents of a city that exempted its Jewish citizens from restrictions that so hobbled their coreligionists in most western provinces of the Russian Empire.

Flight to London in 1921 inscribed another degree of apartness on the Berlin family. But though exile, in Ignatieff's words, "consolidated detachment," Isaiah took to his adopted country with an avidity that evolved into an articulate embrace of that country's institutions and ideals. His regard for Britain's blend of resilient traditionalism, liberal constitutionalism, and ethos of inviolable individualism made him, in some ways, more English than the English. But Ignatieff does not neglect the power of Berlin's underlying Russian and Jewish identities, expressed above all in a need for passionate intensity, whether in friendships or in responding to ideas or

works of art, particularly music. In Berlin's case, an English reasonableness allowed a rich, emotional interiority to flower.

Ignatieff adds little to the evaluation of Berlin's philosophical achievement set forth in John Gray's fine intellectual biography, *Isaiah Berlin* (1995), but he provides the human context and drama behind the writing of Berlin's brilliant discourses on the making, meaning, and makers of ideas—and counterideas—that have shaped the modern world since the Enlightenment. We are given an intimate view of Berlin's involvement not only in academic politics but in real politics, not only the reporting he did for the British Foreign Office from Washington during World War II but also his shrewd efforts to support moderate Zionists in the achievement of a Jewish state. Berlin's engagement with the extra-academic world, his contact with politicians, statesmen, and doers of all stripes, gave his political reflections a realism and an appreciation of the role of personality and character in history. Both qualities will extend the life of Berlin's work.

This is an almost Boswellian blend of memoir and biography, and one wishes there were even more of the former: more anecdotal accounts of the conversational brilliance, more words from the man himself. A certain thinness in the treatment of Berlin's later years might have been remedied by more reportage. After all, Ignatieff had the high privilege of interviewing his subject for 10 years, and he is a superb and

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reliable evoker of characters and scenes. If it seems churlish to complain of too few words in an age of disastrously overlong biographies, for once less might not necessarily have been more.

—Jay Tolson

Arts & Letters

AT HOME WITH THE MARQUIS DE SADE:
A Life.

By Francine du Plessix Gray.
 Simon & Schuster. 491 pp. \$27.50

SADE:
A Biographical Essay.

By Laurence L. Bongie. Univ. of Chicago Press. 336 pp. \$29

With so many fine minds bent upon the monster these days, you can choose your Marquis. Was he the compelling, nearly lovable son and husband of Gray's biogra-

phy? Or the "obnoxiously adolescent, opportunistic, tantrum-prone," mother-hating reptile of Bongie's academic screed? Was he, as Gray believes, the "father of modernism" and "prophet of Queer Theory"—academe's latest contribution to sexual politics? Or, as Professor Bongie would have it, a false prophet of the First Amendment, "author of the most monotonously egregious . . . pornographic novels imaginable, all richly interlarded with a preachy secondhand ideology . . . pilfered from thinkers far more original and coherent than he"?

Donatien Alphonse Francois de Sade (1740–1814) came from a cash-poor but landed family of debauched aristocrats (Sade’s father picked up boys on the street). Sade attended a Jesuit school in Paris, where he learned, firsthand, the joys of corporal punishment. Through family machinations, he served in the prestigious Carabiniers de Monsieur despite being too short to qualify. He strutted in his gleaming blue uniform with crimson lining, cuffs, and collar, cultivating his notorious sexual tastes off hours.

Sade’s father married him off to the plain daughter of a wealthy, *haute bourgeoisie* family. To everyone’s surprise, the marriage took. During the next decades Renée-Pélagie Cordier de Montreuil would bear Sade’s children, endure his absences, defy her mother, and procure young victims for Sade’s bloody orgies of whipping, masturbation, and sodomy. After his arrest and imprisonment, she sent him dildos and *petits gâteaux*. Sade called Pélagie “my puppy dog,” “celestial kitten,” “fresh pork of my thoughts.”

Sade wrote his scabrous novels—*Justine* (1791), *Juliette* (1799), and their ilk—from jail. Briefly freed during the Revolution, he died at Charenton, the fancy mental hospital where he had staged theatrical productions. Two decades later, he resurfaced as a dictionary entry: “Sadism: The perversion of deriving sexual satisfaction from the infliction of pain on others.”

Gray, the novelist and feminist, became interested in Sade after reading his prison correspondence with his wife. She argues that “few lives provide a more eloquent allegory on women’s ability to tame men’s nomadic sexual energies.” She reminds readers that “the writer’s task is to probe the mystery of personality,” giving “equal time to . . . demons and to saints.” Neither justification persuades. Few married men remain so untamed as Sade, who got more than his share of equal time before Gray

came along.

But no matter. What makes her biography worth reading is the writing, the novelist’s gift for richly realized character, for pacing and plot. Gray tells a riveting story of Sade and his family, of the aristocracy’s fall, of Regency fashions and prejudices and the insanity of life in Paris during and after the Revolution.

Bongie, a professor of French at the University of British Columbia, has written 18th-century studies before; what he lacks in readability he makes up for in erudition. But his determination to revise the standard thinking on Sade’s oedipal psychology, based on two newly discovered letters from Sade’s mother, may tire all but the most dogged Sadeans. And some readers may wonder whether, in making such a lengthy case against postmodern literary criticism (the work, not the life, is what matters), the scholar doth protest too much.

—A. J. Hewat

**THE UNKNOWN MATISSE:
A Life of Henri Matisse—The Early
Years, 1869–1908.**

By Hilary Spurling. Knopf. 480 pp.
\$40.

When Henri Matisse died in Nice in 1954 at the age of 84, he was an honored figure whose work had affected the course of art in the 20th century as surely as had the entirely different achievement of his sometime rival,



Vase of Flowers (1924), by Henri Matisse

Pablo Picasso. Reading this splendid book, we know how the story will end, yet Spurling, a British critic and biographer, makes us doubt the outcome. Her account of the adversity the young Matisse endured—financial, critical, physical, psychological—is so persuasive that, time and again, we expect him to renounce his vocation and find another career.

The eventual master of luxuriant, voluptuous color was born into the cold, dank world of French Flanders, near the Belgian border, and spent the first quarter of his life in that gloomy landscape. His father was a seed merchant, and it was assumed that Henri too would find a middle-class career. He was studying to be a lawyer when he discovered, at 20, his true calling. Despite the opposition of his family and the cartoonish scorn of villagers, he moved to Paris to study art in one of the establishment schools.

Of course, he initially failed his drawing exam for admission to the *École des Beaux-Arts*. But he persisted, was accepted, and went on to immerse himself in the Parisian art world. After years of often desperate poverty, he told friends in 1903 that he had lost all desire to paint and had almost decided to give up. But he did not surrender to circumstance, and by 1908 he was on the brink of fame. The rivalry with Picasso had begun.

Matisse's preoccupation with light drove him to seek its origin within the canvas itself and to release the light in colored emanations from that source. He strove to free color from its representational role and to use it to interpret reality. In so doing, he overturned the traditional objective way in which Western painters had represented reality. "He was," writes Spurling, "substituting for their illusion of objectivity a conscious subjectivity, a 20th-century art that would draw its validity essentially from the painter's own visual and emotional responses." Matisse's work, paintings that experimented with light and color through scenes of simple domesticity, seemed to many of his contemporaries an assault on civilization itself. To her great credit, Spurling makes us understand why.

Matisse painted windows and doors opening onto landscapes of infinite promise and possibility. "This is what I find so particularly expressive," he once said, "an open door like this, in all its mystery." At the end of his life, Matisse believed that his entire career might be seen as

a flight from the dark world of his northern upbringing to the light and color of the south, where the Mediterranean sun freed his genius. An insistent sense of how physical place worked on Matisse and drove him to achievement informs this biography. Spurling opens a window onto the immense and varied landscape of a life, and the intelligence she brings to observing the life bathes the landscape in light.

—James M. Morris

THE AMATEUR:
An Independent Life of Letters

by Wendy Lesser. Pantheon. 274 pp.
\$24

In the "overture" to these interlocking autobiographical sketches, Lesser aptly describes herself as "an 18th-century man of letters, though one who happens to be female and lives in 20th-century Berkeley." *The Amateur* is a bracing memoir of a one-of-a-kind life that has been shaped by an addiction to (of all things) books, dances, paintings, plays, photographs, poems—and by a deep need to judge, not merely enjoy, them.

As I learned the minute I met her (we were on a book prize committee together years ago), Lesser has the intimidating gift of great clarity and certitude about what she likes and what she doesn't like in life, which for her comprises "mainly, other people and works of art." Yet she is anything but dogmatic. *The Amateur* helps to explain how Lesser has skirted that danger, and in the process become the boldly eclectic editor of the *Threepenny Review*, the literary quarterly she founded in 1980; the subtly discriminating author of four very different books of (for want of a neater term) cultural-social-literary criticism; and, not least, a self-portraitist who has what many fiercely opinionated people lack—calm (and often comic) perspective on herself and her era.

There was never much fear that "brash, impatient, judgmental, loud, energetic, efficient" Lesser, born in Palo Alto in 1952, would get lost in the unrest of the 1960s or in the comparatively unstructured life she led as an English graduate student during the 1970s. Instead, she found latitude for her own "relatively untutored omnivorousness," and she also had a chance to exercise "what one Berkeley friend calls my 'unremittingly linear' mind." By the 1980s and 1990s, she

had carved out a precarious literary existence outside the academy, “on the fringes of the economy.” And she was launched on a rigorous mission to understand and evaluate “the experience that takes place when a reader or observer or auditor encounters a work of art: that meeting place between one person’s sensibility and another person’s creation.”

Lesser’s own sensibility is unfailingly independent but never willfully idiosyncratic. She is not shy about being “the learned critic, commenting on the work,” or about sharing what it is like to be “the novice, being molded by that work.” Writing about the Balkan folk dancing that was once her passionate pastime, she finds an analogy to the welcoming but demanding conversation her criticism aims to set in motion. “It was a place,” she recalls, “in which everyone was accepted, but in which discriminations (of grace, skill, knowledge) nonetheless mattered. It was a kind of community that was ideal for someone who was essentially, secretly solitary.” In a culture ever more balkanized between high and low, academic and popular, creative and critical, cerebral and visceral, Lesser reminds us of the distinctions that matter.

—Ann Hulbert

PREEMPTING THE HOLOCAUST.

By Lawrence L. Langer. Yale Univ. Press. 207 pp. \$27.50

It’s hard to believe that, a few brief years ago, people worried that American memory of the Holocaust would fade through lack of interest. These days, movies, memorial museums, Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies, and the general roar of what some cynically call “Shoah business” have made the destruction of European Jewry such a common rhetorical touchstone that trivialization, not oblivion, poses the more immediate threat. It’s natural, then, that we now see the emergence of cultural critics who denounce the misuse of the Holocaust, and of a smaller group—call them Holocaust fundamentalists—who oppose virtually all attempts to draw parallels or lessons from the Holocaust or, indeed, to do anything but rigorously contemplate its singularity.

The literary critic Lawrence Langer has

long been prominent in this latter group. Over the years, he has written a shelf of books that treat artistic and literary aspects of the cultural memory of the Holocaust—from survivors’ testimony and memoirs to the art and poetry that emerged from the furnace of suffering—while maintaining strenuous objections to what he sees as “preemption” of that memory by others. His objection, reiterated and elaborated in this brief collection of essays, is to the drawing of connections from the Holocaust to other matters, whether it’s teaching tolerance in schools, pondering moral conundrums about the line between ordinary people and murderers, or highlighting accounts that point to the strength of the human spirit—“the habit of using mass murder as a text for furthering personal agendas about humanity’s capacity for goodness or its ability to resist oppression.”

This is, to say the least, oddly put—what demotes the search for uplift to a mere “personal agenda”?—but the larger point is sound. When parallels are drawn too easily or uplifting accounts are accepted too readily, horror is trivialized. But Langer is stricter yet. He argues that all efforts to find “meaning” of any kind in the Holocaust are intrinsically suspect and reductive, even questions about how we would act in similar circumstances. Of the hundreds of Jews boiled alive in an acid bath, he observes: “There is simply no connection between our ordinary suffering and their unprecedented agony, nor do our trivial inclinations toward sin resemble in any way the minds that designed such terminal torture.”

At some point, such stringency becomes self-defeating. To refuse *all* analysis of an event, to reject *every* possible inference, is finally to insist on silence. So it is almost a relief, late in the book, to find Langer disobeying his own dictum, drawing his own meaning—albeit a dark and despairing one—from the material on which he has spent his career. “The need for a revision, and then a re-vision, of our cherished value systems,” he writes, “is the chief spiritual legacy of the Holocaust.” A grim prescription, perhaps, but not so grim as the insistence that nothing can be learned, said, or remembered about this greatest of crimes.

—Amy E. Schwartz

Contemporary Affairs

GRAY DAWN:

How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America—and the World.

By Peter G. Peterson. Times Books.

280 pp. \$23

When the sky does fall, those once denounced as Chicken Littles suddenly become prophets. Peterson may turn out to be one of them. He assessed the dire consequences of American aging in *Will America Grow Up Before It Grows Old?* (1996). Now, in *Gray Dawn*, he extends the analysis to the rest of the world.

Everywhere, but especially in wealthy countries, people live longer. The cost of their medical care is increasing. The age of their retirement—and hence their entry into the ranks of those supported by public pensions—is dropping. They are having fewer children who might support them in retirement. Intergenerational solidarity does not help: grandparents live apart from grandchildren, often in another part of the country. As societies move from high rates of fertility and mortality to low, Peterson argues, they face fiscal disaster.

While acknowledging that demographic projections have turned out wrong in the past—not that long ago, Cassandras were worrying about too *high* a birth rate—Peterson believes that fiscal problems are virtually unavoidable. Under even the most conservative estimates of future trends, too few will be working to support too many looking for dignified leisure. Even more important, not all trends are cyclical. Once birth control is introduced in a nation, for example, families with more than 10 children become rare.

Different societies will handle the aging bomb in different ways. Peterson admires Japan, the first country to cope with rapid aging. There, the Confucian ethic stresses intergenerational responsibility, and the political system prizes consensus over conflict. Italy, by contrast, “may be the world’s worst-case pension scenario.” Strong unions protect their (retired) members, while, as a result of low birthrates, people over 60 outnumber those under 20. The United States has the advantage of being

the youngest, demographically speaking, of the world’s rich countries. But it has the problem of a political system unable to say no to demands for disproportionate spending on the elderly.

One need not accept all of Peterson’s political judgments. To start with, fiscal health may be less important than individual rights, the very lack of which makes Japan so appealing to the author. In addition, Peterson seems naive about the capacities of government (he believes that regulators can prevent chicanery in a worker-controlled pension system), and he fails to recognize the symbolic importance Americans attach to Social Security despite its economic inefficiencies.

Still—despite skepticism about worst-case projections—I find Peterson’s factual conclusions persuasive. Americans someday may rue the fact that, back when the emerging problems were so clearly and compellingly described in *Gray Dawn*, they did not pay attention.

—Alan Wolfe

LUXURY FEVER:

Why Money Fails to Satisfy in an Era of Excess.

By Robert H. Frank.

Free Press. 336 pp. \$25

The townspeople of Ithaca, New York, once disdained each passing Porsche, according to Cornell University economist Frank, but now they view pricey cars with envy. Even the author is not immune: he acknowledges owning a BMW—purchased *used*, he stresses. Out of such insidious, competitive profligacy, Frank contends, grow myriad social ills, including bleak inner cities, neglected children, air pollution, potholes, and obesity.

In *Luxury Fever*, Frank amasses prodigious evidence of America’s wasteful ways. Since 1980, the market for fine wines has grown by 23 percent annually. The average size of new houses was 1,100 square feet in the 1950s; it’s 2,000 square feet today. (Bill Gates’s 45,000-square-foot palace especially offends Frank, who wishes the Microsoft founder would erect a smaller house and use the sav-

ings to subsidize mass transit.) And, the author notes, while the top earners accumulated ever-larger fortunes, median family income dropped two percentage points between 1990 and 1995. The rich have spent more on luxury items, but, contrary to the assumptions of laissez-faire economics, society as a whole has not benefited.

After lamenting the growing gap between rich and poor, an issue often raised by liberals, the author borrows the rhetoric of Darwinian analysis from conservatives to explain the acquisitive compulsion. Male deer through the generations have sprouted ever-larger antlers because, it appears, females find them alluring. Massive antlers thus help propagate the species, but they also make it difficult to navigate through thick forests. Conspicuous consumption, Frank contends, is the human equivalent of antlers. (He fails to note what may be a closer equivalent: cos-

metic surgery, which he derides elsewhere as wasteful.) To pay for larger homes and spiffier cars, Americans immerse themselves in debt, work through evenings and weekends, and, like the unwieldy bucks, find life increasingly difficult to navigate.

Frank proposes heavily taxing conspicuous consumption in order to encourage “inconspicuous consumption,” which would result in cleaner air, happier families, and longer vacations. But such measures, including a now-repealed tax on luxury boats, have failed in the past. More to the point, materialism, economic inequality, and environmental degradation have roots running deep in American history. The Vanderbilts lived opulently long before Bill Gates. *Luxury Fever* sets forth our spending patterns in rich detail, but fails to account for the traits of American character that underlie them.

—Richard Houston

Science & Technology

VIRTUAL REALISM.

By Michael Heim. Oxford Univ. Press. 264 pp. \$26

Technological disciplines have collective personalities. While the field of artificial intelligence (AI) is that former prodigy who has been bumped around but is still game, virtual reality (VR) is AI's sexier, younger, right-brain cousin, wilder, more sensuous, with a larger circle of admirers ranging from Pentagon warriors to neo-bohemians.

Heim is a philosopher determined to sort out what new technologies mean for enduring humanistic issues, beginning with *Electric Language* (1987), on the implications of word processing, and continuing with *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (1993). He presents *Virtual Realism* as an alternative

to debunking books by authors as varied as Clifford Stoll, Sven Birkerts, and Bill McKibben. Yet he also distances himself from those enthusiasts who foresee a posthuman cyborg destiny for our species.

From Heim's account, at least two main directions for virtual reality emerge. Operational telepresence is today's successor to the flight simulation technology familiar in military and civil aviation, in which a human interacts with electronic (and sometimes physical) representations of physical objects. Artificial telepresence is more abstract, a synthetic social space rather than the representation of an existing physical one. Fabricated personalities called avatars, directed by programs or by human participants, can interact in a world with properties unknown in



our universe. But artificial telepresence can also be used to design manufacturing systems that run in the physical world.

Heim gives some attention to helmet-mounted displays, the gloves, and other simulation apparatus most commonly identified with VR. But he notes the practical difficulties that have frustrated early recreational versions of these combat-born techniques, including nausea and disorientation in a significant number of users. He notes an alternative form of VR, the CAVE Automatic Visual Environment, that does not isolate the senses like (to use his metaphor) a falcon's hood. It is a 10-foot cube of display screens in which participants can interact with virtual objects. Originally designed for scientific visualization, it is now used by Detroit automotive designers as well as media artists.

Heim points to a VR that is not a replacement for nature or the social world, but merely an enhancement. He takes issue both with "naive realists" who fear VR as an opiate amid the devastation of the living planet and with the "network idealists" and "data idealists" who are indifferent as to the source of a sensory input.

Virtual reality emerges from this book as a genuinely gifted youngster with distinguished ancestors in the arts and sciences. Heim could have added that VR also has a strong religious heritage. From the 13th-century friar Roger Bacon to the architects of the Mormon Church, Western religious leaders have long sought rich sensory representations of invisible realities. Heim himself uses a theological metaphor when he writes that VR "does not imitate life but transubstantiates it."

AI has taken far longer than expected to live up to its promise. Is VR also destined to be an underachiever? Heim's rich sampling of its techniques convinces me that VR is indeed for real. But, as with so many other innovations, its most important achievements may be far different from what we project. *Virtual Realism* is a refreshingly thoughtful overview of the possibilities, and a welcome invitation to humanist critics to understand and guide them.

—Edward Tenner

**CHILDREN OF PROMETHEUS:
*The Accelerating Pace of
Human Evolution.***

By Christopher Wills. Perseus Books.
288 pp. \$25

With the recurrent political and religious assaults on "Darwinism," it remains worth arguing that humankind has evolved and is still evolving. *Children of Prometheus* advances the argument more effectively than most books, whether scholarly or popular. Wills, a professor of biology at the University of California, San Diego, makes a broad selection of recent findings genuinely accessible to general readers, including students. Technical parts of the argument—such as the presentation of balanced genetic polymorphism and the forces of natural selection sustaining it—read smoothly, betraying none of the labor that must have gone into the writing.

Moreover, Wills goes a crucial step further. He emphasizes and supports the claim that human evolution—real biological evolution, not just cultural change—is accelerating. Our species has been evolving quickly by ordinary standards (for example, those for other primates) and the pace is speeding up. Although only small differences in overall DNA composition separate us from our nearest relatives, the chimpanzees, those gene differences have produced huge structural and other phenotypic changes, enabling humans to outdistance the chimps since the two lineages separated. Much of the book is devoted to explaining the reasons and mechanisms for the acceleration.

Wills argues that the distinction between human biological and cultural evolution is a false one. The two are locked in a positive-feedback loop, whereby evolution of cognitive capacity (which at first had to be genetic) results in a greater ability to alter the environment. Those alterations produce powerful selective forces in favor of enlarged and novel cognitive capacities for coping with environmental stress. The enlarged capacities lead to further (sometimes destructive) changes in the environment. And so on. Meanwhile, migrations enlarge the gene pool of merged human (or hominid) populations. Thus, the supply of genetic variation—the raw material of evolution—increases as cultural change fuels environ-

mental change. A strength of the book is its exposition of this feedback loop.

Other elements are not so solidly established. The author makes a politically correct attempt to dismiss *Bell Curve*-style hereditarianism—which, given that Wills's whole argument rests on the biological bases of cognitive ability, seems rather unconvincing. Elsewhere, Wills gives the still-emerging story of Neanderthals the same billing, and its conjectures (which is what they are) the same weight, as much more secure findings. He waxes lyrical about the recent discovery, in a cave that was probably inhabited by Neanderthals, of a 50,000-year-old fragment of hollowed-out bone in which symmetrical holes appear to have been punched. Like others, he speculates that this object was a flute, hence that the Neanderthals had music, a conclusion that would significantly alter our view of their capacities and history. But of course the object might well *not* have been a flute. The extended chain of guesses that follows, interesting and even plausible as it is, ought to be more clearly identified as such.

Still, this is an authoritative antidote to the witless but trendy calumny that evolution, specifically “Darwinism,” is just a tired 19th-century idea, ripe for overthrowing.

—Paul R. Gross

***SURVIVAL OF THE PRETTIEST:
The Science of Beauty.***

By Nancy Etcoff. Doubleday. 325 pp.
\$23.95

In *The Beauty Myth* (1991), Naomi Wolf blamed our patriarchal culture for inculcating “competitive” and “hierarchical” notions of female attractiveness. If TV networks would hire 60-year-old women as news anchors, if fashion designers would use average-looking models, if actresses would refuse to tone their bodies for nude scenes (“as a gesture to women in the audience”)—then, Wolf maintained, our thinking would change.

Not so, according to Etcoff, a psychologist on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. She contends that humans' conceptions of beauty are genetically hard-wired. Three-month-old infants, uncorrupted by Wolf's cultural cues, stare longer at beautiful faces than at plain ones. Whereas earlier efforts to popularize evolutionary psychology, from

Desmond Morris's *Naked Ape* (1967) to Jared Diamond's *Why Is Sex Fun?* (1997), often erected elaborate analogies between human behavior and animal behavior, Etcoff concentrates on studies of humans' attitudes and mating rituals, with only the occasional animal analogy. Readers, it seems, no longer need to be convinced that evolution has shaped human eros.

In chatty if quote-heavy prose (featuring musings on beauty by Ovid, Baudelaire, Don King, Aaron Spelling, and countless others), the author argues that the ingredients of female beauty are mostly markers for fertility. Women with large and symmetrical breasts are more fertile, as are women with hourglass torsos (Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn, despite their divergent body types, had the same waist-to-hip ratio). Thick hair, large eyes and lips, and small chins signal youth and health, which contribute to fertility. Male attractiveness proves more complicated, perhaps because females are less visually obsessed than men when mate hunting. Whereas males admire hyperfeminized faces featuring larger-than-life lips and eyes, both sexes find hypermasculinized faces off-putting. Department store managers, in fact, sometimes complain that the more manly mannequins look like rapists. A beguiling male face carries a hint of femininity.

For both men and women, appearance carries far-reaching social consequences. We are more likely to come to the aid of the gorgeous, and less likely to trouble them with our own pleas for assistance. We accord them a larger personal space in conversation. We are more likely to give them high grades and good jobs, to acquiesce to them in arguments, and to acquit them in court. The beautiful, in turn, grow serenely accustomed to our kowtowing.

While acknowledging that evolutionary psychology doesn't solve every mystery of beauty, Etcoff says little about its limitations. In particular, she never tries to unravel the interaction between culturally defined markers and evolutionary cues. For instance, women on the higher socioeconomic rungs weigh more than average in developing countries, where ready access to food signals status, but less than average in developed countries, where, with food readily available,



The Judgment of Paris (c. 1632–1635), by Peter Paul Rubens

thinness signals “money and leisure time and obsessive focus.” Elsewhere, Etcoff notes that aggressively unattractive clothing or adornments can signal upper-crust status, for “only high-status individuals can afford the pleasure of not pleasing.” Are such markers amenable to change, perhaps even to *Beauty Myth*-style revolution? Etcoff never

says. She also leaves hanging the provocative and poignant assertion that “the penalty for ugliness might be even greater than the reward for beauty.” Still, she succeeds in engagingly charting the origins and the impacts of our undemocratic aristocracy of beauty.

—Stephen Bates

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FROM THE CENTER

My first few months as director of the Woodrow Wilson Center have left me even more deeply impressed than before by the excellence of its work. We have carved out an important niche—stepping back from events to take a longer view and put public issues in a broader context. As the *Weekly Standard* says, “The Wilson Center remains one of the few havens for disinterested scholarship in the country.” Now I want to build on our strengths and move the Center forward in several well-defined directions.

First, we will make the work of the Center more focused, by organizing the vast majority of our work around a few core themes. One will be *the U.S. role in the world*. Another will be *governance*—improving the ability of government to do its work well. We have a major study of changes in public attitudes toward government under way, and I want to pursue other questions: How can we increase civic participation? How can we attract top-notch people to government service?

We will focus on *long-term challenges* facing our country and the world. In March, for example, Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) and former CIA director James Woolsey came to the Center to present their proposal for increasing U.S. energy security in the next century. We will also pursue projects that reflect *the broad interests of Woodrow Wilson*, such as international institutions, multilateralism, reducing trade barriers, and government reform.

A final theme, continuing the Center’s strong efforts, involves *putting important policy questions into their broader historical, cultural context*. A leading example is our Cold War International History Project’s explorations of the legacy of the Cold War.

Second, we will make the work of the Center more visible. A new public affairs director, the Center’s first ever, will help make this possible.

Third, we will make the work of the Center more relevant. We must bring the Center’s work closer to some of our key constituencies,

such as Capitol Hill. During the NATO summit in April, when several dozen heads of state will gather in and around the Center’s home in the Ronald Reagan Building, we expect to host a variety of major events and bilateral meetings.

Fourth, we must expand some of our programs and activities. I want to see the Center sponsor research on Africa, expand its work on Canada and the Middle East, and enlarge its United States Studies program.

Fifth, we will make the Center the intellectual center of Washington. I am beginning a Director’s Forum, which will bring Nobel prize winners and other significant thinkers to speak at the Center and to meet members of the Washington community.

The Wilson Center has a unique role to play. Few Americans today have much confidence in our country’s political dialogue. Our debates over public affairs are degraded by unchecked assertions, a failure to separate fact from spin, and arguments heavy with innuendo. Talk shows and prime-time television magazines reduce our political discourse to entertainment. The challenges facing the United States demand thoughtful, in-depth discussion, with full exploration of the relevant knowledge, conducted in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect. That is the kind of dialogue we have at the Wilson Center.

As a recent report of the National Academy of Public Administration said, the Center “can transcend partisan perspectives and serve as a moderating force to bring different voices together.” Vice President Al Gore’s national security adviser recently told me, for example, that Wilson Center work helped shape U.S. policy in formal negotiations with China on environmental issues.

The Wilson Center can make a difference. In the months and years ahead, it will be our mission to increase the influence and recognition of this institution, a unique presidential monument in a city of monuments.

Lee H. Hamilton
Director



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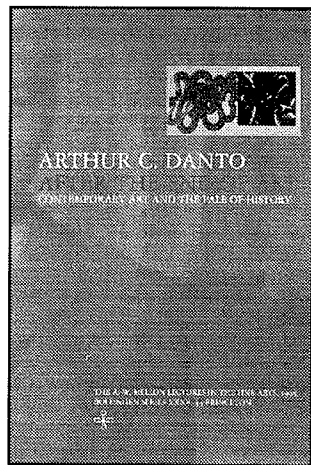
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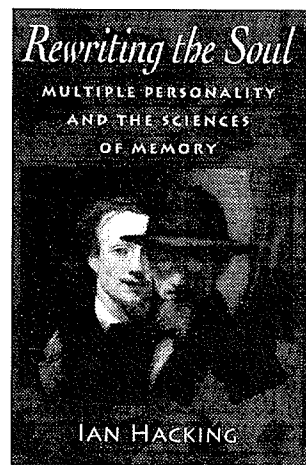
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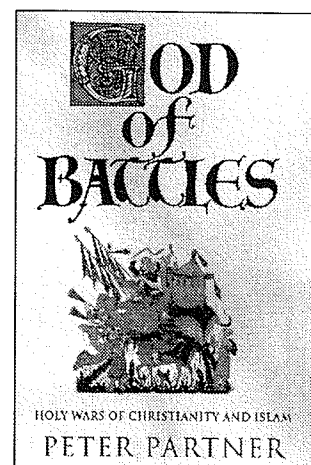
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