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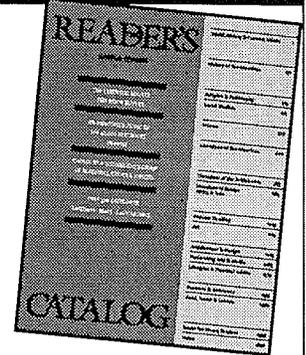
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

The feeling that American politics is badly broken—and broken because of the nefarious influence of money—goes back at least to the demagogic rhetoric of the seventh U.S. president, Andrew Jackson, though the sentiment was abroad in various, inchoate forms even before. More disturbing, perhaps, is that efforts to fix the problem, beginning with Jackson's, have often had the effect of making things worse—or at least making them bad in a different way. As Gil Troy explains in this issue's cover story, crusades and reforms intended to cleanse the political process have only inspired politicians and those who would influence them to develop more imaginative ways of raising and contributing money.

Is Troy's point, then, a counsel of despair? Not at all. For one thing, it should challenge the cynical conclusion that ours is a particularly corrupt age. For another, Troy's long perspective should help us see that the connection between money and politics, while unbreakable, undergoes continual change, reflecting large shifts in economy, culture, and society. Understanding those changes may be the wisest step toward limiting the worst abuses of the money-and-politics nexus.

The most recent wrinkle in the story—though not unheard of in the past—is the alleged injection of foreign money into campaign politics, a possibility much explored in relation to President Clinton's campaign finances. Whatever is finally proved, current investigations raise an important question: in the age of international business and global corporations, should we distinguish between foreign and domestic attempts to influence political outcomes? Would we be better off if the former were legalized and brought into the open? There are no easy answers. But Troy's cautionary tale suggests that democracy is a delicate machine, better maintained by vigilance and occasional modifications than by major overhauls.

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SUMMER 1997

THE WILSON QUARTERLY

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by Gil Troy

Would Abe Lincoln have raised an eyebrow over Bill Clinton's guest list for the Lincoln bedroom? Probably not. Long ago, "Honest Abe" had his men generously sprinkle "material aid" among voters in New York. The author chronicles the colorful history of money and politics in America, showing that citizens' attitudes have changed more than political realities.

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by William McPherson

A royal wedding in Switzerland and a funeral in Bucharest are among the stops on the author's search for clues to Romania's remaking after the overthrow of communist strongman Nicolae Ceaucescu.

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by J. B. Jackson

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COVER

Detail from an 1890 Joseph Keppler cartoon: *None But Millionaires Need Apply—The Coming Style of Presidential Elections* (originally printed in *Puck*). Design by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden.

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

CORRESPONDENCE

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Victoriana

Your Spring '97 cover illustration is identified as a painting from about 1873, hence "Victorian." Readers, however, may well wonder what is going on in the picture, or why it shows those oddly dressed boys, who are *not* in Victorian garb.

In fact, they are boys from Christ's Hospital School, which was founded in 1553 by Edward VI as a "hospice" (place of refuge of sorts) for "poor children of Christ." It is still going strong in Horsham, Sussex, where it moved some decades ago. And the boys there still wear these uniforms, designed in part as functional outfits worn by all, requiring little change, and therefore making all seem alike. (The school now takes in girls, too.) In short, it is now—and long has been—a well-known English "public" school, and a good one academically. Its religious roots, like those of most such schools, are weak, though when I went there, on an English Speaking Union exchange scholarship during 1952–53, there was still daily chapel and, twice on Sundays, Church of England masses. Coleridge went there, as did Charles Lamb.

James T. Patterson
Brown University,
Department of History
Providence, R.I.

It would be churlish to criticize the splendid article by David Gilmour ["The Ends of Empire," *WQ*, Spring '97], for he has successfully covered a vast subject succinctly, but I hope no offense will be taken at some friendly disagreement.

The "deterioration in relations between British and Indians" was not the inevitable result of James Mill's six-volume history of British India. But that is a matter of opinion. What brings me to write is Gilmour's omission of the bloody consequences of Britain's withdrawal from India in 1947.

Gilmour was, of course, discussing the withdrawal in the context of British-India relations, and, true, there was little violence directed against the British, but, as he well knows, the result of this peaceful withdrawal was the greatest deliberate mass slaughter of innocents since World War II, as Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus fell upon one another in the Punjab. It was a slaughter that the British tried and failed miserably to prevent.

Although they marched out peacefully with flags flying to the cheering of the populace, the British must share the blame for the tragedy that followed. If inner-city street gangs were openly poised to slaughter each other, and yet the police "withdrew peacefully," would this be cause for congratulation? I would think not.

Gilmour rightly points out some of the happier legacies of the Raj that remain in India. I would make a modest addition: marmalade. Not only in India but throughout the world, if there is marmalade for breakfast, here Britannia once ruled.

Byron Farwell
Hillsboro, Va.

On Buddhism

The articles by two respected scholars of Buddhism ["Why Buddhism Baffles the West," *WQ*, Spring '97] were of great interest. The first, by Jan Nattier, described some of the routes by which Buddhism has come to America, naming three categories: import Buddhism (brought by American enthusiasts), export Buddhism (brought by Asian missionaries), and baggage Buddhism (brought by Asian immigrants). Like so many typologies used to describe religions, however, this one is called into question by historical evidence. For example, much of Zen practice in the United States, which Nattier



describes as “import Buddhism,” derives from Zen teachers (Japanese, Chinese, and Korean) who have come as missionaries and thus fit the category of “export Buddhism” either on their own or through the sponsorship of a home institution. The famous Japanese teacher Shunryu Suzuki came to the United States to serve a Japanese immigrant community (hence “baggage Buddhism”). Indeed, in many cases of Zen, Tibetan, and Southeast Asian Buddhism, teachers brought to America to serve the ritual needs of an immigrant community are lured away to teach “white” Buddhists how to meditate. Recent interest in Tibetan Buddhism has spawned a phenomenon that seems to fall into none of Nattier’s categories. This is the identification of American children as the reincarnation of great Tibetan lamas. (In a case of life imitating art, a Seattle boy was recently so identified, just as in the film *The Little Buddha*.) Here, Westerners become quite literally incorporated into a global Tibetan Buddhist community.

Professor Swearer’s survey of the history of Buddhism achieves what many scholars attempt but few achieve. It is a clear, concise, and historically accurate description of a long and complex tradition. My only quibble (apart from omitting Tibet from the list of Buddhist nations that did not come under European colonial domination in the 19th century) is with his suggestion that “engaged Buddhism” derives from traditional Buddhist principles. When the Dalai Lama speaks about non-violence, he is far more likely to cite Gandhi or Martin Luther King than he is to cite a Buddhist text.

Donald S. Lopez, Jr.
Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies
University of Michigan

Why does good medicine—honestly applied and based on true principles of the Mystic Law—work by itself? Is it because Buddhism is reason and does not primarily concern itself with frivolous, secular principles of reward and punishment, such as those engendered by trifling notions of ethnocentrism, materialism, and elitism? Why are evidently uninitiated, self-seeking “scholars” and others wrapped up in speculation about

fanciful media pictures of Buddhism, petty demographics, book sales, and the fate of predecessors? Buddhism says the sages know the three existences of life—past, present, and future. Sages affirm that Buddhism of limitless joy will invariably spread according to the time, the people’s capacity, and honest aspirations to enlightenment.

Maurice Daniel
Havelock, N.C.

Thank you for bringing some careful analysis to the current Buddhist frenzy in the United States. Virtually every form of Buddhism has taken root here, and while Hollywood and Madison Avenue seem hell-bent on banalizing the Buddha Dharma for profit, Buddhists of all stripes are getting down to the serious business of meditation, chanting, and compassionate engagement with social suffering. Only time will tell which Buddhist hybrids will flower in American soil.

Stephen Prothero
Assistant Professor
Department of Religion
Boston University

Chair Views

In his fascinating discourse on “How the Chair Conquered the World” [WQ, Spring ’97], Edward Tenner claims that the Chinese characters for “chair” mean “barbarian bed.” Perhaps he is speaking of the characters used in times past or an old expression. The current term in Mandarin, *yi zi*, employs two characters that stand for the spoken word rather than make a pictorial representation. The word for *seat*, however, is a picture (see illustration, below).

Monty Vierra
Chutung, Taiwan



*From Fun with Chinese Characters (1980),
by William McNaughton*

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Classical Quotation

I have always enjoyed the description of jazz as "America's classical music," which was quoted in the introduction to Clive Davis's article in the Spring '97 issue. It wasn't until recently, though, that I ran across the originator of the concept. Surprisingly, the source was not a jazz critic or musician but Ray Manzarek, the keyboard player for the rock band The Doors. He is credited by the late jazz critic Ralph J. Gleason in his book, *Celebrating Duke*.

Robert G. Gremley
Chicago, Ill.

Deep Frost

In his review of *Homage to Robert Frost*, by Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Walcott [WQ, Autumn '96, p. 97], Hugh Eakin passes on in sharpened form an allegation of racism in Walcott's essay. In quoting Frost's comments concerning the selection of the cast for an opera Gertrude Stein had written, the reviewer has Robert Frost saying, "Negroes were chosen to sing . . . because they have less need than white men to know what they are talking about." While refraining from expressing his own view of this manifestly racist statement, the reviewer goes on to convey Walcott's conclusion that although Frost's comment can diminish "delight" in his poetry, it would be a mistake to allow Frost's "prejudices" to compromise our appreciation of the poet "in his own terms."

Upon reading *Homage to Robert Frost*, I found a troublesome discrepancy between the reviewer's quotation of Frost and Walcott's. In Walcott's essay, Frost is quoted this way: "I read that negroes were chosen to sing her opera because they have less need than white men to know what they are talking about."

To raise a small question about the practice of quotation, why were ellipses indicating the omission of significant words not used at the beginning of the reviewer's quotation, while they were used further on when other words were omitted? More substantively, while the omission of the words in question makes the quotation unequivocally racist, their inclusion renders it ambiguous. Is Frost reporting the views of others, or is he telling us about himself?

Whatever we may conclude concerning the discrepancy between author and review-

er, both clearly agree that Robert Frost exhibits racial bias. Yet the matter does not seem so clear.

To resolve the question, one must turn to the primary source—a letter written by Frost to his daughter Lesley in 1934, in which he counsels her concerning a talk on contemporary poetry that she was to give. The letter appears in *Family Letters of Robert and Elinor Frost* (1972), edited by Arnold Grade. In his comments, which mostly concern the Imagist poets, Frost refers to numerous writers, giving characteristically pungent opinions of their work. He writes: “I suppose Gertrude Stein has come in confluently to encourage the intimators or innuendot. A little of her is fun, but goes a long way. I read that negroes were chosen to sing her opera because they have less need than white men to know what they are talking about. That is a thing that can be reported without malice.”

What have we here? Certainly not Robert Frost’s racial views. Rather, the reference to the opera is a comment on Gertrude Stein. “A little of her is fun, but goes a long way,” he says, and then clarifies his meaning by reporting something he had read about her work. Reading Frost in context, it would be gratuitous to interpret the reference to “negroes” as an interjection of his racial views.

Why this misrepresentation of what Frost wrote? Derek Walcott gives some hint of prior inclination by prefacing his reference to Frost’s alleged bias with his opinion that “it is inevitable that we come across this sort of thing.”

Robert Frost was no egalitarian, and he was brilliant in using the deep biases that divide peoples as vehicles for probing the nether side of human potential. See “The Vanishing Red” as a frightening example. Those who would criticize have an obligation to hold themselves to the same standards by which they judge others.

Emery W. Flavin
New Paltz, N.Y.

Taking Issue

It is disturbing to note in Allen Becker’s letter in the Spring ’97 issue of *WQ* an error so trivial that it barely deserves to be called innumeracy, and should perhaps be assigned to failure to use an encyclopedia. I am referring to his calculation that equates a \$21 billion loss to \$8.40 per American. Standard usage in the United

States considers “one billion” to be a thousand millions. Simple third-grade arithmetic (long division) then yields a population for the United States of 2.5 billion, too large by a factor of 10.

Perhaps this is just a quibble, but it seems to me to be indicative of a larger problem in society as a whole, namely, the inability of most people to look at anything involving numbers and assess whether the order of magnitude is correct. It would appear that many citizens understand that a million is a large number, a billion somewhat larger, and a trillion unimaginably large, even though we measure our economic activity in terms of trillions of dollars annually.

Perhaps if you keep in mind that a thousand seconds is about 16½ minutes, a million seconds is about 11½ days, a billion seconds is about 31½ years, and a trillion seconds is more than 31,000 years the relative magnitudes of these numbers will have more meaning for you.

That such a simple error should escape proofreading without a gloss does not speak well for scholarship at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Jonathan Stafford
Eugene, Oregon

The caption to the illustration of your review of Timothy Ryback’s article in “The Periodical Observer” [Spring ’97, p. 141] referred to “Nazi troops” marching into the Sudetenland. Using the term *Nazi* to describe members of the German army is a hangover of World War II—era propaganda. The Nazis were a political party that came to power in 1933; their membership never exceeded 10 percent of the German population.

Some of the soldiers in the picture may have been Nazis, and many or most may have supported Hitler or voted for him, but they are not “Nazi troops.” No one would describe the American army in World War II as “Democratic troops” or our forces in the Gulf war as “Republican troops.” They were Americans, and the men in the picture were German soldiers. This is not to minimize their crimes; the German army participated in many of Hitler’s atrocities.

Hank Coiner
Miami, Okla.

FINDINGS

PORN STUDIES: Academia seems more and more like the world of rock music, where every new generation is compelled to come up with something more outrageous than the one before. A few years ago, it was Catharine MacKinnon, now a professor at the University of Michigan Law School, arguing on feminist grounds for a zero-tolerance approach to pornography, or at least pornography involving the “subordination of women.” Now another small band of academic feminists is going to the opposite extreme. For them, reports M. G. Lord in *Lingua Franca* (Apr.–May 1997), pornography “is an unruly force that promises to unsettle social conventions, and studying it is a radical political act.” Or, even better, you can *create* your own pornography, as art history professor Joanna Frueh of the University of Nevada does. She’s the author of *Erotic Faculties* (1996). At the University of California at Irvine, professor Linda Williams has penned a little masterpiece comparing *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*, a hard-core flick, to *Pygmalion*. At Northwestern University, there’s professor Laura Kipnis, who’s carved out a niche that might be called *Hustler* studies. She serves up sophisticated interpretations of the porn magazine and its proprietor, Larry Flynt, whom she sees as a figure of “Rabelaisian transgression.” Kipnis is disgusted that Flynt sold out to the Hollywood filmmakers who created *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. It’s “exactly this sort of nauseating national self-idealization” she thought Flynt was against, she wrote last year. Doesn’t anybody have any standards anymore?



Joanna Frueh

SINGING ALONE: The “bowling alone” saga continues. That’s the one in which a Harvard professor parlays an arti-

cle about the decline of American civic groups into a truly significant six-figure book advance on the strength of a snappy allusion to the decline of bowling leagues. Like all social scientists, bowling maven Robert Putnam owes a large intellectual debt to the great German sociologist Max Weber, one of the founding fathers of the social sciences. But now it appears he may also owe Weber a small finder’s fee. In an article on civil society in Germany (see our report on page 128), political scientist Sheri Berman uncovers a 73-year-old tip from Weber. Back in 1924, he urged his colleagues to study Germany’s strong civil society, “starting with the bowling club . . . and continuing to the political party or the religious, artistic or literary sect.” Weber also expressed an interest in choral groups. Hark, is that a sequel we hear?

NOSTALGIE DU GULAG: During the long struggle against apartheid, the South African novelist and Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer was a frequently heard voice of moral authority in the *New York Review of Books* and other mainstream American publications. In May, the *New York Times* carved out a big space on its op-ed page, where she excoriated the military government of Nigeria for murdering dissidents and harassing the press. So it is something of a shock to read her in the much-less-traveled pages of *Transition* (Fall 1996), a journal edited by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., tearfully recalling the glories of that lost beacon of liberty, the Soviet Union. Gordimer writes that the victory over apartheid came “at a time when a new miracle is yearningly needed to compensate for the failure of the miracle the first quarter of the century promised—now a fallen star, the red star, flickered out.”

Later in her essay, Gordimer writes: “The depth of the sense of abandonment, now, not only among those who were communists but among all of us for whom the ideals of socialism remain—though these have been betrayed and desecrated in many countries—it is this sense of *abandonment*

that the collapse of the Soviet Union brings to our century, rather than the disillusion the West would triumphantly claim.”

AND BRING BACK APARTHEID TOO: Writing in our Winter '97 issue, Peter Skerry of the Brookings Institution explored the strange politics of affirmative action, under which people receive benefits for belonging to groups of which they are not formal members and to which they owe no fealty. Just figuring out who is a member of a favored group can be a problem. As Christopher A. Ford points out in *California Law Review* (vol. 82:1231), a society that grants valuable benefits on the basis of racial or ethnic-group membership can't afford to be casual about the terms of membership. Most of the methods used by the federal government have serious flaws. “Visual surveys” are unreliable. “Self-identification” can touch people’s sensitivities, and can also be inaccurate. Birth certificates? The National Center for Health Statistics has struggled for years to devise guidelines for filling them out. Currently, it requires that babies be identified as members of the same race as their mothers. Only it’s not so simple, Ford points out. For example, “a Black woman’s female progeny would remain Black for indefinite generations even should they marry Whites.” But if one of her sons married a white woman, their children would be white.

What to do? Diligently, Ford searches the world for guidance. His conclusion:

Of all the systems we have examined, only India, South Africa, and a handful of the old Jim Crow jurisdictions confront the dilemmas of classification with relative honesty. True, the latter two undertook such efforts for the purpose of inflicting harm rather than doing good, yet all three at least faced up to the necessity of drawing lines. It would be ironic indeed if for the intelligible administration of modern anti-discrimination law we borrowed our models of procedural rectitude in part from our own segregationist past or from the apartheid state of South Africa. However, if we are to administer a race-conscious public policy, we have to understand that categorization requires method.

THE MEDIEVALIST MINORITY: Meanwhile, group politics is also causing discomfort over at *PMLA*, the flagship journal of the unfailingly progressive Modern Language Association (MLA). In 1980, the prestigious journal of literary studies switched to a policy of author-anonymous reviewing in order to ensure that women and minorities get a fair shot at publishing in its pages. But the policy has been controversial.

Most “surprising and troubling,” writes editor Domna C. Stanton in the March 1997 issue, “has been criticism from some scholars of color, who note that the special-topic issue on African and African American literature (Jan. 1990) did not contain a single essay by an African or African American, except for the introduction by the coordinator. . . . As one scholar of color put it, ‘Author-anonymous reviewing represents equal opportunity, but we need a process that embodies the principles of affirmative action.’”

Should slots be set aside for the underrepresented? Stanton doesn’t think so. “How would the underrepresentation be determined? How would the claim of different constituencies—for example, Native Americans, medievalists, specialists in nineteenth-century Italy, and African Americans, all of whom could be said to be underrepresented in *PMLA*—be adjudicated? And most difficult of all, who has the right to say ‘we’ in sentences like the one quoted? Who is authorized to speak (or write) as a member of a particular constituency. . . ?”

A good question, and one that coordinators of future special-topic issues will now have to confront. The MLA recently approved Stanton’s proposal to allow them to commission two essays per issue from known authors.

PLANET FOR RENT: In *Nature* (May 15, 1997), a team of scientists reports the results of what is apparently the first calculation of the market value of planet Earth’s ecological systems and natural resources. In round numbers, it’s \$33 trillion annually. For those who prefer to rent, that works out to \$2.75 trillion per month. The total global national product is \$18 trillion.

AT ISSUE

Absolutely

The weatherman on one of the national morning TV shows has left his home base, and safety, in New York to be in Boston for the annual running of the marathon. Chatting with his distant anchored colleagues, he remarks amiably that the race will bring the runners close to the course of Paul Revere's run. Then: "I guess you could call Paul Revere the first marathoner." Well, yes, you could call Paul Revere an astronaut or the Messiah. You could say he beat Columbus to America and made the Louisiana Purchase (a dozen beignets to go) with a credit card. But should you?

We are told that Americans no longer know much history, and we shrug the warning off, despite the giddy public moments that put Paul Revere in Nikes. The past used to be, in novelist L. P. Hartley's memorable phrase, a foreign country, where they do things differently. It's withdrawing now to the distance of a separate galaxy. Increasingly, Americans do not recognize the persistence of the past—in the small history they make and the large events they observe. The past is never prelude; it's all coda. So events occur, ordinary and bizarre, with no adequate context for judging their significance. Behind the events of a day, however, there is the immense encroaching roominess of history. And we cheat ourselves when we fail to set the dimensions of our lives against that defining space and stretch our minds in its expanse.

"Lunacy" was a common judgment on the behavior of the 39 individuals who shared suicides in a San Diego mansion this past spring. But the judgment was etymologically flawed. The group who sought the key to heaven's gate aspired to a location way past the moon, and they were drawn not by the pull of the planets but by an old idea. They died in southern California, a

place, we are told, where the soil does not take traditions. Yet their resolute "no" to this physical world echoes back through millennia. It has been whispered sometimes, and sometimes, as in San Diego, shouted. The belief that the world needs escaping, that the body is vile, in each of the word's several senses—wretched, wicked, of little worth—and that secret codes, open to the initiate, contain salvation recurs in the history of civilizations, pitched to varying degrees of intensity.

Allow the San Diego 39 a larger history and an ancestry. In the second century A.D., Gnostic separatists began to set themselves up in opposition to the Christian

Church. Gnosticism picked its creed from a smorgasbord of beliefs—Christianity, Platonism, Judaism, Stoicism, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism—but the essence was a promise of salvation through access to

secret knowledge. The movement's fundamental rejection of the material for the spiritual, its challenge to the goodness of creation and the freedom of man, its embrace of asceticism, and, most of all, its insistence on a higher doctrine, hidden from the many but revealed to the few, are recognizable still in a cul-de-sac in contemporary California.

The Gnostic spark burned on in third-century Manichaeism, a religion named for its Persian founder, Mani. Mani believed he was the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus, and his missionary's zeal sent him to India and China before his beliefs got him flayed alive in Persia in A.D. 276. In Manichaeism an uncompromising dualistic myth—rigidly differentiated principles of good and evil, God and nature, light and darkness—once again became the basis for a structure of belief and an ethic of asceticism. The forces of darkness were in cosmic struggle with the light; by invading the realm of

WQ

light, darkness mingled good and evil and trapped a divine substance in matter. Only the elect—those in the know—could disentangle their souls and participate in redemption.

Roman emperors proscribed Manichaeism as a subversive foreign cult, but it spread rapidly in the West. Was the absolutism of the religion its appeal? Augustine himself was a believer for a time, before he settled on Catholicism. (Despite his fierce polemical stance against Manichees and Gnostics, he never fully shed his unease with matter and flesh.) Manichaeism's formal life as a Christian heresy lasted many centuries, and its absolutist tenor was picked up by numerous post-Reformation sects, including the Puritans. Indeed, its deep suspicion of the world and the physical lingers still. Jump the centuries, blur the name, adjust the details, and you can see its vestiges even in savvy, loose, compliant America. Our Manichaeism may not know its name or have a catechism, but it is about the same feeling of election and the enduring human need for certainty in a burdensome, flawed, and improperly valued physical world.

The temptation to absolutism and to the reassurance of answers that exclude “however” may recur precisely when standards are relaxed and judgment is mostly reserved, as it is in America today. Asked to choose between a society that offers either a leap into the pudding of “whatever” or a hard landing against the stone of injunction, most Americans will leap in a second. But not all. Some will dislodge the stone and use it as a weapon. Absolutism is the border state adjacent to freedom. The border is open, the landscape ordered and inviting. It promises relief from the intricate responsibilities of democracy.

We imagine we have outgrown the humbling superstitions of the past and the compulsion to draw up sides for mortal stakes. Our tolerance is our talisman, and “We Can Work It Out” an anthem for the age. The mind holds no more recesses than a balloon. To all our troubles there is a simple arc, and we are urged to trace it smartly, so that we can “let the healing process begin” and, yes, “reach closure.” (If only Closure were a town in the Yukon,

to which everyone who used the word—the critic, the broker, the hooker—could be banished.) The Valley girl's impatience is our rough wisdom: “Get over it, Lear!”

So where is our Manichaeism? Is it in anxiety over some cosmic upheaval coinciding with the arbitrary assignment of a millennium? Well, we are promised chaos when the clock strikes zero, but it will be a clean apocalypse, done with a click and a whirl—no astral confusion or riven earth, no Messiah come in glory to part sheep from goats. Our computers will simply refuse to recognize the millennial turn and retreat in their obdurate mechanical course to 100 years ago, thereby giving us the chance for another go at the 20th century, the rehearsal having been a shambles. The consequence of the machines' refusal will be a confusion as absolute as any in a roiling, traditional hell. The servant systems by which we keep track of ourselves will lose their bearings, and take all our bearings with them.

Neither superstition nor millennial fervor defines our Manichaeism. Its expressions are social and civic and revealed in our successive absolutisms—in yesterday's attempt to impose Prohibition on the country; in today's division between those who insist abortion is murder and those who say it's a procedure; in the wounding invocation of racial identity as a form of election. The current divisions of our politicians do not warrant mention because they are comic, not cosmic—the antagonists reel from pulled punches—but our wars of religion do. These are different from the bloody engagements of previous centuries. We do not send armies of hostile believers out onto a battlefield. Rather, the very notion of religious belief contends with the insistence that religion can have no place in the public discourse of a civil society, that its specific values have nothing to add.

Our absolutisms attach themselves to the serious and the trivial, and sometimes conflate the two. Who has not witnessed the over-the-top indignation of individuals who smell tobacco smoke in a smoke-free zone and react as if they had inhaled nuclear waste? The fury of these Savona-

rolas of second-hand risk can be absolute. Of course, the outrage is in the service of saving the nation's children, about whom Americans can be hopelessly—and opportunistically—sentimental when they want to compel attention. The true protectors of the young are those who also advise them that our culture of accumulation will ravage their spirits as dependably as nicotine reduces their bodies.

And there's a Manichaean divide to our contemporary ambivalence about the body. Some treat it as a pincushion; "scarification" is a service available by appointment, like having your tires rotated. Slick pages show the concaved bodies of the young, looking heroin-hollowed and so diminished they should be attached to hospital tubing and infused for days with glucose. The willed contempt of these transparent young things for their mortal selves, however absolute it may appear, does not match the scorn we should reserve for those who profit by their display.

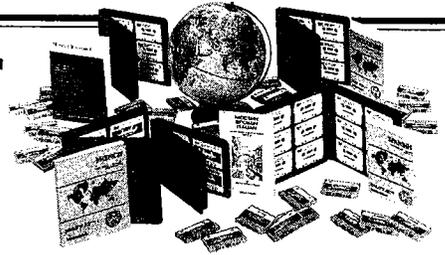
Another portion of the society fusses with the body as if it were upscale Play-Doh. Their compulsion to remake the body and find the escape hatch from its time-bombed mortality—to suck it thin and polymer it perfect, to fall and fall again on the laser's edge—seems finally just another form of contempt. But, then, the irksomeness of the flesh has confounded even mighty religions. Catholicism, for one, blows hot and cold on the body (and chilly more often than

not), though, in fact, its beliefs are centrally informed by an incarnational strain: God's son took a body and raised it from the dead to signal the worth of the physical; the world will end with universal resurrection and the harmony of flesh and spirit. The trick is to assign to each its just value until then and keep the two in line, despite a sense that they are sometimes as mismatched as tiger and prey.

The old Greeks knew the dangers of excess, and one of the purposes of tragedy was to display the risk—and the thrill. But ordinary life, outside the theater, was to be lived back from the edges, on a middle way that is rarely the most scenic route through this compromised world. There will always be those who opt for the extremes, and they can be heroes, or martyrs, or fools. The self-absorption of any elect—secular, religious, cultural—will not serve the communal needs of the society, and that is perhaps the fundamental criticism to be made of it. The cowardice of rejecting the world does not match the achieved heroism of reasoned accommodation. Behind the comet that ran interference between the irrevocable act of 39 souls in California and their salvation was a deeper gulf than they ever expected to cross. They are not the first to have been blinded by a light, and perhaps history lends their sorry deaths a little grace. The higher course is still to linger right here, in the flesh, in the pudding, in the stew.

—James M. Morris

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MONEY AND POLITICS

The Oldest Connection

Campaign finance reform! Campaign finance reform! the high-minded crickets are chirping these days—and not for the first time.

Some reforms may well be needed, but before they are made, a close look at the lasting relationship between greenbacks and politics, and at the history of attempts to alter it, is very much in order. Our author obliges.

by Gil Troy

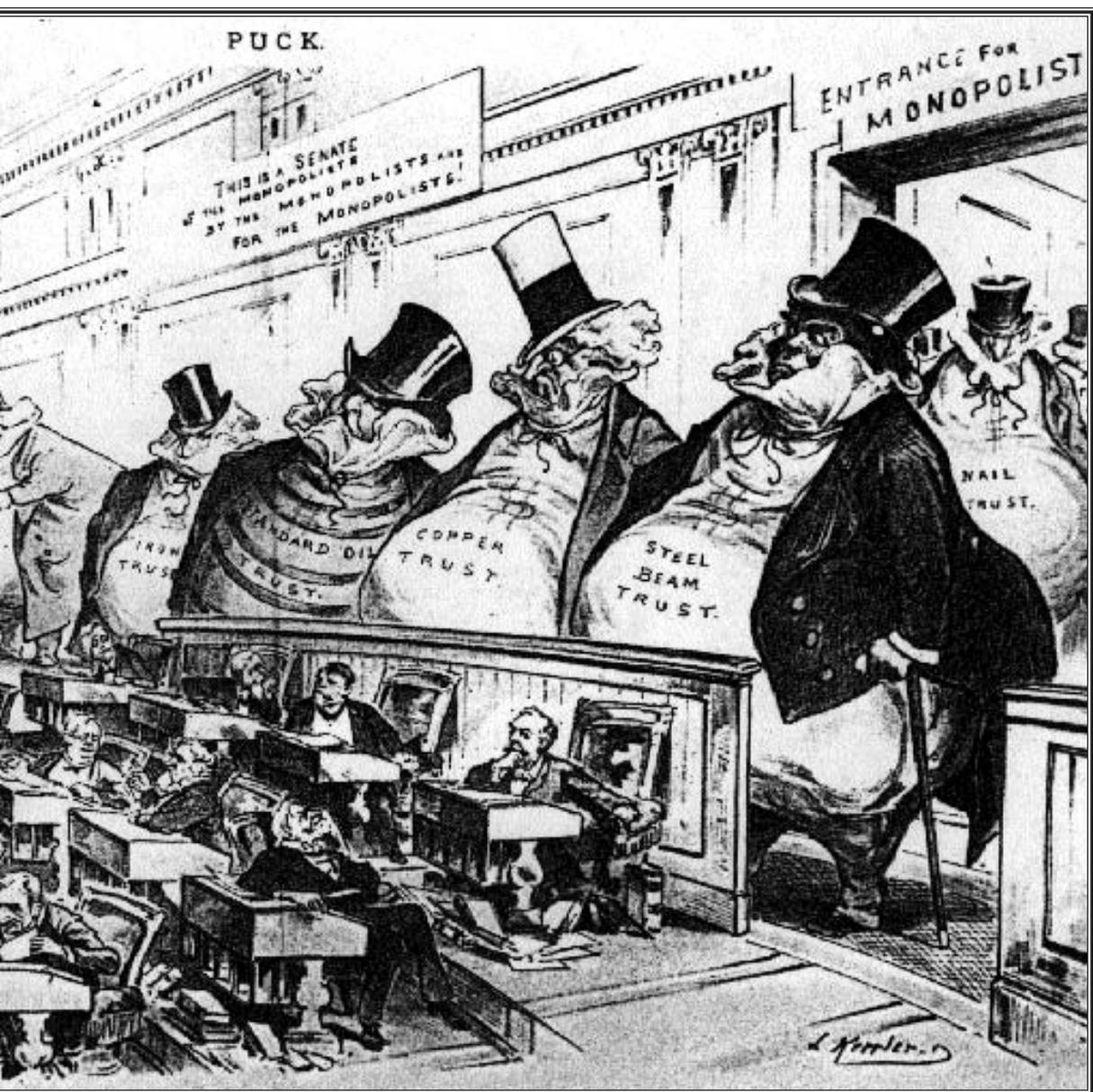
The story of the president prostituting himself and his office to secure re-election seems all too familiar.

During the campaign, reports came from all over the country that his men “were paying out money like water” to bring about the desired result. “All has been done that *can* be done here,” a crony in New York assured the chief executive shortly before the election. “Every Ward—here [in Manhattan] and in Brooklyn—and every Election District, is abundantly supplied with

‘material aid.’” To justify their efforts, the president and his men denounced their rivals’ “aristocratic party,” filled with “millionaires.”

The spectacle is not only familiar; it is venerable. The president who sank so low was America’s sainted Abraham Lincoln, seeking re-election in 1864. His Republican supporters claimed to represent “the hard-handed people” against the Democrats’ “plantation and bank paper aristocracy . . . who in case of success would gather five times the amount [contributed] out of the public chest.”





THE BOSSES OF THE SENATE read the original caption on this 1889 cartoon. All the moneyed interests are well represented, but “the people” are excluded.

As that mid-19th-century case of presidential politics-as-usual suggests, the Clintons’ Lincoln bedroom farce—even with the related whiff of suspicion about foreign contributions—simply does not measure up, at least so far, to America’s great money-and-politics scandals. It pales, for instance, beside the *Crédit Mobilier* stock-for-influence swap of the 1870s, which ruined Vice President Schuyler Colfax and may have cost Speaker of the House James G. Blaine the presidency. Assuming that President Clinton and his associates did not

exchange a foreign policy quid for a monetary quo from China or foreign interests, then the fact that hundreds of people paid the modern equivalent of a king’s ransom to be able to brag that they had coffee with the first couple or stayed overnight in the White House seems almost the very picture of innocence. Certainly, it would fail to measure up to the nefarious doings of the Tweed Ring of New York City’s Tammany Hall, or to the Teapot Dome oil lease frauds during President Warren Harding’s administration, or to the routine corruption of

Governor Huey “Kingfish” Long’s Louisiana dictatorship.

In the United States of America—and everywhere else—politics is about power, and money is a form of power. Despite the best efforts of reformers, past, present, and future, it is impossible to remove all influence of money in politics. Running for elected office costs money, and it must be raised somehow. And as former senator Russell Long (Huey’s son) once observed, “The distinction between a large campaign contribution and a bribe is almost a hair-line’s difference.”

As realists, Americans have generally tolerated this state of affairs, knowing there is not much they can do about it anyway. Politicians have tried to distinguish between “bribes” and “campaign contributions,” and even (with George Washington Plunkitt, a pol associated with Tammany Hall early in this century) between illegal graft and “honest graft.” Americans, perhaps more often than not, have averted their eyes from the whole messy business. This permits them, if they wish—and many do, for there is a romantic strain in American thought—to treat politics as an exercise in democratic idealism rather than a struggle over power. Thus, every so often, when the inevitable money-and-politics scandal erupts, a sense of injured innocence causes the scandal to be blown out of proportion. The illusion that politics can be cleansed of money, that such scandals are mere aberrations, generates loud cries for reform. Sometimes, reforms are made; sometimes, they make a difference; sometimes, the difference is for the better. But not always.

President Andrew Jackson well understood that money is power. Indeed, during the 1830s, while fighting the supposedly “monstrous” Second Bank of the United States, he uttered those very words—“Money is power”—

in a tone of thundering outrage. “Old Hickory,” the hero of the War of 1812, recognized an enduring truth: often, the only thing more profitable than selling your office is railing against the terrible malefactors trying to buy it.

From colonial days to our own, the saga of money in American politics reveals at least as much about Americans’ ambivalent attitudes toward money and politics as it does about the relative purity, or corruption, of the republic at any given time. Whether in the more aristocratic colonial and early republican periods or in the populist epoch that began in 1828 with Jackson’s election to the presidency, currying the people’s favor has always been costly. In colonial Virginia, candidates’ agents “swill[ed] the planters with bumbo” (a potent mix of rum, water, sugar, and nutmeg), among many other treats. George Washington spent about £25 apiece on two elections for the House of Burgesses, £39 on another, and nearly £50 on a fourth, which was many times the going price for a house or a plot of land. Washington’s electioneering expenses included the usual rum punch, cookies, and ginger cakes, money for the poll watcher who recorded the votes, even one election-eve ball complete with fiddler.

James Madison considered “the corrupting influence of spiritous liquors and other treats . . . inconsistent with the purity of moral and republican principles.” But Virginians, the future president discovered, did not want “a more chaste mode of conducting elections.” Putting him down as prideful and cheap, the voters rejected his candidacy for the Virginia House of Delegates in 1777. Leaders were supposed to be generous gentlemen.

Madison’s attempt at purity, though futile, signified the changing ideological climate. The revolution and the new nation, historians in recent decades have

> GIL TROY, a professor of history at McGill University, is a native of Queens, New York. He is the author of *Affairs of State: The Rise and Rejection of the Presidential Couple since World War II* (1997) and *See How They Ran: The Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate* (rev. ed., 1996). Copyright © 1997 by Gil Troy.



In this mock-memorial to “Our Civil Service as It Was,” cartoonist Thomas Nast, a Republican, warned voters in 1877 what the party of Andrew Jackson would do if returned to power.

held, were rooted in republican ideology, a complex of attitudes that deemed individual virtue the key to national success. For republics to prosper, men of character had to sacrifice particular interests for the public good. Democratic republics were viewed as fragile flowers threatened by the whims of the many and the intrigues of the few. The fear of corruption and the yearning

for altruistic leaders motivated the Framers—and continued to influence their descendants.

In such an environment, proper candidates stood for election; they did not run. It was Washington’s agents who swilled the voters with bumbo, not the candidate himself. Passivity demonstrated virtue. The word *candidate*, from *can-*

didus, the Latin word for white, recalled the Roman politicians whose white togas were emblematic of their purity.

This pristine approach to campaigning suited early American society. Most inhabitants lived in farming communities scattered along the Atlantic coast. Information traveled only as quickly as individuals could: New Yorkers first heard about Lexington and Concord four days after the battles; Georgians waited six weeks. In these self-sufficient polities, people usually knew one another intimately, obviating the need for spectacular campaigning. All knew their place in society, with commoners expected to defer to their betters.

In the early republic, national politics was remarkably primitive and relatively cheap. The first parties were crude organizations lacking legitimacy. Local and state ties were firmer than national allegiances. (And U.S. senators were elected by state legislatures, not the general electorate.) The taboo against active campaigning by a candidate would prove most persistent at the presidential level. As Representative William Lowndes of South Carolina said in the early 1820s, “The presidency is not an office to be either solicited or declined.”

During the 1820s and 1830s, white male suffrage became all but universal. Transportation and communication breakthroughs, the Industrial Revolution’s social and economic changes, and the uncorking of public passions by religious revivals transformed American politics. Millions entered politics as voters and as partisans attending caucuses, conventions, and rallies. Leadership was no longer just a matter of gentlemen persuading one another; now, politicians had to sway the crowd.

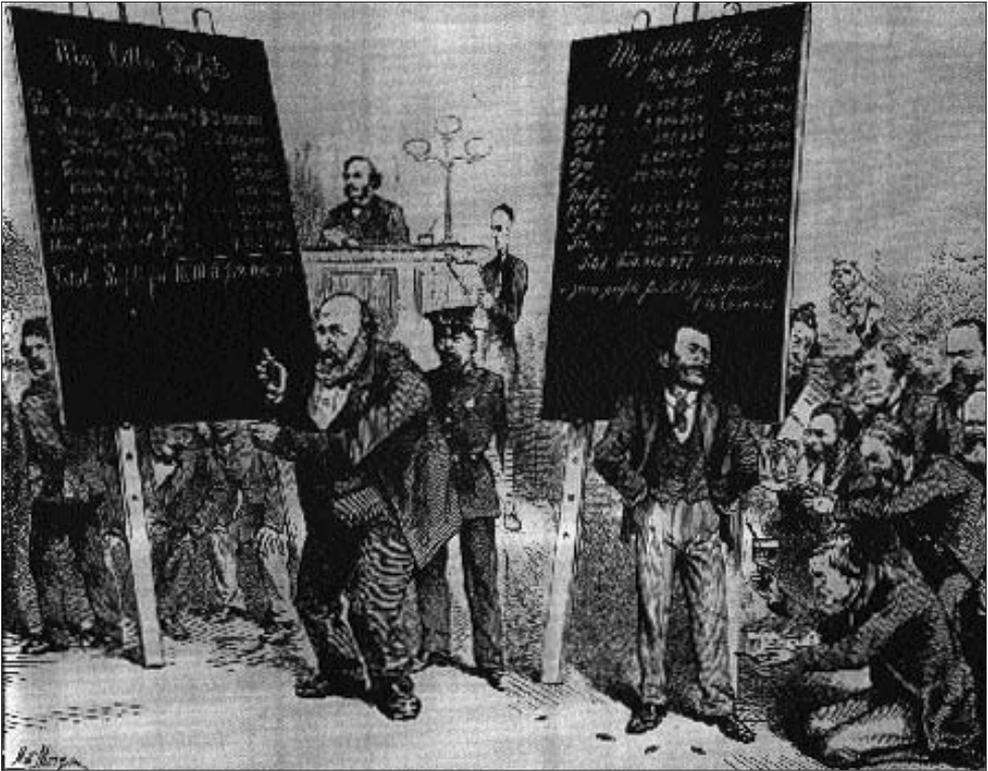
No device was too gaudy or inane to accomplish that—songs, slogans, floats, coonskin caps, “Old Hickory” trunks, “Log Cabin” newspapers, “Wide-Awake” lamps, and revival-like “camp” meetings more suitable to the Second Coming than to the deliberative rites on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in

November. These all-American forms of electioneering all cost money. How else could candidates communicate with hundreds, thousands, millions of voters? In fact, the more democratic, the more inclusive, the campaign, the more it cost. Congressional campaigns cost up to \$4,000 in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, far less in the aristocratic South and Yankee New England. Bills for statewide gubernatorial contests could run into the tens of thousands, with most of the money going to publish handbills, pamphlets, and partisan newspapers. By the mid-1800s, national committees were spending between \$50,000 and \$100,000 on presidential campaigns, in addition to the sums spent by the local Whig and Democratic parties in each state and the federal government’s expenditure on “free” campaign literature sent out by congressmen of both parties in an abuse of their franking privileges.

This new state of political affairs threatened the nation’s sense of its own virtue. Parties clouded considerations of character with policy questions. They popularized campaigning and institutionalized conflict. And worst of all, party loyalty supplanted the public good. Politicians of the new breed now aspired less to be “virtuous republicans” than to be “democratic soldiers,” marching to the party’s beat.

This change in American politics was part of a broader shift under way in American life, particularly in the North. An agrarian society was starting to enter the industrial world, as thousands of yeoman farmers became urbanized factory workers. The winds of Jacksonian egalitarianism and a liberal, entrepreneurial revolution buffeted the deferential social patterns set by past generations.

The presidency floated reassuringly above this changing American republic. With the federal government still distant from their daily lives, most Americans viewed the presidency with an awe they did not extend to lesser offices. State and local contests, with more earthy and visible interests at stake, generated more



President Grant instructs New York's "Boss" Tweed in the art of politics: "The trouble in your case is, that you did not pocket enough to buy up all your enemies."

excitement and partisanship. The president represented all Americans. A statesman was not, as later cynics held, a dead politician—he was a politician nominated for the presidency.

Even Andrew Jackson, for all his demagoguery while in office, avoided public politicking during his three presidential campaigns (losing in 1824, winning in 1828 and '32). But as president, he bashed the wealthy repeatedly, while his minions raised money aggressively. His 1828 victory may have cost as much as \$1 million, much of it absorbed by the federal government, thanks to his legislative allies' convenient franking privileges. Old Hickory's 1832 veto of a bill to recharter the Second Bank of the United States—a "moneyed monster" that would only make "the rich richer and the potent more powerful"—became an issue in the campaign that year, and Jackson's successful war against the bank became the highlight of his second term. Nicholas Biddle, the bank's politically maladroit

head, spent more than \$42,000 of the bank's money in his losing battle. The bank also plied Senator Daniel Webster and other pols with generous loans and fat fees. Jackson thundered his disapproval, asking "whether the people of the United States are to govern . . . or whether the power and money of a great corporation are to be secretly exerted to influence their judgment and control their decisions?"

By the end of the Jacksonian era, the die was cast. The growth of the government naturally lured businessmen into political affairs, just as the spread of democracy increased the costs of campaigning. Patronage came to be a means not only of rewarding the faithful but of extracting campaign funds from them. Though Jackson insisted that his spoils system made officeholders responsive to the people, it also made them responsive to their party: thousands of officeholders provided annual contributions—or else lost their jobs.

Over the next century-and-a-half, the sums would become larger, the stakes

higher, the reforms more ambitious. The president would become less insulated and less exalted, plunging into politics by stumping and eventually raising funds himself. The peculiar American mindset which countenanced the increasing role of money while worrying about the power of the money men would lead the progressive journalist Walter Lippmann to observe that the history of corruption in the United States is really the history of reform.

By the mid-19th century, politics had become the great American pastime. Local, state, and national parties, bowing to the emerging industrial ethos, sought to create well-oiled political “machines.” Many of the most effective urban machines ran on immigrants, who gladly exchanged their votes for jobs, Christmas turkeys, or election day payoffs. The parties raised an estimated 10 percent of their campaign funds from civil service assessments, 25 percent from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia financiers, and the rest from public banquets costing \$5 a head, taxes on convention delegates, fees to attend meetings, and individual contributions.

Presidential politics was then slightly more genteel. Once nominated, candidates usually adopted the traditional passive pose—and, at least in Abraham Lincoln’s case in 1860, soon became “bored—bored badly,” according to his law partner. Lincoln’s supporters, however, were less idle, as they went about trying to put money into the right hands.

During the Civil War, Lincoln converted the Republican Party from an idealistic insurgency into a formidable organization. The government gave Northern businessmen millions of dollars in war-related contracts and also dispensed thousands of new patronage jobs. In return, the party

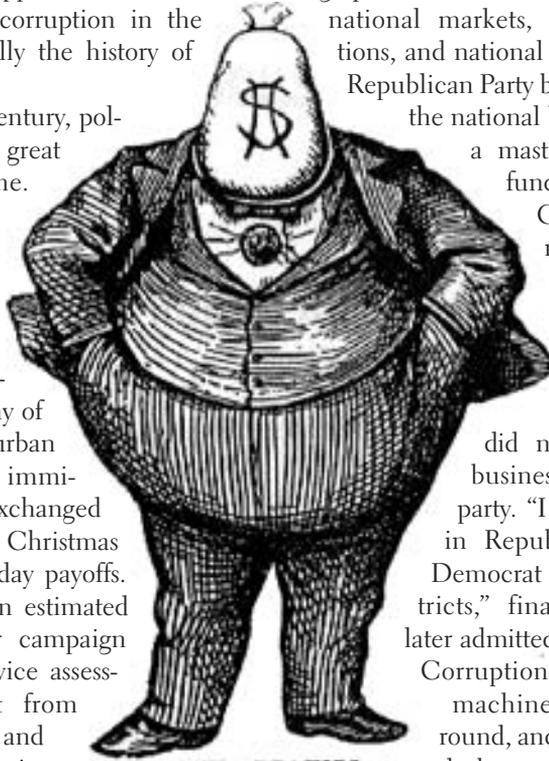
demanded contributions from the contractors and five percent of the officeholders’ salaries. Democrats “have to contend against the greatest patronage and the greatest money power ever wielded in a presidential election,” the *New York World* lamented in 1864.

The spread of the railroad and the telegraph after the war sped the rise of national markets, national corporations, and national businessmen. The Republican Party became the party of the national boom, financed by a masterful state-by-state fund-raising machine.

Gilded Age businessmen learned to consider campaign contributions a normal business expense, and they did not necessarily do business with only one party. “I was a Republican in Republican districts, a Democrat in Democratic districts,” financier Jay Gould later admitted.

Corruption made the party machines’ wheels go round, and the machines fostered the rapid growth of the nation, dotting the landscape with parks, roads, railroads, and buildings. Party machines also distributed services to the needy in the years before the welfare state. But now and then the excesses became too excessive, even for the Gilded Age. In 1871, New York reformers finally organized against William Marcy “Boss” Tweed and his “ring” of Tammany Hall Democrats. Through its control of patronage and party nominations for office, by cleverly padding expenses and arranging sweetheart deals during an age of great public-works projects, the machine had reaped millions of dollars.

If that sort of “honest” graft and city machine corruption represented the quintessential Democratic scandal, the *Crédit Mobilier* scandal of 1872 was the quintessential Republican one. The scandal broke during President Ulysses S. Grant’s re-elec-



THE “BRAINS”

tion campaign, when newspapers revealed that the Union Pacific Railroad's construction company had given stock at virtually no cost to influential Republican politicians, including House Speaker Blaine of Maine, Representative James A. Garfield of Ohio, and Vice President Colfax.

Genteel Republicans lamented what they regarded as their party's moral decline. "The day is at hand," warned historian Henry Adams, a descendant of two American presidents, "when corporations . . . having created a system of quiet but irresistible corruption—will ultimately succeed in directing government itself." Patrician idealists such as Adams could not bear to see the party of Lincoln and anti-slavery become the party of Blaine and railroad payoffs. In 1872 and again in 1884, these "best men" bolted the party, helping the Democrats to their first post-war presidential victory in '84.

Gilded Age politicians disdained the reformers. In 1884, regulars branded them "mugwumps," redefining the Algonquin word for "chief" to mean a fence-sitting bird with its "mug" on one side and its "wump" on the other. (Another new definition of "mugwump" at the time was "a person educated beyond his intellect.")

Despite the regulars' disdain, the reforming spirit grew, along with the power of money in politics. After Garfield was elected president in 1880, one observer chided Republican leader William Chandler, saying, "I honestly think you fellows elected Garfield by the use of money, systematically and methodically employed. I think you bought Indiana as you would buy so much beef. . . . Where this side of h--l are we going to stop?"

Then, as now, the only thing worse than raising money improperly was not raising enough of it. Democrats, despite their best efforts, were often outspent—but not always. "I am haunted now with the money fear," financier William Whitney told the 1892 Democratic nominee, Grover Cleveland, at the start of the campaign. Whitney proceeded to raise more than \$2 million and kicked in \$250,000 of his own. Cleveland was elected.

Americans then did not see a sharp conflict between corporate interests and those of government. When bribery did occur, the bribed politicians were blamed, not the system. The chief concern of reformers in the Gilded Age was not the power of the money men but federal political patronage. This issue brought about a historic rift between Republican regulars, pitting "Stalwart" Republicans who opposed any civil service reform against the younger "Half-Breeds" who accepted some restrictions.

President Garfield's assassination in 1881 by a deranged office seeker forced the issue. The Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883 created some merit-based federal appointments and outlawed assessments on federal officeholders. But the law of unintended consequences took hold: by barring federal assessments, the Pendleton Act increased parties' need for corporate money.

Businessmen were glad to supply it. In 1888, the Republican "boodle" campaign took in as much as \$3.3 million. "Money was used in this election with a profusion never before known on American soil," one mugwump complained.

The bipartisan zeal for fund-raising—and the influence the so-called robber barons had in both parties—united the disparate elements of the Populist movement in disgust. Be they southerners or westerners, bankrupt farmers or fire-breathing editors, Populists agreed that the nation's virtue was threatened. "We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political and material ruin," lamented the authors of the Omaha Platform of the People's Party of America, issued on July 4, 1892. "Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench." Presidential nominee James Weaver of Iowa, Representative Thomas E. Watson of Georgia, and their fellow Populists could not stop industrialization and urbanization, but their revolt fused modern fears of businessmen corrupting politics with traditional republican fears of compromising virtue.

The Populists saw their nightmares



Mark Hanna, who helped make McKinley president and was often caricatured as a plutocrat, declares in this 1899 cartoon by George B. Luks: “That man Clay was an ass. It’s better to be president than to be right!”

materialize in 1896. That year, Cleveland businessman and Republican political operative Mark Hanna harvested corporate funds for the presidential campaign of former Ohio governor William McKinley with awesome efficiency. In perfecting the “merchandising” campaign, Hanna and his cronies viewed voters as consumers to be seduced, not as crusaders to be mobilized. To put McKinley across, Hanna spent \$6–\$7 million, the equivalent of nearly \$100 million today—and more

than either party would spend again until 1920. Terrified by the “fusion” of Populists with free-silver Democrats, the few Democrats who served as directors of railroads and banks abandoned William Jennings Bryan to support McKinley. Without internal watchdogs to object, corporate chieftains made their donations for the first time directly from corporate coffers. Standard Oil alone contributed \$250,000. Corporate executives compared their contributions to “taking out an insurance policy.”

Democrats, unable to match the Republicans in collecting corporate dollars, portrayed the 1896 campaign as a battle between the plutocrats and the people—a theme and a strategy that would reappear again and again throughout the 20th century.

Progressivism transformed the Populists' instinctive suspicion of corporate money into a more considered and lasting approach to purifying the republic. Progressives such as Charles Evans Hughes, Robert M. La Follette, and Jacob Riis brought to the fore two powerful instruments of indignation: the legislative commission and the journalistic exposé. In the state of New York, a 1906–07 investigation of the insurance industry revealed that one company spent nearly \$1 million stopping “undesirable legislation.” Other states began looking into the business-politics connection. This effort to cleanse politics culminated in 1912 in a congressional committee's condemnation of the “vast and growing concentration” of power in the hands of the “money trust.”

The efforts of these legislative tribunals dovetailed with those of “muckraking” journalists such as Ida Tarbell, author of the explosive *History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904). Millions of Americans were exposed to the evils of corruption—and industrialization. Government and Big Business came to be seen as adversaries, and the corrupting effect of money in politics was now regarded not as aberrant but as epidemic. Money in politics became the scapegoat for America's industrial ills.

During the first three decades of the 20th century, the Democrats—consistently outspent by Republicans—would hammer home that progressive lesson. They naively hoped to take railway and other public service corporations completely out of politics, while at the same time expanding the government's influence over those corporations. Progressive Democratic platforms blasted “the improper and excessive use of money in elections as a danger threatening the very existence of democratic institutions,” and chided the Republicans for relying on “vast sums of

money wrested from favor-seeking corporations” and “the predatory interests.”

Progressives were optimists. They considered problems complex but solvable. Together, latter-day Republican muggumps and impoverished progressive Democrats succeeded in getting many reforms written into law. Congress banned corporate contributions from federal campaigns in 1907 under the Tillman Act and mandated the disclosure of campaign funds three years later. On the state level, still the main American political arena, more than 130 different laws regulated legislative lobbying, outlawed corporate contributions, and prohibited public officials from accepting free rail passes. But though corporate contributions to campaigns were outlawed on both the state and federal levels, corporate chieftains could easily get around the ban by individually contributing as citizens or by indirectly funneling money to favored pols.

Theodore Roosevelt, the Bill Clinton of his day, embodied America's contradictory attitudes toward campaign financing. As president from 1901 to 1909, he attacked the robber barons as enthusiastically as he sold out to them. Roosevelt's tirades against corporate titans and his loud but limited trustbusting discouraged many businessmen from contributing to his 1904 presidential campaign. Roosevelt and his aides solicited aggressively nevertheless. Certain moguls claimed that Roosevelt met them in a secret 7 A.M. White House session in which \$250,000 was secured from the railroad baron E. H. Harriman. Eventually, the Republicans raised an estimated \$2.2 million in campaign funds, nearly three-quarters of that money from corporations.

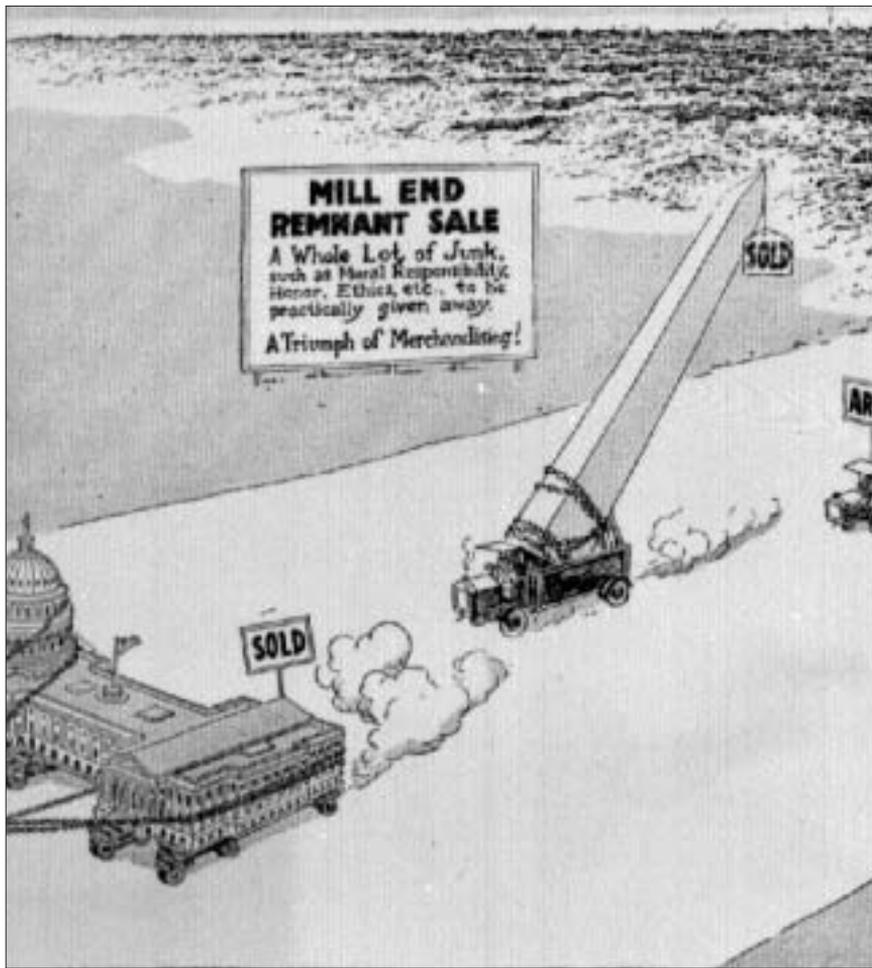
In late October 1904, Daniel Lamont, a former aide to Grover Cleveland, visited TR's Democratic opponent, Judge Alton B. Parker. “Well, you are going to be licked, old fellow,” said Lamont, who was now working on Wall Street. “How do you know?” Parker asked. “Why,” Lamont replied, the corporations “have underwritten Roosevelt's election just as they would underwrite the construction of a railroad to San Francisco.” Deciding that “if I

could not win I could at least start a fight against contributions to campaign funds that would insure cleaner elections in [the] future,” the judge attacked Roosevelt, assailing his “shameless . . . willingness to make compromise with decency.”

Roosevelt ridiculed the charges. And he continued his attacks on the corporations during his second term. Businessmen were outraged. “We bought the son of a bitch and then, he did not stay bought,” steel magnate Henry Frick fumed.

Through his enthusiastic and aggressive politicking, Roosevelt forged a close relationship with “the plain people” of America. But his unprecedented involvement in fund-raising—the other side of the coin, as it were, of aggressive political campaigning—tainted the White House and further undermined America’s republican tradition.

In 1912, with Woodrow Wilson their nominee, the Democrats approvingly noted “the unanimous sentiment in favor of publicity, before the elections, of campaign contributions.” (Running a third and final time as the Democratic nominee in 1908, Bryan had refused individual donations of more than \$10,000 and before Election Day listed all the contributions he had received.) Even the Republicans that year felt compelled to concede that the Tillman Act did not work. Their 1912 platform called for “such additional legislation as may be necessary more effectively to prohibit



After President Harding’s death, the Teapot Dome

corporations from contributing funds, directly or indirectly, to campaigns.”

Democrat Wilson, trying to appear as virtuous as Bryan, barred three big tycoons from contributing to his campaign and launched broad fund-raising drives. A drawing in the *New York World* showed a fresh-faced American looking at a billboard that read: “WANTED—100,000 EARNEST CITIZENS TO CONTRIBUTE EACH ONE HONEST DOLLAR TO ELECT A PRESIDENT OF AND FOR THE PEOPLE—NO TRUST MONEY ACCEPTED.” Alas, it took much more than \$100,000, honest or otherwise, to run a presidential campaign. And the 88,229 contributions of \$100 or less yielded a mere \$318,910. The Democrats, while continuing to shut the door on the three leading tycoons, turned to other fat cats for help. At the end of the



scandal erupted, inspiring this biting 1924 cartoon.

day, the 40 biggest contributions outweighed all the others.

The progressives' effort to keep big money out of politics failed. "The fact is," *Baltimore Sun* columnist Frank Kent wrote in 1923, "that nowhere in the country has there been devised a legal method of effectively limiting the amount of money that may be spent in political fights. No law has been enacted through which the politicians cannot drive a four-horse team." The Corrupt Practices Act, enacted two years later, limiting expenditures for congressional races and demanding periodic financial statements from candidates for federal office, did not change that situation. Some reforms, such as the push for nomination of presidential and other candidates by primaries, made campaigning even more expensive. Ultimately,

the reformers' decades-long efforts to improve the American political system did at least as much harm as good. They weakened the role of parties, lessened faith in popular politics, and hastened the decline of voter participation.

Twentieth-century politicking would prove to be far more expensive than 19th-century popular politics. The cost of mobilizing partisans through torchlight parades paled beside the cost of attracting millions of indifferent or disaffected voters to the polls. And as the century went on, politicians increasingly had to struggle to be heard above the din from competing forms of entertainment, such as radio and, later,

television. It became more and more difficult to distinguish political campaigns from advertising campaigns.

Moreover, ad campaigns were expensive. In 1920, chewing gum magnate William Wrigley, Jr., promised "the biggest advertising drive ever launched in a political campaign." But he was shocked to discover that Republican presidential nominee Warren Harding's campaign coffers held "only" about \$8 million. "We [have] received about as much so far," Wrigley complained in August, "as I spend every week advertising a penny stick of Chewing Gum."

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal further centralized and commercialized politics. FDR made the presidency the focal point of American politics and popular culture. In 1936, a month before his landslide reelection victory over Alf Landon,

Roosevelt told Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes that “there was not enough money in the campaign fund to pay this week’s headquarters salaries.” Twelve years later, a shortfall in dollars would strand Roosevelt’s successor, Harry Truman, on his campaign train in Oklahoma. In retrospect, Truman tried to make a virtue out of Democratic poverty, saying, “That’s the way it ought to be. . . . When people are anxious to give you a lot of money in a political campaign, you always have to ask yourself what the reason for it is. People just don’t give money away for no reason.”

While bashing Republican “economic royalists” and dreaming up ways to “soak the rich,” New Deal Democrats devised various schemes to cash in on their popularity with American consumers and the growing corps of government contractors. President Roosevelt autographed leather-bound volumes commemorating the Democratic convention that fetched \$100 apiece. Companies doing business with the federal government placed tax-deductible advertisements costing as much as \$2,500 in the book. Such presidential fund-raising devices brought in \$250,000 in 1936 and \$338,000 in 1940. Roosevelt’s postmaster general, James Farley, preferred political banquets. Farley, wags noted, “is the only political manager who has ever been able to sell five dollars worth of groceries for one hundred dollars.”

During the New Deal era, the Democrats came to depend heavily on union money. But when John L. Lewis, with a photographer present, offered the president a check for \$250,000 from the United Mine Workers to kick off one campaign, Roosevelt, not wanting to seem beholden to Big Labor for big money, smiled and said, “No thanks.” (The UMW ended up contributing nearly twice the initial offer, but in a series of smaller donations.)

Republicans succeeded in equating Big Labor with Big Business in the public mind. In 1943, during World War II, Congress extended the Tillman Act to ban contributions from unions as well as corporations. To circumvent the ban, unions created political action committees (PACs). If companies could get around the law by

funneling money to politicians through individual executives and their relatives, unions could do the same through ostensibly broad-based citizen groups.

The New Deal zeal to improve almost all aspects of American life extended to campaign reform. The Hatch Act of 1939 and 1940 limited government employees’ participation in campaigns, limited all campaign contributions to a maximum of \$5,000, and limited major party spending to \$3 million—at the federal level. Once legislators finished writing the reforms, they began, as candidates, to circumvent them. Creative accounting became the norm, as local parties and independent entities promoted candidates with money that previously would have been funneled through the national party. This use of what we now call “soft money” made a mockery of reform. The year the Hatch Act became law, Wendell Willkie’s Republican presidential campaign spent nearly \$15 million, while Roosevelt’s Democratic campaign spent \$6 million.

The New Deal, World War II, and the \$32 billion Federal Highway Act of 1956 (signed into law by Republican president Dwight Eisenhower) linked the fortunes of millions of Americans to national policies—and politicians. At the same time, local machines sputtered, their influence weakened by federal social welfare programs and municipal civil service reform. The proliferation of primaries and the rise of interest groups made independent candidates more viable. Voters were also more independent, and increasingly oriented toward the national leaders whom they heard on radio or, later, saw on television.

By midcentury, political fund-raising was more centralized than localized. The Republican Party, like a well-managed corporation, had a unified fund-raising operation in most states, minimizing the traditional intraparty turf battles. The Democrats, typically, were more disorganized and less effective at coordinating their efforts.

For all their differences in raising money, Republicans and Democrats spent it in similar ways. In 1956, the national committees allocated about 40 percent of their funds for television advertisements,

15 percent for the printing, purchase, and distribution of literature, four percent for radio advertising, and two percent for print advertising.

By letting politicians appeal directly and “personally” to masses of voters, television made money, not manpower, the key to political success. Campaigns became “professionalized,” with “consultants” and elaborate “ad-buys,” and that added to the cost. So did the fact that as party loyalties diminished, candidates had to build their own individual organizations and “images.” The \$25 million spent by all candidates running for president in 1960 represented a jump of 46 percent from 1956.

Presidential contests were not the only ones becoming more expensive. From the 1950s to the 1960s, costs for state campaigns in Wisconsin, for example, tripled. The total cost of all campaigns for federal, state, and local offices in the nation reached \$175 million in 1960—and would climb to \$300 million in 1968, and \$1 billion by 1980.

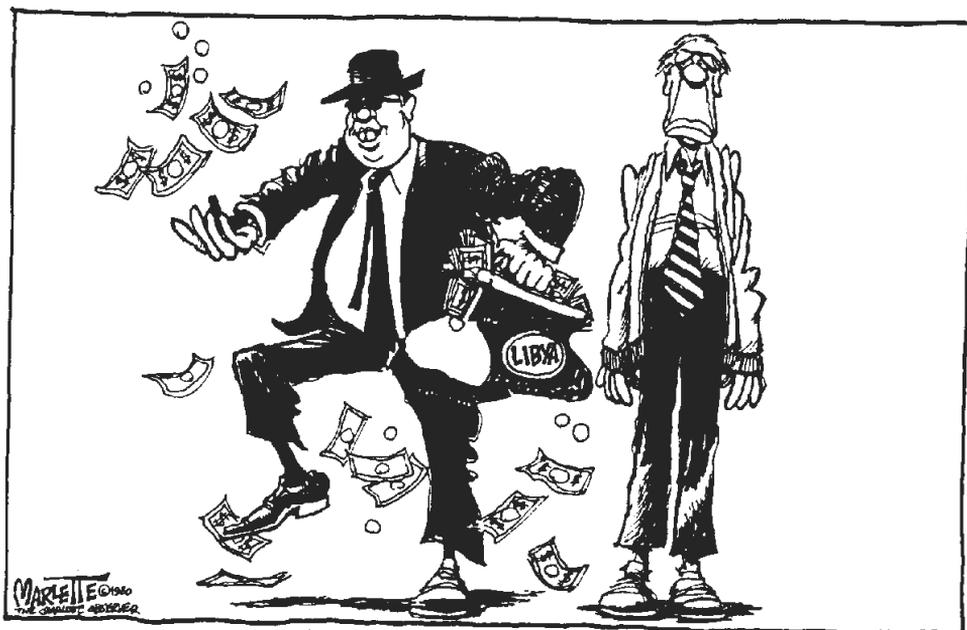
In 1960, with Nelson Rockefeller in contention for the Republican presidential nomination, and John Kennedy among the candidates for the Democratic nod, some feared that politics was on its way to becoming a rich man’s game. Hubert Humphrey, a Kennedy rival of modest means, fumed during their West Virginia primary contest: “I don’t have any daddy who can pay the bills for me. I can’t afford to run around this state with a little black bag and a checkbook.” Such grumbling overlooked Kennedy’s other political assets and overestimated the importance of money in politics. As Rockefeller’s repeated failures to secure the nomination of his party would attest, the richest candidate does not always win.

Richard Nixon, who beat out Rockefeller for his party’s nomination in 1960, still envied the wealth of Kennedy, his Democratic opponent. “Remember ’60,” Nixon urged campaign aides eight years later. “I never want to be outspent again.” As president, Nixon shamelessly, zealously used the White House to score political points and raise money. His aide

Pat Buchanan characterized state dinners as critical battlefields where the president could “reward his friends with invitations to the great occasions . . . and punish his enemies by relegating them to the perpetual darkness outside the manor.” Many of his friends showed their fealty with cash. Fifteen people who donated a combined total of \$251,675 to the 1968 campaign were, not coincidentally, named to ambassadorships. For his re-election campaign in 1972, President Nixon spurred a \$60 million fund-raising effort. In trying to outdo his foes, “Tricky Dick” realized their fears about him, and progressive fears about corporate supporters. Twenty-one executives would be convicted in connection with illegal donations of corporate funds to Nixon’s Committee to Re-elect the President.

The Watergate scandal occurred after Congress enacted the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, mandating full disclosure of all contributions above \$100 and limiting candidates’ advertising expenditures. (Many fat-cat donations streamed into Republican headquarters just before the new reporting rules went into effect on April 7, 1972.) This legislation was the first comprehensive federal campaign-financing law since the Corrupt Practices Act of 1925. But Watergate renewed the progressive fear of money in politics and inspired yet further efforts at reform. Though millions were disillusioned with their government, they still believed in its ability to legislate corruption out of existence and purify politics.

So, suddenly, a century’s worth of rhetoric and modest tinkering gave way to the sweeping 1974 Amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act. A six-member, full-time, bipartisan Federal Election Commission reflected reformers’ continuing belief in experts. Public financing in general presidential elections for candidates who spurned private contributions reflected the New Deal and Great Society belief in big government. Restricting individual contributions to \$1,000 or less, limiting the amounts wealthy candidates could contribute to their own campaigns, and regulating



THE BLUES BROTHERS

First brother Billy Carter's antics turned into a serious problem for the president when it was discovered that he had taken money to lobby for the Libyan government.

spending in campaigns for federal offices all reflected the “1960s” belief in equality.

Yet for all the pious hopes, the goal of the Watergate-era reforms—to remove the influence of money from presidential elections—was, in hard and inescapable fact, ridiculous. Very few areas of American life are insulated from the power of money. Politics, which is, after all, about power, had limited potential to be turned into a platonic refuge from the influence of mammon.

The new puritanism of the post-Watergate era often backfired. Tinkering with the political system in many cases just made it worse. In the 1980s and '90s, for instance, reformers “front-loaded” primaries so that many could be held on “Super Tuesday,” with the aim of undoing the effects of previous reforms that had magnified the importance of unrepresentative states such as New Hampshire and Iowa. Instead, the reforms produced the unwanted result of magnifying the importance of early fund-raising in the “invisible primary.”

The 1974 reforms also did not work out as the reformers intended: the Age of the Fat Cat was replaced by the Age of the PAC. With individual contributions now

severely restricted, corporations mimicked labor unions and launched political action committees to fill the void. In 1975, the Federal Election Commission allowed corporate PACs to solicit employees as well as stockholders. This oft-overlooked decision enhanced the PACs’ power. Corporate, union, and other PAC spending on congressional races, which had been \$8.5 million in 1972, zoomed to \$105.6 million in 1990. The finance reform further splintered American politics, shifting power from the parties toward individual candidates who forged lucrative relationships with particular PACs.

Overall, individuals still donated more money than corporations and unions did via their PACs. No PAC could contribute to the publicly funded general-election presidential campaigns or give more than \$5,000 to a congressional candidate. Still, PACs became the bogeymen of modern politics—at least until Clinton’s Asian money dragons overshadowed them in 1996. Refusing to take PAC money became an easy if expensive symbol of a candidate’s supposed virtue. In 1988, Herbert Kohl, the multimillionaire owner of the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team,

would spend \$6 million arguing (successfully) that his wealth guaranteed his independence, that he would be, as his slogan boasted, “nobody’s Senator but yours.” Most pols, of course, not being multimillionaires, preferred to strong-arm PACs for funds while bashing them with words.

In an age of growing moral relativism, reformers raised standards in the political realm to new and often unrealistic legal heights. Failure to fill out forms properly became illegal. This growing “criminalization” of politics, combined with media scandalmongering, did not purify politics but only further undermined faith in politicians and government.

In 1976, the Supreme Court struck down some of the 1974 reforms as unconstitutional limitations on free speech. In *Buckley v. Valeo*, the majority of the justices ruled that candidates could receive public funding in exchange for accepting spending limits but that other candidates who did not take public funding could spend freely. The Constitution’s broad protections of individual liberty—which most Americans cherished—thus blocked the creation of a campaign system which, according to polls, most Americans wanted. That, in many ways, has been the story of 20th-century American reform. A burst of enthusiasm for redistributing wealth, curbing pornography, or cleaning up the environment would run into the systemic American emphasis on individual rights over community needs. If Americans do not have quite the political system they desire, they at least have a system that is as contradictory, as wild yet constrained, as vulgar yet puritanical, as America itself.

The new 1974 spending caps disappointed modern mugwumps. Political parties devoted their limited funds in 1976 to television ads. The posters, bumper stickers, and buttons that defined 19th-century electioneering all but disappeared. Political romantics celebrated these once-deplored advertising devices, because at least they were part of the traditional print culture—and disdained the television ads that were now the best way to reach video-minded voters.

The post-Watergate reforms were fur-

ther weakened in 1979 by amendments allowing state and local parties to fund “get out the vote” drives and other grassroots activities. The parties proceeded to put hundreds of millions of “soft” (i.e. unregulated) dollars into that loophole. After a slight dip in 1976 when the experiment in public funding began, campaign costs soared. When Barry Goldwater first ran for the Senate in 1952, his campaign cost \$45,000; by the time he retired in 1986, he would have had to spend a projected \$3 million to run. Four years later, Senator Jesse Helms (R.-N.C.) spent \$13.4 million on his (successful) re-election effort.

The need to raise such vast sums turned senators and representatives into full-time supplicants, their hands always outstretched. By 1990, according to one analysis, 0.10 percent of the voting-age population donated 46 percent of the money congressional candidates raised, and 0.05 percent of the voting age population accounted for all of the large-donor money that winning Senate candidates raised. To raise \$3.87 million—the average cost of a Senate race in 1990—senators had to take in \$12,405 every week for six years. To raise \$407,556—the average cost of a House race in 1990—representatives had to harvest \$17,000 a month during their two-year terms.

Democrats at times have tried to blame this unseemly situation on the supposedly characteristic excesses of the Reagan era. But as suggested by the “Keating Five” case—in which five senators, including four Democrats, were accused of aiding a savings and loan operator involved in securities fraud, in exchange for a total of \$1.5 million in campaign donations—neither party can escape blame. “We’re owned by them,” a Democratic congressman would reportedly lament in 1993. “Business. That’s where the campaign money comes from now. In the 1980s, we gave up on the little guys.”

The modern enslavement to campaign fund-raising is, alas, bipartisan. And it takes place in the context of Americans’ contradictory attitudes about money in politics. As the party that usually gets less in the way of monetary contributions,

Democrats have been particularly shameless in their stance, braying against fundraising while at the same time feverishly raising funds. Wealthy people who purchase status with payoffs to museums are admirable philanthropists; when they plunge into public service, they risk being called “fat cats” who want something more in return for their generosity than advancement of their notion of the public good, and something more sinister than status by association. Donors are “angels” if they champion the right candidate—or the right cause—but “devils” if they bankroll an opponent.

Money is not just “the mother’s milk of politics,” it is America’s life force. The obscene power of money in modern America triggers the same conflicted feelings of envy and disdain, of fascination and repulsion, that appear in the perennial debate about campaign finance. Americans admire the rich and distrust them, worship wealth and abhor it.

The 1996 campaign reflected the failures of a century’s worth of reform as well as hysteria about what, in essence, are the costs of American democracy. The flood of “soft money,” “issue ads,” and questionable foreign donations inspired the leaders of



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Information that China planned to try to influence the 1996 elections was kept from President Clinton, possibly at the direction of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Most political scientists and historians agree that the impact of money on politics is often much exaggerated. Many other factors go into any given victory, and money is helpful only if well spent. In 1996, President Clinton benefited from well-timed “ad buys” that Democrats made even before the campaign began. But each year, many candidates who spend less than their opponents win. In 1980, for instance, Jimmy Carter outspent Ronald Reagan.

Common Cause and other reformers to call the 1996 campaign “the dirtiest ever.” But the truth is that the situation, while lamentable, is neither that novel nor that bad.

On one level at least, the campaign disclosure laws worked. Even huge contributions from modest Asian-American gardeners mysteriously flush with cash were duly recorded.

The “Motel 1600” aspect of the scandal does not seem to involve any quid pro quos that were worse than unseemly. The

Clintons were selling face time, not policies. As for the China connection, it remains (at this writing) unproven. U.S. law enforcement agencies obtained evidence last year that the Chinese government planned to try to influence the elections by making campaign contributions. It is not known whether any such donations were made. The Democratic National Committee has promised to return some \$3 million in contributions from Asian Americans because the true source of the money could not be verified. Much of the money was raised by John Huang, the top American executive for the Riady family, an Indonesian clan with far-flung business interests.

Republicans also found foreign money hard to resist. After months of self-righteous posturing about the Democrats' alleged derelictions, the Republican Party announced in May that it was returning more than \$100,000 in donations from a Hong Kong aviation services and real estate company. During the hard-fought 1994 congressional campaign, this same company provided a \$2.2 million loan guarantee to a research organization headed by Haley Barbour, the former GOP national chairman. This allowed the organization to get a \$1 million bank loan and repay \$1.6 million it had borrowed from the Republican Party.

While campaign donations from foreign contributors are illegal, contributions from foreign citizens who live in the United States, or from American subsidiaries of foreign companies, are not. In the age of the global village and the multinational corporation, distinctions between "insiders" and "outsiders" become blurred. Rather than create more unenforceable and impractical laws, why not publicly disclose which foreigners are contributing to which candidates and let the voters assess a given political leader's independence?

For all the talk about the influence of money in presidential politics last year, the campaign season actually produced three more exhibits of money men who could not buy the Oval Office for themselves. Tycoons Ross Perot and Steve Forbes spent millions, gained attention, but failed (in

Perot's case, for the second time) to win the ultimate prize. And Senator Phil Gramm (R.-Texas), a former economist who talked incessantly about how vital money was in politics, surpassed the record of his fellow Texan, the late John Connally, to claim the dubious honor of raising the most money to least effect. Connally, running in 1980, raised \$12 million to secure a single GOP convention delegate; in 1996, Gramm raised \$20.8 million before returning to the Senate empty-handed.

These seemingly monstrous amounts were actually rather modest, considering how much it costs to attract attention in a nation of 265 million couch potatoes whose ties to community and to politics have been attenuated by technology and the distractions of the consumer culture. Given that the William Wrigley, Jr., Company spent \$247 million advertising chewing gum in 1996, the \$169 million the Clinton campaign spent that same year does not seem unreasonable. When one considers that Procter & Gamble spent more than \$8 billion on marketing its shampoos and other products in 1995, the estimated \$2 billion price tag for the whole 1996 election, involving thousands of individual contests throughout the country, does not seem too high. That \$2 billion is less than 0.33 percent of the nation's gross domestic product—a small price, indeed, to pay for the functioning of American democracy.

Yet American democracy in action is not always a pretty sight. In his zeal to raise funds, Bill Clinton seemed to treat the White House as if it were the Arkansas state house. By doing that, he detracted from the majesty of the presidency and triggered traditional republican fears of decline.

In an ironic tribute to the first lady's role in this "copresidency," Hillary Rodham Clinton helped to sell off access to "sacred" parts of the White House. Ninety-eight coffees averaging \$50,000 per schmoozer—for which he or she got a cup of java and three Danish—and Lincoln bedroom sleepovers at more than \$100,000 a pop disprove any assumption

that wealth necessarily reflects intelligence. Still, in a celebrity-obsessed culture, what could be more worthwhile for thousands of rich Americans than the chance to write mom a letter on White House stationery, or to attend a state dinner hosted by the Clintons or the Gores, America's celebrities in chief?

But celebrity is an unstable currency. The modern president is more central, more familiar, and more vulnerable than his predecessors. Clinton—or any modern president—is only as good as his last headline, his most recent action to be praised or condemned hysterically by a media mob intent upon melodrama and scandal.

As with the muckrakers' attacks early in this century, the "soft money" scandal near the end of it captures a broader dissatisfaction with the political system. Increasingly, it seems, Americans are becoming fed up with a personality-driven political culture of posturing and sound bites that ignores the great challenges of modern life. Many feel powerless as individual citizens in a massive, impersonal society. The current outcry is a cumulative one, combining the traditional republican fear, the turn-of-the-century progressive sensibility, and the "1960s" suspicion of capitalism and the establishment, with today's post-Watergate, post-modernist political funk. The traditional American longing for virtuous yet accessible leaders, for statesmanlike politicians, fuels contemporary cynicism. A *New York Times*/CBS poll found that 90 percent of Americans wanted finance reform, but 78 percent doubted it would work.

T rue reform will indeed remain elusive. It is impossible to outlaw many of the Clintons' most outrageous fund-raising ploys, and it would be foolish to try. How can a law be written demanding that the president and first lady show more respect as custodians of the "people's home?" How can a law compel a president and vice president to act with dignity and class?

And there is no getting around another

simple truth: "Wherever there is government, there is money in politics," as the political scientist Alexander Heard notes. Calls for campaign finance reform win ready applause but can easily backfire. President Clinton's exhortations to clean up the system only make his indiscretions seem more outrageous. Vice President Albert Gore's presidential ambitions now seem a little threatened because his pose as the last boy scout leaves hardly any room for the slightest "scandalous" behavior, even when it is sanctioned by the absence of what he has called any "controlling legal authority." And Republicans' attacks on Democratic fund-raising ring hollow, as both parties continue to shake down big spenders, both from here and abroad.

On November 9, 1996, 136 years and 34 presidential elections after his crony assured Abraham Lincoln that New York was "abundantly supplied with 'material aid,'" Clinton declared that the fund-raising scandals swirling about him had "shown us once again that our campaigns cost too much, they take too much time, they raise too many questions, and now is the time for bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation." More recently, he has called for a regulatory ban on "soft money." Few Americans have been more eloquent in attacking money in politics; few politicians have been more shameless in collecting funds. President Clinton the shape-shifter embodies Americans' historical ambivalence toward campaign finance. Given the realities of money and politics, and the illusion that the two can somehow be separated, Clinton and other politicians are almost certain to continue in that same way, working both sides of the street: energetically raising funds while calling, as necessary, for reforms; thinking like statesmen when instituting changes but acting like crafty lawyers when campaigning. As long as that remains true, no mere piece of legislation will be able to solve this characteristically democratic political problem.

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Rescuing Art From Modern Oblivion

Leo Steinberg's brilliant and sometimes controversial contributions to the history of art not only enliven a stagnant discipline but uphold the idea of art as a continuity of creative acts. David Levi Strauss introduces a thinker who has challenged many of the critical shibboleths of our time—and, in doing so, helped us to see great works anew.

by David Levi Strauss

Is art history any longer relevant to contemporary American culture? Though reports of its demise are exaggerated, the discipline is certainly in crisis and has been under attack for years, from within the profession and without. In *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (1989), Donald Preziosi characterizes the tenor of these attacks in suitably apocalyptic terms: “What art historians do is changing—certainly too slowly for some and far too precipitously for others. . . . All the old road signs seem to have been effaced by adolescent graffitists or rewritten in extraterrestrial hieroglyphs by ivory-tower academicians whose heads swirl about in a starry semiological firmament.”

Disciplinary boundaries—the divisions of intellectual labor into discrete fields—are being rejected in favor of new theoretical methods that range across disciplines. Defenders of the old borders are charac-





The U.S. Postal Service's cropping of Giovanni Battista Cima's Madonna and Child (c. 1496–99) demonstrates the modern compulsion to deny or efface the central importance of Christ's sexuality in countless works of Renaissance art. That focus, argues Leo Steinberg (right), reflected the emphasis that Renaissance theologians placed on the Incarnation, or humanation, of Christ.



terized as recalcitrant relics. “The art historian,” writes Preziosi, “is as much an artifact of the discipline as are its ostensible objects of study.” The new generation of art historians is directed to look at advances in other interpretive fields as painful reminders of the inadequacies of its own discipline. In his structuralist treatment of art history, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (1983), Norman Bryson observes:

It is a sad fact: art history lags behind the study of the other arts. . . . While the last three or so decades have witnessed extraordinary and fertile change in the study of literature, of history, of anthropology, in the discipline of art history there has reigned a stagnant peace; a peace in which—certainly—

a profession of art history has continued to exist, in which monographs have been written, and more and more catalogues produced: but produced at an increasingly remote margin of the humanities, and almost in the leisure sector of intellectual life.

Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters, and Sculptors* (1550) is often called the foundation stone of art history. It established the idea that art progresses through identifiable stages of development toward classic perfection. This myth of progress in art has proven hard to shake, no matter how much contrary evidence accumulates around it. Even today, when a close look at the 30,000-year-old paintings recently discovered in the Chauvet cave should be enough to put the myth of linear progress to rest forever, it persists in art history. And along with this belief in progress in art comes a reluctance to rethink established hierarchies and judgments. Art history is a fundamentally conservative institution, and Renaissance art history is the most conservative of all.

Academic art history arose in the 20th century, built on the work of historians such as Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), the father of the modern objective historical school, who brought scientific method to historical analysis and believed it possible for history to present the past “as it really was,” free of complicating subjectivity. Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) developed a critical framework for evaluating, dating, and authenticating works of art based on formalist analysis in his *Principles of Art History* (1915), and the Englishmen Roger Fry and Clive Bell would later promote postimpressionism on mostly formalist grounds. But it was really in the 1930s, when the great refugee-scholars Fritz Saxl, Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, and Ernst Gombrich fled Germany and Austria to end up in England and the United States, that the discipline became popular as an academic subject.

At this point and for a while after, it was still possible to conceive of the history of art as a more-or-less orderly procession of masterpieces, based on a more-or-less reliable consensus about which art works should be included in this history and even about how they should be seen. Objectivity was the attainable goal. As long as this unified theory of culture held, the influence of the relative position of the viewer was not seen as a significant factor. We were all (or all of us who were thought to matter) still in the same story.

That is no longer the case. Art history is criticized for using obsolete and invalid methods to defend values that no one takes seriously anymore, from positions of imagined authority that are no longer recognized outside the field—in short, for being woefully out of touch. But the most serious challenge to the practice of art history is the reported loss of faith in the underlying principles on which it depends. In his influential essay, *The End of the History of Art?* (1987), Hans Belting describes this crisis as a “loss of faith in a great and compelling narra-

> DAVID LEVI STRAUSS is a writer and critic in New York, where he contributes regularly to *Artforum* and *The Nation*. Copyright © 1997 by David Levi Strauss.

tive, in the way that things *must* be seen.” That is, we are no longer all in the same story, and we are rapidly losing the will to imagine it. The real difficulty, Belting claims, is that “contemporary art indeed manifests an awareness of a history of art but no longer carries it forward; and that the academic discipline of art history no longer disposes of a compelling model of historical treatment.” Some of the most vehement critics of the discipline seem to be saying that the only way to save art history is to destroy it—to convince it to abandon its only real reason for being, namely, the imagination of continuity in art.

Given this dire state of affairs, it is perhaps not so surprising that one of the most persuasive advocates for the continuing relevance of art history (and, by extension, of the humanities as a whole) to contemporary life and thought is a 77-year-old scholar who seems to be regarded with suspicion, if not outright hostility, by a significant portion of the art history establishment. Although Leo Steinberg has received an award in literature from the American Academy and Institute for Arts and Letters (1983), the Frank Jewett Mather Award for Distinction in Art Criticism from the College Art Association (1984), and a MacArthur Fellowship (1986), he has always had a conflicted relationship with the art history establishment. For much of his long and distinguished career, he has been often treated as an apostate, a cantankerous and deluded exegete, even a dangerous heretic. When the great art historian Meyer Schapiro died last year, the critic and philosopher Arthur Danto wrote in *The Nation* that Schapiro was “too brilliant to ignore but, from the perspective of the establishment, too radical to accept.” This seems also to be Leo Steinberg’s contemporary predicament.

To one approaching Steinberg’s work from outside the profession of art history, say, as a contemporary art critic, Steinberg seems at first an unlikely controversialist. Rather, he appears to be a steadfast defender of the traditional values of art historical analysis, using the old tools of iconography and iconology handed down to him by his teachers rather than the newer ones favored by postmodernist theory. It is the way he uses these tools, and what he makes with them, that is different. But Steinberg’s work over the last 50 years has frequently drawn outraged responses and censorious remarks from defenders of the faith—forcing us to ask, Just what faith is being defended?

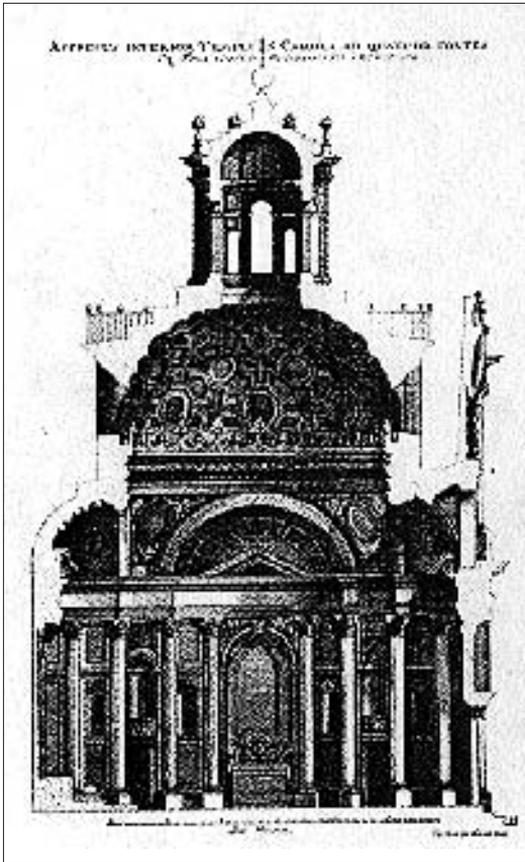
Leo Steinberg was born in Moscow in 1920 and lived in Berlin and London before emigrating to the United States in 1938. Having studied at the Slade School of Art in London, he entered the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University in the mid-1950s (Ph.D., 1960), where he studied art and architecture with, as he later wrote, “two great masters, Professor Richard Krautheimer and Professor Wolfgang Lotz.” In 1958 and ’59 he was a guest of the American Academy in Rome, where he researched and wrote his dissertation on the first major work of the baroque architect Francesco Borromini (1599–1667). *Borromini’s San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane: A Study in Multiple Form and Architectural Symbolism* (1977 revised and expanded) looks forward, both in style and substance, to Steinberg’s later writings. “Our study,” he wrote, “has

attempted to lay a heavy symbolic burden on S. Carlino—heavier perhaps than any building will bear. What we imply is that Borromini, being called on to build his first church, had asked himself—what is a church; what does it stand for? His answer—if our hypotheses are at all credible—is that the church building is a microcosm of the Church universal; therefore it stands for the See of St. Peter and the mystic Body of Christ, for the world’s circuit suffused by the Cross, and—in the singleness of its substance and its manifold forms—for the nature of God.”

Eighteen years later, when this work was published in a series of outstanding dissertations in the fine arts, Steinberg introduced it as “my old polemic and disguised manifesto, belaboring a proposition nobody would now contest, to wit, that the bravest baroque architect made his first building structurally contrapuntal in the service of a symbol [signifying the Trinity]; and that the building’s message could be read in the eloquence of its forms, *if only these were read closely enough*” (emphasis added). That last pendant clause is a significant qualification, one that would expand in importance throughout Steinberg’s subsequent career.

The seeds of Steinberg’s heresy, glimpsed in his dissertation, can be

seen more clearly in one of his first published essays, “The Eye Is a Part of the Mind” (1953), which he later called “a rite of passage, a declaration of independence from formalist indoctrination.” In this essay, Steinberg took on the reigning orthodoxy of formalist art history (represented by Roger Fry and Clive Bell), its institutional inheritors (such as Alfred Barr at the Museum of Modern Art and Albert C. Barnes, who formed the Barnes Collection in Philadelphia), and the contemporary critics who brought its methods to bear on modern art (led by Clement Greenberg, who championed American abstract art as superior to, and purer than, the previous art of Europe). One of the central tenets of formalism was that representation had little to do with advanced art.



Longitudinal section of Francesco Borromini’s S. Carlo alle quattro Fontane, the subject of Steinberg’s dissertation.

Steinberg's essay attempted to show "that representation is a central esthetic function in all art; and that the formalist esthetic, designed to champion the new abstract trend, was largely based on a misunderstanding and an underestimation of the art it set out to defend." "What matters," Steinberg wrote, "is the artist's intent to push the truth of his representation to the limits of what is felt to be depictable. The changing pattern of these limits is the preoccupation of the history of art."

Steinberg was not arguing against abstraction in favor of representational art. Rather, he was objecting to reductive approaches to art, abstract or not, that treated it as detached from the sensible world of which it is a part. His main objection was that this kind of thinking is patently ahistorical. To treat abstract works as "simply painting," he wrote, "as though they had no referent outside themselves, is to miss both their meaning and their continuity with the past. If my suggestion is valid, then even non-objective art continues to pursue art's social role of fixating thought in esthetic form, pinning down the most ethereal conceptions of the age in vital designs, and rendering them accessible to the apparatus of sense."

This cogent description of art's social role could be usefully applied to Steinberg's own work as scholar and critic, teacher and lecturer, over the subsequent four decades. He taught drawing and art history at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York from 1961 to 1975, and ended his teaching career as Benjamin Franklin Professor at the University of Pennsylvania (1975–91). His lectures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Studio School in New York, Columbia University, and elsewhere are legendary among artists and art lovers. Few scholars of our time have so enlivened the traditional art history magic-lantern show (lecturing with slides) as has Steinberg.

When Steinberg focuses his attention on a work that people think they know, such as Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà*, or works that experts have agreed are lesser ones, such as Michelangelo's last paintings, he brings new insight and analysis to these variously occluded works, making them once again visible. This often involves the radical questioning of long-held views. Reviewing Steinberg's 1975 book on Michelangelo's last paintings, *New York Times* art critic John Russell wrote:

Professor Leo Steinberg is before all things a rescuer. To the discipline of art history he brings a chivalric intent and, with that, a depth and a density of emotional commitment which are quite exceptional. When we read him we feel ourselves in the company not of one of art history's accountants, but of an ardent and vulnerable nature which is stretching itself to the utmost.

He excels on disputed ground. If it is (or was) the general opinion that Jasper Johns is an impudent prankster, or that the substance of late Picasso is glib and repetitive, or that there is only one right way to look at a new painting, then Leo Steinberg will get right in there and straighten things out. In dealing with older art (as he more usually does) he likes, equally, to tussle with a subject to which injustice has been done. In such cases, and without shirking any of the drudgeries of pure scholarship, he invests his summing-up with insights that belong to our generation alone.



Of Las Meninas (1656) by Diego Velázquez, Steinberg writes that it is “in no sense a conventional picture. It undertakes a lot more, being concerned with nothing less than the role vision plays in human self-definition.”

Otherwise, why bother to write about a work that has already been so exhaustively scrutinized? Introducing in 1981 his extraordinary work on Velázquez' *Las Meninas*, first written as a lecture in 1965, Steinberg notes, “Writing about a work such as *Las Meninas* is not, after all, like queuing up at the A&P. Rather, it is somewhat comparable to the performing of a great musical composition of which there are no definitive renderings. The guaranteed inadequacy of each successive performance challenges the interpreter next in line, helping thereby to keep the work in the repertoire. Alternatively, when a work of art ceases to be discussed, it suffers a gradual blackout.”

Although Steinberg is known primarily for his masterful writings on historical subjects—especially the works of Michelangelo, Man-

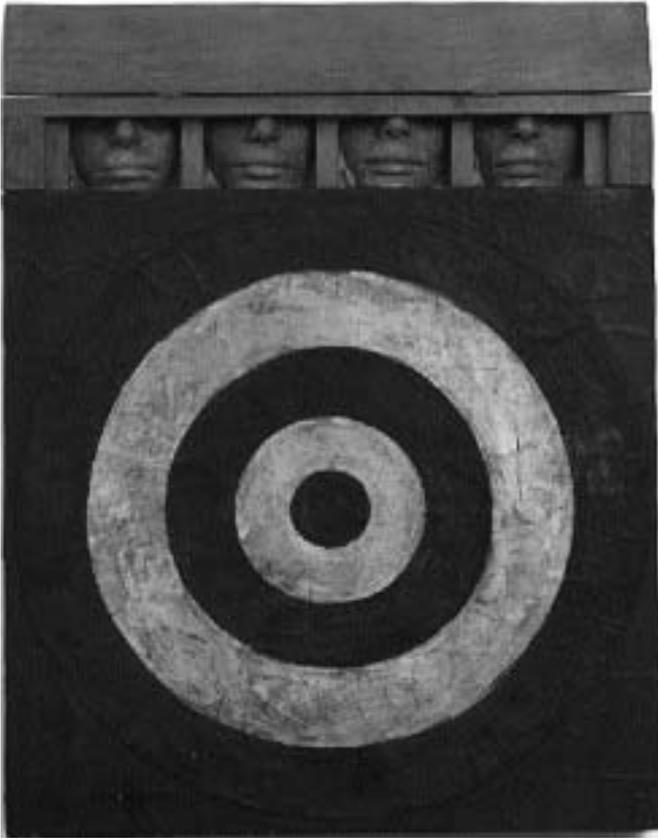
tegna, and Velázquez—his writings on modern and contemporary art are models of engaged criticism. The works collected in *Other Criteria* (1972) range from short reviews to polemical essays and extended considerations of particular works by selected artists, including Jasper Johns, Picasso, and Rodin. The reviews all date from the same, unfortunately short, period of time. “In those days, the mid-1950’s,” writes Steinberg, “practicing art critics were mostly artists or men of letters. Few art historians took the contemporary scene seriously enough to give it the time of day. To divert one’s attention from Papal Rome to Tenth Street, New York, would have struck them as frivolous—and I respected their probity. . . . With each passing month, these pieces got harder to do. Commenting on a life’s work in a week’s writing became a preposterous challenge. Tom Hess is right—it takes years to look at a picture. I succumbed to exhaustion after ten months and never reviewed again.”

This early retirement must be counted as one of criticism’s signal losses. Though no longer writing reviews, Steinberg has continued occasionally to address works and issues of contemporary art. In a brilliant and prophetic essay from 1962 that grappled with the difficulties of Jasper Johns’s early work, Steinberg articulated the values of criticism in its relation to history:

A work of art does not come like a penny postcard with its value stamped upon it; for all its objectness, it comes primarily as a challenge to the life of the imagination, and “correct” ways of thinking or feeling about it simply do not exist. The grooves in which thought and feelings will eventually run have to be excavated before anything but bewilderment or resentment is felt at all. For a long time the direction of flow remains uncertain, dammed up, or runs out all over, until, after many trial cuts by venturesome critics, certain channels are formed. In the end, that wide river which we may call the appreciation of Johns—though it will still be diverted this way and that—becomes navigable to all.

Most people—especially those who belittle a critic’s work—do not know, or pretend not to know, how real the problem is. They wait it out until the channels are safely cut, then come out and enjoy the smooth sailing, saying, *who needs a critic?*

In the light of such engagement, Steinberg came to see formalist criticism as a retreat into aesthetic protectionism. As criticism moves away from the world into a defense of art for art’s sake, Steinberg believes it also moves away from art. In the title essay of *Other Criteria*, originally given as a lecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1968, Steinberg wrote, “I find myself constantly in opposition to what is called formalism. . . . I dislike above all [its] interdictory stance—the attitude that tells an artist what he ought not to do, and the spectator what he ought not to see.” This concern for the rights of artists and spectators was more than a momentary polemical stance. Steinberg has always addressed in his writings not only other art historians but artists and viewers of art. In so doing, he



© 1997 Jasper Johns/Licensed by VAGA, New York, N.Y.

Jasper Johns's Target with Four Faces (1955). Says Steinberg, "Johns doesn't give us the commonplace in a painting . . . but the commonplace as a painting. This is different."

has refused to retreat behind the disengaged superiority of the specialist, or an imagined "objectivity." In railing against the constraints of formalism, he was also striking out against the concomitant "disdain of subjectivity" that underlies it. In "Objectivity and the Shrinking Self," he says, "With the disdain of subjectivity goes the demand that value judgments be eliminated from serious investigations of art since they cannot be objectified. . . . In protecting art history from subjective judgments, we proscribe the unpredictable question into which value and personality may surely enter, but which pertains to art because of art's protean nature." If art history (and also art, it must be said) is to be relevant outside its own sphere, Steinberg realized, it must continue to ask these "unpredictable questions."

Steinberg distrusted the claims that Clement Greenberg and others made for modern art at the expense of historical art, in effect separating modern art from everything that preceded it. "Greenberg's theoretical schema keeps breaking down because it insists on defining modern art without acknowledgment of its content, and historical art without recognizing its formal self-consciousness," Steinberg writes. Considering Jasper Johns's use of given

designs (the American flag, targets, light bulbs, cans of Ballantine Ale), Steinberg compares this recognition of prestructured forms to the way “artists formerly accepted the anatomy of the body.” Responding to those who would accuse Johns of insufficient originality for using these prestructured forms, Steinberg points out that “the best storytellers, such as Homer and Shakespeare, did not, like O. Henry or Somerset Maugham, invent their own plots.” And Steinberg counters Greenberg’s reduction of Old Master painting to an impure “illusionism” or slavish mimesis with historical examples:

Some of the Old Masters overruled the apparent perspective by dispersing identical color patches as an allover carpet spread (Pieter Bruegel, for instance). Some worked with chromatic dissonances to weave a continuous surface shimmer like mother-of-pearl. Many—from Titian onward—insured their art against realism by the obtrusive calligraphy of the brush—laying a welter of brush-strokes upon the surface to call attention to process. Some contrived implausible contradictions within the field, as when the swelling bulk of a foreshortened form is collapsed and denied the spatial ambience to house it. All of them counted on elaborate framing as an integral part of the work (“advertising the literal nature of the support,” as Greenberg says of Collage)—so that the picture, no matter how deep its illusionism, turned back into a thing mounted there like a gem. It was Michelangelo himself who designed the frame of the *Doni Madonna*, an element essential to the precious-mirror effect of its surface.

In “Other Criteria,” Steinberg challenged the separation of modernism from all that had come before it, and so sought to head off the crisis to come in art history. In suggesting (in 1968) that “Modernism may have to be redefined—by other criteria,” Steinberg presaged the claims of postmodernism, and 20 years later this early opposition to modernist theory helped make Steinberg one of the few art historians embraced by theorists of postmodernism such as Hal Foster and Craig Owens. The most astute critic of Greenbergian doctrine, Rosalind Krauss (currently Meyer Schapiro Professor of Modern Art and Theory at Columbia University), has long been a champion of Steinberg’s work and has published two of his most influential essays in her journal *October*.

One of these essays, published in *October* in the summer of 1983 and subsequently as a book by Pantheon in 1984, has now appeared in a second “revised and expanded” edition from the University of Chicago Press: *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (1996). This beautifully produced edition includes the original essay and its “excursuses” (including “collateral matter, additional illustrations, and expanded quotations, as well as polemics, digressions, and unseasonable interruptions I could not resist”), followed by a “retrospect,” nearly as long as the original essay, in which Steinberg further expands on the original work and addresses the



criticisms it engendered when first published. As one artist friend told me after reading the new edition, “The first part changed forever the way I will look at Renaissance art, and the second part made me see why.”

The original essay examines in voluminous detail (aided by more than 250 illustrations) the prominent display of Christ’s genitals in Renaissance painting and sculpture—a recurrent “*ostentatio genitalium*” to complement the *ostentatio vulnerum* (the ritual showing forth of the wounds) of Christ. In picture after picture, the penis of Christ—as an infant, on the cross, and in resurrection—is not merely visible but ostentatiously *displayed*. In many examples, this *ostentatio* is the focus of the composition. The Madonna displays the infant Christ’s genitals to the inquiring eyes of the Magi,

or the wealthy donors who commissioned the paintings, or to any other viewer who might doubt that Christ was incarnated as fully human and complete in every detail. In paintings of the crucified Christ, there is special emphasis on the extravagant knots and flights of his loincloth, and there are all those pietàs, with Christ shown holding his groin. There are even a sizable number of Christs ithyphallic in death. “All of which,” Steinberg points out, “has been tactfully overlooked for half a millennium.” Why? How? And most important, What does it all mean?

While revealing this long-overlooked aspect of Renaissance art, Steinberg speculates on its theological significance as evidence of the *humanation* (Steinberg resuscitates the older term as preferable to its replacement, “Incarnation”) of Christ. “In celebrating the union of God and man in the Incarnation,” he writes, “Western artists began displacing the emphasis, shifting from the majesty of unapproachable godhead to a being known, loved, and imitable. . . . Realism, the more penetrating the better, was consecrated a form of worship. . . . To profess

that God once embodied himself in a human nature is to confess that the eternal, there and then, became mortal and sexual. Thus understood, the evidence of Christ's sexual member serves as the pledge of God's humanation."

Even before the Renaissance was over, this new realism employed by Western artists prompted censorial actions by ecclesiastical conservatives. Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*, carved in marble for the Sta. Maria sopra Minerva in Rome in 1514, showing a Christ "complete in all parts of a man" was "disfigured by a brazen breechclout," as Steinberg puts it, by church officials. All two- and three-dimensional 16th-century copies of the statue added aprons to cover the offending member. In Steinberg's view, this misplaced modesty effected a denaturing or *de-humanation* of Christ that has continued into the modern age. "If Michelangelo denuded his *Risen Christ*," writes Steinberg, "he must have sensed a rightness in his decision more compelling than inhibitions of modesty; must have seen that a loincloth would convict these genitalia of being 'pudenda,' thereby denying the very work of redemption which promised to free human nature from its Adamic contagion of shame." It is this "possibility of a human nature without human guilt" that has been obscured in the "modern oblivion" that Steinberg decries in his book.

The Sexuality of Christ is clearly a work of genius, and Steinberg's address, as always, is generous, directed toward any intelligent reader. What is not so apparent to the nonspecialist reader is the revolutionary content of the essay in terms of art history. Such a reader is somewhat surprised to learn that the book was greeted by a storm of protest from some art historians (and at least one formidable philosopher) when it first appeared. As one commentator noted,



Michelangelo's Risen Christ (1514–20) has stood in Sta. Maria sopra Minerva in both its original (opposite page) and covered states.

“No subject is more taboo in art history than the sexuality of Christ.” Or, one might add, in Christianity itself. But we are told that theologians were generally convinced or at least intrigued by Steinberg’s analysis. It was the art historians who were outraged. A number of them took Steinberg’s thesis as an affront to the profession.

In his “reintroduction” to the second edition, Steinberg writes:

Gladly would the present publisher have issued this book in a second edition without doubling its size, but I said no; I would not deprive it of the interest accrued since 1983. The book had elicited questions that could not be dodged without gross discourtesy, especially those posed in goodwill or in good-natured banter, and more especially those intended to kill. These last were the more intriguing to deal with, but I have tried to resist playing favorites. . . . To review judgmental decisions, to make judges accountable for their opinions, seems only just. It is also good sport.

Steinberg’s retrospect is in great measure a reply to one particular criticism leveled at *The Sexuality of Christ* by the eminent British philosopher (and author of the magisterial *Painting as an Art*, 1984) Richard Wollheim. Reviewing the original book for the *New York Times Book Review*, Wollheim called Steinberg “one of the sharpest intellects working in art history,” and the book “an exotic feast for which we should be grateful.” But he also warned readers to be wary of Steinberg’s proofs. “The most disturbing aspect of this strange, haunting book, with its great boldness of conception,” cautioned Wollheim, “is the resolute silence it maintains on all alternative views.” In other words, the great man had lost his *objectivity*, and had therefore compromised his professional authority. The striking of this velvet-covered mallet had the effect of calling Steinberg to order.

In his retrospect, Steinberg the advocate sets out to answer each and every counterargument ever made in print to refute his original findings and interpretations. (He mentions the many positive responses from colleagues and other reviewers only briefly, in a footnote.) Such a text might have read like a legal brief, and there are times when the litigious intent does threaten to overwhelm both reader and writer, and the relentless rehearsal of evidence to induce a kind of penis ennui. Responding to the comments of the British Renaissance specialist David Ekserdjian, Steinberg wryly characterizes his own excessiveness in this way: “The charge was made in one sentence—and I now answer in six long-winded pages, like an exegete expatiating on a scriptural verse.” What redeems this obsessive “antirrhethikos” (an answering back) is the astonishing clarity, insight, and humor of the writing. No matter how complex the arguments and counterarguments become, and no matter how often they are repeated, Steinberg’s language is always fresh—an enactment of the truth that clarity and

depth are complementary. For an innocent (nonexpert) reader, the pleasures are considerable.

Steinberg's writing has always been remarkably accessible, coming as it does out of a generosity of address that is especially rare in writing on art. Unfortunately, the general reader for whom Steinberg writes has lately become an endangered species, due, among other factors, to the impoverishment and consolidation of the publishing industry. (By the time Panofsky's *Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* was reissued in 1971, the great humanist already found it necessary, in his preface, to enclose the "general reader" in quotation marks, signaling the precariousness of its referent.)

In addition to its other attractions for a general readership, *The Sexuality of Christ* is a glimpse into art history's internecine conflicts. Charles Hope, of the prestigious Warburg Institute in London, reviewed *The Sexuality of Christ* in the *London Review of Books* in 1984. In his "answer back" to the dismissive review, Steinberg describes Hope as "an art historian widely admired for his zeal in policing the field." Downplaying the significance of the *ostentatio genitalium*, Hope wrote, "There is nothing special about the fact that Christ's genitals are depicted in so many paintings of the Madonna. In Renaissance art virtually all babies are shown naked, or at least naked below the waist. The genitals are, in a sense, the attribute of babyhood, and for many people they are also rather cute." To which Steinberg replied:

No doubt; and this must be why the high-throned Madonna in Figs. 5 and 82 presents her boy's penis to the protégés of the Theological Virtues, as if to say, "Cute, don't you think?"

The remark about genitals being the attribute of babyhood is a surprise. One expects to hear protests that babyhood pervades an infant's whole mind and body, so why pick on the penis? Has Hope succumbed to SC's [*The Sexuality of Christ's*] insidious fetishism? On the contrary; the observation is designed to resist it. If we can be persuaded that all babyhood is ("in a sense") defined by the genitals, we shall have further reason to deny special status to the Christ Child's.

But that is a hopeless task. No appeal to babyhood's alleged attribute, to naturalism or stylistic coherence, to Renaissance fashions in putto dress or the cuteness of teeny penises—no amount of such baby talk explains what we are given.

But it is the blandishments of *The Sexuality of Christ's* two principal accusers, Richard Wollheim and the medieval historian Caroline Bynum, that drive Steinberg over the edge of professional decorum. Following Wollheim's criticisms, Caroline Bynum wrote that "Steinberg's reading of a number of pictures of the adult Christ in which he sees an actual erection under the loincloth is questionable." Later on she refers to "some of the legitimate questions critics [i.e. Wollheim] have raised about Steinberg, such as the question of

how much of the artistic attention to genitals is simply naturalism, or doubts about what certain painted folds of drapery really conceal.” The reference is to Maerten van Heemskerck’s *Man of Sorrows* of 1532, in which Christ’s loincloth clearly delineates an erection. After a parenthetical sigh—“(What follows is written with a touch of exasperation; I hope it shows.)”—Steinberg offers a painstaking description of the plainly illustrated picture and then writes:

Now if Wollheim and Bynum have “legitimate . . . doubts about what certain painted folds of drapery really conceal,” do they have an alternative, non-phallic candidate for this nuisance that detains the ceremony before its last cadence? What sort of “stylistic feature” would they have us think lurks under that cloth? Stray undulation? Random updraft? Hot air? Renaissance draperies are spirited dialogues with the body, and to belabor them with description is tiresome. But it needs doing to call a pretentious bluff: the affectation of rigorous standards by hit-and-run scolds who pronounce the erection motif to be “questionable,” but frame no question and stay for no answer.

The polemical vociferousness in the retrospect will surprise those who still think of art history as a gentle profession, but it will delight those who have had enough of art history’s “stagnant peace,” and who recognize what is really at stake in such conflicts.

The subject of Christ’s sexuality and humanation is a compelling one, and it emerges as a part of what may be seen as Steinberg’s subject at large, something that has recurred throughout his work and grown more incisive and insistent of late: namely, the ever-mysterious relation between the erotic and the spiritual, and between sensual apprehension and mental understanding or verbal articulation. Steinberg’s deep understanding of art comes out of his physical experience of actual works, never out of books (although he is one of the most erudite scholars working today). His impatience with art historians who develop bookish theories about works of art without ever really looking at what is before them sometimes erupts into rage. To him, these art historians and critics are like the late-16th-century writer Lomazzo, whose comments on Michelangelo’s *Pietà* Steinberg once dismissed with the line, “But he was writing from memory, after having gone blind.”

One of the most persistent criticisms leveled at *The Sexuality of Christ* has been that Steinberg relies too much on the evidence of the pictures themselves and not enough on more “authoritative” substantiating texts. The hapless Charles Hope says the art historian’s task is to “understand what the art of the Renaissance meant to people at the time *by reading what they said about paintings* and about their faith” (Steinberg’s emphasis added), to which Steinberg adds, “What we ourselves think we see in the pictures is most likely capricious.” While of course drawing copiously from historical written sources to support his theological speculations, in *The Sexuality of Christ* and elsewhere Steinberg treats pictures themselves as primary sources. This is appar-

ently something that is just not done in reputable art history, especially in Renaissance art history. Any conclusions about the meaning of pictures must be supported by contemporary written texts, and texts always trump pictures if the two differ.

This textual prejudice becomes a special target of Steinberg's scorn: "Textism as I define it is an interdictory stance, hostile to any interpretation that seems to come out of nowhere *because it comes out of pictures*, as if pictures alone did not constitute a respectable provenance. . . . To my mind, the deference to far-fetched texts with mistrust of pictures is one of art history's inhibiting follies. It surely contributed to the obnubilation, the Cloud of Unseeing, that caused Christ's sexual nature as depicted in Renaissance art to be overlooked." This insistence on looking, rather than overlooking, is Steinberg's signature. The literature of art history is rife with interpretations of works of art that seem entirely plausible—until one really looks at the work itself. This is not to say that the eye, even Leo Steinberg's eye, is always right. Like the mind of which it is a part, the eye is fallible. But it is always the point closest to the object under scrutiny. Steinberg's conclusion to the original essay of *The Sexuality of Christ* is an appeal for just this kind of "objectivity":

I have risked hypothetical interpretations chiefly to show that, whether one looks with the eye of faith or with a mythographer's cool, the full content of the icons discussed bears looking at without shying. And perhaps from one further motive: to remind the literate among us that there are moments, even in a wordy culture like ours, when images start from no preformed program to become primary texts. Treated as illustrations of what is already scripted, they withhold their secrets.

These lines—regarded as evidence of Steinberg's impertinence and apostasy by art historians who disagree with him—are, on the contrary, an impassioned argument for the continuing relevance of art history. As a critic (it is really only an excuse to get close to works of art), I am drawn to works of art and literature that change the way I perceive the world. Leo Steinberg's writings do this again and again. The overwhelming effect of his writing—on Michelangelo's *Pietà*, or Picasso's *Sleepwatchers*, or Hans Haacke's installations—is to include the reader in his passionate seeing. In his imagination of a public for art, he recognizes that the relation between art and its public does not just happen; that the connection must be *made*. "Making things relevant is a mode of seeing," he once wrote. Of this seeing, Steinberg has made a literature. And he has always been clear about what is at stake: "The objects of our enquiry depend for their sheer existence on admiration. Art is cherished, or it does not survive."

A Balkan Comedy

Politics and daily life in Romania since 1989 have been as strange, and at times as sinister, as they were during the 24-year rule of Nicolae Ceausescu. Three recent events—two weddings and a funeral—drew the author into the absurdist drama of postcommunist Romania.

by William McPherson



The marriage of Margareta of Romania and Radu Duda on September 21, 1996, marked a symbolic coming together of two former dynasties, royal and communist.

Comedies are supposed to end with a wedding, where this one begins. The funeral comes later. The wedding, a royal wedding at that, involves an ancient dynasty that was but has effectively ceased to be. And, in a sense, it was a royal funeral too, in an incipient dynasty that would have been but never quite was. But first the wedding, which could not have taken place but for the events that began to unfold some 50 years before.

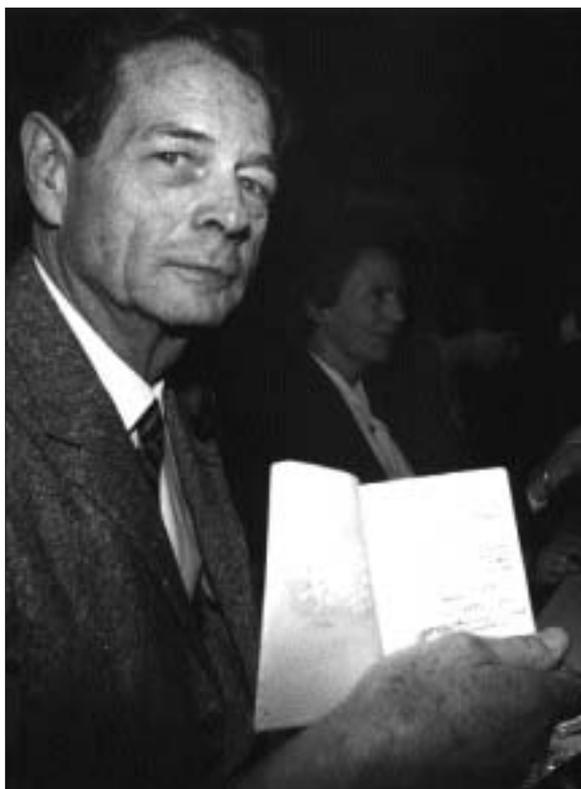
On August 23, 1944, the tall and handsome King Michael of Romania—now the father of the bride—threw the country’s pro-Nazi dictator into a palace safe and turned his country to the Allies, thereby shortening the course of the war by some months. The next year at Yalta, the Allies thanked him by ceding his country to the Soviets, who then betrayed him—a kind of double double-cross. The Americans gave him a Jeep and a medal. By December 30, 1947, the Communists had completed their takeover of his country. Under threat of gunfire, the popular king, then only 26, was forced to abdicate, hustled onto a train and into exile. He was the last Balkan monarch to flee his country.

And thus began the remarkable chain of events that culminated in the unlikely marriage in Switzerland on September 21 of last year of the king’s eldest daughter and designated heir, H.R.H. the Princess Margareta of Romania, to Radu Duda, the son of a former member of the same Communist Party that had expelled the king 49 years before.

The party, of course, no longer officially exists in Romania. It expired shortly after the execution of the country’s last dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, on December 25, 1989. Nor does the throne. Still, by the standards of both families, that of the former king and that of the former apparatchik, this was an astonishing event. A few years before, it would have been unimaginable.

But in this postmodern age, love conquers even the differences between the Hohenzollerns of Sigmaringen and the Dudas of Iasi. Not to mention the queen of Spain, the former empress of Iran, the former king and queen of Greece, and the past and present highnesses of various principalities and powers, the dukes and archdukes, princes, princesses, and archduchesses, remnants of the great families that once ruled Europe who crowded into the small Orthodox church of St. Gherassimos on a pleasant if occa-





Visa canceled: One of King Michael's attempts to return to Romania after the overthrow of Nicolae Ceauflescu was blocked at the Zurich airport.

sionally overcast Saturday morning in Lausanne to witness the event. (Their beleaguered British kinfolk, none of whom was there, were reliably reported to be fretting over their own future at Balmoral in Scotland.) Except for Farah Diba of Iran, they are all cousins of one degree or another, and they do stick together. The Almanach de Gotha is a very cozy family, almost, one might say, bourgeois, even to the jewelry—except for Princess Margareta's. She wore a truly dazzling tiara from the vaults of Cartier in Geneva. The gold in the bridegroom's father's mouth was the real thing, too, not the ersatz variety

around the throat of one of the archduchesses, as my companion, who has an eye for these matters, pointed out.

The man who captured the heart of the 47-year-old princess, Radu Duda, is an actor 11 years her junior from the provincial capital of Iasi in northeastern Romania. His father, René Corneliu Duda, is a professor of public health and management at the University of Medicine there. From 1992 until 1996, he served on the Iasi city council for the party that seized power in Romania in December 1989 and held it firmly until November 1996. That party's uncontested leader is a one-time high Communist official, former president and now senator Ion Iliescu, who seemed to regard the king as his nemesis, or one of them. He should have looked closer to home. Abandoned finally by the secret police, or so it is presumed, and dogged by seven years of corruption at the top and worsening conditions for the rest, Iliescu was defeated in the presidential elections of last November 17, the first Romanian head of state ever to pass from power through the polls. Easier lies the head that wore the crown than seized it.

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King Michael has never renounced his claim to be the legal constitutional monarch of Romania. For that reason among others, Iliescu was determined to keep him from ever seeing Romania again, to the point of using Kalashnikovs if necessary. He proved that on the king's first attempt to return to his country, on Christmas Eve 1990, one year after the still-puzzling events that put Iliescu and his group of former *nomenclaturisti* in power. After a few hours of fear and confusion, the king was forced back on his plane and for the second time made to leave the country at gunpoint. He tried to return several times after that, occasionally getting so far as the airport. The one brief visit Iliescu eventually permitted him, at Easter 1992, drew such vast and cheering throngs in Bucharest—some hundreds of thousands, by most accounts—that the Power (Puterea, as they say in Romania) was terrified, and the Iliescu regime denied all subsequent requests. Fear of another last-minute denial was the main reason the princess did not attempt to hold her wedding in Romania, where she has been many times since 1989. Of the family, only the king was forbidden to enter his country.



During last autumn's electoral campaign, one of the television advertisements for Iliescu and his Romanian Party of Social Democracy showed the face of his opponent, Emil Constantinescu, transmuting slowly into the face of King Michael. A vote for Constantinescu was a vote for the king. The majority of Romanians were not ready for that. This sophisticated, computer-generated manipulation of images smelled suspiciously like the work of the notorious American election consultants hired in secrecy by the Power. Whoever thought of it, however, the message was clear: if the king should return, the boyars (owners of the old landed estates) must soon follow. The boyars will seize your land, your houses and apartments, your factories and jobs. That message had served the party well in the national elections four years before. On the eve of those elections, an official of predominantly Hungarian Harghita County took me on a tour of his mountainous domain. "The opposition wants to bring back the king, and the king will bring back the boyars," he said, repeating, as if it were indisputable, the refrain I had heard many times before. Moments later, he pointed out what had been a collective dairy farm. After the revolution it was bankrupt, he told me. The farm had borrowed a lot of money for new milking machines, new barns. It was intended to be a model of a dairy farm, but after the revolution it couldn't pay its debts. "So the manager bought it exactly then, and now he rents its land and equipment to the peasants."

"The same manager?"

"Yes, of course the same manager. There was only one manager, so it had to be the same."

"I thought you told me that if the king returns, he will bring back the boyars."

Yes, he agreed. That is what he'd said, that is what would happen.

I gestured toward the farm. “But the boyars are already here.”

The pattern was repeated throughout the country. In the months immediately following December 1989, the Communist managers, having sold what moveable assets they could from the enterprises they directed and already considerably diminishing their value, bought them from the state for a fraction of their worth. This was the beginning of privatization in Romania.



A dismal late November afternoon in Bucharest, 1990, the lobby of the Hotel Intercontinental, at that time one of the few warm places in the city. I am introduced to a man in his mid-forties named Paul.

“Paul?”

“Paul of Romania, of course.”

“Oh, of course.”

At the time I, and most Romanians, had no idea who this Paul of Romania was, although since the events of December everyone had learned about King Michael. What I did know was that one of the newspapers then controlled by the ruling party had published a letter from the Empress Elizabeth—another unknown—claiming that a Prince Paul, not Michael, was the rightful heir to the throne. The Power, although it disapproved of the throne, seemed to approve of that. Later I learned that Paul Lambrino was the direct descendant, two generations removed, of a very brief morganatic marriage by King Michael’s father, a marriage that was almost immediately annulled and its child unrecognized. I never did learn



The would-be royals: Paul Lambrino, who claims to be the rightful heir to Romania’s throne, marries Lia Triff on September 15, 1996.

who the Empress Elizabeth was, and as far as I know, having served the purpose of the Power, she was never heard from again.

She was not, in any case, at the wedding that took place in Bucharest just the Sunday before the wedding of Princess Margareta and Radu Duda in Lausanne. Paul Lambrino, now certified by a court in a small Romanian provincial town as His Royal Highness, Prince Paul of Romania (a small step on his way to the throne that isn't), was joined with great pomp and the blessings of two of Romania's richest businessmen and one titled German, to Lia Triff, the divorced fifth wife of the late San Francisco lawyer Marvin Belli. The timing was an unfortunate coincidence, the bride wrote in a letter of apology to Princess Margareta; her mother was facing major surgery and they wanted to have the ceremony before the operation. More recently a figure on the London social scene, the now-Princess Lia was fined \$75,000 by the California Fair Political Practices Commission for dubious handling of campaign contributions when she ran for the state senate there in 1984. The Bucharest newspapers say she is of Romanian origin. The London newspapers say she is from Hamtramack, a working-class community near Detroit. They also say she bounced a couple of checks at a London stationer's.



In Switzerland, all that seemed to have been forgotten, or unknown to, or at least politely overlooked by the 180 guests who gathered for lunch after the ceremony under an extraordinary gauzy tent—the pearly light was soft as mist—at the Polo Club in Mies, outside Geneva. The toast was given by the bride's godfather, the former king Constantine of Greece, who still can't return to his country. "You," he said to the bridegroom, "are responsible for the future of Romania." A heavy charge, but the faithful cheered. Radu Duda, sitting between his princess bride and the Empress Farah Diba, smiled politely. The reaction of his father, René, flanked by Queen Anne of Romania (whose father, Prince of Bourbon-Parma, by curious coincidence was also named René) and the Archduchess of Austria, went unnoticed, although probably not by the queen, who is a keen and intelligent observer. A Romanian toasted the king. Politics seemed about to rear its awkward head. The skies burst and the rain poured down. The tent held up nicely. Margareta thanked her sister, the Princess Sophie, who had organized the event to its smallest detail—except for the Romanian royalist's toast. But that was in Romanian, so few understood. Radu Duda kissed the hand of the queen of Spain. No, he wasn't particularly nervous. "Perhaps my experience in the theater. . . ." The couple passed by each of the tables to chat with the guests, several of whom had been Princess Margareta's roommates at the University of Edinburgh, where she read sociology, political science, and international law; others were members of the board of the foundation she established in 1990 for charitable work in Romania. The rain stopped, there was a flurry of kisses to hand and cheek and air, the couple was driven off in a Rolls cabriolet, and the jolly party ended.



That evening there was a smaller informal gathering for family and friends of the bride and the bridegroom at Villa Serena, the king's spacious but unpretentious house in nearby Versoix—so informal, in fact, that the queen, a descendant of Louis XIV, was discovered washing dishes in the kitchen and the grandchildren passed trays of canapés (“Want some?”), and so unpretentious that the paint is flaking from the living room ceiling. Luxe it is not, but comfortable and friendly it is.

A principled, modest, and rather formal man, 75 last October 25, the king remains devoted to the country where he was reared and educated but which he scarcely saw in 48 years. At the time, he had little hope of seeing it again. Now, after the general elections of November 3, in which the ruling Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR) with its allies lost control of the Parliament, and especially after the presidential elections two weeks later in which

Iliescu was replaced by Emil Constantinescu, a former professor of geology and the candidate of the democratic coalition, the king is again able to return to Romania, if not to reign. Not the dream he had once envisioned, surely; not the dream of the most ardent royalists that faded this day with Princess Margareta's marriage to a Romanian and a commoner; but a kind of vindication for the long years in exile when the Communists were in power, and for the various humiliations inflicted since. Three months after the elections, however, the question of his Romanian citizenship and the legality of his



Emil Constantinescu, head of the democratic coalition, won last November's presidential election.

abdication were still under consideration by the Ministry of Justice. A decision was expected “*imediat*,” as every waiter in Romania says on taking one's order. Although his citizenship was finally restored, the more difficult issue of the legality of his abdication was not addressed. The restoration of the monarchy seems remote at best, but at least King Michael has at last been honored by his own people in his own country.

The Romanians have a proverb—the language seems made for proverbs—*Pestele de la cap se împrute*—the fish rots from the head.

Did I know the rest of it? the king asked.

No, I had thought that was all of it.

“*Dar de la coada se curata*” — But you clean it from the tail. Romania has a population of some 23 million—a very big fish indeed.



One week to the day after the wedding of Princess Margareta, I arrived at the four-star Hotel Lido in Bucharest, where a modest single room costs \$190 a night, then approximately twice the monthly salary of the average Romanian, and it was necessary to request towels and toilet paper. At the reception, I changed a minimal amount of money.

“May I have a receipt, please?”

“Receipt?” The woman, who speaks English, looked as if she had never heard such a request before.

“*O chitanta.*”

“*Da.* Yes, of course.” She produced a kind of receipt on a memo pad, without the usual official stamp and for 3,000 lei more than she had given me.

“I believe you owe me more money.”

“Yes, of course.”

Dar de la coada se curata, I thought but did not say. I said instead, “I’m glad I asked for the receipt.” This produced no reaction.

The Hotel Lido, a fine old art deco building in the center of Bucharest, was bought from the state and spruced up by the PiIunescu brothers, who, adept in the ways of the savage capitalism that runs rampant in this country today and adept in the old ways of savage socialism as well, have become in a short time three of the richest men in Romania—and there are some very, very rich men in Romania today. Two of the brothers very close to



In December 1989, Ion Iliescu (hand raised) stands with other members of the National Salvation Front, the reformist communists who ousted Ceauflescu but kept their own grip on power.

then-president Iliescu acted as *nasi*, or godfathers, to Paul Lambrino and Lia Triff. (One of them, George, is now, after the elections, officially under investigation for corruption.) The role of the *nas* in Eastern Orthodox weddings usually involves support and protection for the couple, and certainly a substantial gift. Covering all bases, the brothers once offered hospitality to Princess Margareta. And just the night before, one of their planes from the first and only private airline in Romania bore home from Vienna, where he had died, the body of Nicu Ceausescu, the youngest, favored son of Nicolae and Elena, the presumptive heir to the dynasty that would have been but never was.

It was for the funeral of Nicusor—“little Nicu,” as he was sometimes affectionately known—that I found myself arriving to the sulphurous fumes of Bucharest this particular afternoon. In its way, the death of Nicu Ceausescu of esophageal hemorrhages from complications of cirrhosis at the age of 45 was the final end of another dream, or a nightmare, depending on how you look at it. In Romania, this dream too has been a long time dying.



Nicu is a mythic creature here, part good old boy, part bad boy, part beast. Before the events of December 1989, the gossip about him among the *protipendada* was hushed, horrific, and incessant, tending to focus on the bestial rather than the better part. (May Communist-era Romanian-English dictionary defines *protipendada* as “*obs.* high society”; neither the word nor the society it denotes was ever obsolete in Romania.) Everyone knew he had killed a woman with his car on one of the boulevards of Bucharest when he was 18, and there was talk of another fatal accident a few years later. Everyone said he had forced the Olympic gymnast Nadia Comeneci to be his lover. Drunk, he was said to have urinated on a plate of oysters (and then raped a waitress) at a dinner given by the man chosen by his parents to groom him for the dynastic succession, the one-time foreign minister fitofan Andrei and, until its dissolution with the arrest of all its members in December 1989, a member of the ruling Political Executive Committee, the PolExCo, Romania’s politburo.

“Yes, I played the card of Nicu,” Stefan Andrei once told me over a long series of vodkas—Stolichnaya, not his favorite but the best available—only partly relieved by the spicy grilled sausages known as *mititei* in the pleasant latticed garden of the Restaurant Select, favored before and since by the party elite. He seemed a little rueful. It was not, after all, a winning card. “Yes, I was more near to Nicusor.” There was resignation, affection, even a kind of admiration in his voice; it does take some nerve, however depraved, to urinate on a plate of oysters, even for a Ceausescu. “But Nicu, his brother, his sister Zoia—they all have the [power] microbe, the gene of Ceausescu.”

As a member of the PolExCo who remained with Ceausescu until the end, Stefan Andrei was infected by the microbe, too. He had been tried and convicted with the rest of the Committee, but his sentence was suspended for health reasons in November 1992 and he was pardoned by presidential decree in March 1994, six weeks before our meeting. He still lives in his

old villa near the restaurant, sitting in his library with his fine collection of books around him, thinking about the memoirs he is planning to write, and collecting his pension which, as he pointed out, was less than half of the bill for the vodkas and *mititei*. He took it from the waiter and checked it carefully before pocketing some cigarettes from my package and handing the bill to me. “You are paying, yes?”

Everyone knew, or at least believed, that Nicu simply took whatever woman he fancied, a Neanderthal machismo that plays very well in Romania. There is, as a counterintelligence officer told me a few days after the funeral, “much folklore in what he was said to have done.” Doubtless true. Nonetheless, he fancied a lot of women, and however great his powers of persuasion may have been—he was a handsome young man—they were not nearly so compelling as the immense power of his name. “His real interests were drinking and sex,” a former acquaintance told me. “Politics was only the means.”

But once there had been another Nicu, or so those who knew him claim, a young man deeply in love with a classmate. When the girl was six months pregnant, she was seized in her house by the secret police on the orders of his mother, Elena, and taken to Elias Hospital, the hospital of the party elite, where an abortion—illegal under Ceausescu—was forced upon her. Nicu was then made to marry someone his mother found more desirable, though he did not. The story, widely repeated, was that he woke up the morning after his wedding and said, “Who is this cow in my bed?”

In the equivalent in Romania of a high school memory book, one of his female classmates wrote, “I hope you always remain as honest as you are now.” He went to university and, like his older brother, Valentin, studied



On June 3, 1991, Nicu Ceauflescu, the dictator's youngest son, received a 20-year sentence for various crimes. He served two and a half years.

physics, though unlike Valentin he did not continue his studies beyond his undergraduate years. He chose a career in the party instead, or perhaps it was chosen for him. He was not an intellectual, as were his siblings. Partly because of this, several have described him as being tormented by an excruciating inferiority complex. As a boy, he was badly beaten by both his parents. He sucked his thumb until he was 22 or 23. For that reason and for many years, he was called “*Degetarian*” —thumb-sucker—but behind his back, of course.

A classmate who knew him from the age of six said after his death, “I don’t think he was a cruel person—personally corrupt, maybe, but not personally cruel. Beria [Lavrenti Beria, the chief of Stalin’s secret police] was a cruel person. He wanted to be feared. Nicu wanted to be liked, though he was erratic and sometimes brutal. Zoia once said he’s crazy, and he was a little. But when he began to acquire power and later, when he was head of the Union of Communist Youth, he was always ready to talk to former classmates—you could just ring him up—and he would try to help with the problem.”

That was the good Nicu, the Nicu of the high school memory book, the Nicu who later liked to play football with schoolboys on the streets of Sibiu, who always had a bottle of whisky in his desk drawer and packages of Kents for the members of his council there. (In Romania at that time, Kents were less a cigarette than a currency, and remained so until well into 1990.) And if he arrived a little late and a little hungover for the weekly council meetings, he always made a joke about it and passed around the Scotch and the Kents.

People liked him in Sibiu, or at least those I have spoken to said they did. He gave them food—a rather telling locution to the foreign ear. It was used daily in Romania to describe the government’s largesse in handing out meat, milk, bread, water, heat—or, when the necessities were denied, its parsimony. They still say it.



There was a joke before the revolution. An American passing a long line of people in front of a shop asks his Romanian companion the reason for the queue. “They give us meat,” the Romanian says. The American says, “I’d rather pay for it.”

There is another Romanian expression, part of the folk wisdom:

*Capul ce se pleaca*Π
Sabia nu-l taie.

(The head that bows is not cut off.) There are two more lines, however, which make the point of the proverb. I did not hear them until much later:

Dar cu umilinta]Π
Ea îl înconvoaie.

(But it is covered in humiliation.) The reason I hadn’t heard the rest of the expression is that few Romanians seem to have heard it either.



Nicu's older brother and sister, Valentin, 48, and Zoia, a year or two younger, were rather more quietly pursuing interests in nuclear physics and mathematics respectively while their brother was moving quickly up the ranks. Valentin, in fact, studied several years at the University of London in the late 1960s and has a doctorate in nuclear physics from the University of Bucharest. Zoia was once, at least, a serious mathematician. She now lives a very reclusive life, though Valentin is still affiliated with the Magurele Institute of Atomic Physics in Bucharest, where his colleagues defended him at the time of the turbulence. Only Nicu chose a party career. The television news here the day after his death showed old family movies of Elena in happier times lovingly, tenderly caressing Nicu's face, and Zoia flirting coyly with her father. Valentin is standing a little awkwardly to the side. At that time, he was not particularly close to either his parents or his siblings.

Valentin, together with Nicu and Zoia, had been arrested during the violent events that toppled his parents in December 1989, but he and Zoia were released from prison after eight months; Nicu, the youngest, the party activist, had been sentenced to 20 years, charged at first with genocide, which was later reduced to aggravated murder, and finally to illegal possession of weapons. He had been arrested because he was an alternate member of the 15-member Political Executive Committee, as well as first secretary—a very important post—for the county of Sibiu, in the capital city of which some 90 people had been killed during the revolution, presumably on his orders. But as with so many things connected with the events of December 1989 in Romania, exactly who gave the order remains unclear. And as with the charges, the sentence, too, was reduced—from 20 to 16 years. Nicu served two and a half, the time for illegal possession, and was released in 1993—not, Valentin contends but as the government suggested, for health reasons, though he was seriously ill, but because he had served his time. All the other charges were eventually dismissed, as were the much lesser charges against Valentin and Zoia.

I did not know Nicu. I saw him a few times in the courtroom at his trial, a gaunt figure with a sometimes piercing gaze, and after his release from prison he was once pointed out to me behind the wheel of a car. But I do know his brother Valentin. I first met him in the spring of 1991, a few months after his release but before all the charges were dismissed. He came to dinner with a mutual friend in my small apartment in one of the thousands of blocks of flats his father had ordered built during the 24 years he ruled Romania. He seemed nervous at first, but then so was I. It felt very strange indeed to look across the coffee table and see his mother's features written so clearly on his face. But the nervousness passed, helped perhaps by the fact that I took very few notes, perhaps by the Ballantines, perhaps by his ease in English, which he speaks fluently and virtually without accent. In any case, he stayed until three in the morning. It was the 10th birthday of his son, whom he had not seen since December 23, 1989. He did not know his whereabouts nor that of his former wife, the boy's mother.

For reasons I cannot explain, Valentin and I became, I think, friends.

Some kind of friends, anyway, as they say here. It is hard to know how to be friends with the enigmatic elder son of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, whose power was near absolute in this country that they brought to ruin, whose increasing capacity for willful blindness and self-deception was at least extraordinary, and who were shot like dogs on Christmas Day 1989. I cannot imagine what it is like to be Valentin. I mentioned his parents' deaths that night, and he responded very briefly and without affect or inflection. Their trial itself was a joke. It lasted little more than an hour and was conducted by their former accomplices, including Ceausescu's deputy minister of defense, soon to become one of Romania's richest men and now with the change in regime formally charged with abuse of office, and Virgil Magureanu, who suddenly became and who remained until April 30 of this year—almost six months after the elections—the head of the secret police, the Romanian Information Service (SRI), the successor to the old Securitate in which he had served as an officer. All of them clearly wanted the couple silenced. The charge—another travesty—was genocide. Anybody anywhere who turned on the television that day saw their crumpled, bloodied corpses awkwardly splayed on the frozen earth, the camera closing in to show that Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu were not on their way to Paraguay or North Korea or China but were in fact dead on the ground, eyes glazing, in a courtyard in an undisclosed location in Romania. It was that image of Elena I saw when I looked at Valentin's face. Valentin did not see the tape.

The ostensible reason for this grisly bit of television was to stop the counter-revolutionary terrorists from shooting. Although everybody saw the terrorists, even grappled with them and turned them over to various authorities, after that, as Nicu said in a deposition published here the day after he died, “all were a little extraterrestrial.” Units of the Army? Of the Ministry of Interior? The Securitate? No one knew, and those who might have known were not saying. The terrorists had simply disappeared. Like the fabled millions if not billions of dollars the family was supposed to have stashed in secret accounts abroad, which now seem more likely to have been government or party or Securitate treasure than a personal horde accumulated to maintain a life of luxury abroad in the event of a hasty forced departure. The Ceausescus were despots, their power was for all practical purposes absolute, but unlike Nicu they were rather austere despots, not in the Latin American or Caribbean mode. At the time, however, the new group in power was comparing them to the Marcos family—diamonds in the chandeliers, gold in the bathrooms, that sort of thing. After a couple of years of pro forma activity on the part of the government, the search for the money—like the search for the terrorists—was quietly dropped and the firm of Canadian accountants discharged, just a little short of finding at least some of the millions they believed existed. As to the diamonds in the chandeliers, which even Ted Koppel reported in early 1990, they turned out to be crystal, and the gold the same material as the archduchess's necklace.



The Epoch of Gold, as the Ceausescu era began to be described as it entered its grandiose dynastic phase, started with rather more promise than it ended. After the death of the Romanian Stalinist leader Gheorghiu Gheorghiu-Dej in 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu seemed liberal. In 1968, when he refused to support the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he was in fact genuinely, hugely popular, both at home and in the West. For a time, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, conditions were better in Romania than in the surrounding countries. There was an abundance of goods in the shops and prices were low. Western governments courted Ceausescu as the “maverick” of the Warsaw Pact long after the by-then “Genius of the Carpathians” had ceased to display any maverick tendencies, which were questionable to begin with. (The greatest genius he evidenced was for attaining power and staying there.) Charles de Gaulle visited in 1968, Richard Nixon the following year, and Ceausescu and his wife made several state visits to the West—Buckingham Palace, the Élysée Palace, the White House (three times). As late as 1984, Vice President George Bush praised him as “a good Communist,” although only the year before he had made possession of a typewriter subject to authorization by the police, with the requirement that a sample of its type be registered with them.

The state by this time was controlling the lives of its citizens to the most minute detail: how many calories they could consume, how much soap was needed to keep them clean, what wattage of light bulb could be burned, how high the temperature inside their flats should be. By 1985,



Before the revolution: propaganda in rural Romania extols the leader.



Ceaușescu—the “Genius of the Carpathians”—and his wife Elena visit New Orleans in 1978. Six years later, Vice President Bush called him “a good Communist.”

Ceausescu’s massive “systematization” program had been underway for several years. Hundreds of villages and churches throughout the country were destroyed and their inhabitants herded from their homes into almost uniformly dismal blocks of flats. In Bucharest, he had an entire quarter razed to make way for the gigantic Palace of the People and the Victory of Socialism Boulevard leading up to it. The boulevard is a little longer and a little wider than the Champs-Élysées. The building is larger than the Pentagon, and the scale of its vast halls utterly dwarfs a man. Petre Roman, the first prime minister after the 1989 overthrow and now the leader of the Union of Social Democrats, a major partner in the new power, once told me that it cost \$6 billion to build. It is still unfinished, although part of it now accommodates the lower house of the Parliament. The salons the size of football fields are used for conferences and official events. By and large, the people seem proud of it.



My mother loved me,” Valentin told me the night we first met, “maybe too much.” I think Valentin loved his mother, too. In the last period, separated from his first wife, whom by most accounts his mother despised, he returned to his parents’ home, the sumptuous presidential villa known as the Spring Palace. Perhaps it was for that reason, after years of distancing himself from his parents and the regime—even living in a small apartment with his wife and son and, like every ordinary Romanian, going out in the morning for his bottle of milk and loaf of bread, if there were such to be had—that he allowed himself to be put forward as an alternate member of the Central Committee at the last Party Congress in November 1989, when communist regimes elsewhere were

crumbling and just five weeks before the regime crumbled in Romania, too. Or maybe he was just tired. He never explained.



There is no secret,” Valentin said in a long and sometimes difficult conversation two days after his brother’s funeral. He seldom smiles, and there are many pauses. He is not an easy person, nor does he seem a happy one. “People don’t recognize what they see, that’s all. These people”—he was referring to the Power—“have to hide a lie, and everybody knows it. They don’t feel guilty. That’s the first thing. Have you seen the tapes of Iliescu on December 22?”

Yes, I had. Not only Ion Iliescu but the entire leadership of the National Salvation Front, as the group in power was then known, were standing on the floodlit balcony of the Central Committee Building a few hours after the Ceausescus had fled by helicopter from the roof of the same building. Terrorists had been shooting all around them, resuming again when the front retired within. The other buildings in the enormous square were pocked with bullets for months. The old university library, repository of an irreplaceable collection of books and manuscripts, was destroyed by fire. The balcony went unscathed. The official toll of the dead, revised frequently with a final version released three years after the events, is 1,104; only 160 were killed before the dictator fled. Curious—if the figures are accurate—that the majority of them were killed in Sibiu. “A lot of effort,” Valentin once said, “to kill these two old people.”



The Palace of the People—larger than the Pentagon—was intended to crown Ceauflescu’s sweeping urban and village renewal plan.

Two days after I first arrived in Romania, in January 1990, I was told, “Reality is a secret here. Everybody knows but nobody knows, and nobody knows exactly.”



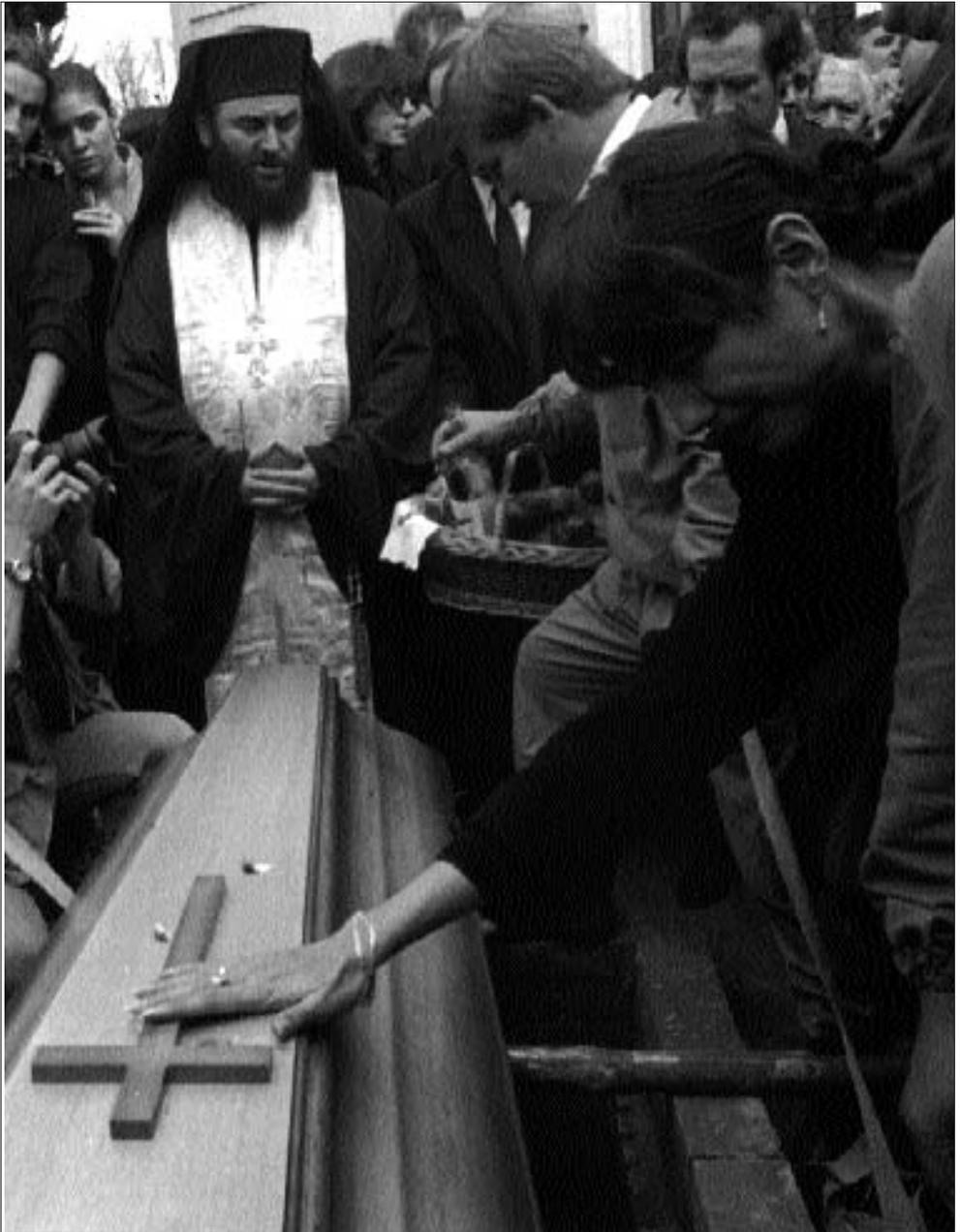
Some months after the Ceausescu murders, word was slowly spread—no one knows why or by whom—that they had been buried in unmarked graves a hundred yards apart in Ghencea Cemetery in southwest Bucharest. Almost seven years later, on the last Sunday in September, in a place of honor in the same cemetery, their youngest son, Nicu—Printisor, as he was also called, the Little Prince, his mother’s presumed favorite, the putative heir—was buried under a pyramid of floral garlands rising nine or 10 feet into the autumn sky, while some thousands filled the cemetery from the doors of the pretty octagonal chapel to the entrance gates, clambering over gravestones (but carefully avoiding the graves themselves) and climbing to the roofs of mausoleums, jostling for a better view.

Journalists stood bored on the chapel steps, smoking cigarettes and waiting for the service to end, while babushkas, babies, smartly dressed women, young people, old people, hordes of security, and men in the traditional ill-fitting brown or gray suits that always seem associated with party congresses pressed around them.

“Who are these people?” Alison Mutler, the Associated Press bureau chief in Bucharest, who has been there longer than any other foreign journalist and seems to know everyone, asked her Romanian colleague Horia Tabacu. “I don’t recognize any of them.”

“*Fosti securisti, carciunari, si babe,*” he replied. Former Securitate (Ceausescu’s secret police), barhoppers, and old ladies. “Nicu’s friends, except for the old ladies. You wouldn’t know them.” And, of course, the just plain curious.

Inside the chapel Nicu was eulogized by Adrian Paunescu (no relation to the brothers), the man who is most often described as Ceausescu’s court poet, once a member of the Central Committee, after 1989 a senator in the new parliament, and at the time of the funeral the presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers’ Party, the PSM, which had been until recently a member of the government’s nationalist left-wing coalition. (He also represented Romania at the Council of Europe and until his electoral defeat in November held a seat on the cultural commission of the Romanian Senate. But then, Ceausescu’s personal physician, who devised the country’s “rational nutrition” program, was for a time minister of health in the successor regime.) Nicu was prayed over by two Romanian Orthodox priests, with music from two choirs, doleful folk music from the Left—Adrian Paunescu’s old youth group called the Circle of Flame—and ecclesiastical chants from the Right—students from the Theological Institute. In Romania, the Left and the Right have a tendency to coalesce harmoniously under the tribal tent of national identity. An old colleague, the former secretary at the Central Committee for the Union of Communist Youth, now the prospering director of the giant construction and engineering company



Dana Radu touches the coffin of her husband, Nicu Ceauflescu, as it is lowered into the grave on September 29, 1996

Carpati, sent Nicu off with the old communist salute and a personal touch: “*Ramas bun, tovarase prim-secretar; adio, prieten drag si iubiti!*” — So long, Comrade First Secretary; good-bye, dear and beloved friend!

The coffin, draped in the postrevolutionary tricolor, was escorted to its brick-lined grave by his brother and sister, his father’s surviving brothers and sister, by a sizeable contingent from the former Central Committee and the Political Executive Committee, and the newly rich in Romania who, in many cases are one and the same—the old and present *protipendada*, in a word, including the Paunescu brother, Viorel, in whose hotel I was staying.

Change at Last?

In the seven years of President Ion Iliescu, the gates in the walls of Cotroceni Palace, the Romanian White House, were solid and forbidding. Since the election last November of President Emil Constantinescu and his prime minister, Victor Ciorbea, the fortress gates have been replaced by graceful wrought iron, affording a view of the drive, the gardens, and the fountains playing within.

More than the green and sunlit afternoons, the magnificent chestnut trees that bloom in May, and the buds on the fragrant lindens—all of which incline one to optimism—more even than the elegant new message on the buses urging Bucharesteans to keep their city clean, more than anything, in fact, the replacement of the gates seems to me an outward and visible sign of the changes beginning to stir within. Moreover, the message on the buses appears to be working: the center of the city is indeed cleaner—or at least remarkably free of trash. There is still plenty of dust from the renovation and new construction going on, and the fumes from the traffic are overpowering. But one of these years Bucharest will be a pleasant, even charming city, something like the “little Paris” Bucharesteans like to think their capital resembled in the 1930s.

There is, in fact, a kind of boom going on here at the moment. Share prices on the new Bucharest Stock Exchange increased an average of 97 percent from April 1 to May 22 on rumors that foreign money was coming into the market. Certainly the average Romanian, or even the above-average Romanian, was not driving up prices. The average salary here is 504,000 lei a month, which works out to about \$70. A young doctor just out of medical school earns less than \$30. A cabinet minister is paid 1.3 million lei: \$185. A high executive earns 1.6 million (\$230) after taxes. He could buy more in 1991 than he can today. Almost everybody could, in fact, and despite the shortages, most people were economically better off under the communist regime. Considering the salaries, food is now very expensive.

How Romanians survive is a mystery to me, and perhaps to many of them, but they have a term, *a se descurca*, which means to manage, to get by (or get around), to figure things out. This remarkable ability has so far stood them in good stead, allowing them to *rezist*—to survive despite the forces determined to crush them—even though one of them tells me fairly frequently, “I do not know if I can resist much longer.” But he does.



After the service Ion Dinca, one of the most powerful persons in Communist Romania after Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, was standing on the steps of the chapel, surveying the crowd. He too was arrested after the revolution, tried with three other highest officials for his part in the events of December 16–22, and sentenced to life in prison. Like the rest of them, he spent a little time there, and was released. At the time of his trial in January 1990, he said in the *limba de lemn*—the wooden language—of the party, “I recognize once again that through my passive attitude which lacked any resistance to the dictator that I had a role in the shooting of the demonstrators and in the decision of the dictator to choke off the demonstrations through blood.” He was, however, the only one of the four to stand before that military tribunal and assume some responsibility for his actions.

Almost seven years later, he looks handsome and fit. His hair is silver; his brown eyes are striking but oddly cold. He hasn’t changed his convictions much, and he still speaks in the familiar *limba de lemn*, though he has a little more spark than he had in 1990. “The old generation

He manages. Perhaps that explains the congestion in the streets despite the price of gasoline, and a lot of other things as well.

It might explain how Adrian Petrescu, once an intelligence officer in Ceaușescu's Securitate, the old secret police almost invariably described as “dreaded,” has managed to remain in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, now as head of the North America desk. He worked for the Department of Foreign Intelligence in Romania and in the United States and Canada. I do not know Petrescu, but from the former intelligence officers I have met who hold or have held high government positions, I am sure he is an agreeable and pleasant fellow. So is the former lobbyist for Ceaușescu (and Mobutu Sese Seko and Saddam Hussein, and others of that ilk), the sometimes baron and sometimes *von*, Edward J. van Kloborg III, whom the Romanian embassy invited to its dinner for Princess Margareta in May. Same faces, different voices. Perhaps *descurca* also explains the agility with which these faces manage to switch sides when convenient: one day Ceaușescu, the next Iliescu, and now Constantinescu.

There does, however, seem to be one standard. “Treason is treason,” a bright and capable official of the new government said recently, referring to those like General Pacepa, who defected in 1978, and others like Mircea Rînceanu, who risked his life and almost lost it to oppose the Ceaușescu regime from within. Leading intellectuals and members of the press express similar sentiments: those who tried to save their country—and there were many—were traitors to it.

One wonders: Which side was history on? Do the Germans consider those who fought against Hitler traitors to Germany? Was opposition to Stalin a betrayal of the Soviet Union? Is the Polish colonel Richard Kuklinski, who in the 1970s revealed Soviet invasion plans for Western Europe and in 1981 informed United States intelligence of Poland's impending plans to impose martial law, a traitor to Poland? The Poles don't think so. He will return to Poland within the next few months to be decorated as an honorary citizen of Kraków.

But Romanians still seem very confused on this matter of fundamental moral importance. It's time they made up their minds on what treason is and who the traitors were.

—W. McP.

Bucharest, June 1

worked for the people,” he declared, “and the new generation only destroys. Even if [the Ceausescu] had faults, they built things. What they built in 25 years, these people couldn't paint as much in 250!”

The crowd jostling us tried to explain, all of them, it seemed, simultaneously. “First, Ceausescu gives us homes. Second, he gives us food.”



Dinca may be half right, at least. Ceausescu did build things. Later my taxi driver took me on a tour of some of the outlying areas of Bucharest, far from the older beaux-arts and art deco center that was attractive once—still is, if you've acquired the taste—and will be again some day. Out here in the urban wilderness is a vast, overwhelming wasteland—fields of dust, unfinished buildings, crumbling walls—an alienating lunar landscape, but somewhere in these partially finished blocks people are living, though none could be seen.

Forget about the paint. “Dinca has right,” the driver exclaimed. “This

will take 250 years just to finish! Just this one building—Ceausescu killed half a quarter to make that, at least 60 houses!” Ceausescu intended to build six such leviathans around the city. Each was to have a huge supermarket of several floors. Only one of the supermarkets is finished, the driver said. It is called Delfinului, the Dolphin’s. “All you can find there is onions.”

“Life is better in prison,” the friend with me said. “It costs one million lei a month (approximately \$300 at that time) to keep a man in jail. He can play chess. He can eat. Maybe he is warm. He wants to stay there. My parents together earn 300,000 a month. What can they do?”



We [members of the PolExCo] are not ashamed of what we did in this country,” Dinca said. “It is these people today who need to be ashamed.” His sons-in-law are now two of the richest men in Romania. They own the ComputerLand stores there, Pizza Hut, and various factories and hotels. A daughter is said to live in New Jersey.

“These people”—and some of those people, too; perhaps they were the same people—were getting into their sparkling Mercedes, their BMWs and the Jaguars, and heading for Vox Maris, one of Bucharest’s largest and most splendid casinos, for the traditional funeral feast. There are a lot of casinos in Bucharest. More than in Las Vegas, they say, but they say a lot of things.

The rest of the crowd milled about for a while, then, as the autumn light began to fade from the great yellowing oaks, slowly dispersed, leaving the pungent smell of burning wax from the hundreds of small yellow candles flickering on the graves of Elena, of Nicolae, and now of Nicu.



Valentin and I were having coffee in the Vox Maris, the same grand casino where the funeral feast was held. It was morning, two days after the funeral, and the crowds had not yet arrived.

“Nicu was never groomed to be the successor. That was [only] the rumor.” He paused for a moment. “But rumors even become the reality.”

“Yes. Especially in Romania.”

“Maybe others in the party thought it would be a good idea. He could command a lot of sympathy. He always wanted to look tough and act strong, but he wasn’t. He was more like a child than anything else.”

“What about the 90 people killed in Sibiu?”

“He did not order the shooting. I know when he’s trying to lie, and he wasn’t lying. I knew immediately. That’s why I defended him so strongly.” He paused and lit another Pall Mall. “Have you noticed? All the heroes in Sibiu now are the militia and the Securitate—all the dead people, and now they are the heroes of the revolution.”

“So the villains are now the heroes?”

“Yes.”

And the heroes are now the villains. The death three weeks before of Grigore Rȃiceanu, an early Communist figure—an *ilegalist*, as they were called—who was one of six to sign the strongest letter of protest to come out of Romania before the revolution, went unremarked and unreported in Romania, perhaps because of his son, Mircea, who had been sentenced to death in 1989 for spying for the Americans and left the country in May 1990, after two attempts on his life. His sentence, which Ceausescu eventually commuted to 20 years, still stands, although the



The grave of Nicolae Ceausescu

new government has been in power more than six months. The death sentence of Ion Mihai Pacepa, the former acting director of foreign intelligence who defected to the West in 1978, also remains in force, although, since the Washington visit of Romanian foreign minister Adrian Severin in April 1997, Pacepa’s sentence is being reconsidered. The list goes on. Many sentences remain to be reconsidered.



One more thing. The long-unmarked grave of Nicolae Ceausescu is now topped by a stone cross—with a red star carved into it. Valentin hasn’t seen it.

April 30, 1997



The Places We Play

Before his death last year, J. B. Jackson stood virtually unchallenged as the pre-eminent scholar of the American landscape. Here, in one of his final essays, Jackson turned his thoughts to leisure, and found that where we play our games often says as much about us as what we choose to play.

by J. B. Jackson



We find ourselves driving down a street in a poor section of town. The uniform frame houses, each with a front porch and a patch of grass, are separated by narrow alleyways leading to the garages. In places the street is bordered by vacant lots and billboards, but along both curbs cars are closely parked.

Traffic proceeds by fits and starts. A dozen or more small children are running along the sidewalks; when they suddenly decide to cross the street and dart out from between the parked cars, some of them stoop to recover a cap or a glove or a baseball they might have dropped. Cars and trucks come to an abrupt halt, but the children show no alarm. They playfully slap the fenders of cars and pluck the aerials. They call

out some kind of greeting or cry of defiance, and skip out of sight.

The vacant lots, ugly with trash and bottles and cans, slope down to a small, stagnant puddle overgrown by weeds. What charm there is in the scene comes from the running children in their bright-colored parkas—blue and purple and green and pink.

When we have worked our way through the street congestion and halt to get our bearings, we watch them as they run and skip. We say what all drivers say on such an occasion: it is a public scandal for children to have to play in so dirty and hazardous a place. Why have they chosen it when they might have been playing in their familiar brick-paved schoolyard? But the street has undeniable attractions: there is a noisy construction site where great trucks come and go; the dark alleyways with their rows of trash barrels invite exploration, and each parked car offers a hideaway. For most of the children home is in one or another of the frame houses, and though they are old enough (so they think) to take care of themselves, they are happy to feel the eye of a parent or of an older brother or sister watching from an upstairs window. Lastly, the proprietor of the small corner convenience store has sworn undying hostility to them. If a ball so much as bounces—or even rolls—on his portion of the sidewalk, he runs out and yells that the police are on their way. The children respond with jeers and name-calling and a chorus of forbidden words. Then they take flight to the vacant lot beyond the billboards.

We who watch are curious to know what game it is that they are playing. It has features all of us recognize from our own childhoods: the children vaguely establish boundaries which they are not to cross and choose home bases. Other, smaller children hope to be included, but they are told to go away, they don't belong. Then, by the familiar process of counting out ("eeny, meeny, miney, moe"), they choose two team captains. The group disperses: all race through the scarred, vacant lots, bolting for places to hide. The more adventurous deliberately ("accidentally on purpose" is their phrase) splash through the oily puddle and emerge wet and muddy and triumphant.

The game, whatever it is, involves running and being caught, and proceeds with screams of delight. Then someone discovers a small garter snake moving in the grass, and it becomes the center of attention. With a long stick, a child turns it over and exposes its pale underside. Others dare to pick it up and watch it writhe. Laughing and shouting obscenities, they throw it into the air, hit it, and before they know what they are doing, they have killed it. Then they fall silent; play has suddenly ceased to be play.

Those of us still watching from the sidewalk are revolted. Dirty, cruel,

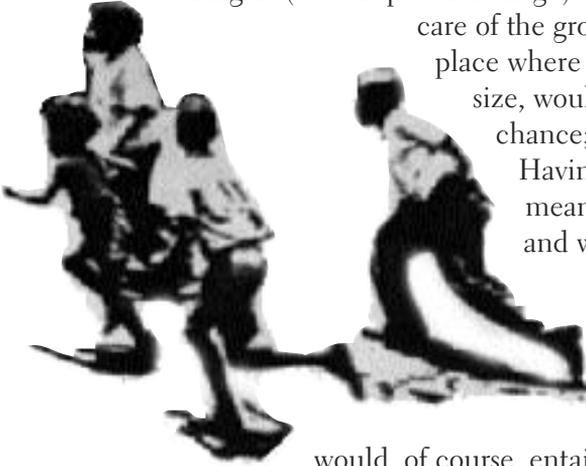
> J. B. JACKSON (1909–96) had a long and distinguished career teaching and writing about landscape design at Harvard University and the University of California at Berkeley. He founded *Landscape Magazine* in 1951, and his influential essays appear in several collections, including *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (1984) and *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (1994), which won the PEN Award. This essay is taken from a forthcoming collection, *Landscape in Sight*, to be published this fall by Yale University Press. Reprinted by permission. Copyright © 1997 by J. B. Jackson.

little brats! And what language! Why is there no one to supervise their play? Those less harshly critical try to interpret the misbehavior as a temporary act of rebellion against adults—parents and police and teachers with their rules and restrictions. All agree that there ought to be a better place for play: one with a fence or a wall where there would be no intrusion, no dirt.

A fence, if it were high and strong enough, would be an excellent solution. It would keep out blowing trash and prevent shortcuts by strangers (so our speculations go). A fence would allow us to take

care of the grounds, plant trees and grass, a place where all children, whatever their size, would be safe and have an equal chance; lawsuits would be unknown.

Having a fence with a gate would mean that we could control how and when the playground was used and by whom; it would allow for special hours and special groups, and do away with quarrels. We could discourage troublesome gangs. This



would, of course, entail constant supervision: a caretaker or a groundskeeper who could also serve as a program director. This person should have training in play or recreation supervision. That would give the playground a special identity and even create a sense of group identity among the children. The smooth, accident-proof surface would allow for a variety of games. More important, a fenced, well-kept playground would encourage efficiently organized activity, with records and scores and a kind of membership badge or uniform. Thus we visualize the ideal playground.

These are amenities we already have in many playgrounds. We find them in tennis courts and basketball courts and hockey rinks: all have man-made surfaces and limited access, and all are permanent. They cost money. But that, after all, is what makes a playground valuable: children learn to respect timetables and rules and the authority of the coach, and learn to respect the immediate environment. In short, a playground—fenced and well kept—allows children to develop skills, learn cooperation, and be valuable citizens. So what we must have (it is agreed) is more such playgrounds, efficiently designed and administered, and each one an essential element in its landscape, whether urban, suburban, or rural.

But play and playground are different, and play is not an easy thing to define, especially when we include adults, as we are learning to do. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists no fewer than 30 current meanings, from “play” the guitar, “play” the stock market, “play” tennis, “play” house, and “play” the role of Hamlet to play in the sense of “to move or operate freely within a bounded space, as machine parts do.”



The ancient Greeks honed body and mind in the gymnasium. Their sharpened skills formed the basis of their military supremacy.

The most common definition is that play is a way of spending our leisure in games and sports; play is an agreeable pastime. That is hardly precise, but it reminds us of an important characteristic we sometimes overlook: play is essential, for any existence would otherwise be divided between work and idleness. It is something we freely and gladly choose.

The man who first studied the concept of play—especially adult play—was the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga. In 1935, he published his influential work, *Homo Ludens* (Man the Player). It has been criticized by anthropologists and sociologists for being what is now called Eurocentric, but it is widely recognized as the first serious attempt to analyze play as a cultural, not a biological or psychological, trait. Huizinga's thesis was that play is a basic, innate human urge, not only predating the religious impulse and cultural institutions but actually influencing their emergence and evolution. Play has had an impact on the practice of law, the performing arts, and even international policy because it emphasizes and codifies procedures and produces dialogue, and also (according to Huizinga) because it requires certain distinct, consecrated spaces, such as “the arena, the card table, the screen, the tennis court . . . forbidden spaces, isolated, hedged around, hallowed, within which special rules pertain. Play creates order, and *is* order.”

Huizinga sums up play as being “a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it. It pro-

ceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy.” Throughout the book, he underscores the physical and emotional benefits of play: a sense of bodily well-being and an awareness of our kinship with fellow participants. For, to him, play is essentially a group or interpersonal activity. The solitary play experience—that of the mountain climber, the hunter, the explorer—is of little cultural consequence. The truly unforgettable manifestations of play—the procession, the dance, the ritual re-enactment of myths, above all, competition in games and sports—what he calls the element of *agon*, from the Greek word for contest—are what matter. And since children rarely respond to play in this coherent manner, Huizinga has little to say about the rowdy or spontaneous aspects of play, or play as the pursuit of “fun.”

What were the sources of this theory? In the years between the world wars, Huizinga was identified with a group of eminent Central European intellectuals and scholars who shared a vision of the future that was profoundly pessimistic. In their search for a good society, they turned (as their predecessors had) to the classical past. They sought to revive the values implicit in the culture of pre-Socratic Greece, and in particular its philosophy of education and character formation. Like other critics, Huizinga was inspired by Homer and Hesiod and Xenophon. What they had to say about the upbringing of young Athenians and Spartans confirmed his theory that play produced not only healthy bodies but sound minds and sound morals. Parents did not merely instruct the young in the martial arts and social graces, they impressed on them the cardinal importance of acting with justice and honor when dealing with others, and the importance of knowing how to compete.

“From childhood until the onset of the supreme attributes of culture,” Huizinga wrote, “the urge to be praised and honored for one’s superior qualities provides a powerful incentive to reach individual or collective perfection. . . . Virtue, honor, nobility and glory are to be found in the earliest kind of competition, that is to say, in games.”

Here is one of the few references in *Homo Ludens* to the play of children, and the context suggests that Huizinga means adolescents who are already trained in the martial arts and in the rules of fair competition in sports. Instruction taking place in the youths’ earlier years thus would have been a private family affair involving competition between equals or associates, a kind of restrained competition that might be called “playful” in that it entailed no reward.

In his discussion of what was essentially an aristocratic definition of play as “fair” competition in manly sports, Huizinga refers to the terrain of the ancient Olympic Games as a *gymnasium*. He thereby calls our attention to a link between landscape design and education: the gymnasium or play space as the locus of moral and physical development for an aristocratic society. The Academy in Athens (which we

usually associate with Plato and his teachings) was in fact the most celebrated gymnasium in the city, a designed park with flowing water, groves of trees, and spaces for play. The man-made landscape in the form of garden or park or collection of buildings and spaces became a part of the Renaissance revival of aristocratic sports, and in a debased form it flourishes today. Agon is part of the modern setup; all that is now missing is the moral or ethical ingredient.

In 1801, an Englishman named Joseph Strutt published a book entitled *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*. For its period, it was a model of research into obscure chronicles and ancient texts. It was reprinted several times up to 1903, when it was carefully edited and brought up to date. An American edition appeared in 1968. It deserves to be better known. It tells in detail how English men and women enjoyed themselves during a period of some 700 years. It does not pretend to be a sociological treatise, merely a vivid account of some of the more carefree aspects of everyday life in all classes of society.

“War, policy, and other contingent circumstances,” Strutt writes, “may eventually place men at different times in different points of view, but when we follow them into their retirements, where no disguise is necessary, we are most likely to see them in their true state and may best judge of their natural dispositions.” By “retirements” Strutt must have meant leisure, for what he describes are the pastimes, the diversions, and pleasures of public life, chiefly in London. These were surprisingly numerous and varied. Quoting from Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), he notes how Londoners “take pleasure to see some pageant or sight go by, as at a coronation, wedding and such like solemnities, to see an ambassador or a prince received and entertained with masks, shows, and fireworks.” But Londoners also created their own entertainments. “Dancing, singing, masking, mumming and state plays,” to quote again from Burton, “are reasonable recreations in season. . . . Let them play at ball and barley brakes and afterwards, plays, masks, jesters, gladiators, tumblers, and jugglers are to be winked at, lest the people should do worse than attend them.”

The public street, well into the 18th century, was the favorite place for adult play: football, wrestling, ninepins, shovel board, bear- and bullbaiting, cockfighting, and meetings of friends took place in crowded streets and alleys and open places. Strutt conscientiously describes these activities and tells when they were likely to occur and which group, young or old, poor or rich, took part. He writes about ceremonial costumes and banquets, and about how the façades of houses were occasionally decorated for celebration. He has much to say about fireworks—how Handel wrote music for them at Vauxhall Gardens and Ranelagh, both popular pleasure gardens.

Diversions of this sort were not confined to London. Just as in ancient Greece, many smaller games were played in places other than the main Olympic gymnasium; rural England saw a number of annual celebrations of sports in the provinces. For several days on end, thousands of

country people would gather in small towns to take part in traditional games and sports or to witness displays of strength and agility and grace. There were trained dogs and trained bears and trained horses, acrobats and sleight-of-hand artists and tightrope walkers. Musicians played and people danced. Charles II, on his way to Spain, stopped to watch such a rural meet in Cornwall, a region known for its wrestlers and boxers, and found the event so enthralling that he stayed all day and “became a brother of the jovial society.”

“Persons of rank” seldom participated in these countrified celebrations, preferring their own pastimes and their own company. As they understood the concept, play meant certain traditional sports such as hunting, hawking, horse racing, or archery, or perhaps a version of handball or tennis. These called for expertise and knowing how to behave. It is true that until the 19th century, “persons of rank,” when indoors at home, played games we now associate with children: puss-in-the-corner, blindman’s buff, and musical chairs. But outdoors, when they engaged in other competitive games, they were usually in a more concentrated frame of mind: they wanted to excel. They had been brought up to believe that sports made them braver and stronger, more respectful of rules, and (socially speaking) more acceptable; if they won, they expected to be praised.

When common people played, however, the tone was informal and spontaneous and full of expectations of a good time. Often there were players who knew nothing about the game and had to be taught. While they played, they had no time to think about the workaday world to which they would soon return; “fun” was what they were after. Both kinds of play brought excitement and pleasure, but in intention they were very different, and their modern equivalents still are.

One important difference (at least in landscape terms) was this: with groups of working people—families or neighbors or fellow workers—play began wherever would-be players happened to be. In town the street was the logical place; in the country it might be the village green, the churchyard, or the field where they had been working. In any case, it was not a terrain especially prepared or set aside, merely one that was available and accessible. But when the gentry decided to play their various games of agon, the play space was familiar and well prepared. It was free of obstacles and uncertainties: a “level playing field,” as the saying goes. That was probably what Huizinga had in mind when he stipulated that play should occur in spaces that were “hedged around, hallowed, within which special rules pertain.”

Throughout Western history there has always been a class requiring, and able to produce, such areas dedicated to athletic performance and moral training. Those spaces not only multiplied throughout our landscape but have persisted up to the present: spaces designed to suit the tastes of a class of citizen who thinks of play as an effective way of teaching the young how to conduct themselves and how to develop certain physical skills. Even our comparatively new American landscape contains innumerable examples, some inherited, some recently designed: the col-



In this 16th-century painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder (Hunt in the Honor of Charles V at the Chateau of Torgan), actions reveal social rank: the common folk beat the brush and drive stags toward the noblemen, who wait in the foreground with crossbows cocked.

lege campus, the country club, the sports arena, not to mention the many once-private parks and estates now open to all. What more can we ask for than well-kept, enclosed areas of greenery where we can (if we want) develop our social talents and at the same time acquire strong bodies?

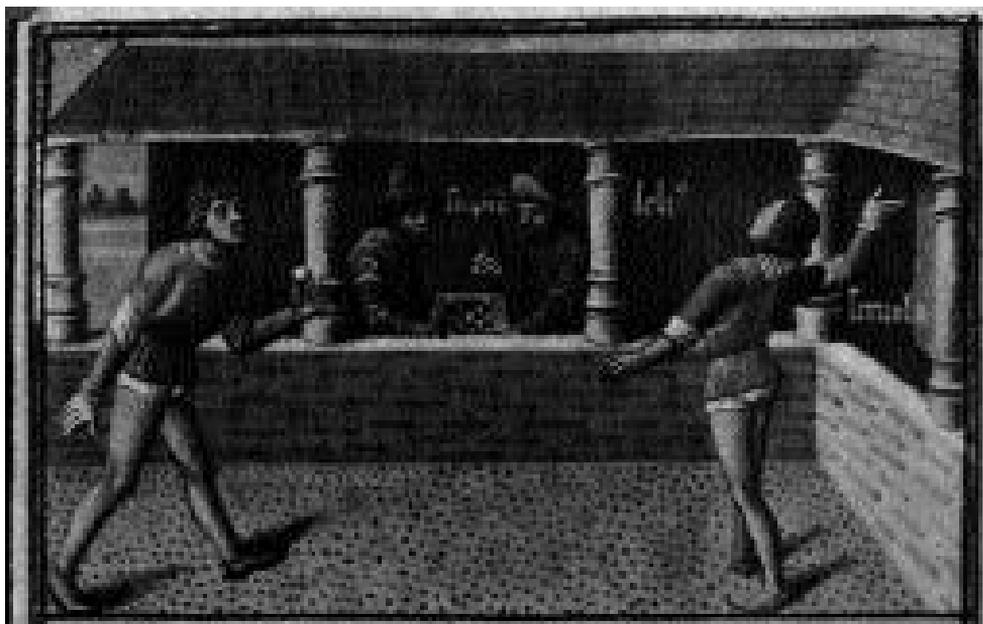


Only one need is neglected—the inner need to be part of a nonhuman cosmic order; that we have to satisfy as best we can by ourselves.

Historically speaking, the hunting forest is the earliest and most familiar of these “consecrated” spaces for play. We tend at present to perceive the forest as an unspoiled and beautiful fragment of nature; if it has any moral function at all, it is to encourage a kind of nature mysticism. But beginning more than a thousand years ago, when it was already legally defined and protected against intruders, the forest was identified with skill and bravery and a rigid social hierarchy. It is in the forest that we glimpse an attitude toward the natural environment that we have long ignored: nature was to be *used* and modified and even occasionally destroyed, in order to produce an environment that would promote a certain kind of behavior. In the medieval forest, undesirable types of game and objectionable vegetation were done away with, and desirable specimens introduced. Forests were logged and, as we have seen in many European forests, long, straight avenues or drives were often cut for the convenience of hunters.

On a smaller scale, other agon sports demanded a similar remodeling of the environment. Horse racing, as well as bowling and archery, required a small version of the “level playing field”—usually a smooth stretch of lawn surrounded by a hedge or fence. Tennis, when it was introduced in a refined and regulated form from France, was particularly demanding. As a kind of handball, it had long been played by schoolchildren on any convenient open field, but when it became popular among the English gentry in the 15th century, it required the smoothest of surfaces and walls, along with protective gloves and eventually racquets. The only suitable setting at first was the exterior of a church, and for a brief time tennis was played *inside* St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. An indignant clergy put an end to this desecration, and the totally artificial environment in the form of a measured court soon evolved.

An unusually elaborate example of space for agon in the late Middle Ages was one for tournaments; strictly speaking, the space devoted to combat between knights was called the lists. A medieval chronicler defined the tournament in what could be called terms of make-believe



Wimbledon's roots: early tennis was played with bound hands in a walled court.

or play: “a military exercise carried out not in the spirit of hostility but solely for practice and the display of prowess.” Surprisingly, Huizinga treated tournaments with scorn. In *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924), he dismissed them as essentially shallow pageants without deep meaning: “Overloaded with pompous decorations, full of heroic fancy, they serve to express romantic needs too strong for mere literature to satisfy.” Strutt, by contrast, wrote enthusiastically about the tournament as theater: “Such a show of pomp, where wealth, beauty, and grandeur were concentrated, as it were, in one focus must altogether have formed a wonderful spectacle.”

To this day, agon sports are the ones we take most seriously. They are the ones with their own permanent terrain, not accessible to everyone; the ones with established historical records and their rosters of heroes; the ones with their own uniforms and logos, their own hierarchies. Huizinga was not entirely accurate when he declared that agon games provided no material rewards or social advantages. Thus it is that even in the modern commercial city, with its monuments and spaces dedicated to government, crown, or church, there are those, often architecturally impressive, that celebrate a certain kind of play and certain players. In time, we may learn to include other, more vernacular kinds of play: many American communities are learning to provide permanent, designed spaces for skateboards, and many resorts focus on ambitious and expensive ski and toboggan runs. On the whole, however, we still identify agon sports with the secluded “level playing field” of grass (or Astroturf) in its own protected terrain: ornamental areas, identified with traditional notions of sportsmanship, and as such worth preserving. It was only a few years ago that the International Olympic Committee consented to consider a

number of sports that placed less emphasis on person-to-person competition and more on awareness of the natural environment: scuba diving, hang gliding, alpinism, and surfing.

There has never been a time when agon was the only game in town, nor when there was not a vernacular or working-class version of collective play. They first confronted each other on our Western landscape about 400 years ago, when cities grew in size and brought together in one place many elements of the population. The impact of archery—essentially an aristocratic agon sport—on vernacular sports is an instance.

The use of the bow and arrow in fighting, hunting, and target practice was probably the favorite sport of all classes in 15th-century England. The average archer was a working man, but his leader and commander was usually a person of rank. To the nobility, archery symbolized manly virtues: strength, bravery, skill, and patriotism. English bowmen were widely respected for their effectiveness in warfare, and the fact that gunpowder (and ultimately artillery) threatened to make archery obsolete by the 16th century merely served as a reason for cherishing the longbow and arrow as signs of England's past military prowess. Englishmen of every class were obliged to have a bow in their dwelling and to practice their skill in leisure hours. Indeed, many English cities retained spacious fields in the center of town, even when open spaces were becoming rare, where archers could practice.

But the working-class English, like working-class men and women throughout the world in the Renaissance, had discovered a potentially more profitable way of spending their leisure: gambling. We think we have learned to exploit all forms of gambling with our bingo parlors, casinos, slot machines, lotteries, and other means of gaming, but as long ago as the 11th century an English authority listed no fewer than 10 ways of gambling with dice, and even chess, checkers, and backgammon were considered games of chance. When small coins and decks of playing cards became common, gambling was almost irresistible, not simply as a way of making money but as a way of demonstrating skill and judgment, and of foretelling the future. Tarot became immensely popular in the 16th century.

England's conservative establishment reacted to this competition with a vigor that anticipated by several centuries that of the National Rifle Association. A lobbying group composed of "bowers, fletchers, stringers and arrowhead makers of the realm" petitioned the Crown in the 15th century to repress the spread of gambling, and the Crown obliged by forbidding all "artificers, apprentices, labourers, mariners, fishermen, watermen or any serving man" from playing any of the following games, except on Christmas: "football, quoits, putting the stone, kayles, tennis, bowls, clash legating, half bowl, slide thrifts, or shore groat or backgammon." (Gambling had previously been banned.) What these various games with Gothic or Celtic names might have been, I cannot discover, but they were presumably popular, and

their outlawing must have had its effect on the public play. A list, compiled at a later date, of locations in the city where all public games were forbidden gives us a picture of how scattered and how modest those places of vernacular diversion must have been: “public houses, bars, archways, small plots of wasteland, bootmakers’ stands and even the large umbrellas of bookmakers.”

This campaign against gambling may not have had the intended effect—to return working-class men to the practice of archery—but it undoubtedly discouraged much informal play in crowded parts of town. Gambling moved out to the racetracks or into clubs, and street lotteries became popular, but the increasing shortage of space did the most dam-



Playing kayles outside an English tavern

age. Strutt and other chroniclers of sports often note that because of the heavy traffic in city streets, one game or another went out of existence. Football, in its vernacular form, was always a violent and dangerous sport, played only by the roughest element and constantly condemned by the authorities. It disappeared from the streets in the 16th century and took refuge in graveyards—specifically, those on the north sides of churches, where few bodies were buried. Even in the countryside, space for casual play became hard to find: the introduction of cattle raising fostered the planting of hedges; new kinds of crops rendered land unsuitable for games. In 16th-century France, changes in cultivation forced such rural games as bowling and ninepins and horseshoe pitching to seek space in the village, and the players had to pay for using private land. In brief, much traditional play, popular with working-class citizens, located in the center of town where the players lived and worked, was driven out, either by the shortage of space or by police decisions to improve traffic circulation and promote order.

Archery long held out in the city, thanks to powerful protectors. But Strutt reports that in 1780, when a last ceremonial unit of archers went to what was later for Huizinga its consecrated space, “hedged around, hallowed, within which special rules pertain,” the men discovered that their field had

been enclosed by a brick wall. A determined group of “toxophiles” (amateurs of archery) sought to keep the sport alive in the 19th century by promoting it as a suitable recreation for ladies and gentlemen. The same process of gentrification, led by Thomas Arnold of Rugby, kept football alive in the 1850s, much regulated and refined. Cricket was also rescued—and subject to “agonization” and the rule of white flannels—at much the same time.

Historians are in general agreement that some time in the second half of the 18th century, what we call popular or vernacular culture began to lose its vitality and charm. Until about that period, almost all classes of society shared the same tastes in dress and music and play and speech; what differences there were came from different ways of life and never implied a different culture. But the 19th and 20th centuries were hard on the vernacular. The cult of agon, with all its rites and restrictions and ethical hang-ups, drove much innocent public life from the streets and quite unintentionally fostered the mania for gambling by emphasizing the role of money. Gambling brought hardships of its own: it produced economic instability and discouraged both work and play in favor of low-spirited idleness.

In the cities of the United States in the first years of our independence, there was joblessness and much bad behavior. “The great number of idle boys who frequented the wharves on Sunday,” the historian John Bach McMaster wrote, “playing pitch and toss and other games destructive of morals, and who during the week spent their time in pilfering goods landed on the wharves from ships, was an evil as serious as any which received public attention.” In town after town, therefore, the citizens formed committees to improve the economy and the moral tone. The poor were given food and fuel and shelter, and among the first resolutions passed by the various societies for moral and economic improvement were those proposing schools for the training of youths and the production of healthy and useful citizens.

The usual agon response was to create new and specialized spaces in the landscape. Early in the 19th century, middle-class America started to think about parks in the nation’s towns and cities, carefully designed cemeteries and college campuses, and promenades along the waterfronts. In keeping with the ancient Greek idea of agon and the importance of healthy bodies and healthy minds, it created a space, distinct from the street, where gymnastics could be taught and practiced.

The idea came from Germany. A theology student named P. L. Jahn, much distressed by the despondent moral tone among German youth occasioned by their country’s defeat at the hands of Napoleon in 1809, resolved to remedy the situation by offering vigorous outdoor gymnastic exercises to all young Germans; to the space where this training was to take place he gave the classical name *gymnasium*. The students were required to wear uniforms and to receive political indoctrination as well as physical exercise. The gymnasium experience proved highly popular.

In 1819 Jahn fell out of favor with his Prussian superiors, and the experiment came to an abrupt end. Three of his assistants, Karl Beck, Francis Lieber, and Charles Pollen, young theology students, fled to the United States. Beck created the first gymnasium class in a small school in Northampton, Massachusetts. Lieber started a public outdoor gymnasium on Tremont Street in Boston. He later became the first professor of German at Columbia University, and it was he who translated Tocqueville into English. Pollen established the first course in gymnastics at Harvard University and was also the first to teach German there.

Much of the enthusiasm for the new kind of sport called gymnastics derived from the physical well-being it produced; its moral and patriotic teachings left most young Americans unimpressed, and yet one is struck by the numerous references in early gymnastic writing to the influence of religion, beginning in Germany and continuing through the 19th century in New England. Edward Hitchcock, son of the clergyman and geologist who presided over Amherst College, was the head of the first comprehensive program in gymnastics at Amherst, held in one of the first college buildings to be labeled a gymnasium. He described his program as designed “not with exclusive attention to the muscular system, but to keep bodily health up to the normal standards so that the mind may accomplish the most work, and to preserve the bodily powers in full activity for both the daily duties of college and the promised labor of a long life.” The body, in other words, was a machine, and play represented occasional maintenance.

The plight of young men working in factories or ships or offices in unfamiliar cities far from their homes was of prime importance to reformers in 19th-century industrial cities. The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) evolved into a network of centers for social contact and religious instruction. After the Civil War, when the larger YMCAs included a gymnasium and often a swimming pool, they became responsible for satisfying the sports and leisure needs of a whole generation. It became the duty of several of the urban YMCAs to invent suitable games for playing in gymnasiums; and it is to the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts, that we owe the formulation of two of America’s most popular games: basketball and volleyball. It was also in the Y that competitive swimming, together with its rules and procedures, was instituted. But the remarkable aspect of these invented games was the considerations given to the limitations and needs of the players. The principles of agon promoting fairness in competition, simplicity of action, and a regard for justice and goodwill among the players, previously not matters of regulation, were made basic features.

It was at the end of the 19th century that the influence of the theological student was replaced by that of the professional coach and athletic director. The clergymen had tried to respect the identity of the individual amateur player and normal human limitations in sports. By contrast, at the close of the century, John Hoberman writes in *Mortal Engines: The Science of Performance and the Dehumanization of Sport* (1992), “physiological thinking began to be applied to athletic performance. . . .

Anthropological and physiological assessments of the human organism during this period were cultural symptoms of an Age of Calibration—a mania for measurement that continues unabated to this day.”

Yet, concurrently with the development of performance-oriented sport, with its dependence on drugs and medicine, there has emerged a new concept of sports, reminiscent in many ways of vernacular attitudes. It requires us to re-examine our definition of play and its significance.

A generation ago, in an essay entitled “Games of Dizziness and Fear,” the French psychologist Jean Caseneuve wrote: “There is a kind of game or sport which can be designated by the term *helix*, the Greek word for whirlwind or an evolving spiral, to which is related a word which can be translated as vertigo or the dizziness of intoxication.” How can dizziness be experienced as a sport? “By an effect both physical and psychological. The organs of balance, particularly in the inner ear, are momentarily disturbed by unusual movements and the result is a modification of the way we perceive our surroundings. Our relation to the world around us takes on a strange quality, and our self-awareness undergoes change. Even in harmless cases, as on a swing or merry-go-round, there is a certain shift in perception that is part of the pleasure children get from this kind of play. The definition of helix games and sports should include all activities involving . . . loss of physical balance and all the means we use to modify our self-perception.” Caseneuve noted that in those sports the spatial dimension is not



The space defining the game: boys playing basketball at a New Jersey YMCA gymnasium



George Peck, here unicycling across the rough, broken terrain of an abandoned mine in Alaska, perhaps best exemplifies the aesthetic of helix sports. Rejecting the notion of contest so inherent in agon sports, Peck seeks other, more personal pleasures in wilderness settings made accessible by a conveyance he calls “more portable than a mountain bike and about as dangerous as walking.” Recently, he added a new twist: seatless wilderness unicycling.

always well defined, but that the dimension of time remains precise; for only by consciously controlling the length of time we undergo this experience can we continue to maintain our freedom; the sport is still a game, still a kind of make-believe.

Helix sports are what we in America have called sports of mobility: skiing, gliding, soaring, sailing, snowboarding, skateboarding, as well as car and motorcycle racing, surfing, and mountain climbing. Many were inspired by the automobile. Most of them got their start during the Great Depression and became more widespread after World War II. Some arose among the unemployed youth of Central Europe, some among the prosperous younger generation of postwar California; still others are contemporary civilian adaptations of military performances. All seem to have certain characteristics in common.

In all of them we see an instinctive avoidance of the “beaten track”: the familiar itinerary, the rails, the surfaced highway, the track, the lawn, even the gymnasium. We can see a revolt against the timetable, the schedule, the planned journey. It is as if a whole generation had taken off cross-country to explore the unfamiliar, nonhuman aspect of an environment, where tradition offered no guidance or warning.

Another characteristic is the rejection of traditional equipment and techniques. No matter how a sport may have originated—as Hawaiian ritual games in the case of surfing, or as Norwegian peasant transportation in the case of skiing—sooner or later the prototype is discarded or modi-

fied. Participants in the new sports of solitary mobility are no longer willing to follow established procedures.

A third characteristic is that these sports are not highly competitive. It is true that in many respects skiing has been assimilated into the world of commercialized competitive sports, but few skiers—and surely fewer surfers and hang gliders and mountain climbers—are primarily concerned with achieving “victory” or breaking records. Possibly related to this lack of competitiveness is the fact that few of the sports are inspired by an ulterior practical motive, or are practiced because they are body building or character forming or socially acceptable. The ski bum, the surf bum, and the motorcycle bum are typical products of such sports of mobility.

Finally, a most important characteristic of helix sports is the terrain itself, especially where there is an apparent absence of design or structure. I say “apparent” because many resorts design and engineer their ski runs, and surf-producing beaches have been built in California—to say nothing of the totally artificial surfing beaches in Phoenix. Yet, compared with the terrain of traditional competitive sports, the terrain of helix sports usually bears few visible signs of its function: a few marks in the snow, a strip in the desert, a buoy, a light. Weather, which plays so important a role in most helix sports, is of course unpredictable. What participants set out to do is not to follow a well-defined course; they simply head toward some remote destination, a new experience, a new environment, a dehumanized, abstract world of snow or water or sky or desert, where there are no familiar guidelines. With this goes a sense of uncertainty and of being totally alone. We note how we tend to revive an intuitive awareness of our surroundings, reacting to textures, currents, rides, temperatures, slopes, lights, and clouds and winds, even directions. The essential value of these sports seems to lie in a fresh contact with the environment and a new sense of our identity. Even if briefly, there ensues a temporary reshaping of our being.

The pursuit of many helix sports is unfortunately now confined to the few who can afford to go into the wilderness or to ski resorts. But their experience is one that many aspire to—of an unexplored world of great spaces: desert and mountain and sky and open water—and it is there that we can formulate a new relationship to the natural environment, or revive an old one. The helix movement involves something much more than a belated return to nature. I think it derives from a basic impulse to search for a fresh identity (or, more accurately, to search for a way of changing the identity we have). To quote Caseneuve, “This kind of sport finally results in diverting our consciousness, in creating the illusion of abandoning our everyday personality by modifying the relationship between the individual being and his environment. . . . It is not speed in itself that we seek . . . but the intoxication it produces. . . . There would be no helix sports if there were not a profound urge in all of us to escape from ourselves, and if there did not come to every living being a time to turn away from mundane existence.”

CURRENT BOOKS

Annals of Blinksmanship

WE NOW KNOW:

Rethinking Cold War History.

By John Lewis Gaddis. Oxford University Press. 425 pp. \$30

"ONE HELL OF A GAMBLE":

Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964.

By Aleksandr A. Fursenko and Timothy Naftali.

W. W. Norton & Company. 420 pp. \$27.50

by Thomas Blanton

Now that the Cold War is over, its history has become a growth industry, though in truth there was no great shortage of historical analysis even while the war was going on. Today, however, one finds a certain generational divide as perhaps the salient characteristic of the enterprise. Mostly younger scholars clustered around the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson Center—including James Hershberg, Vladislav Zubok, Chen Jian, Kathryn Weathersby, Mark Kramer, Csaba Bekes, and Hope Harrison—have pioneered the integration of sources from the “other side” of the Cold War into a nuanced, contextual, and truly international version of our recent past.

Acutely aware of the contingent nature of the new sources, these young historians avoid entanglement with any of the old, ideologically divided schools of Cold War history. To oversimplify drastically, the orthodox school of Herbert Feis and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., blamed the Cold War on the Soviet Union. The revisionist school of William Appleman Williams blamed American economic expansion for frightening the Soviets. The “postrevisionists,” typified by John Lewis Gaddis, attempted an empirically based amalgam of the two sides, only to meet with criticism from revisionists who called this approach “orthodoxy plus archives.” The postrevisionist retort was to dub the three schools “hawks,” “doves,” and “owls.”

A few senior scholars already established in these debates have also dared to grapple with the new evidence—none to greater

effect than the leading owl himself. Gaddis, a historian at Ohio University now moving east to Yale, has produced a fascinating, provocative, and in no small measure endearing revision of Cold War history up through the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The work is endearing because, in exposing the errors of past histories, Gaddis focuses frequently on his own. The careful reader of footnotes may judge this book to be the foundation of a new school of Cold War history: autorevisionism.

Hardly anyone in either the older or younger generation of Cold War scholars will agree with all of Gaddis’s judgments. For example, is it truly explanatory to call Josef Stalin a “brutal romantic” when all Soviet leaders were brutal and Nikita Khrushchev retired the romance trophy? The book’s grand sweep is beyond the reach of this review, but its penultimate chapter on the Cuban Missile Crisis may provide a lens through which to glimpse the extraordinary work that is going on in this field—especially when considered in tandem with a remarkable new history of the crisis based on Soviet sources.

The most enduring phrase summing up the Cuban Missile Crisis—the climax of the Cold War and the closest the world ever came to nuclear Armageddon—belongs to Secretary of State Dean Rusk: “We’re eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked.” Thus was born the myth of calibrated brinkmanship—the belief that if you stand tough you win, and that nuclear superiority makes the difference in moments of crisis. This myth, midwived by the Kennedy

family and its hagiographers, had untold consequences for the planning of the Vietnam War and the nuclear arms race.

A different story began to emerge in 1969, when *Thirteen Days*, the posthumous memoir of Robert F. Kennedy, revealed that the resolution of the crisis (Khrushchev's withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba) came after a series of secret meetings in which RFK offered the Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin not threats of nuclear retaliation but an old-fashioned diplomatic deal: a pledge of no U.S. invasion of Cuba, plus the withdrawal of U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey. The terms, according to the memoir, were that this could not be an explicit *quid pro quo* and that the deal would never be publicly acknowledged by the United States. Further revisions of the myth emerged in the early 1980s, when former Kennedy aides Robert McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, alarmed by what they saw as President Ronald Reagan's embrace of brinkmanship, warned the public that the Cuban Missile Crisis had not been resolved by America's nuclear superiority but by its conventional superiority in the Caribbean, which enabled restraint and the quarantine of Cuba.

Next came a trickle of declassified U.S. government documents in the mid-1980s, including notes and transcripts from the meetings of John F. Kennedy's top advisers, in which the president appears not as the fastest draw at the OK Corral but as a peacenik. As soon as the Joint Chiefs of Staff admitted that they could not guarantee the destruction through air strikes of all the Soviet missiles in Cuba, JFK decided to do whatever he could to avoid an invasion of Cuba and a war over what he called "some obsolete missiles in Turkey." In 1987 Rusk himself revealed JFK's willingness, had the crisis persisted much longer, to propose a public Turkey-Cuba trade through the

United Nations—a willingness, in short, to blink.

Since then, the revisions have mounted as the documents have flooded out. Theodore Sorenson has admitted that while editing *Thirteen Days* he cut references in RFK's diary to an explicit Turkey-Cuba deal. Despite JFK's dismissal to reporters of any such deal as a weak-willed option floated by U.S. Ambassador to the UN Adlai Stevenson, we now know, on the basis of a declassified cable from Dobrynin (published in the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*), that RFK made the deal explicit even as he handed back the formal Soviet letter recording it. His comment to Dobrynin was that such a document "could cause irreparable harm to my political career in the future."



Many of these revelations first saw the light of day at a series of conferences organized by James Blight and Janet [sic] Lang of the Thomas J. Watson, Jr., Institute for International Studies at Brown University. Held between 1987 and 1992, these "critical oral history" sessions included Kennedy aides, Soviet

participants, and finally Cuban veterans (among them Fidel Castro), and they produced more revelations: that along with intermediate-range missiles, the Soviet arsenal in Cuba included tactical nuclear warheads that might have been used if the United States had invaded; and that Cuba was very much an actor in its own right, Castro at one point telling an increasingly alarmed Khrushchev to "use 'em or lose 'em."

On the Soviet side, the Blight-Lang sessions were forced to rely on the largely uncorroborated memories of aging veterans and their children (such as Khrushchev's son) rather than on solid documentation. As recently as September 1994, when I presented the Russian archives with a set of Kennedy audiotapes and a 15,000-page microfiche of declassified U.S. documents related to the missile crisis, the archives had

released only 700 pages on the subject. One may therefore imagine the jubilation among Cold War historians at the appearance of “*One Hell of a Gamble*,” by the Russian scholar Alexandr A. Fursenko and his Canadian collaborator, Yale University historian Timothy Naftali.

It is a treasure-trove of a book, studded with quotations and citations from still-secret archives in Moscow, woven together with the new U.S. documentation. It is also a dramatic and highly readable narrative, the most authoritative to date, of the six-year period from the Cuban Revolution through the aftermath of President Kennedy’s assassination and the October 1964 coup that ousted Khrushchev. The title comes from a recently declassified Oval Office audiotape in which JFK told a belligerent congressional delegation that invading Cuba during the crisis would be “one hell of a gamble.” To his everlasting credit, JFK was not willing to roll those dice.

The new Soviet evidence falls into three categories: Soviet intelligence and embassy reporting from Havana to Moscow, a similar flow from Soviet agents and officials in Washington, and internal Politburo and Khrushchev office records. The first category alone makes this book essential reading for any serious analyst of U.S.-Cuban relations. It yields extraordinary insights into the personalities of Castro, his brother Raúl, Che Guevara, and other leaders, as well as abundant information about Cuban military and intelligence capabilities. Perhaps most striking is evidence of the Cubans’ unrelenting fear, before and after the Bay of Pigs landing in 1961, that a U.S. invasion was imminent. The authors’ evocative rendering of the resulting paranoia suggests that when Khrushchev claimed that the missiles were there to defend the Cuban Revolution, he was not just scoring a propaganda point. (He also, as Gaddis points out, succeeded in this aim.)

Equally fascinating is the second category, Soviet reporting from Washington. For example, summaries of reports from a personable military intelligence officer named Georgi Bolshakov reveal that he hit it off with RFK and met with him on a back-channel basis some 51 times during

1961–62. There were also some woeful intelligence failures: the KGB station chief Alexandr Feklisov reported in March 1962 that he had at least three well-placed sources whose names “the Russian government continues to protect.” Yet despite these alleged penetrations, during the October crisis the KGB fell back on (inaccurate) invasion tips from a bartender at the National Press Club.

The Holy Grail for Cold War historians is, of course, the third category of evidence: notes of Politburo meetings, Khrushchev memos, and reports intended for the highest levels of the Kremlin. As cited by Fursenko and Naftali, this evidence adds rich new detail to our understanding of Khrushchev. Perhaps most astonishing is the degree to which the Soviet premier acted as his own intelligence analyst. So closed was Khrushchev’s inner circle that he rarely consulted with the KGB about decisions regarding the United States. Instead, he would summon whatever prominent Americans happened to be in Moscow. On the occasion of his deliberations over whether to place tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba, the visitor dropping into Khrushchev’s dacha for a chat was the poet Robert Frost!

As with all such exclusive scholarly arrangements, the strength of Fursenko and Naftali’s book is also its weakness. Very few of the KGB, Politburo, and military intelligence (GRU) documents cited here are available to other scholars. Moreover, the authors’ acknowledgments and source notes give little indication of what sort of conditions were attached to their exclusive access—a discouraging omission, indeed. Some citations are reassuringly precise, while others read simply “*spravka* (summary), GRU.” What were those conditions? Did the authors select the materials they wanted from complete lists and finding aids, or were their searches directed by the staffs of these still-closed archives? That said, if the authors had not pushed for whatever access they obtained, our understanding of the Cold War would be demonstrably the poorer. As Gaddis does through his assessment, Fursenko and Naftali through their narrative arrive at a new definition of heroism on the part of national leaders—what Gaddis calls “a new profile in courage.” We now

know that the Cuban Missile Crisis arose from a certain degree of adventurism on both sides—Kennedy’s covert actions against Castro and Khrushchev’s secret missile deployment—and that it was resolved only because both men were willing to risk humiliation rather than Armageddon.

In one of the great counterfactuals of history, we might ask, What if Khrushchev had only held out another day or two for a public Turkey-Cuba trade? Without the “Russians blinked” version of history, might the American officials who planned the Vietnam War have had less faith in their calibrated brinkmanship? Might Khrushchev

have survived the October 1964 coup plot, in which his adventurism in Cuba was one of the indictments? President Kennedy later estimated the odds of nuclear war during the missile crisis as having been one in three. Bundy guessed lower, at one in 100. But as Bundy added, “In this apocalyptic matter the risk can be very small indeed and still much too large for comfort.”

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The Other Borges

BORGES
A Life.

By James Woodall. Basic Books. 333 pp. \$30

by Richard Barnes

When the great Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez was presented the Nobel Prize for literature in 1982, he graciously took the occasion to declare that the Argentine fabulist Jorge Luis Borges deserved the honor before him. If any writer was to be credited with bringing Latin American fiction out of its former provinciality into world prominence, it should have been Borges. Unfortunately, though, the prize never went the older writer’s way.

Like Falstaff, Borges (1899–1986) was not only witty himself but the cause that wit is in other men—and women. His view of the world was limited, distinct, yet inclusive, like the small, eponymous sphere in one of his most famous stories, “The Aleph,” in which everything is visible at once. The poignant yet hilarious

list of what is seen there—convex equatorial deserts and every grain of their sand, the survivors of a battle writing postcards, a sunset in Queretaro that reflects the color of a rose in Bengal, a ring of dried clay in a sidewalk where once there was a tree—



has been likened in its comprehensiveness to Homer’s description of the shield of Achilles.

Borges’s humor, like that of Cervantes,

is bookish, profound, very funny, and sad. Like Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett, he saw the world from an odd angle, yet so vividly and truly that to know his work is to experience, at times, a dreamlike combination of the strange and the familiar, the ordinary and the impossible, and to recognize the experience as “Borgesian.”

Borges lived a long but in many ways restricted life. From his early twenties to his early sixties, he seldom left Buenos Aires. Except for his first, brief, fumbled marriage, which occurred when he was in his sixties, he lived with his parents; his mother died at 99, when he was 76. He did not get his first job until he was past 40, and that a humble one in a provincial branch library. The sum of his political activism consisted of one cause he considered lost, the effort by Radical Party leader Hipólito Yrigoyen to regain the presidency in 1928. When Yrigoyen won, Borges drifted away. Borges was attached sentimentally to many women, but it is unlikely that any of these relationships was ever consummated.

As Borges’s writing began to win fame, he lost his sight. Old and blind, he became the director of the National Library and a widely traveled celebrity, but the philosophical doubts he entertained toward his own existence were, while playful, not void of anxiety: “I who am made of time, and blood, and death throes.” He complained of “Borges,” an unwelcome companion whom he could not escape even by suicide, which he twice planned but never seriously attempted. Although he traveled the world, late in life Borges said often that he had never left his father’s library, any more than Alonso Quijano (Don Quixote) ever left his.

This uneventful life has already been the subject of a half-dozen biographies, with another dozen in the works. Promised and of great interest are those by Donald Yates, an early translator of Borges, and by Jean-Pierre Bernès, the French cultural attaché who became Borges’s editor (in French translation) and friend. The latter, which is being written with the cooperation of María Kodama, Borges’s heiress and widow (after an eight-week marriage just before

his death), will be the closest thing to an authorized biography.

Woodall’s book is advertised as the first biography in English since Borges died; it is the first by someone who never met him. An English journalist who writes on theater, music, literature, and flamenco, Woodall investigates diligently, writes lucidly, and has no particular ax to grind. “There are many people who today guard his reputation jealously, and who wish to promote ‘their Borges,’” he writes. “If this book succeeds in anything, it will I hope be in painting Borges as he was, offering a picture as frank as it is accurate.” Whether such an aim is achievable has become a vexed question of criticism. But here, at least, it is stated clearly and pursued energetically.

In his politics, the example of Borges would reverse the solemn maxim that the personal is political (meaning that nothing is really personal); for him, the political was merely personal. His paternal grandmother was English, and most of the books in his father’s extensive library were by English authors. During World War II, when many Argentines were Nazi sympathizers, Borges supported the Allies. Later he deplored the Argentine invasion of the Falklands Islands and popularized the phrase “two bald old men fighting over a comb.” His mother’s remote Portuguese ancestors were, he supposed, Jews. So he celebrated the victories of the new nation of Israel in poetry and, in the face of virulent anti-Semitism in Argentina, published a daring essay, “I, a Jew.”

Borges’s maternal Argentine forebears were military men and among the founders of the republic; his family was never wealthy, but it was patrician, and his best friends were of the upper crust. Because of all this, Borges was the natural enemy of the populist dictator Juan Perón, whose name he never uttered. And from time to time he voiced opinions that caused him to be heckled in public and attacked by the press and that probably cost him the Nobel Prize. His paternal grandfather was a colonel in the “Conquest of the Desert,” the campaign to rid Argentina of Indians; Borges considered this an historic achievement. He had lunch with the murderous generals who toppled

Perón's third wife, Isabela, in 1976; he said that they were gentlemen. He accepted a prize from Chile's dictator, General Augusto Pinochet. Later he apologized for his political naiveté: "I hate politics. I'm a mild, stay-at-home anarchist and pacifist, a harmless disciple of Herbert Spencer."

In later life, Borges's blindness obliged him to depend on others, while his eminence tempted some to take advantage of his vulnerability. The struggles between people accusing each other of trying to "colonize" Borges continue to this day, one result being that there is no comprehensive edition of his works either in Spanish or in English; the best edition is the French translation published by Pleide.

About these aspects of Borges's life and character, Woodall makes good on his promise to be accurate and fair. The main limitation of this serviceable biography is its failure to comprehend the value of Borges's mature poetry. Borges's writing life can be divided into three distinct periods punctuated by physical calamities. His earliest writings were coterie poetry, literary and historical essays, and Argentine local color. When he was nearly 40, he suffered a cut on the head that became infected and sent him into a fever, causing him such terrible hallucinations that he doubted his own sanity. A few days after he regained consciousness, his mother read to him, and he wept because he could understand. Still, he feared to write an essay because "if I cannot do it, then I'm finished, I don't exist anymore." So he wrote his first story. And it was the revolutionary short fictions of the 1940s—*El Jardín des Senderos que se Bifurcan* (The Garden of Forking Paths) (1941), *Ficciones* (Fictions, 1944), and *El Aleph* (1949)—that made him a world-class author.

In the following decade, as he gradually went blind, he resumed writing poetry. There had been poems in periodicals and new revised editions, but no new book of poetry between 1929 and 1960. One reason for his return to poetry was that he could hold it in his memory, not needing to see drafts. "Regular verse is, so to speak, portable," he wrote. Yet strict metrical form, which Woodall dismisses as "a physiological necessity," was for Borges a stim-

ulant and a mystery. The sonnet, for instance, "may seem arbitrary but throughout the centuries and across geography it has displayed a capacity for endless modulations." And like Thomas Hardy, Borges always thought of himself as a poet, though his prose had claimed the public's attention. "To the last," Woodall writes, "he wrote poetry, and obstinately considered himself a poet, when everyone who wasn't an aficionado of Argentine literature . . . thought of him as a great storyteller"—as if the gods were so evenhanded that to grant one gift would be to deny the other.

From *El Hacedor* (The Maker, 1960) forward, Borges's poetry is that of a learned, elderly man: clear, measured, and deliberate, with the earned simplicity of a master craftsman. It is awake to grief but indifferent to grievances. Looking back at his first book when he was 70, Borges remarked that while he had once found poetry in sunsets, shabby suburbs, and unhappiness, he now found it in mornings, downtown, and peace of mind. In Latin America, Spain, and France, he is coming to be recognized as one of the great poets of the century, as Hardy is in the English-speaking world.

Woodall's comprehension is limited also by his scant acquaintance with the literary traditions in which Borges wrote. One telling instance will suffice, a sonnet written during 1963–64 and titled (in English) "Adam Cast Forth":

Was there a Garden, or was it just a dream?
Dull, in a flickering light, I've often
wondered
(And almost as if it were somehow a comfort)
If the past, once Adam's kingdom, now his
shame,
Couldn't have been some trick, an illusion
caused
By a certain God I dreamt of. The memory
Of his clear Paradise is now blurry,
But I am sure it did exist, and does,
Though not for me. This tedious long furrow
Is my chastisement, and the incestuous war
Of all the Cains and Abels and their fry.
And still, it is a great thing to have loved,
To have been blest or lucky, to have lived
In the green Garden, if only for a day.
(tr. by reviewer)

Woodall interprets this poem to be about Borges's dashed hopes of marrying one of his young collaborators, María Esther Vásquez. Yet surely the title and theme of a paradise lost point to John Milton, who, like Borges, went blind with his greatest poetry yet to be written;

and it seems clear that the ill-remembered garden stands simply for having been able to see.

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Showing Off

THE HANDICAP PRINCIPLE.

By Amotz Zahavi and Avishag Zahavi. Na'ama Ely, trans.

Oxford University Press. 320 pp. \$25

by Lionel Tiger

This richly persuasive book is the distillation of more than 20 years of argument about one central idea—namely, that much of what appears to be profligacy or excess in nature is really a form of economy. Among biologists, the standard explanation of such showy phenomena as the peacock's tail, the stag's antlers, or the tendency of the gazelle when threatened by a predator to leap straight into the air before fleeing is that they are adaptations run amok. They may be magnificent, biologists argue, but they serve no evolutionary purpose. The Zahavis, he a professor of zoology at Tel Aviv University and she a former professor of plant physiology at the Volcani Center for Agricultural Research, beg to differ. Applying Darwinian theory to their extensive study of animals in their native habitats, they contend that the reason why the males of many species evolve puzzlingly costly and often absurd characteristics and behaviors is precisely because these reveal, by their very burdensomeness, that the males are sufficiently strong and healthy to make formidable competitors and desirable mates. The users of this information are other males, who rank themselves according to certain recognizable clues, and females, who generally make the reproductive choices.

Implicit in the authors' "handicap principle" is the decisive role played by females in sexual, and hence natural, selection. This idea has been around since the mid-1970s, when the Zahavis published their first exploratory paper. (Around the same time, I was editing what was probably the first collection of scholarly pieces on female hierar-

chies.) The questions being asked then were intriguing: How do females organize their "pecking orders"? How is it decided which females get to mate with which males? What is the basis for the often turbulent negotiations surrounding sexual access? Biologists still know little about these questions, but with studies like this one the picture becomes clearer.

While developing their hypothesis, the Zahavis explore a variety of related biological issues. One is ritualization, or the process by which animals appear to coordinate their behavior in order to avoid fights, conduct courtship, and attract mates. Why do potential competitors observe what appear to be standardized rules? About ritual behavior such as *lek*, the stylized milling about of elk bucks and other male ungulates, the Zahavis claim that it "brings out crucial differences in performance, which in turn reflect accurately the different abilities and motivations of the competitors." In other words, evolutionary selection seeks a level breeding field. The obvious comparison is with the way human sports are organized by levels of skill to ensure real competition. Even the professionals tend to give inferior teams first pick of rookie players; sport, like biology, is most exciting when it is about exquisite differences. When the score is 58 to 3, the fans go home. When it's a cliff-hanger, they stay.

A closely related question concerns what appear to be wasteful responses to predators on the part of some animals. When a bird sees a cat, it issues a warning call. Why does it do that? Why not just scoot silently away?

The conventional biological explanation is that the bird is driven by a kind of self-interested altruism (or altruistic self-interest): it warns its fellows out of a supposed biological imperative to preserve the collective DNA. The Zahavis offer a simpler explanation: the bird is discouraging the cat. By flagrantly announcing its awareness of the predator, it also signals its confidence in its ability to escape. Perhaps the cat should go find a less energetic bird. Reinforcing this argument is the fact that some warning calls are specific to particular predators. Do birds taunt cats?

The Zahavis make a similar point about the always fascinating relationship between hosts and parasites. Some of those relationships are symbiotic, that is, of mutual benefit to both species. In those that are not symbiotic—that involve a mutual threat or “arms race” between the two species—the Zahavis discover a curious gray area. Sometimes, they suggest, a host species may “choose” a particular parasite as a compromise burden, one that will protect it against more harmful and debilitating enemies. They offer the illustration of the cuckoo and the crow. The cuckoo lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, where its nestlings eventually displace those of the other bird. The crow’s response to this parasitic behavior is to tolerate and indeed care for the interlopers as though they were its own. In turn, cuckoo nestlings behave less aggressively toward crow nestlings than toward the offspring of less accommodating hosts.

Between such hosts and parasites there is, the authors claim, an adjusted equilibrium that gives both a certain amount of reproductive elbow room. Such relationships are subtler than they appear at first and have important medical implications. For example, the recent work of Paul Ewald, a medical researcher at Amherst College, suggests that AIDS carriers may be living longer not only because of medication but because the virus that prevails over time is the one that does not rapidly destroy the host necessary to its propagation.

Overall, the Zahavis’ book is enlivened by a style that is indirect, playful—almost, one is tempted to say, cubist. The authors’ conclusions will obviously be controver-

sial, including their support of one recent hypothesis that is the subject of an explosion of inventive research. It has to do with the role of physiological symmetry in both individual development and sexual selection. In a nutshell, it appears that individual animals—and humans—whose facial and other bodily features are symmetrical rather than irregular are more likely to have had a healthy fetal development, to be relatively free of parasites and viruses, and to be more attractive to potential mates. So the peacock bracing himself to spread a heavy but perfectly symmetrical tail is doing so to convince the plain peahen that he will be a healthy paterfamilias. Beauty, it would seem, is more than feather-deep.

It should go without saying that such findings tend to reinforce commonsense understandings of human behavior. For example, few will dispute the idea that costly adolescent male behavior such as buying huge, preposterous tires for a pickup truck or carrying the loudest boom box on the block is meant to intimidate rivals and impress any female within miles. More disputed are certain biological findings related to female behavior. The female preoccupation with cosmetics is, according to the misconceived puritanism of certain feminists and other radicals, a capitulation to the forces of marketing. Yet it would seem that there is a biological basis for this preoccupation: clear, smooth skin has been shown to be an irreducible feature of male mate selection. After nearly a half-century of enforced plainness, women in mainland China have almost overnight joined the international sisterhood of make-up artists. Chairman Mao challenges Charles Darwin and loses.

Perhaps the most agreeable aspect of this book is its seamless linking of animal and human data, and, more inventively, its extrapolations from human experience into the lifeways of other animals. What Max Weber called *verstehen* (intense empathy) is here applied, with great freshness, to species other than our own.

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Arts & Letters

FRANCIS BACON: *Anatomy of an Enigma.*

By Michael Peppiatt. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 384 pp. \$30

"I have had the most extraordinary life," the British painter Francis Bacon once remarked to his biographer, Michael Peppiatt. "The life is more extraordinary than the paintings." Quite so. Bacon (1909–92) is conventionally viewed as one of



the greatest artists of the 20th century. But his ironic pronouncement on his own life and work has a way of echoing through the pages of even this sympathetic biography.

If Bacon's canvases seem to be populated by mere slabs of meat, his most intimate relationships suggest why. To Peppiatt's credit, he provides glimpses of Bacon's turbulent and bloody sexual adventures, most of which had all the romance of a gruesome bare-knuckled boxing match, without indulging in prurient sensationalism. Though his prose lacks the vigor and lowlife relish of John Lahr's study of that other homosexual extrovert, the playwright Joe Orton, Peppiatt diligently outlines the philosophical and erotic impulses that nourished (if that is the right word) Bacon's impossibly bleak vision.

The editor of *Art International*, Peppiatt has the advantage of having been for 30 years part of Bacon's notoriously broad social circle. (Even by the standards of bohemia, the painter moved in mixed company; as Peppiatt notes, here was a man who would

dine with a duke before going off to be beaten by a bruiser.) And while it is obvious that Peppiatt remains an unabashed admirer, he seldom lapses into hyperbole or opaque curator-speak.

Given the paucity of documentary evidence—Bacon appears to have preferred saloon conversation to letterwriting—the book persuasively hints at such formative experiences as a disastrous relationship with a distant upper-class father and a youthful foray into the sexual maelstrom of Weimar Berlin. Pablo Picasso was a dominant artistic influence, but Bacon also found inspiration in a less likely source: Nicolas Poussin's *Massacre of the Innocents* (1626–28).

How will Bacon's work fare with posterity? As might be expected, Peppiatt regards him as a modern master. More revealing is Peppiatt's quotation from a 40-year-old review by another of Bacon's champions, the distinguished critic David Sylvester: "Many of the things that make Bacon exciting today may render him laughable for future generations." Five years after his death, Bacon's reputation still stands, especially in France. But for how much longer? Despite its scholarship and reasoned advocacy, this book may ultimately be most valuable for the light it throws on the spiritual exhaustion of the mid-20th century.

—Clive Davis

THE HUNDRED THOUSAND FOOLS OF GOD: *Musical Travels in Central Asia (and Queens, New York).*

By Theodore Levin. Indiana University Press. 318 pp. \$35

If you are not familiar with the city of Tashkent, Levin will guide you through the crooked streets of the Muslim Old City, the broad avenues of the 19th-century Russian quarter ("planned with colonialist precision"), the featureless vistas of the Soviet zone ("creeping out like a fungus"), and finally "the new Uzbek Tashkent," where "the Uzbek *nouveaux riches* try to outdo one another" in grand houses that nonetheless have outdoor privies and, in a surrealistic touch, are modelled on "the mansions in the immensely popular Mexican soap opera, 'The Rich Also Cry.'"

After mapping the lay of the land (in Tashkent, Bukhara, Khorezm, and several mountain villages in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), Levin, a professor of music at Dartmouth College, introduces the musicians. One of the most memorable is Turgun Alimatov, a native of Tashkent steeped in the classical Islamic song cycle, *Shash maqâm*. Alimatov's performance of a traditional melody on a long-necked lute called a *tanbur* is probably the most stunning track on the 74-minute CD accompanying this book. Yet as Levin shows, this consummate musician was never part of his homeland's cultural establishment—administered as it was, for most of Alimatov's 70 years, by the Soviet authorities.

Levin does not caricature Soviet cultural policies but rather presents them as a complicated mixture of the preservationist and the assimilationist. The exception, of

course, was religion: another musician, Ma'ruf Xâja, recalls being asked to perform "folk music" on the radio in 1937 with this proviso: "There couldn't be any mention of God or the Prophet."

Yet Ma'ruf Xaja continued to play religious music, as did most of the Muslim and Jewish musicians Levin chronicles. And, in the post-Soviet era, so does a pop singer named Yulduz Usmanova. Her songs exhorting listeners "to love one's parents, to love God" are resisted not by Stalinist commissars but (in her words) by "people who love rock music." One of Usmanova's songs (featuring a solo by Turgun Alimatov) was a hit in Germany. Levin includes it on his CD, as if to admit that there is little point in searching for the unsullied wellsprings of this or any other ancient musical tradition. The best one can do is bathe in the living waters as they flow.

—Martha Bayles

Contemporary Affairs

TIME FOR LIFE: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time.

By John P. Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey. Pennsylvania State University Press. 367 pp. \$24.95

"For the first time since his creation, man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem, how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure . . . [and how] to live agreeably and wisely and well." John Maynard Keynes was right, according to Robinson, a sociologist at the University of Maryland, and Godbey, a professor of leisure studies at Pennsylvania State University. In this study of what Americans do all day, the authors conclude that, yes, economic growth and productivity have won for us the leisure that Lord Keynes prophesied in 1928.

But what are the trends in how Americans use their time? We are spending more time visiting art museums, doing needlework, participating in sports, pursuing hobbies, and (above all) watching television—at the expense of caring for children, visiting parks, socializing, reading, exercising, and working. Of all the trends the authors reveal in the period they study (1965–85), the most con-

troversial is the last. Robinson and Godbey are in the minority when they argue that the American work week has shrunk by five hours in 20 years. Other scholars, such as Juliet Schor, Arlie Hochschild, and this reviewer, have pointed to longer working hours and correspondingly fewer leisure hours.

Social science theory is sufficiently flexible to have it either way. Do the higher wages that accompany economic development coax workers to raise their incomes by spending more hours on the job? Or do rising wages encourage workers to enjoy greater leisure without sacrificing income? When theory predicts diametrically opposed outcomes such as these, only an empirical solution will reveal the truth. Now the fun begins.

Armed with what they refer to as "controversial ideas in all of their quantitative splendor and detail," the authors try to disprove the claim that Americans are working longer, not shorter, hours. The difference turns on the authors' methodology. While other researchers have relied on published statistics and surveys that ask their informants to recall numbers of hours worked in an earlier period, Robinson and Godbey rely

on data obtained from respondents who keep time budgets of activities as they unfold. This data collection method, they maintain, avoids the errors inherent in recalled information.

So far, so good. Yet the authors show a troubling carelessness when it comes to handling even the most straightforward information. For example, they challenge the “questionable belief” held by other researchers that Americans are spending less time reading. Yet their own data reveal that time spent reading dropped by 48 minutes per week—a change considered significant in studies of this kind. Similarly, the authors argue that there has not been a trend away from organized religious activities. Yet their data for matched samples of respondents show a 10 percent decline in time spent in such activities. If these conclusions can be checked against the authors’ own published data, one wonders about the accuracy of those conclusions that cannot.

—Lee Burns

MORAL JUDGMENT:
Does the Abuse Excuse Threaten Our Legal System?

By James Q. Wilson. Basic Books.
134 pp. \$18

To the question posed in its subtitle, this book offers a resounding “yes.” In these 1996 Godkin Lectures delivered originally at Harvard University, Wilson, a professor of management and public policy at the University of California at Los Angeles, presents a scathing indictment of recent trends in criminal law. His special target is the elaboration of excuses, especially those based on alleged histories of abuse, as in the sensational trials of Erik and Lyle Menendez, who murdered their parents. Wilson also objects to expert testimony involving dubious social-scientific findings, such as the percentage of

battered women who (in Wilson’s words) “become so utterly dependent on the abuser that they really believe there is no escape short of his death.” Wilson finds these tendencies offensive because they undercut responsibility. Accused individuals are encouraged to avoid accountability; judges and lawyers evade responsibility for the integrity of legal judgment.

The linchpin of Wilson’s argument is the opposition between judgment and explanation. Judgment is stern and rule-bound, unblemished by passion or sentiment. Explanation, by contrast, evokes sympathy on the basis of the presumed causes of irresponsible or criminal behavior. This opposition makes sense, up to a point. In defining burglary, homicide, and other crimes, the law looks for reasonably clear-cut and objective criteria of guilt or responsibility, while trying to avoid issues of motivation, character, and circumstance.

But these devilments soon reappear: the insanity defense presumes that a person’s actions are explained by mental disease or defect; a plea of duress appeals to the ways in which a person’s will may be constrained; self-defense invokes an accepted motivation. The problem is not, as Wilson claims, that we confuse responsibility and causation. Rather, it is that legal sophistication *requires* us to discern and evaluate causes. Some causes mitigate culpability, as in the “abuse excuse” cited by Wilson. Others, such as drunk driving, aggravate it. Paradoxically, the search for greater precision in assessing degrees of blameworthiness can open the door to untested and imprecise theories. This has happened in the past, and it will continue to happen. Wilson tells us much about the bad results, but I wonder if he fully appreciates the virtues that produce the defects he decries.

—Philip Selznick

History

DERELICTION OF DUTY:
Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies That Led to Vietnam.

By H. R. McMaster. Harper Collins.
446 pp. \$27.50

In early 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson, heir to John F. Kennedy’s commit-

ment to defend South Vietnam, was less concerned about the conflict in Southeast Asia than about the upcoming November election. Summoning the Joint Chiefs to the White House, he listened to their argument that there were only two options in Vietnam, “win or get out.” He did not like what he heard. He told them, “I’ve got to win the



election...or somebody else has . . . and then you can make a decision. . . . But in the meantime let's see if we can't find enough things to do . . . to keep them [Hanoi] off base . . . and upset them a little bit without getting another Korean [war] started."

Then, as later, Johnson tried to deal with Vietnam at the minimum political cost. McMaster, a young Army soldier-scholar and Gulf War combat veteran, draws on newly available documents and interviews to show how, from the start, this approach doomed both the U.S. effort in Vietnam and traditional military-civilian relations. Obscured in most of the literature on Vietnam, it is a chilling tale.

Because Johnson did not want to be accused of "losing" Vietnam, he rejected all talk of a U.S. withdrawal. Yet in 1964 he also did not want to jeopardize his election as a "man of peace" running against the hawkish Barry Goldwater. Nor, in 1965, did he want to mobilize the country for fear of forfeiting his Great Society programs. Johnson's civilian advisers, notably Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, tailored their proposals accordingly. They figured that "graduated pressure" would help LBJ politically while at the same time persuading Hanoi to back off its goal of "liberating" the South. Each seemingly small military step—covert operations, retaliatory air strikes, an incremental bombing campaign, the first U.S. troop deployment—was seen as an extension of diplomacy, sending a new "signal" to the North Vietnamese.

Was "graduated pressure" working? Johnson often worried less about that question than about a revolt by the Joint Chiefs. Like Kennedy, he scorned and distrusted the Joint Chiefs as old-fashioned and unimaginative. Their traditional role was to offer professional military advice untainted by poli-

tics. But LBJ wanted complaisance and agreement. And McNamara, eager to please LBJ and convinced that he and his civilian aides alone should shape U.S. strategy, kept the Joint Chiefs out of the loop.

For their part, the Joint Chiefs complained but, riven by interservice rivalries and parochialism, could not come up with a unified strategic plan. The Air Force's Curtis LeMay and his successor John P. McConnell, saw an intensive bombing campaign as the answer to Hanoi's support for the Vietcong guerrillas in the South. The Marines' Wallace Greene urged a coastal "enclave" strategy. Meanwhile, the Navy's David L. McDonald vacillated, and the Army's Harold K. Johnson, who had grave doubts about bombing, lacked the self-confidence to confront either his colleagues or the White House.

Soothed, divided, and isolated by the artful McNamara, the Joint Chiefs grew privately bitter but never challenged the evasive, temporizing, and finally deceptive assertions made by the White House. As the Vietcong guerrillas made steady gains and LBJ achieved his 1964–65 goal of avoiding a political showdown on Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs became known among junior officers in the Pentagon as "the five silent men." The price of their silence—and of Johnson's policy—was the eventual involvement of a force of more than 500,000 U.S. troops, and 58,000 American dead. McMaster concludes: "The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field nor was it lost on the front page of the *New York Times*." It was lost in Washington almost before the country knew it had begun.

—Peter Braestrup

RUSSIA: *People and Empire.*

By Geoffrey Hosking. Harvard University Press. 548 pp. \$29.95

Who needs another history of Russia under the tsars? The short answer is that we all do, for the fall of the Soviet Union casts fresh light on the whole of Russian history. Was Communist rule simply an interlude, and if so, between what and what? Does democracy stand a chance? Is the new Russia fated to be, like its tsarist predecessor, a conqueror and ruler of its neighbors?

A professor of Russian history at the University of London, Hosking was among the few Western scholars to take seriously the

strivings toward civil society and participatory government in Russia during the last years of Soviet rule. In this eminently readable history, he asks whether Russia has always been an eccentric country doomed to its own peculiar fate or whether it can follow a path similar to that of other nations. Without pressing the point, Hosking implies that, despite its uniqueness, Russia has much in common, if not with the United States, then with Germany, Austria, even Turkey.

Hosking highlights the supporting evidence. The Russian press on the eve of World War I was notably free and independent, he emphasizes, while the legal system instituted by Alexander II at the time of the American Civil War really did open the way toward the law-based society that Mikhail Gorbachev (who knew this history well) called for six score years later. Hosking also shows that in its waning decades the tsarist regime instituted “sweeping guarantees” of private property, in effect dissolving the patrimonial state that had ruled the land for centuries.

In such tsarist reforms, Hosking finds the underpinnings for optimism about Russia’s future. Yet these reforms were swept away when the Communists seized power and in effect restored the ancien régime in a new

guise. How was this possible? On this question Hosking is tentative. He argues that the new parliamentary system never really linked up with the emerging mass public and that the privatized economy was too young and fragile to survive the upheaval of World War I. Then too, the champions of the waning patrimonial order never gave up, effectively preventing the post-1905 system introduced by Nicholas II from functioning as a proper constitutional monarchy.

Underlying these failures is Russia’s history of empire, a theme emphasized in Hosking’s title and introduction but only sparsely developed in his text. A bolder historian, one more inclined to state a grand thesis, might have dug deeper. The logic is as simple as it is implacable: empire requires a large army, which in turn requires strict control of the population, including the serfs. Freedoms granted to some Russians will be demanded by others, not to mention by other nationalities under Russian rule. The preservation of empire is, therefore, the main impediment to reform. It is too bad that Hosking does not place the imperial experience at the very heart of his story, for it rings with solemn familiarity today.

—S. Frederick Starr

Religion & Philosophy

THE COMPLETE DEAD SEA SCROLLS IN ENGLISH.

Edited by Geza Vermes. Viking Press. 688 pp. \$34.95

Only a humorous God could beget such a tale: in 1947 a Bedouin shepherd, Muhammad edh-Dhib, discovers an ancient scroll while exploring a remote cave in the Judean desert south of Jericho. The find is reported, experts are summoned, and the news travels around the globe. During the next several years, 10 other caves are found, yielding some 4,000 fragments of ancient Ara-



maic and Hebraic texts. A team of scholars sets about deciphering the bits and pieces.

An anxious world waits for news of what the scrolls might contain. And waits.

Only now, 50 years later, is the full text of the Qumran scrolls (as they are more properly called) appearing in English. The scholarly squabbling and other maddening interruptions in the work—including the occasional Mideast war—are now the stuff of legend, ably retold by Vermes, who, as professor emeritus of Jewish studies at Oxford’s Wolfson Col-

lege, has long been recognized as one of the world's foremost Dead Sea Scroll scholars. With skill worthy of a spy-thriller writer, Vermes recounts the "revolutionary" action taken in 1988, when the *Biblical Archaeology Review* published a computer-aided reconstruction of various smuggled fragments circulating among privileged scholars. With the scrolls thus effectively "liberated" from the clutches of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the official scroll editors, the pace of translation increased exponentially, leading to this present volume.

Are the scrolls worth the wait? Biblical scholars will no doubt be disappointed. With no sure way to establish the scrolls' provenance, questions regarding the biblical canon remain unresolved, even though the Cave I version of the Book of Isaiah predates the oldest previously known version by a thousand years. The Qumran scrolls quote freely from a variety of Scriptural sources and thus shed little light on what constitutes the "true" or original Scripture. The value of the scrolls lies more in the tantalizing glimpses they yield of the Qumran community that created them.

Included among the documents is an elaborate codex of laws known as the Community Rule, describing the hierarchy of the society from the Master or Teacher of Righteousness (at one time mistakenly thought to be Jesus of Nazareth), to the lesser Guardians or Teachers (who interpreted liturgical matters and maintained discipline and order), and finally to the Disciples, who strove to follow the holy way of the community. Other scrolls deal with the scheduling of daily events in the community temple, liturgical calendars and lists of prayers, and a wealth of scriptural writings and attendant commentary. There are many fragments of Scriptural text not found in present-day bibles (Vermes calls them "Biblically Based Apocryphal Works"), as well as a badly deteriorated document known as the War Scroll. The War Scroll either describes a battle that has already taken place (perhaps the final battle of the Israelites against the Kittim from the Book of Daniel) or prophesies a battle yet to come; in either case, it includes intriguing descriptions of contemporary war tactics similar to those used by the Romans.

The massive work of translating this material clearly signals only the beginning of scholarly engagement with the contents.

Vermes sides with those who think the scrolls community was an Essene sect, described in the First Book of the Maccabees as having been led into the Judean wilderness by the Teacher of Righteousness after a clash with the "Wicked Priest or Priests." The Essenes, says Vermes, were "devoted to the observance of 'perfect holiness'" but "lacked the pliant strength and the elasticity of thought and depth of spiritual vision which enabled rabbinic Judaism to survive and flourish." Sometime during the first century C.E., the Maccabean Essene community was reported to have been wiped out by the Romans. Of the creators of the scrolls, says Vermes, only one thing can now be said with certainty: "No one of the original occupants of Qumran returned to the caves to reclaim their valuable manuscripts."

—James Carman

**FIVE LOST CLASSICS:
*Tao, Huang-Lao, and Yin-Yang
in Han China.***

By Robin D. S. Yates. Ballantine Books. 464 pp. \$27.50

In 1973, Chinese archaeologists excavating tombs at a site named Mawangdui in Changsha, Hunan, made an incredible discovery. Along with many exquisite works of Han dynasty art and craftsmanship, the archaeologists found a large cache of manuscripts written on bamboo and silk. These included versions of the *Laozi* and the *Yi jing* (or *Book of Changes*). Evidently the tomb was sealed in 168 B.C.E., making these the oldest extant versions of two seminal works of Chinese philosophical literature.

The unearthing of the Mawangdui manuscripts not only revolutionized the international study of ancient Chinese philosophy and history; it sparked a renaissance in Chinese archaeology. Excavations at other sites have yielded a flood of new material that has set off major scholarly debates. To bring the texts to a broad audience and to allow English-speaking readers a window onto these debates, Ballantine Books began publishing translations of the recently discovered texts in 1989. The latest in this series is a translation of five key Mawangdui texts by Yates, a professor of East Asian studies at McGill University.

Four of the texts, written on silk and appended to *Laoze B* (the second version of the *Laozi* found at Mawangdui), promise to

illuminate a mystery that has puzzled students of the Han dynasty for centuries. At the beginning of the Han, before Confucianism became the official ideology of the empire, the court was dominated by a form of Taoism known as Huang-Lao (a term that combines the names of Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor, and of Laozi, the legendary founder of Taoism). The content of Huang-Lao was unknown until 1973, because there were no received texts clearly identified with it. Most scholars agree that the four texts appended to Mawangdui *Laozi B* will help to clarify Huang-Lao,

but the consensus ends there.

Yates's is the first complete English translation of the four *Laozi B* texts (and one other text from the same cache). Some of his interpretations are controversial, especially his theory that a distinct school of philosophy, Yin-Yang, existed prior to Huang-Lao and contributed significantly to it. Of course, no translator could avoid controversy in the midst of such fertile debate. These are exciting times for anyone interested in the fundamentals of Chinese thought, and this translation provides a welcome introduction.

—Andrew Meyer

Science & Technology

VISUAL EXPLANATIONS:

Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative.

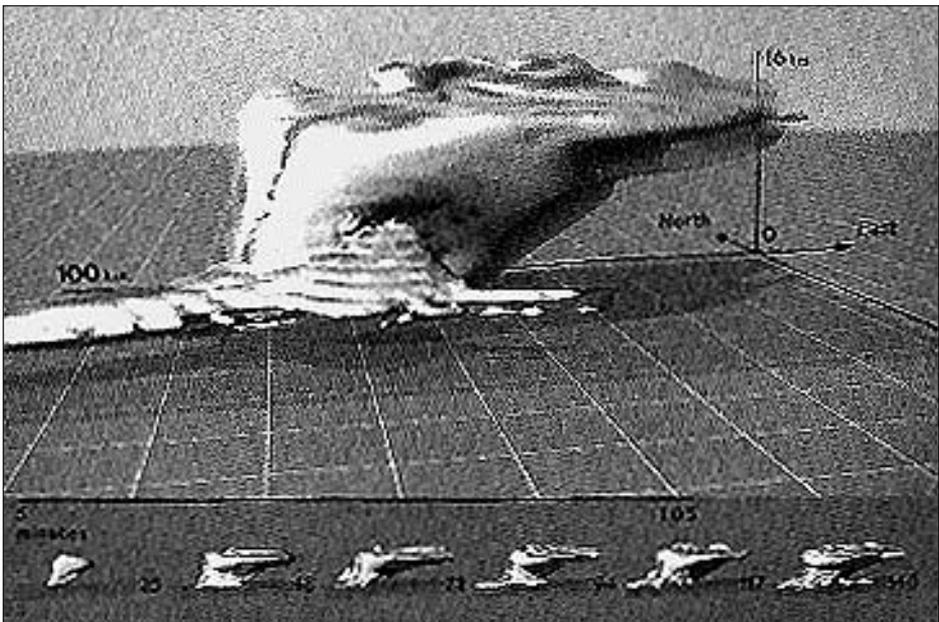
By Edward R. Tufte.

Graphics Press. 156 pp. \$45

Edward Tufte's first book, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (1983), revealed a curious fact about the incipient era of personal computing: unprecedented amounts of data can now be manipulated with unheard-of speed, yet users often rely on visual presentations that are ungainly and distracting. In his book, described by one reviewer as "a visual Strunk and White," Tufte did not try to create a new aesthetic for the Information Age (as publications such as *Wired* have since claimed to do). Rather, the

Yale University political scientist and statistician searched the past for graphic works exemplifying clarity, integrity, and ingenuity—such as a combined map and chart, drawn in 1861 by the French engineer Charles Joseph Minard, that traces both the advance and the retreat of Napoleon's army in Russia during his invasion of 1812. Using a thick line that changes color and grows thinner as the troops move westward, Minard vividly captured the drastic attrition that Napoleon's army suffered. It is, in Tufte's opinion, "the best graphic ever made."

Despite the comparison to Strunk and White, Tufte's works are not mainly rule books or guides. Rather, they are splendidly



personal anthologies of good and bad instances of visual presentation. His second book, *Envisioning Information* (1990), includes such arresting images as an exploded diagram of an IBM copier-duplicator, in which 300 parts are kept in their relative positions but separated and labeled.

Motion in time, both physical and abstract, is the focus of the present volume. Process, change, causation—the challenge here is the compression of four-dimensional data into two-dimensional images. Hence the striking cover image of a developing thunderstorm. On a clear but subdued time-space grid, the viewer sees both the enormous cloud depicted at a particular moment and six smaller depictions of its past and future states.

“Certain methods for displaying and analyzing data are better than others,” writes Tufte. “The difference between an excellent analysis and a faulty one can sometimes have momentous consequences.” Thus he compares the ways in which crucial information was presented in “two life-and-death decisions”: the attempt to curb a cholera epidemic in London in 1854, and the decision to launch the space shuttle *Challenger* in January 1986. In 1854, the Victorian physician John Snow drew lucid data maps that linked the epidemic with a single contaminated water pump. In 1986, the *Challenger* engineers used number charts that were incomplete and confusing, and seven astronauts died. The same *Challenger* data—the recorded effects of hot and cold temperatures on the rubber O-rings holding the rocket together—show up much more clearly in the two formats devised by Tufte: a number chart that includes all the relevant information, and an old-fashioned scatter plot.

In Tufte’s book, as in life, simpler is not always better. Most of his other examples demand unusual analytic and aesthetic skill—and often time. These are not always available. A second limit of Tufte’s method is his penchant for purely visual analysis, abstracted from the history of representation. For instance, he describes the title page of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651) as having been organized as a “confection” along the same lines as an illustration from Jean de Brunhoff’s *Babar’s Dream* (1933). Such ahistoricism can delight but it can also mys-

tify. Tufte also deplores Isotype glyphs (e.g., one stylized coffin equals so many deaths) without explaining why they were once so popular. Nor does he say what is so very bad about Isotype. It may not be elegant, but is it misleading? Occasionally, aesthetics can even dehumanize. Tufte’s own composite illustration of a psychotic patient’s agonizing medical history is a masterpiece, but is there any evidence that it helped that particular patient or any other? Ultimately, what *Visual Explanations* illustrates best is the reason why good graphic designs are so uncommon: they are uncommonly hard to do.

—Edward Tenner

***THE MATHEMATICAL UNIVERSE:
An Alphabetical Journey through
the Great Proofs, Problems,
and Personalities.***

By William Dunham. John Wiley & Sons. 320 pp. \$24.95

The mathematician Felix Klein once responded to the hackneyed comparison of mathematics to music by saying, “But I don’t understand; mathematics is beautiful!” Every mathematician knows what Klein meant. So will readers of this fine popularization. As he did in his previous book, a guided tour of the 12 great theorems called *Journey through Genius* (1990), Dunham describes the human and the historical dimensions of mathematical discovery. But while most popularizers settle for gee-whiz accounts of incomprehensible discoveries that merely reinforce our prejudice that math is baffling, Dunham, a professor of mathematics at Muhlenberg College, does the opposite. He walks us through the actual proofs, and we learn that with math, unlike sausage or legislation, we do want to see how it’s made. His book is organized into 26 alphabetical entries, from A (Arithmetic) to Z (the symbol for the complex-number system). An awkward arrangement, perhaps, but in Dunham’s hands it still permits some historical depth. The entry “Hypoteneuse,” for example, presents three proofs of the Pythagorean theorem: an ancient Chinese diagram, an elegant 17th-century calculation, and a clever proof devised by President James Garfield when he was in Congress. About the latter, Garfield remarked drily that it was “something on which the members of both houses can

unite without distinction of party.” This book, which requires no more preparation than high school algebra and geometry (and a willingness not to panic at the sight of formulas), harks back to a day when even politicians understood that, in math, beauty is proof and proof beauty.

—David Luban

BUFFON:

A Life in Natural History.

By Jacques Roger. Sarah Lucille

Bonnefoi, trans. L. Pearce

Williams, ed. Cornell University Press.

512 pp. \$49.95

In our time it is nearly impossible for a scholar, however driven, to achieve true eminence both as a scientist and as a philosopher of science. It is even harder to achieve both these goals *and* write a best seller. Not so in the 18th century, when the great questions of scientific method—what is the proper role of hypothesis . . . of received religious truth . . . of observation?—were still urgent and of interest to the reading public. George Louis LeClerc (1707–88), born of upwardly mobile laborers in the small town of Montbard, Burgundy, seized the opportunity for fame offered by these questions. Educated by the Jesuits and later in the law, LeClerc chose a life in science instead. He became the Comte de Buffon and wrote his century’s most celebrated work of natural history, in which he came down on the side of empiricism and materialism, yet managed to avoid the blacklist.

This admirable biography, the lifework of the late French historian of science Jacques Roger, is not driven (or defaced) by any particular sociopolitical-epistemological theory, although Roger was alert to the theoretical implications of his subject. The book provides a rich, expertly documented assessment of Buffon’s science and philosophy, but it does not discount or overlook those scars and blemishes that were the marks of Buffon’s humanity—and of his time.

Buffon was a sycophant and seeker after preferments, who assiduously cultivated his king (Louis XV) and the courtly circle, doled out favors to family and supporters, and heaped scorn on critics and those with less influence. He was also an effective manager of people, of his estate, and of the Jardin du Roi in Paris, which he turned into one of the leading scientific institutions of Europe. He produced an awe-inspiring body of work based not only upon the research of others but upon his own large-scale observations and experiments.

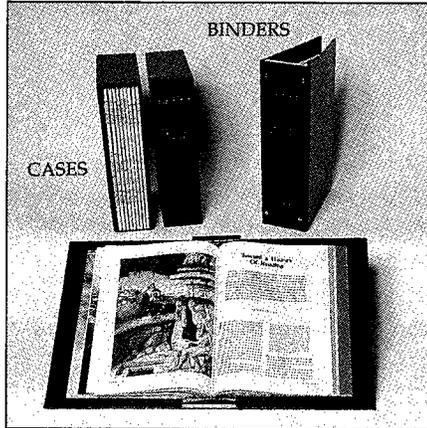
Buffon was the antagonist of the Swedish taxonomist Carol von Linne (Linnaeus, 1707–78) and of all “arbitrary,” hierarchical “systems” of classification. Yet his own system for the investigation of nature was as comprehensive as Aristotle’s. A good deal of it was murky or wrong, even in its day. But some of it was right. Buffon took issue, for example, with the prevailing explanation of embryological development. He argued that the notion of a miniature, preformed being—a “homunculus” or “animalcule” “instantaneously” present in the mixture of male and female sexual fluids—was absurd, a case of infinite regress. Living things are not dolls-within-dolls, he asserted. Against this preformationist view and its powerful clerical support, Buffon proposed his own, empirically based theory that, if not a complete account of epigenesis (the assembly of the embryo from substances in the fertilized egg), was nevertheless a rational and courageous step toward it.

Buffon was a predecessor of Charles Darwin, at least to the extent of his insistence upon natural explanations for natural phenomena—from the formation of the embryo to the origin of the planets. While outwitting the Doctors of the Sorbonne, the censors, and his enemies, and while preserving his reputation and fortune, he helped to set the life sciences on the independent, secular path they have followed ever since.

—Paul R. Gross



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POETRY

Walter de la Mare

Selected and introduced by Anthony Hecht

Walter de la Mare (1873–1956), roughly a contemporary of Robert Frost but by temperament more akin to Thomas Hardy and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was too poor to continue his education beyond St. Paul's Cathedral Choir School in London, and became a book-keeper at an English branch of Standard Oil, at which cheerless work he continued for 18 years. By the age of 35 he had published his first collection of poems anonymously, and the first of his five novels, one of which, *Memoirs of a Midget*, published in 1921, is a brilliant, moving and unsettling work. He is also the compiler of that extraordinary "collection of rhymes and poems for the young of all ages" called *Come Hither*, one of the finest anthologies of poetry for young readers, and one that deeply enriched the youthful reading of W. H. Auden. Later Auden was to write with characteristic shrewdness of "the delicacy of his metrical fingering and the graceful architecture of his stanzas." De la Mare's poetry is richly, sometimes dreamily, melodic, and the subtlety and skill of his prosody probably derives in part from his familiarity with folk literature and traditional English nursery rhymes. Witness the titles of some of his books: *Songs of Childhood* (1902), *A Child's Day: A Book of Rhymes to Pictures by C. W. Cadby* (1912), *Peacock Pie: A Book of Rhymes* (1913), *Down-adown-derry: A Book of Fairy Poems* (1922), and *Poems for Children* (1930). But readers should immediately be warned against supposing such titles promise a poetry that is "twee" or sentimental. De la Mare was keenly aware that the imagination of a child is haunted by spirits, ghosts, crime, and danger, as well as by moods of deep sorrow and overpowering fear. And, of course, other volumes of his verse (*The Listeners*, *Motley*, *The Veil*, *The Fleeting*) are not concerned with children nor addressed to them.

Though de la Mare is not much noticed or praised these days, and his work is absent from a number of standard anthologies, it is worth remembering that he was once much honored, and his words resounded in the ears of a considerable readership. When C. K. Scott Moncrieff turned Marcel Proust into English, he transformed the title of the whole work, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, into a well-known phrase from one of Shakespeare's sonnets, *Remembrance of Things Past*; and when he transformed the title of one of that work's sections, *Albertine disparue*, into an English phrase that also would generate literary resonance, he turned to the last line of a poem of de la Mare's for *The Sweet Cheat Gone* (from "The Ghost").

The British Crown made the poet a Companion of Honor in 1948, and he was named a member of the Order of Merit in 1953 and an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Perhaps more tellingly still, his fellow O.M., T. S. Eliot, in a tribute prepared for de la Mare's 75th birthday, composed the following poem:

When the nocturnal traveler can arouse
No sleeper by his call; or when by chance
An empty face peers from an empty house,

By whom: and by what means was this designed?
The whispered incantation which allows
Free passage to the phantoms of the mind?

By you: by those deceptive cadences
Wherewith the common measure is refined;
By conscious art practiced with natural ease;

By the delicate invisible web you wove—
An inexplicable mystery of sound.

Eliot draws attention to “deceptive cadences,” and truly de la Mare’s prosody deserves the most careful and reverent study. But Eliot also points to “The whispered incantation which allows/ Free passage to the phantoms of the mind,” and which concerns the summoning up of the uncanny, some spectral world within and about us. This fascination with the darker imaginative realms has not always been looked upon with critical approval. I. A. Richards regretted that “no intimation of the contemporary situation sounds” in de la Mare’s poetry, and goes on to say that “he is writing of, and from, a world which knows nothing of these difficulties, a world of pure fantasy for which the distinction between knowledge and feeling has not yet dawned,” which sounds suspiciously like an accusation of emotional and mental backwardness. And even when, as sometimes happens, de la Mare allows some brutal reality to invade his poems, Richards declares that he voices “an impulse to turn away, to forget it, to seek shelter in the warmth of his own familiar thickets of dream, not to stay out in the wind. His rhythm, that indescribable personal note which clings to all his best poetry, is a lulling rhythm, an anodyne, an opiate, it gives sleep and visions, phantasmagoria; but it does not give vision, it does not awaken.”

The tone here is that of a grumpy teacher, scolding some youth who has failed to concentrate on the table of logarithms. In essence, Richards is charging de la Mare with writing a sort of unmanly, escapist poetry. Indictments of the same sort were once brought against Yeats as well as Keats. And it is not easy to reconcile this charge with such a poem as “In the Dock,” which is included here. In any case, the richly evocative voice, the metrical inventiveness and syntactical ingenuity, the lovely imaginative power and slightly dated locutions, the archaic charm of a world steeped in mystery, are to be encountered in the first, enchanting stanza of “All That’s Past”:

Very old are the woods;
 And the buds that break
Out of the brier’s boughs,
 When March winds wake,
So old with their beauty are—
 Oh, no man knows
Through what wild centuries
 Roves back the rose.

Isaac Meek

An Epitaph

Hook-nosed was I, loose-lipped; greed fixed its gaze
In my young eyes ere they knew brass from gold;
Doomed to the blazing market-place my days—
A sweated chafferer of the bought and sold.
Fawned on and spat at, flattered and decried—
One only thing men asked of me—my price.
I lived, detested; and deserted, died,
Scorned by the virtuous, and the jest of vice.
And now, behold, blest child of Christ, my worth;
Stoop close: I have inherited the earth!

The Fat Woman

Massed in her creaseless black,
She sits; vast and serene;
Light—on glossed hair, large knees,
Huge bust—a-sheen.

A smile lurks deep in her eyes,
Thick-lidded, motionless, pale,
Taunting a world grown old,
Faded, and stale.

Enormous those childless breasts:
God in His pity knows
Why, in her bodice stuck,
Reeks a mock rose.

The Moth

Isled in the midnight air,
Musked with the dark's faint bloom,
Out into glooming and secret haunts
The flame cries, 'Come!'

Lovely in dye and fan,
A-tremble in shimmering grace,
A moth from her winter swoon
Uplifts her face:

Stares from her glamorous eyes;
Wafts her on plumes like mist;
In ecstasy swirls and sways
To her strange tryst.

Drugged

Inert in his chair,
In a candle's guttering glow;
His bottle empty,
His fire sunk low;
With drug-sealed lids shut fast,
Unsated mouth ajar,
This darkened phantasm walks
Where nightmares are:

In a frenzy of life and light,
Crisscross—a menacing throng—
They gibe, the squeal at the stranger,
Jostling along,
Their faces cadaverous grey:
While on high from an attic stare
Horrors, in beauty apparelled,
Down in the dark air.

A stream gurgles over its stones,
The chambers within are a-fire.
Stumble his shadowy feet
Through shine, through mire;
And the flames leap higher.
In vain yelps the wainscot mouse;
In vain beats the hour;
Vacant, his body must drowse
Until daybreak flower—

Staining these walls with its rose,
And the draughts of the morning shall stir
Cold on cold brow, cold hands.
And the wanderer
Back to flesh house must return.
Lone soul—in horror to see,
Than dream more meagre and awful,
Reality.

Incantation

Vervain . . . basil . . . orison—
Whisper their syllablings till all meaning is gone,
And sound all vestige loses of mere word. . . .
'Tis then as if, in some far childhood heard,
A wild heart languished at the call of a bird
Crying through ruinous windows, high and fair,
A secret incantation on the air:
A language lost; which, when its accents cease,
Breathes, voiceless, of a pre-Edenic peace.

In the Dock

Pallid, mis-shapen he stands. The World's grimed thumb,
Now hooked securely in his matted hair,
Has haled him struggling from his poisonous slum
And flung him, mute as fish, close-netted there.

His bloodless hands entalon that iron rail.
He gloats in beastlike trance. His settling eyes
From staring face to face rove on—and quail.
Justice for carrion pants; and these the flies.

Voice after voice in smooth impartial drone
Erects horrific in his darkening brain
A timber framework, where agape, alone
Bright life will kiss good-bye the cheek of Cain.

Sudden like wolf he cries; and sweats to see
When howls man's soul, it howls inaudibly.

The Suicide

Did these night-hung houses,
Of quiet, starlit stone,
Breathe not a whisper—'Stay,
Thou unhappy one;
Whither so secret away?'

Sighed not the unfriending wind,
Chill with nocturnal dew,
'Pause, pause, in thy haste,
O thou distraught! I too
Tryst with the Atlantic waste.'

Steep fell the drowsy street;
In slumber the world was blind:
Breathed not one midnight flower
Peace in thy broken mind?—
'Brief, yet sweet, is life's hour.'

Syllabled thy last tide—
By as dark moon stirred,
And doomed to forlorn unrest—
Not one compassionate word? . . .
'Cold is this breast.'

Speech

The robin's whistled stave
Is tart as half-ripened fruit;
Wood-sooth from bower of leaves
The blackbird's flute;
Shrill-small the ardent wren's;
And the thrush, and the long-tailed tit—
Each hath its own apt tongue,
 Shrill, harsh, or sweet.

The meanings they may bear
Is long past ours to guess—
What sighs the wind, of the past,
In the wilderness?
Man also in ancient words
His thoughts may pack,
But if he not sing them too,
 Music they lack.

Oh, never on earth was bird,
Though perched on Arabian tree,
Nor instrument echoing heaven
Made melody strange as he;
Since even his happiest speech
Cries of his whither and whence,
And in mere sound secretes
 His inmost sense.

Night

All from the light of the sweet moon
 Tired men now lie abed;
Actionless, full of visions, soon
 Vanishing, soon sped.

The starry night aflock with beams
 Of crystal light scarce stirs:
Only its birds—the cocks, the streams,
 Call 'neath heaven's wanderers.

All's silent; all hearts still;
 Love, cunning, fire, fallen low:
When faint morn straying on the hill
 Sighs, and his soft airs flow.

The Mermaids

Sand, sand; hills of sand;
And the wind where nothing is
Green and the sweet of the land;
No grass, no trees,
No bird, no butterfly,
But hills, hills of sand,
And a burning sky.

Sea, sea; mounds of the sea,
Hollow, and dark, and blue,
Flashing incessantly
The whole sea through;
No flower, no jutting root,
Only the floor of the sea,
With foam afloat.

Blow, blow, winding shells;
And the watery fish,
Deaf to the hidden bells,
In the waters plash;
No streaming gold, no eyes,
Watching along the waves,
But far-blown shells, faint bells,
From the darkling caves.

Good-bye

The last of last words spoken is, Good-bye—
The last dismantled flower in the weed-grown hedge,
The last thin rumour of a feeble bell far ringing,
The last blind rat to spurn the mildewed rye.

A hardening darkness glasses the haunted eye,
Shines into nothing the watcher's burnt-out candle,
Wreathes into scentless nothing the wasting incense,
Faints in the outer silence the hunting-cry.

Love of its muted music breathes no sigh,
Thought in her ivory tower gropes in her spinning,
Toss on in vain the whispering trees of Eden,
Last of all last words spoken is, Good-bye.

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

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The High Price of Victory

A Survey of Recent Articles

The United States has a history of military unpreparedness. After World War I, Congress, never imagining the world conflict to come, spurned the War Department's outrageous plan for a regular army of 500,000 men. It authorized instead a force of 280,000, and then let budgetary pressures during the 1920s keep troop levels at half-strength. After World War II, America swiftly shrunk its army of 10 million down to about 552,000—a force that, General Omar Bradley judged when he inherited it in 1948, “could not fight its way out of a paper bag.” The perceived weakness encouraged North Korea's Soviet-sanctioned invasion of South Korea in 1950, bringing on the Korean War. Now, six years after the end of the Cold War, with the military reduced from 2.1 million to 1.4 million men and women, the question of preparedness has arisen once again.

Defense spending, which has fallen from more than \$300 billion in 1989 to about \$250 billion today, could be cut by billions of dollars more “without jeopardizing our national security,” in the opinion of Lawrence J. Korb, a former assistant secretary of defense, writing in the *Washington Monthly* (Mar. 1997). “An objective assessment of the threat would show that we have more than enough forces to protect our interests in the Persian Gulf and on the Korean Peninsula, and that our forces are already increasing their technological advantage at the current levels of defense spending.” Instead of preparing for a two-front war that almost certainly will not occur, he writes in the *New York Times* (May 22, 1997), the United States should aim “to be able to fight one large war while handling

smaller peacekeeping operations elsewhere, with a weapons budget sufficient to maintain our technological edge.” This could be done, he maintains, with a much leaner Pentagon budget.

The “Rogue Doctrine,” formulated in 1989 under General Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that the military threats to the United States in the post-Cold War era would come from “rogue” states such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Cuba, and North Korea. The United States thus should be able to fight and win two large regional wars simultaneously. According to the Quadrennial Defense Review, a congressionally mandated strategic blueprint issued recently by the Pentagon, the current main military force of 10 active army divisions, a dozen aircraft-carrier battle groups, and 20 air force fighter wings is enough to do that.

Some military specialists, however, question whether the United States is ready to fight even *one* large regional war. “The army today,” assert Frederick W. Kagan and David T. Fautua, military historians at the U.S. Military Academy, “could not field the force which won the [1991 Persian] Gulf war. . . . Whereas the American land component of the forces that defeated Saddam Hussein comprised seven divisions, five heavy and two light (out of our then-total of 18 divisions), today, out of 10 divisions, only six are heavy, and five of these are already committed to defending American interests elsewhere around the world.” Withdrawing the heavy divisions “from either Bosnia or Korea, let alone from both,” they write in *Commentary* (May 1997), “would itself

entail large costs, undermining the credibility of America's commitments around the world and inviting instability and possibly war."

The "real Achilles' heel" of the two-regional-wars strategy, Harry G. Summers, Jr., a retired army colonel and syndicated columnist, writes in *Orbis* (Spring 1997), is that it has been "seriously underfunded, with estimates of the shortfall ranging from \$150 million to \$200 billion. But instead of facing that fact, America [has] tried to wish it away." One way of doing that, "a favorite of the defense contractors, [is] to argue that high technology could substitute for manpower." But soldiers are not going to be rendered obsolete, Summers says. America, in his view, must make up its mind whether its national interest and international obligations require "a Cold War-type military with a relatively large standing army" or not.

In reality, Kagan and Fautua argue, the U.S. role in the world "is as extensive as ever, and there is no reason to think it will soon diminish." During the Bush and Clinton administrations, "we have dispatched troops abroad more often than we did during the previous 20 years under Presidents Reagan, Carter, Ford, and Nixon." President Bush sent soldiers to Panama and Somalia, as well as to the Persian Gulf, while President Clinton sent armed forces to Haiti, Bosnia, the Persian Gulf again, and the seas around Taiwan.

These far-flung missions are not only stretching the army thin but robbing it of its war-fighting edge, Kagan and Fautua argue. Peacekeeping and war-fighting demand very different skills and qualities, and the army today is heavily involved in the former.

Because manpower is very expensive, especially without a draft, the army makes an attractive target for budget-cutters, observes historian Donald Kagan, of Yale University, also writing in *Orbis*. (The recent Quadrennial Defense Review report calls for a four percent reduction in active-duty troops.) But the temptation must be resisted, he says. *More* money than is now budgeted or anticipated will be needed.

With the Cold War over, America today is in an immensely favorable situation in the world, Kagan notes, and its "most vital interest . . . is maintaining the general peace." But, he adds, it is a common mistake to

assume "that peace is natural and can be preserved merely by having peace-seeking nations avoid provocative actions. The last three-quarters of the 20th century strongly suggests the opposite conclusion: major war is more likely to come when satisfied states neglect their defenses and fail to take an active part in the preservation of peace."

Yet modern democracies find it hard to maintain their commitment to deterrence. Kagan writes: "If there is no war and no immediate threat in sight, opponents of the policy will denounce it as an unnecessary expense diverting resources from more desirable causes. They will regard the peaceful international situation as natural and unconnected to what has helped produce it: the effort and money expended on military power."

Such a commitment will be possible, Kagan concludes, only after "a full national debate, followed by the adoption of a grand strategy of continued engagement in the new constellation of international relations." Critics such as Eric Alterman, a Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute, who favor, as he writes in *World Policy Journal* (Summer 1996), "a less interventionist United States," would be heard. So would proponents of humanitarian intervention, such as Robert I. Rotberg, president of the World Peace Foundation, and Thomas G. Weiss, of Brown University. As they write in *From Massacres to Genocide* (1996), humanitarian interventionists believe that the United States should regard its national interest as "genuinely threatened by instability and strife wherever in the world they occur."

Eliot A. Cohen and A. J. Bacevich, both of Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, agree on the necessity of a national debate. "The uncomfortable fact," they write in the *Weekly Standard* (Mar. 3, 1997), "is that the United States has become a global hegemon, its soldiers members of a constabulary enforcing a Pax Americana. It may be awkward or disconcerting to admit as much to ourselves, let alone to others, but to pretend otherwise will serve in the long run only to confuse citizens and soldiers alike. As a result, the nation is sorely in need of a new public discourse appropriate to the grand strategic enterprise to which the United States has tacitly committed itself."

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

The Founders and the 'Vision Thing'

"Revolutionary Men of Letters and the Pursuit of Radical Change: The Views of Burke, Tocqueville, Adams, Madison, and Jefferson" by Susan Dunn, in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Oct. 1996), Box 8781, Williamsburg, Va. 23187-8781.

What is the proper role of abstract ideas in politics? Are they an indispensable source of liberating visions or merely, in Edmund Burke's phrase, "untried speculations" that often lead to disaster?

The question intrigued America's Founding Fathers and many of their contemporaries, notes Dunn, a historian at Williams College, especially as they watched the French Revolution unfold after 1789. One pole of the debate was defined by Burke, Britain's great conservative parliamentarian, who in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) denounced the "spirit of innovation" for its disregard of tradition and experience. Inclined toward the Burkean view was a significant group of Americans, including Alexander Hamilton, Gouverneur Morris, and John Adams. For Hamilton and Morris, writes Dunn, "the strength of American democracy lay in its continuity

with its colonial past and English institutions. Experience and practical wisdom were purely positive values; neither man thought that experience dulled the mind with routine, stale formulae, or worn ideas."

Another important Founder, James Madison, the chief architect of the U.S. Constitution, held a more nuanced view. He saw both experience and theory as flawed forms of human understanding. "Madison knew well that men had no choice but to use their rational faculties and imagination to shape the political future," Dunn writes.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the famed observer of *Democracy in America* (1835-40), was no less horrified than Burke at what France's revolutionary intellectuals had wrought, but he insisted that abstract ideas do have a role in politics. In monarchical France, he argued, the kinds of "wise and practical men" Burke admired lived an insular royal exist-



An artist in 1807 contrasted President Jefferson, relying on Voltaire and other dubious authorities, with the sagacious conservative, Washington.

tence, ignorant of changing social and political conditions. “Only the interplay of *free institutions* can really teach men of state this principal part of their art,” he wrote in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (1856). France’s intellectuals were more attuned to the changes in French society, but they were barred from the practical experience in politics that would have tempered their theories.

Thomas Jefferson was closer in spirit to the French philosophes than most of the other Founding Fathers. Always a contradictory mix of the pragmatic and the idealistic, he favored the latter toward the end of his life.

By 1824, he had come to see the American Revolution as very like the French, a blank slate for the abstract ideas of the Founders: “Our Revolution...presented us an album on which we were free to write what we pleased,” he wrote.

Yet Jefferson, like Tocqueville, grasped an essential truth, Dunn argues. For modern societies, the choice was no longer between preservation and revolution, as Burke believed, but between evolution and revolution. “A healthy polity, they suggested, would always turn to its men and women of experience and theory, courageous, farsighted, and hopeful, for perpetual renewal, the key to its survival.”

The Democrats’ Gender Gap

“Finding the Real Center” by Ruy Teixeira, in *Dissent* (Spring 1997), 521 Fifth Ave., Ste. 1700, New York, N.Y. 10017.

By many accounts, President Bill Clinton won a second term last year by moving to the center and re-establishing his credentials as a “New Democrat.” Congressional Democrats, in contrast, took more of a traditional liberal approach—and, as a result, failed to recapture the House. But hold on—that’s not exactly what happened, contends Teixeira, director of the politics and public opinion program at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C.

“The truth is,” he writes, “that Clinton’s political resurgence was based on his defense of *Old Democrat* programs, sometimes abbreviated as M2E2: Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment, as well as...a widespread perception that the economy was improving.” Almost 60 percent of Clinton voters, in one postelection survey, cited his support of domestic programs (education, Medicare, and the environment) to explain their choice, compared with only 31 percent who pointed to his New Democrat positions on welfare reform, a balanced budget, and crime.

Clinton won 49 percent of the popular vote last year, six points more than in 1992. Despite all the media attention lavished on affluent suburban “soccer moms,” Teixeira says, about three-fourths of that increased support came from moderate-income voters who were not college graduates, especially women.

The economic picture for these women has been bleak, Teixeira notes. At the end of

1995, wages for women with some college education were five percent lower than in 1989. While distrusting government as much as their male counterparts do, women “are more appreciative of government’s essential role in providing social services like health care and education. They are also more willing than men to see the government ensure job availability and a wholesome social and family environment.” Thus, Clinton’s defense of M2E2, as well as his small-scale regulatory proposals (such as the V-chip, school uniforms, and extending family and medical leave), appealed to them.

House Democrats also reclaimed some lost ground—though not enough to reclaim the House. While their share of the votes of non-college white men jumped, it was still 10 points short of the 53 percent they claimed in 1992. Winning over those still-reluctant non-college white males is now the House Democrats’ real challenge, in Teixeira’s view. A New Democrat approach is not likely to work, he says. After all, Clinton got an even smaller share of this vote (38 percent) “than the supposed Democratic dinosaurs in the House!”

What should traditional liberal Democrats do? Teixeira suggests sticking to the M2E2 agenda while taking a leaf (moral values) from the New Democrats: “I think we need to learn to talk about the role of government in raising living standards in a language voters understand: the language of values.”

Was Cincinnatus a Commuter?

“Capitol Flight” by Jennifer Bradley, in *The New Republic* (Apr. 7, 1997), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Running as antigovernment outsiders in 1994, Republican candidates for the House of Representatives, intent upon becoming not mere lawmakers but citizen-legislators, promised in their “Contract with America” to enact term limits. Term limits may have failed, writes Bradley, a staff writer for *Roll Call*, but so many new members seem to think of themselves as Cincinnatus, ever eager to return to the plow and home, that the House is now a lot emptier most of the time.

“Every week, on Thursday evening or Friday morning, more than half the members of the House abandon Washington, and its pernicious climate of government professionalism, and head home,” she says. “They spend four cleansing, clarifying days with ‘real Americans’ in their districts and return, reluctantly, to Washington as late as Monday night or Tuesday morning.”

The work of governing—attending com-

mittee hearings and dealing with proposed legislation and fellow legislators—thus gets squeezed into three “harried, tense, 12-hour days”: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. This truncated schedule was invented not in the last few years by Republicans but in the 1960s by Democrats who wanted to encourage members to be responsive to their constituents (and thus more secure in their seats). But the Republicans have made the weekly rush to the home district a virtual congressional commandment.

As a consequence, hundreds of lawmakers don’t know their colleagues very well and don’t understand much about legislative work. One recently retired congressman estimates that fewer than 100 out of the 435 members today are “serious legislators.” The result is not a more virtuous deliberative body, Bradley argues, but only “a new kind of do-nothing Congress.”

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Politicizing the Military

“The Paradox of Professionalism: Eisenhower, Ridgway, and the Challenge to Civilian Control, 1953–1955” by A. J. Bacevich, in *The Journal of Military History* (Apr. 1997), Society for Military History, 910 Forbes Rd., Carlisle, Pa. 17013.

No *Seven Days in May* coup has ever taken place in the United States, and none appears in the offing. Nevertheless, contends Bacevich, executive director of the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, the “edifice of civilian control” has become so “rickety” that “a highly politicized military establishment” feels free to enter “the partisan arena.” An example: the Pentagon’s “virtual insubordination” early in the Clinton administration over the prospect of overt gays in uniform.

Never as apolitical as Americans have liked to imagine, the senior U.S. military has become highly politicized, Bacevich says, as the result of events that have undermined the basis of the traditional concept of military professionalism. One of the most significant of these was a titanic—and often misunderstood—struggle that took place in

the Eisenhower administration.

In the fall of 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower, needing to make major budget cuts and believing that nuclear weapons had rendered a large military establishment for fighting conventional wars superfluous, decided on a new U.S. strategy: Soviet aggression would be met by “massive retaliation” with nuclear weapons. Eisenhower also worried that maintaining a large standing army might turn America into a “garrison state.”

Eisenhower had consulted the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but army chief General Matthew Ridgway felt that Ike had peremptorily adopted a policy with possibly calamitous consequences.

Often dismissed as merely a product of “interservice squabbling,” Ridgway’s opposition was actually inspired by much deeper concerns, Bacevich contends. “In jettisoning the principle that war was necessarily a

contest between opposing armed forces, massive retaliation presaged the demise of the military profession. . . . Worse, this new reliance on nuclear weapons to defend America on the cheap appeared to legitimize the targeting of civilian populations for wholesale destruction,” and to raise the specter of a preventive nuclear strike against them. In effect, the president was demanding that the army’s leaders carry out a policy that rendered the traditional tenets of their profession obsolete.

For the next 18 months, Bacevich writes, Ridgway and the army “obdurately” fought the new doctrine, carrying the campaign to the press and to the Council on Foreign Relations. Finally, in 1955, Eisenhower forced Ridgway to retire. But army resistance continued, and Ridgway’s successor,

General Maxwell Taylor, would angrily leave active duty and publish his famous indictment, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (1960).

Far from affirming civilian control, the struggle between Eisenhower and his generals accelerated the politicization of the senior military leadership, Bacevich writes. “No longer able to claim that warfare provided the basis for their role in society and was the wellspring of their authority, neither would they be able to claim to be the authoritative source of advice on military matters.” They were cast adrift. The “tragic dénouement of this process,” Bacevich says, would come when American involvement in the Vietnam War grew, yet top officers sacrificed their professional judgment of the military situation to the exigencies of civilian politics.

Toward a Smaller World

Have reservations about the growing global hegemony of Ronald McDonald, Sly Stallone, and the rest of their crowd? Not to worry, says David Rothkopf, managing director of Kissinger Associates and an adjunct professor of international affairs at Columbia University, writing in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1997).

Many observers contend that it is distasteful to use the opportunities created by the global information revolution to promote American culture over others, but that kind of relativism is as dangerous as it is wrong. American culture is fundamentally different from indigenous cultures in so many other locales. American culture is an amalgam of influences and approaches from around the world. It is melded—consciously in many cases—into a social medium that allows individual freedoms and cultures to thrive. Recognizing this, Americans should not shy away from doing that which is so clearly in their economic, political, and security interests—and so clearly in the interests of the world at large. The United States should not hesitate to promote its values. In an effort to be polite or politic, Americans should not deny the fact that of all the nations in the history of the world, theirs is the most just, the most tolerant, the most willing to constantly reassess and improve itself, and the best model for the future.

Bazaar Foreign Policy

“The Selling of American Foreign Policy” by Lawrence F. Kaplan, in *The Weekly Standard* (Apr. 28, 1997), 1150 17th St. N.W., Ste. 505, Washington, D.C. 20036-4617.

The Clinton administration has put commerce at the center of U.S. foreign policy, in the hope of promoting peace, democracy, and human rights throughout the world. The result has been to cut American foreign policy loose from its strategic and ideological moorings, asserts Kaplan, a Fellow at Johns Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Ad-

vanced International Studies.

In the name of “commercial diplomacy,” the United States now “engages” nations of all sorts, he says, even those whose links to terrorist activities and human rights abuses have won them places on the State Department’s roster of rogue states. “No profit margin is too small [and] almost no regime [is] too distaste-

ful for the apostles of commercial engagement,” such as Jeffrey Garten, who served as undersecretary of commerce for international trade during 1993–95. When Occidental Petroleum last year wanted to pump oil from a Sudanese field, Clinton provided an exemption from the 1996 Anti-Terrorism Act. Syria, too, got an exemption, and “continues to enjoy millions of dollars in American investment.” The White House now is considering lifting the trade embargo on Iran.

The official pariah status of such states as Syria limits trade done with them, but the Clinton administration “tirelessly promotes” business deals with equally egregious countries, Kaplan says. China is only the most prominent example. Despite the repressive policies of the Suharto regime in Indonesia, the late commerce secretary Ron Brown secured Indonesian contracts worth billions for American companies. Mexico—the source of three-fourths of the cocaine that flows into the United States each year—poses, according to the State Department, “a more immediate narcotics threat to the United States” than any other nation. Yet, even after learning “that the commander of Mexico’s much lauded anti-drug effort was himself a drug dealer,” Kaplan notes, Clinton “certified the commitment of our third

largest trading partner to fighting narcotics trafficking.”

The administration also has encouraged American firms “to auction off previously restricted technologies to foreign bidders,” Kaplan points out. It has abolished nearly all export restrictions on computer and telecommunications technology, and, brushing aside Pentagon concerns, has authorized the launching of commercial satellites to take high-resolution photos that could be used for military purposes.

While the administration gives “potential adversaries . . . lucrative trade deals and sensitive technology,” Kaplan observes, it often uses trade “as a weapon with which to bludgeon our strategic allies,” notably Japan.

“By promoting commercial diplomacy at the expense of our strategic interests,” he warns, “President Clinton has essentially rolled the dice, betting that security issues represent nothing more than what one administration official described . . . as ‘stratocrap and globaloney.’ The White House assumes that the rest of the world will recognize the diminished utility of military power—the notion that war will soon go the way of dueling. Unfortunately, no evidence exists to suggest that nations such as China and Syria share that conviction.”

Scrap the Nukes?

“The Case in Favor of U.S. Nuclear Weapons” by Robert G. Spulak, Jr., in *Parameters* (Spring 1997), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa. 17013–5238; “Retired Generals Re-ignite Debate Over Abolition of Nuclear Weapons” by Craig Cerniello, in *Arms Control Today* (Nov.–Dec. 1996), 1726 M St. N.W., Ste. 201, Washington, D.C. 20036.

The siren song of nuclear disarmament seemed a dangerous one when the Cold War was on. But now that the Soviet threat has vanished, the idea of ridding the planet of nuclear weapons is attracting fresh support from an unlikely quarter: the military. Two eminent retired American generals—Lee Butler, former commander in chief of the U.S. Strategic Air Command, and Andrew Goodpaster, former supreme allied commander in Europe—were among more than 60 retired generals and admirals from 17 countries who recently urged the United States and other nuclear powers to move resolutely, step by step, toward complete nuclear disarmament.

“In the world environment now foreseen,” declare Butler and Goodpaster,

nuclear weapons “are not needed against non-nuclear opponents. Conventional capabilities can provide a sufficient deterrent and defense against conventional forces and in combination with defensive measures, against the threat of chemical or biological weapons.” That being so, nuclear weapons are not needed except as “an option to respond in kind” to a nuclear threat or attack. The United States and Russia, Butler and Goodpaster say, should take the initiative in reducing their nuclear arsenals, thus “open[ing] the door” for negotiated reductions by all nuclear powers, and leading to a world permanently free of nuclear weapons.

That is a utopian fantasy, argues Spulak, a senior analyst at the Strategic Studies Center,



Since the Cold War ended, U.S. short-range nuclear arms have been cut 90 percent; long-range ones, 50 percent.

Sandia National Laboratories, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Nuclear weapons, or the knowledge of how to build them, will always exist, as will conflicts among nations. Nuclear weapons, he points out, serve not

influence and might well *increase* the risk of war, Spulak points out. The end of the Cold War has reduced the danger of Armageddon, he says, but it has not altered the grim realities of the nuclear age.

only to deter a nuclear attack or threat, but to reduce the risk of a conventional war between major powers. “Nuclear deterrence does not ensure peace, but, short of nuclear war, places a limit on the level of violence. In fact, among great powers the nuclear era has been a most peaceful time.”

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, subtle U.S. nuclear threats may have deterred Iraq from using chemical weapons. America’s nuclear weapons also enhance its influence in the world, Spulak says. “Diplomacy is always performed against the backdrop of military capability.”

Suggestions that the United States is not serious about maintaining its nuclear arsenal—and using it, if need be—can only undermine U.S.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Time to Discard the NAIRU Jacket?

A Survey of Recent Articles

When the University of Chicago’s Milton Friedman unveiled the concept of the “natural” rate of unemployment, in a 1968 presidential address to the American Economic Association, he let loose a rabbit that economists have been chasing ever since. In a symposium in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Winter 1997), a number of them slow down long enough to consider whether the pursuit is still worthwhile.

NAIRU, as the “natural rate” rabbit has come to be known, is an ugly acronym for

“nonaccelerating inflation rate of unemployment”—which means, more simply, the rate of joblessness that is consistent with an unchanging rate of inflation. The assumption is that inflation is largely determined by the labor market and its upward pressure on wages. The implications for monetary policy, not to mention workers, are great. If the Federal Reserve Board wants to maintain a stable rate of inflation, then it should try to keep unemployment at the NAIRU level; if it wants to reduce inflation, then it should

maintain unemployment *above* the NAIRU level.

When Friedman first hurled his thunderbolt from what passes among economists as Mount Olympus, it seemed, says Joseph Stiglitz, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), as if the natural rate had been established by "royal edict . . . as another one of the universe's invariant constants." For many years, the NAIRU was assumed to be about six percent. Today, however, it is apparent "that if a NAIRU exists, it must be changing over time," Stiglitz observes. Between August 1994 and August 1996, for instance, the unemployment rate was below six percent, so inflation should have risen; instead, as measured by the consumer price index, it fell, dropping from 2.9 to 2.6 percent. NAIRU proponents draw the conclusion that the "natural rate" has declined. Indeed, research at the CEA suggests that it has fallen by about 1.5 percentage points since its peak in the early 1980s. But uncertainties abound, Stiglitz notes.

What brought the NAIRU down? For one thing, Stiglitz says, demographic change, particularly the aging of the baby boomers. Older people are less likely to be unemployed, and so their natural rate of unemployment is lower. Also, after the post-1973 slowdown in productivity growth, workers eventually moderated their demands for increased real wages. Competition in the product and labor markets also held wages down.

The link between the NAIRU and inflation is obviously not a simple one, Stiglitz notes. But that does not mean the concept of NAIRU is worthless, he believes. By the CEA's analysis, unemployment alone accounts for at least 20 percent of the varia-

tion in the inflation rate. Policymakers need NAIRU as a guide. "If there is no clear, systematic relation between inflation and unemployment," Stiglitz asks, "why wouldn't policymakers simply keep trying to push unemployment lower and lower?"

That is just what they should do, argues James K. Galbraith, of the University of Texas at Austin. The NAIRU is dubious as theory, the collective attempts to estimate it have become "a professional embarrassment," and there is little empirical support for the proposition that cutting unemployment below the NAIRU promptly sparks inflation. The United States "has not experienced wage-led inflation since the 1950s, except briefly in 1973," he says. "Since 1973, average real wages have by most measures been stable or falling. All accelerations of inflation have been led by commodities, especially oil, or by import prices via devaluation. Why not therefore conclude that the economy has almost always been *above* the NAIRU during this time?"

But Stiglitz contends that the uncertainty about the precise level of the NAIRU does not invalidate its usefulness as a guide. If the Fed action on interest rates turns out to be based on a mistaken estimate of the NAIRU, the consequences are likely to be modest, and the course can be reversed.

So, after nearly 30 years, should economists stop running after the NAIRU rabbit? Not surprisingly, perhaps, the authors of the six articles in the symposium are far from consensus. But the fact that two articles, and, to an extent a third one, are, in Stiglitz's words, "openly hostile" to the concept of NAIRU, suggests, at the very least, a growing impatience with the elusiveness of the quarry.

Labor Turns Left

"The New Left Takes Over American Unions" by Joel Kotkin, in *The American Enterprise* (May-June 1997), 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

While most New Left radicals of the 1960s had only contempt for organized labor and its conservative, anticommunist leaders, some activists saw the organizing of low-wage workers as the best path to fundamental social change. Today, former student radicals such as David Wilhelm, who directs the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' highly successful Las Vegas operations, are riding high,

reports Kotkin, a Fellow at the Pepperdine University Institute for Public Policy and a dues-paying union member.

The ascension of John Sweeney, head of the Service Employees International Union, to the presidency of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) last year has brought leftists from the labor movement's fringes into posi-

tions of prominence, Kotkin reports. Among them: “ultra-militant” United Mine Workers head Richard Trumka, AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer; Karen Nussbaum, head of the AFL-CIO’s new Working Women Department; and Linda Chavez-Thompson, the AFL-CIO’s executive vice president. Especially disturbing to veteran union members who remember labor’s struggles with the totalitarian Left, Kotkin says, is Sweeney’s opening of the AFL-CIO “to participation by delegates openly linked to the Communist Party.”

Labor’s diminishing clout in recent decades has made the radicals’ gain in influence possible, Kotkin says. From nearly 35 percent of the work force in the mid-1950s, union membership has fallen to less than 15 percent. “As the traditional industrial unions, with their intrinsic interest in economic growth, have declined, power within organized labor has shifted to the rising public-sector unions representing government workers and teachers.” Forty-two percent of union members today are public employees. Most of the New Left radicals who went into organized labor ended up (unlike Wilhelm) in public employee unions.

“Even moderate labor organizers admit that the enthusiasm and organizing savvy of these ’60s kids, as well as their genius for theatrics, have helped resuscitate the image, if

not the power, of organized labor,” Kotkin notes. But the zealous activists have also involved labor in a host of causes (e.g., funding pro-choice abortion groups) that have nothing to do with the bread-and-butter issues of collective bargaining.

The AFL-CIO believes that labor’s future will be determined in the West, says Kotkin. It is holding its convention in Los Angeles this year. The growing Latino population of the Southwest is heavily involved in low-wage industries such as hotels, textiles, and plastics, and could be a rich source of new union members. Los Angeles County, with more than 600,000 industrial workers, is now the country’s largest manufacturing center.

The L.A. labor movement, to an even greater extent than labor nationally, is dominated by public employee unions and by former ’60s radicals, Kotkin says. These leaders have formed close ties with such “fringe” groups as the Labor/Community Strategy Center, which is run by Eric Mann, a Marxist who defends the 1992 riots in the city as a justifiable “rebellion.”

Labor’s new leftward course could well prove self-destructive, Kotkin believes. “Cut off from Middle America . . . unions could become virtually irrelevant nationally.” That prospect, he concludes, is no cause for celebration.

Meet Mr. Keynes, Budget Slasher

“Bring Back Keynes” by Robert Skidelsky, in *Prospect* (May 1997), 4 Bedford Sq., London WC1B 3RA.

All but dead as a practical force in the councils of Western governments during the last 20 years, Keynesian economics may be ripe for revival, says Skidelsky, the biographer of John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946). But bringing that about would require a very un-Keynesian-sounding step: massive cuts in the budgets of Western governments.

Keynes himself would not have shrunk from such a step, Skidelsky suggests. Indeed, he would have been somewhat dismayed by what Keynesianism became. (One of his disciples, Joan Robinson, once famously said, “We sometimes had difficulty getting Maynard to see the point of his revolution.”) At once creative, cautious, and flexible, Keynes would not have succumbed to the hubris that affected his followers during the 1960s, when Keynesian ideas seemed a fool-

proof guide to prosperity. He would have responded to the flaws that emerged in his *General Theory* (1935) simply by modifying his theories. After all, they were only a response to the problems of a particular time.

Those flaws were exposed by the wrenching “stagflation” of the 1970s and by a fierce intellectual assault led by the economist Milton Friedman. Keynesianism had no real theory of inflation and no concept of the “natural” rate of unemployment, which gauges the relationship between inflation and unemployment. Worst of all, in Skidelsky’s view, it had no theory of politics. Keynes counted on politicians to maintain a balanced budget over the course of each economic cycle, running deficits to stimulate the economy in slack times and surpluses when it started to overheat. He had nothing to say

about how politicians and bureaucrats would behave once Keynesianism gave them a license to run deficits—a lacuna later addressed by the distinctly non-Keynesian “public choice” economics pioneered by Nobel prizewinner James Buchanan.

Post-Keynesian economic policy has been reduced chiefly to the control of money and prices, accomplished in the United States through the Federal Reserve Board. Especially in Europe, where unemployment is stuck at high levels, the case for reviving Keynesian “demand management” is strong,

Skidelsky argues. That would involve cautious use of tax cuts or deficit spending. The problem is that most Western governments already run chronic deficits. During Keynesianism’s golden age, balanced budgets were the norm and government spending averaged 30–35 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). That, says Skidelsky, suggests that a modern Keynesian cure would have to begin with budget cuts equal to between five and 15 percent of GDP—not the kind of medicine Keynes’s earlier inheritors were known for.

The Birth of the Supermarket

“Supermarket Sweep” by David B. Sicilia, in *Audacity* (Spring 1997), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

In late 1929, as the U.S. economy began its slide into the depression, Michael Cullen, a 45-year-old food merchandiser for Cincinnati’s Kroger Grocery & Baking Company, made a bold proposal to his employer: open five grocery stores of a radically new sort. “Monstrous” in size and located away from downtown high-rent districts, with plenty of free parking, they would offer low prices to attract shoppers in droves while keeping costs down through direct buying, self-service, and high volume. Kroger said no—and thus missed being in on the birth of the supermarket.

“Cullen went ahead on his own, opening an independent store in [the Queens borough of New York City] in August 1930. He called it King Kullen, and on its giant sign he proclaimed himself the ‘World’s Greatest Price Wrecker,’” writes Sicilia, a historian at the University of Maryland at College Park. Chains such as A&P had already overtaken the traditional “mom and pop” grocery stores, but

aside from their somewhat lower prices and standardized operations, the chain stores did not differ very much from the independents. Cullen revolutionized the industry by borrowing techniques such as self-service from earlier mass retailers. He sold only national brands, thus saving ad dollars. He owned and operated all the departments except meat, produce, and liquors, which were run on a concession basis. “The goods were piled high, the atmosphere was homey, and the fixtures were crude—all of which suggested to customers that they had found bargain heaven,” Sicilia writes.

Within two years, Cullen had eight



By the mid-1940s, the old-fashioned grocery store was finding it hard to compete with the flourishing supermarkets.

stores, total revenues of more than \$6 million a year—and imitators. On an initial investment of \$10,000 (only a tenth of it in cash), the founders of the Big Bear chain began in 1932 with a store in Hoboken, New Jersey, and earned a net profit nearly 17 times as large in the first year. Their net rate of return on sales, however, was paper-thin, only .04 percent. Later, the industry average would be between one-half and two percent—still “much lower than in any previous form of retailing,” Sicilia notes. “With supermarkets, customers were saving as never before.” But they bought more, too. Self-service, it turned out, encouraged impulse buying, and shoppers arriving in cars could carry home much more food than those coming on foot.

Supermarkets spread throughout the

country, with 300 in existence by 1935, and nearly 1,200 by 1936. A&P, the leading food chain, finally joined the supermarket revolution, followed by other chains.

After World War II, the supermarket underwent some changes. Flush with earnings, owners dispensed with concessions, which had been useful in lowering start-up costs. Even more striking, says Sicilia, “the supermarket shed its rough-hewn appearance. . . . In place of the narrow aisles, wooden crates, bare lamps, and sawdust on the floor came wide avenues, gleaming display cases, white tile, and bright lights. Weary of the poverty and deprivation of hard times, the public wanted comfort and convenience.” Today’s tony wood-floored “natural” supermarkets are just the latest adaptation in a fiercely competitive industry that lives on nickels and dimes.

SOCIETY

Welfare, As We’re Coming to Know It

A Survey of Recent Articles

The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done,” according to an *Atlantic Monthly* (Mar. 1997) cover story, was to sign the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act last summer, ending “welfare as we know it” by turning it into a program of fixed block grants to the states. This “terrible mistake,” contends author Peter Edelman, who quit his job as an assistant secretary in the Department of Health and Human Services in protest, will push one million children into poverty and leave 11 million families worse off than before.

Not so fast, comment the editors of the *New Republic* (Mar. 24, 1997). “[Edelman’s] predictions of a doomed future are just that—predictions, based on models done before the bill passed. In fact, the real evidence about the effects of welfare reform is in, and much of the news is good.” In almost all states, welfare case loads have dropped. “So far,” the editors conclude, “it seems the logic behind welfare reform was right: now that the incentives have changed, welfare recipients are making better decisions.”

The welfare rolls actually were dramatically shrinking even before the new law (which

is being phased in) began to take effect, thanks in part to various state welfare experiments approved during Clinton’s first term. Between January 1993 and January 1996, reports Jason DeParle in the *New York Times* (May 10, 1997), the welfare rolls—which had swelled by 25 percent in the previous four years—contracted by 20 percent, as an unprecedented 2.75 million people left them. The President’s Council of Economic Advisers attributed 31 percent of the sharp decline to the states’ various welfare experiments, 44 percent to the nation’s robust economy, and the remainder to other causes.

One state in particular, in the eyes of Robert Rector, a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, has led the way: Wisconsin. Since Republican Tommy Thompson took office as governor 10 years ago, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children case load has dropped by half, from 98,295 to 48,451. In Milwaukee, the Badger State’s only industrial city, the case load has shrunk 25 percent. “The general thrust of welfare reform in the Thompson administration,” Rector writes in *Policy Review* (Mar.–Apr. 1997), “has been to require reasonable behavior by recipients as a condition

of receiving aid." "Learnfare," enacted in 1986, reduced welfare payments to families with truant children. Other reform efforts followed. Since last year, recipients who fail to find private sector jobs have been required to do community service or else see their welfare checks reduced in proportion to the hours they fail to work. Wisconsin also tries to divert new applicants from welfare in the first place.

That's all very well, says DeParle of the *Times* (May 7, 1997), but "what has happened to the throngs of low-income women and children leaving the [Wisconsin] rolls?" While a small percentage seem to have joined the homeless on the streets or in shelters, he reports, "many more seem to be working in jobs they recently landed or secretly held in the past. Others, weary of the system's new hassles, have moved in with friends or family, or left the state."

While work has obvious advantages over welfare dependency, it's not necessarily all that it's cracked up to be by reformers. After interviewing 379 low-income single mothers in Chicago and three other cities, Kathryn Edin, a sociologist at Rutgers University, and Laura Lein, a social anthropologist at the University of Texas at Austin, write in *American Sociological Review* (Apr. 1997) that the mothers "generally found it more difficult to make ends meet when they worked than when they collected welfare." Neither welfare nor the sort of low-wage work available to the women paid enough to cover their monthly bills. To get extra income, which they usually kept hidden from authorities, the welfare recipients worked at jobs on the side, or obtained cash from family members, charities, boyfriends, or the fathers of their children. Employed mothers, in contrast, had expenses (such as child care and transportation) that the welfare mothers did not. Their average monthly

paycheck of \$802 exceeded the other mothers' welfare income of \$565, but their monthly bills were higher (\$1,243 compared with \$876)—and they had far less time to work at additional jobs or to solicit aid from charities. However, note Edin and Lein, who are the authors of *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work* (1997), working mothers generally were more able than welfare mothers to call on family members or friends for monetary or other help.

But as more and more states tighten time limits on benefits and let them lag behind inflation, the erstwhile welfare recipients who will be pushed into the labor force are likely to be less resourceful and more troubled than the employed mothers Edin and Lein studied, says sociologist Christopher Jencks, a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

There will be some, he writes in the *American Prospect* (May-June 1997), whom nobody wants to hire. The new federal law deals with them "by allowing states to exempt up to 20 percent of their caseload from its five-year lifetime limit on welfare receipt." Wishful thinking, he says. When the inevitable happens and people face cut-offs, liberals are likely to push for "flexible" time limits. This would be a mistake, Jencks believes. "Flexible" limits would tend to make work requirements meaningless, he says. And without such requirements, now that most married mothers work, public support for aid to single mothers will "dry up."

What to do? Jencks favors reviving "the principle that the government should serve as an employer of last resort." This is especially important during recessions, and without it, he warns, "states will either have to fudge their time limits or let a lot of destitute families break up."

'Acting White'

"Weighing the 'Burden of "Acting White"': Are There Race Differences in Attitudes toward Education?" by Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Spring 1997), John Wiley & Sons, 605 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10158.

It is common wisdom these days that many black students underachieve in school because they fear being accused of "acting white." The thesis was advanced in a 1986 study of a nearly all-black high school in

Washington, D.C. It was echoed in some subsequent studies and later got played up in newspapers and newsmagazines. But the evidence for it as a pervasive nationwide phenomenon "is not compelling," assert Cook

and Ludwig, professors of public policy at Duke University and Georgetown University, respectively.

They base their case on a study of almost 25,000 public and private school students who were tracked, starting in 1988, from the eighth grade to graduation. The black students' educational aspirations were as high in 1988 as the (non-Hispanic) whites': about 60 percent expected to stay in school and earn a college degree. Four years later, nearly 10 percent of the black students had dropped out, compared with almost seven percent of the white ones—a small difference that disappears when only youths with similar family characteristics (e.g., income, father's presence in the household) were compared.

Black students seem to work as hard as white ones, the authors say. In 1990, 36 percent of black 10th-graders reported skipping a class, 65 percent spent at least two hours a

week on homework, and 28 percent missed (according to school transcripts) more than 10 days of school during the year. Those percentages (unadjusted for family background) were about the same for whites.

Nor were black parents any less involved in their children's education than white parents, as measured by such things as attending school events and checking homework.

High school students are notoriously cliquish, but high-achieving black students do not seem to incur a penalty in popularity among their classmates. The eight percent of black 10th-graders (like the seven percent of white ones) who belonged to academic honor societies were less likely than their classmates to perceive themselves as unpopular. Interestingly, at predominantly white schools, black students' "popularity" was not enhanced by membership in honor societies, while at predominantly black schools, it was.

A Good Word for Politics

The chattering classes's recent enthusiasm for "civil society" is all well and good, historian Gertrude Himmelfarb observes in *Commentary* (May 1997), but something important is often overlooked.

It is natural and commendable for individuals to seek satisfaction in their families and communities, to make these the center of their emotional ties and moral commitments. But to feel completely fulfilled in these roles and entirely identified with them is to lose that larger sense of national identity which comes not from civil society but from the state and the polity. Today, when politics has been so tainted by cynicism and scandal, and when the state itself has been so perverted by the politics of welfare, the retreat to private and communal life is all too understandable. But it would be most unfortunate if it were to deprive the state of the services, the resources, and the loyalties of its citizens, in peacetime and, more urgently, in wartime.

Why Hitler Hated Bowling Alone

"Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic" by Sheri Berman, in *World Politics* (Apr. 1997), Bendheim Hall, Princeton, N.J. 08544-1022.

Whether pondering the prospects of democracy in Eastern Europe or fretting about the decline of league bowling in the United States, all latter-day Tocquevilles subscribe to this basic proposition: a vigorous civil society strengthens, and indeed is a crucial prerequisite for, democratic government. But that's not necessarily so, argues Berman, a political scientist at Princeton University. Take the case of Weimar Germany.

Civil society flourished in 19th-century

Germany and grew even stronger, Berman says, during the 1920s, under the democratic Weimar Republic. As middle-class Germans became frustrated with the failures of the national government and the liberal political parties, they "threw themselves into their clubs, voluntary associations, and professional organizations," Berman writes. This, she contends, not only deflected citizens' energies from politics and government, further weakening the republic's democratic institu-

tions, but also provided the Nazis with “a golden opportunity.”

Previously unable to build much popular support, the Nazis during the second half of the 1920s “concentrated on attracting bourgeois ‘joiners’ who had become disillusioned with traditional party politics,” Berman writes. The Nazis reaped a large harvest of “activists who had the skills necessary to spread the party’s message and increase recruitment.” They also used many of the civic associations, occupational organizations, and other social groups as a “fifth column.” By the early 1930s, she says, the Nazis “had infiltrated and captured a wide range of national and local associations.” The 5.6-million-member Reichslandbund and other farm organizations, for instance, became efficient propaganda channels for reaching the rural population. From their base in Germany’s civil society, Hitler and the Nazis launched their *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power), beginning with their strong showing at the polls in 1930.

The Nazis’ success, Berman concludes, shows that without “strong and responsive political institutions,” a vigorous civil society



George Grosz’s *The Agitator* (1928) was a comment on the menace of Adolf Hitler.

of the sort championed by neo-Tocquevilleans, far from promoting liberal democracy, can help undermine it.

PRESS & MEDIA

Honey, They’ve Shrunk the News

“The Shrinking of Foreign News” by Garrick Utley, in *Foreign Affairs* (Mar.–Apr. 1997), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Wearing the obligatory trenchcoat or safari jacket, the foreign correspondent was once a familiar sight on TV’s nightly network newscasts. But no more. Believing that with the Cold War over, the American public has lost interest in events abroad, and facing increased competition from entertainment offerings on cable, the networks have drastically cut back on international coverage. The number of minutes devoted to foreign affairs at ABC News—the only network news division that has kept its overseas operation largely intact—plummeted from 3,733 in 1989 to 1,838 last year. At third-place NBC, it fell even lower, to 1,175.

Paradoxically, notes Utley, former chief foreign correspondent at both of those networks and now a contributor at CNN, this

shrinkage is occurring even as American influence in the world is spreading through increased commerce and exports of American popular culture. More Americans are working and traveling abroad today than ever before.

Economics looms large in the networks’ decisions. Whereas radio or newspaper correspondents are essentially on their own, a TV reporter is accompanied by a field producer, a camera operator, and a sound engineer, plus some 600 pounds of equipment. For satellite transmissions, an editor and 600 more pounds of editing equipment are required. “The cost of this journalistic caravan . . . begins at around \$3,000 a day,” Utley says. “Airfare and excess-baggage charges can easily reach \$12,000.” Currently, the three

The Electronic Parrot

Novelist Gabriel García Márquez, a former reporter as well as a Nobel laureate, writes in *Press/Politics* (Spring 1997) about the tape recorder's pernicious effect on journalism.

The tape recorder listens, repeats—like a digital parrot—but it does not think; it is loyal, but it does not have a heart; and in the end, the literal version it would have captured would never be as trustworthy as notes taken by the journalist who pays attention to the real words of the interlocutor and at the same time values them with his intelligence and qualifies them with his morality. For radio interviews, the tape recorder has the enormous advantage of providing literal and immediate results, but many of the interviewers do not listen to the answers because they are thinking about the next question.

The tape recorder is the guilty party in the vicious magnification of the interview. The radio and television, because of [their] own nature, turned it into the ultimate goal, but now even the print media seem to share the erroneous idea that the voice of truth is not the journalist's voice, but the voice of the interviewee. For many newspaper reporters, the transcription of taped interviews is the proof of the pudding: They confuse the sound of words, trip over semantics, sink in grammar, and have a heart attack because of the syntax. Maybe the solution is to return to the lowly little notebook so the journalist can edit intelligently as he listens, and relegate the tape recorder to its real role of invaluable witness.

TV network news divisions are spending as much as \$50 million a year on foreign coverage—still a tempting target for network cost-cutters.

At the same time, Utley notes, there is a lot more foreign news aimed at niche audiences. TV offers the all-news channels—CNN, MSNBC, and the fledgling Fox News—and numerous business and financial channels. National Public Radio and Public Radio International also provide extensive international reporting (at a fraction of the cost in television). Daily TV pro-

grams from Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America are transmitted via satellite to niche and ethnic markets in the United States. And then there's the World Wide Web.

So what's the problem? Those people eager to find out about foreign affairs "will be better served" by the new specialized media, Utley says. "Since they will likely be opinion makers—and voters—public discussion of foreign affairs could conceivably improve." But unfortunately, he says, the broader American public will be left out.

Surfing the Web for Soul

"Raising Caen" by William Powers, in *The New Republic* (May 12, 1997),
1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Before television stole their breaking news, chain ownership destroyed their local character, and bland, rootless young "professionals" took over their newsrooms, the nation's great metropolitan newspapers were the soul of their cities. Today, they are spiritually dead, asserts Powers, a *New Republic* senior editor and former reporter for the *Washington Post*. Now, some San Francisco journalists are trying to revive that spirit in a high-tech form: a daily "webzine" called *Salon*.

Powers is skeptical.

David Talbot and a handful of other writers and editors left the struggling *San Francisco Examiner* in 1995 to launch the on-line magazine. *Salon* now has about 30 employees and is backed by the Adobe Systems software company and a leading high-tech venture capital firm. In 1996, *Time* tapped *Salon* as the year's best Web site.

Daily newspapers today, says Talbot, formerly the *Examiner's* arts and features edi-

tor, “have become so corporate, so bureaucratic, so politically correct—all these things have sucked the life out of them.” The best newspapers of the past, in his view, built reader excitement and loyalty “around personality, columnists who make you feel like you’re part of that world, whatever they’re writing about.” *Salon* has tried to do that with established national names such as Camille Paglia and David Horowitz, along with less known writers such as humorist Cintra Wilson.

“Among the high-end online magazines,” Powers writes, “*Salon* seems to be doing as well as anyone.” The number of “page views” (“visits” by readers to individual pages of the webzine) recently reached three million a

month. *Salon*, according to Talbot, has 75,000 registered readers. It will need a much bigger audience to attract enough advertisers to make it a commercial success, the editors acknowledge.

Powers does not try to predict *Salon*’s financial future. But he doubts that its attempt to recapture a sense of local community can work. The newspapers of yore were physically rooted in the places in which people made their lives. *Salon*, in contrast, serves a “virtual community,” made up of people who like the publication’s ideas, slant, or sensibility. It’s just not the same, Powers maintains. “A newspaper wasn’t a club you wanted to join, it was an expression of a club you were already in.”

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy Adrift

“Trends in Recent American Philosophy” by Alexander Nehamas, in *Daedalus* (Winter 1997), Norton’s Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

American philosophy—which for the last half-century has largely meant “analytical” philosophy—is today in a state of confusion, with no canon, no common ground, and no “clear overall direction,” writes Nehamas, a humanities professor at Princeton University. If it is to revive, he says, it must recover its lost heritage of engagement with the larger world.

In the 1930s, pragmatist John Dewey was the leading American philosopher. For him and his followers, Nehamas notes, “philosophy was essentially a public enterprise,” concerned with “large-scale practical problems.” Then Rudolf Carnap and his fellow logical positivists arrived in flight from Vienna and Berlin, with a much narrower conception of philosophy, one that made it seem more purely “scientific.” Gradually, as these émigré scholars found university positions here, their ideas began to take hold.

Chief among these was the theory that there are only two kinds of meaningful utterances: “analytic statements” (such as “All bachelors are unmarried males”), which are true simply by virtue of their words’ meanings, and “synthetic statements” (such as “Bill Clinton is a married male”), which involve the empirical world. Strictly speaking, this “verifiability” theory maintains, logic, mathematics, and empirical science

are the only meaningful parts of language. Thus summarily ousted from the domain of philosophy was “metaphysics,” and all moral and aesthetic evaluations.

By the late 1940s, Nehamas says, under the influence of Carnap and Willard Quine, a Harvard University philosopher who worked closely with the positivists and shared their austere conception of philosophy’s proper domain, the discipline came to be widely seen as essentially theoretical. Philosophers began to don the white coats of scientists. They now distrusted common sense and ordinary language as lacking in clarity, and they had virtually no interest in the works of the great philosophers of the past, which were flawed in the same way. Philosophy, as they saw it, bore no direct relation to the larger world, and served instead as a handmaiden to other disciplines, providing advice about epistemic reliability. (Some analytical philosophers, influenced by British thinker J. L. Austin [1911–60]), did not share the positivists’ distrust of ordinary language, but rather favored close attention to its complexities and nuances. These philosophers, too, however, regarded their discipline as a “second-order” one.)

But then, Nehamas says, several profoundly unsettling developments occurred. Thomas S. Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific*

Revolutions (1963) “showed that the positivist distinction between the pure data of sensation on the one hand and the conceptual operations of the theoretical understanding on the other could not be maintained.” Science, in other words, was not simply the unfolding of pure reason. The philosopher Wilfrid Sellars similarly attacked the idea of pure sensory data and argued “that philosophy cannot be done completely independently of its own history.” Soon, philosophers began to take some steps back toward engagement with the world: John Rawls’s influential *Theory of Justice* (1970) appeared; “applied

philosophy,” particularly business and medical ethics, emerged; and feminism arrived on the scene. There has even been renewed interest in the thought of the pragmatists.

Still dominated by the analytical approach, American philosophy today, Nehamas says, seems in “a holding pattern, [without] an explicit sense of unity and mission.” To regain that sense, he suggests, philosophers—who now, for the most part, are simply going their own separate ways—must look outward more and try to make their common discipline, once again, a public enterprise.

The Forgotten Renaissance

“The Other Face of the Renaissance” by Jaroslav Pelikan, in *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (Apr. 1997), Norton’s Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

In *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), his famous book about Italian life from the mid-14th to the mid-16th centuries, Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt vividly described the rise of humanism and worship of the classical past as medieval Christendom declined. Under his spell, many later scholars came to see the Renaissance as a sort of prelude to the Enlightenment. “Humanism” was often equated with the rejection of traditional religious beliefs. But this interpretation is misleading, contends Pelikan, a professor of history emeritus at Yale University.

While Burckhardt wrote of “the revival of antiquity,” the truth is, Pelikan notes, that “neither Hellenic nor Latin culture could be confined to their Classical, pagan expressions.” The humanists of the 15th and 16th centuries, he says, devoted their scholarly labors not only to the works of Plato and Homer but to the Bible and the writings of the early church fathers.

For a millennium after the death of Augustine in A.D. 430, “ignorance of Greek had been a chronic disease in the intellectual life of Western Europe,” Pelikan points out. Yet, thanks in part to the conquests of Alexander the Great (356–23 B.C.), Greek had become a world language. Alexandrian Jews had translat-

ed the Old Testament into Greek, and it was not the Hebrew Bible in the original but their “Septuagint translation” (the miraculous work, according to legend, of 70 translators who, working independently, each achieved the same result) that most of the New Testament writers, including Saint Paul, had known. The Greek church fathers had also produced a vast body of literature. With the recovery of Greek during the Renaissance, much of this literature became accessible in the West for the first time.

Though Latin had not been “lost” in the way that Greek was, it had a similar, and even more extensive, “afterlife,” Pelikan says, in the Vulgate (Saint Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible made at the end of the fourth



A Florentine scholar in his library, circa 1400.

century), in the Mass, and in the corpus of literature produced by the Latin church fathers, which was even larger than that of their Greek counterparts. The Renaissance humanists looked for inspiration to these “sacred” texts, as well as the ancient non-Christian ones, giving them “the same editorial care and typographical embellishment,” Pelikan writes. Nineteen editions of Augustine’s *City of God*, for instance, were made before 1500.

The “crowning achievements of sacred philology” during the Renaissance were the many Bibles produced, Pelikan writes. There had been numerous efforts during the

Middle Ages to rid the Latin Vulgate translation of corruptions. But the proliferation of printed Bibles in the late 15th and early 16th centuries gave “the Renaissance enterprise of textual criticism . . . a new impetus.” Robert Estienne’s superb edition of the Vulgate, the *Biblia* in two parts, first appeared at Paris during 1527–28. Estienne’s Greek Bible, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, of 1550, “formed the basis of the Greek *textus receptus* for, among other translations, the Authorized (‘King James’) Version of the English Bible,” Pelikan says. The Renaissance and the Reformation, it seems, had much more in common than many have supposed.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Dr. Death is a Quack

“The Kevorkian Epidemic” by Paul R. McHugh, in *The American Scholar* (Winter 1997), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

By helping more than 40 depressed sick people to kill themselves, Dr. Jack Kevorkian has helped give life to the controversy over assisted suicide—and won scattered acclaim as a humanitarian crusader. McHugh, director of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, says Michigan’s “Dr. Death” is outrageously, even insanely, mistreating those who put themselves in his care.

“Most suicidally depressed patients are not rational individuals who have weighed the balance sheet of their lives and discovered more red than black ink,” McHugh writes. “They are victims of altered attitudes about themselves and their situation, which cause powerful feelings of hopelessness to abound.” Their depression is treatable—and it should be treated. Modern medicine no longer regards even terminal illnesses as “signposts to the grave,” he notes, but views diseases rather as “processes in life for which the body has ways of compensating and resisting, even if only temporarily.”

Depression among the seriously ill comes in two forms, McHugh says. Patients with certain illnesses—including Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s disease, AIDS dementia, and Huntington’s disease—are often afflicted by depression as a *symptom* of their ailments. “They are overcome with a sense of hopelessness and despair, often with the delusional belief that they are in some

way useless, burdensome, or even corrupt perpetrators of evil . . .,” he writes. “These patients lose their capacity to concentrate and reason, they have a pervasive and unremitting feeling of gloom, and a constant, even eager willingness to accept death.”

Though that may seem a reasonable assessment of the patients’ situation to family members and physicians, it is actually part of the illness, as much a symptom of it as fevers, pain, or loss of energy. Modern antidepressant drugs, McHugh says, are “usually effective at . . . restoring the patient’s emotional equilibrium.”

Of course, some seriously ill patients are suicidally depressed for other, “perfectly understandable reasons, given the grueling circumstances of their progressive and intractable disease.” But their demoralization—unlike symptomatic depression—tends to wax and wane, to come in waves, and to be worse at certain times, such as during the night. “All patients afflicted with disease—curable or incurable—are susceptible to bleak assumptions about their future and their value,” he says. “These susceptibilities can be magnified or diminished by the behavior of their physicians.” In short, demoralization, too, is treatable.

Most pain-ridden patients suffering from terminal or progressive diseases do not in fact go in search of death, McHugh points out.

Those who do are not the norm; they are people who need the help and protection of their physicians. The death-dealing Dr. Kevorkian instead “trades upon the vulnera-

bilities and mental disorders of these patients and in so doing makes a mockery of medicine as a discipline of informed concern for patients.”

Chilling Out Los Angeles

“Painting the Town White—and Green” by Arthur H. Rosenfeld, Joseph J. Romm, Hashem Akbari, and Alan C. Lloyd, in *Technology Review* (Feb.–Mar. 1997), Bldg. W59, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

Los Angeles could be a cool place. But right now, it isn't. On a typical summer day, the temperature in central L.A. is a full five degrees F. higher than in the surrounding suburbs and rural areas. Many other big cities are also overheated. Is this, as many assume, due mainly to heat generated by cars, office buildings, and factories in the city? Guess again, say Rosenfeld, Romm, and Akbari, who are with the U.S. Department of Energy, and Lloyd, who works at the Desert Research Institute in Reno, Nevada. That heat accounts for only one percent of the temperature difference. The chief culprit, they say, is dark surfaces, such as roofs and asphalt pavements, which absorb heat that lighter surfaces would reflect away.

“With white roofs, concrete-colored pave-

ments, and about 10 million new shade trees,” the authors point out, “Los Angeles could be cooler than the semidesert that surrounds it, instead of hotter.” Besides providing cooling shade, the trees would soak up groundwater, which then would “evapotranspire” from the leaves, indirectly cooling the surrounding air.

Reducing the average summer afternoon temperature in Los Angeles by five degrees, the authors calculate, would cut the need for air conditioning by 18 percent and lower the smog level. The energy savings, not to mention the reduction in medical costs, would be substantial. But it would take about 15 years to achieve this effect. “Los Angeles, or any other large city,” the authors note, “cannot be cooled in a day.”

Stop Talking Race

“Bred in the Bone?” by Alan H. Goodman, in *The Sciences* (Mar.–Apr. 1997), New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Most anthropologists agree that race is an unscientific concept, that distinct biological races simply do not exist. Yet even scientists themselves fall into the race trap, observes Goodman, an anthropologist at Hampshire College, in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Anthropologists and medical and health professionals use race “as a shorthand to describe human biological variations,” he says, even though those variations “blur from one race into the next, and are greater *within* so-called races rather than among them.” Whether racial shorthand is employed in police work, medical studies, or public health situations, Goodman argues, the fact remains that “race science is bad science” and can be misleading, even dangerous.

Take forensic anthropologists, for example. They maintain that while race may be “socially constructed,” the people in one racial category still tend to look enough alike to make “race” useful in police forensics. To

back this up, Goodman says, the anthropologists often cite a study done in the early 1960s suggesting that it is possible to correctly identify the “race” of a skull between 85 and 90 percent of the time. But, he writes, in three of four efforts to replicate the study, “the formula proved less accurate than a random assignment of races to skulls—not even good enough for government work.”

Race thinking, Goodman contends, sometimes leads criminal investigators needlessly astray. That happened in the aftermath of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. A forensic anthropologist concluded that a leg found in the rubble that did not match any of the recovered bodies probably came from a “darkly complected Caucasoid” male. But the leg eventually turned out to belong to a woman who was, according to one forensics expert, “obviously black.”

The use of race as shorthand in medical

work provides similar miscues, Goodman maintains. For example, when public health and medical professionals list race as a risk factor in osteoporosis (a progressive loss of bone mass), which disproportionately afflicts whites, they are encouraging the mistaken assumption that blacks do not get the disease—and therefore are not in need of pre-

ventive care or other help.

The way for scientists and others to avoid the confusion and false leads—and the encouragement to racism that race thinking provides—is simple, says Goodman: stop using racial classifications and refer to specific traits instead. Why say black or white when “darkly complected” are the truest words?

The Mask of the Machine

“Seeing through Computers” by Sherry Turkle, in *The American Prospect* (Mar.–Apr. 1997), P.O. Box 383080, Cambridge, Mass. 02238.

When the personal computer burst on the world in the 1970s and early ’80s, educators believed that a “computer literate” student would need to learn to look “inside” the powerful calculators and understand how they worked, at least in principle. No longer, writes Turkle, a science sociologist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Today, the young learn only how to use the PC as “an information appliance,” becoming marvelously adept, but prey to new information-age illusions.

Before the mid-1980s, computers were not very user-friendly, she notes, and to get them to work, it helped to know something about programming. But increased processing power made it possible to build graphical user interfaces (GUI), “which hid the bare machine from its user.” Apple’s Macintosh desktop computer, introduced in 1984, represented “a way of thinking about the computer that put a premium on the manipulation of a surface simulation.” Then came Windows software. Soon, “people did not so much command machines as enter into conversations with them.” Computer users began to take things “at (inter)face value.”

Computer education in schools now tends to involve learning how to run word processors, spreadsheets, databas-

es, Internet search engines, and other programs. Nothing wrong with that, Turkle writes. But that narrowly practical aim should not be the main goal. Students should be taught how to critically “read” what their computers do and to ferret out hidden assumptions. By playing *SimCity*, for instance, students may find out more about the difficult tradeoffs involved in governing a city than they would from a textbook. But simulations can also be misleading. One young *SimCity* player informed Turkle that “raising taxes always leads to riots,” not realizing that a game based on other assumptions might yield a very different result. In subtle ways, Turkle suggests, the computers we play are beginning to play us.



Do students see beneath the surface of scenes such as this from the computer game SimCity?

ARTS & LETTERS

And Not a Drop to Drink

“The Crushing Power of Big Publishing” by Mark Crispin Miller, and “Gutenberg Unbound” by Tom Engelhardt, in *The Nation* (Mar. 17, 1997), 72 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

A visitor to a Borders or Barnes & Noble superstore, marveling at the thousands of vol-

umes on view and at all the people busily browsing and buying, might conclude that

reports of the impending death of the book are much exaggerated. And with more than \$20 billion in sales (a record) in 1996, including an unprecedented \$5.7 billion for general-interest “trade” books, who could deny it? Answer: doomsayers Miller and Engelhardt, chairman of the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University and a consulting editor at Henry Holt and Company, respectively.

Once, contends Miller, publishers put money making dreck between covers “so as to subsidize the books they loved (although those books might also sell).” Today, however, he asserts, profitable trash “is not a means but (as it were) the end.”

In fact, adds Engelhardt, anxious publishing executives “in their hearts . . . no longer feel that the book, as a freestanding entity, is sustainable.” In the last decade or so, he observes, “computerization has transformed book production, billing, distribution, and bookstore management. With Amazon.com, the online bookstore, it has even changed the way books are bought.”

In this new environment, says Engelhardt (whose 1995 book, *The End of Victory Culture*, was published by Basic Books, an arm of News Corporation’s HarperCollins until it was folded into the parent firm recently), publishing executives sense “that a book not plugged into a product or performance nexus, that cannot offer a companion movie or capitalize itself in the rush to buy face-out space in the superstores, or give a star performance that steps off the page and onto radio or television, will stumble into

the world as if off a cliff steeply.”

Aside from Norton (the employee-owned publisher of his own forthcoming book) and Houghton Mifflin, some university presses, and a host of minor outfits, Miller points out, America’s trade publishers today belong to eight huge media conglomerates, including Time Warner and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation. In only one of these giants—Holtzbrinck, which owns Farrar, Straus & Giroux, St. Martin’s Press, and Henry Holt and Company—“does management seem to care (for now) what people read,” he claims. All the other giants want their publishing arms to show profits of 12–15 percent, comparable to the margins in movies, newspapers, and TV—“but absurd for publishing,” which operated for decades on an after-tax profit rate of about four percent.

Good books are going unpublished, or if published, unpromoted, Miller maintains. And despite the massive displays at the superstores, he says, new titles are given little time to win readers. Books often get only a few months on the shelf before they are shipped back to the publisher to be ingloriously “remaindered.” The backlists of books kept in print are shrinking.

Defenders of today’s book business accuse the critics of “elitism,” and maintain that the publishers are only giving the public what it wants. “If today’s giants are so good at selling to the people,” responds Miller, why are so many of their books such duds? Returns last summer, he notes, reached or exceeded 40 percent of gross sales.

The Lone Coachman of the Apocalypse

In an interview in *At Random* (Spring–Summer 1997) about his latest novel, *The Gospel According to the Son*, a retelling of the story of Jesus written in the first person, Norman Mailer offers some reflections on the novelist’s profession.

At a certain point I decided that I wasn’t trying to write a definitive work about the period. I wanted to do what I started to do—that is, bring this myth to life using the means of a good novelist. And that made me start thinking about my profession. Because it seemed to me that I work in a valuable and honorable profession that is, most unhappily, on the way out—as much on the way out, I fear, as coachmen on Central Park South. In a hundred years novelists may bear the same relation to world culture that those coachmen do now, the ones who sit outside the Plaza and occasionally drive a couple around in a carriage behind one old horse. That’s the gloomy scenario I see for novelists—a future when best-selling novels will be written by computers. We’re halfway there already.

The Feminist Uses of Art

“‘It Is Surprising That There Are Any Happy Wives’: The *Art Interchange*, 1878–1886” by Mary W. Blanchard, in *Journal of Women’s History* (Fall 1996), Indiana Univ. Press, Journals Division, 601 N. Morton St., Bloomington, Ind. 47404–3797.

A century ago, American women searching for ways to enlarge women’s “sphere” found an important vehicle in the Aesthetic Movement. Inspired by English thinkers John Ruskin and William Morris, the movement became a craze in the United States during the 1870s and ’80s, writes Blanchard, an Associate Fellow at the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis. Its message that the pursuit of art and beauty is the pre-eminent goal in life held out the possibility that ordinary household arts such as painting, sewing, and handicrafts might be pathways to a larger world.

One of the new magazines that spread the movement’s ideas was *Art Interchange*. Launched in 1878 by Candace Wheeler, a textile designer and founder of the New York Society of Decorative Art, the fortnightly eventually claimed an audience of 20,000, mostly middle-class women. The editors dedicated themselves to the “promotion of the polite Arts in America,” but Blanchard says that “the ideal female of the *Interchange* was a woman who besieged authority and confinement as she sought her own spiritual salvation through art.” Even in acting as a tastemaker at home, a woman could assert her aesthetic sense. The magazine attacked the clergy, misogyny, and at times marriage and motherhood. One contributor wrote in 1881



that “they who give the world a true philosophy, a grand poem, a beautiful painting or statue . . . have lived to holier purpose than they whose children are of the flesh alone.”

Interchange encouraged all manner of aesthetic pursuits, at one point offering advice to aspiring manicurists, in effect “redefining the female body as an aesthetic *objet d’art* to ornament,” says Blanchard—and showing how the movement used art to escape domesticity. Helping women to find commercial outlets for their “fancy work” was also a part of the magazine’s mission.

The art that *Interchange* published in its own pages—much of it patterns for home art, embroidery, or china painting—likewise challenged the image of the chaste and submissive Victorian woman. The women often appeared alone and in frontal portraits—devices usually reserved for men. Many were undressed, and many images evoked female sensuality. In one painting, a reclining female nude is served wine by a male satyr; in another (see illustration), Juno symbolically asserts her authority over a collared peacock.

Art Interchange generally steered clear of overt politics, Blanchard says, but in its emphasis on female self-fulfillment, it prefigured much of modern feminist politics.

A Blinkered Passage to India

“Midnight’s Grandchildren” by Pankaj Mishra, in *Prospect* (Apr. 1997), 4 Bedford Sq., London WC1B 3RA.

Salman Rushdie’s brashly ambitious *Midnight’s Children* (1981) put the Anglo-Indian novel on the map. His virtuoso venture in magical realism, about the narrator’s growing up in Bombay—and India’s “growing up” after independence in 1947—won Britain’s prestigious Booker Prize and inspired a rash of imitators, who came and went. More recently, dis-

tinctive novelists such as Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, and Robinton Mistry have achieved critical or commercial success. Today, says Mishra, a writer based in New Delhi, Anglo-Indian fiction appears on the verge of becoming a literary phenomenon rivaling the Latin American fiction boom of the 1980s.

But Western audiences are getting a narrow

view of Indian writing, Mishra says. "What in the West is taken as representative of Indian fiction as a whole is in fact a very small sample of the rich fare available in India itself." India has 16 official languages, and vigorous literary cultures exist in more than half of them. "The names of O. V. Vijayan, U. R. Ananthmurthy, and Paul Zacharia may mean nothing to readers of Indian fiction in the West, but in India they have more readers than Rushdie. And books in Malayalam outsell books in English by as much as 10 times." Vikram Seth enjoyed success with *A Suitable Boy* (1993), which "skate[s] merrily over the surfaces of its subject," describing "the shallowness of the North Indian provincial elite." Meanwhile, the name of Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, "the great chronicler of North Indian life in Hindi," remains unknown in the West.

The Indian authors writing in English are

in a very different situation from that of the Latin American stars of the 1980s. Authors such as Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa wrote their fiction in Spanish, originally with a Spanish-speaking readership in mind; only later did they address international audiences. In India, English "remains the language of power and privilege," Mishra notes. But because the audience for books in English is small, their authors "are almost forced to address a global readership." Many of these writers, including Seth, Chandra, and Mistry, choose to live abroad. This "makes for a certain kind of cosmopolitanism," Mishra observes, but "it also leads to a sameness of vision: a slickly exilic version of India, suffused with nostalgia, interwoven with myth, and often weighed down with a kind of intellectual simplicity foreign readers are rarely equipped to notice."

OTHER NATIONS

Mandela's South Africa

A Survey of Recent Articles

Three years after the 1994 elections that marked an official end to apartheid and brought Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) to power in South Africa, euphoria has given way to worries about crime, unemployment, and other problems. South Africans, writes columnist Anthony Lewis in the *New York Times Magazine* (Mar. 23, 1997), are wondering whether Mandela, "the Great Reconciler," is also a great president.

Crime is rampant. There were 18,893 murders in 1995—which translates into a homicide rate nine times higher than the U.S. rate. Car thefts now equal nearly half the number of automobiles sold. "When one links that to the evidence that police rings are organizing car thefts, that many of the stolen cars are exported, and that 30 percent of all goods landed at Durban's port are disappearing," notes John Chettle, a Washington lawyer who formerly directed the South Africa Foundation for North and South America, "it suggests very extensive corruption among police, customs, harbor authority, and other officials." This, he adds in the *National Interest* (Spring 1997), "may be the most serious remnant of the moral corruption of apartheid, and if it is not defeated

soon the consequences could be profound." The crime and corruption, he points out, are encouraging the notion that South Africa is turning into another lawless African state with an incompetent government—and are also prompting some young professionals to leave the country.

"The apartheid system did create conditions for crime: oppressive racial discrimination, deliberate denial of decent education to blacks, miserable housing and economic policies that left millions jobless," Lewis points out. "But [Mandela] was right that the responsibility is his government's now, and its performance so far has to be judged a failure."

Nevertheless, Chettle maintains that "fears of the Africanization of South Africa are almost certainly ill-founded. The truth is that, despite its problems, South Africa is becoming a stable state, not yet akin to the social democratic states of Europe, but one with a high degree of agreement among its elites as to its political, economic, and social foundations."

It was fortunate in a way, Chettle observes, that democracy in South Africa arrived only after the statist ideologies that had sus-

tained the National Party and the ANC—apartheid and Marxism, respectively—had both been discredited. Mandela’s government embraces “prevailing Western economic views: ones that stress budgetary restraint, lowering the deficit, controlling inflation, creating an environment friendly to business, cutting regulation, and—most remarkable of all in a party that in its freedom charter pledged to nationalize the commanding heights of the economy—moving toward dismantling state monopolies and selling off their assets.” Inflation dropped to seven percent last year, the lowest figure in a quarter-century.

Reducing poverty is the country’s great challenge, Chettle writes. Yet the economy has been growing at only about three percent a year—not enough to significantly reduce unemployment, which approaches 40 percent. “Among comparable middle-income developing countries, South Africa has one of the worst records in terms of health, education, safe water, fertility, and income inequality.” Mandela’s government hasn’t much changed that. Lewis calls gross inequality “a time bomb.” But Mandela told him: “We must not be unrealistic. We want to bring about change without any dislocation to the economy.”

Ever since he was elected president, Mandela “has treated his job as more ceremonial than executive,” note the editors of the *Economist* (Apr. 5, 1997). Seventy-nine

years old this July, Mandela has increasingly left the running of the government to deputy president Thabo Mbeki, his designated political heir. Mandela’s term ends in 1999.

Mandela’s shortcomings as chief executive, Lewis concludes, are dwarfed by his achievements in the last three years. “He has taken a country utterly divided by race and made it one where people of different races actually share a vision: where ‘the two worlds have begun to overlap.’ . . . He has transformed the political system without creating unrealistic expectations in the newly enfranchised. He has taken a country where fear was everywhere and made it free. He has given a society marked by official murder a culture of human rights.” A new constitution and bill of rights are now in place.

Despite its serious problems, Chettle says, South Africa “is *not* a typical African state. That is true not only in terms of its infrastructure—an extensive financial, educational, and industrial base, and good communications and roads systems—but also its history. For well over a century the country, or its constituent parts before Union in 1910, has had all the institutions of democratic government. The conflict that has consumed the last half century did not concern so much the adequacy of those democratic institutions as their failure to include all the people.” The recent political reforms, Chettle says, have been “a good example of the reassuring pragmatism that has prevailed in South Africa.”

The Christ of Nations

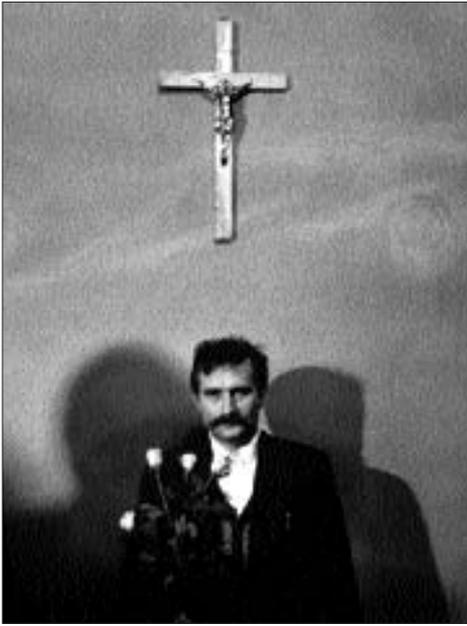
“The Catholic Church and Poland’s Return to Europe” by Timothy A. Byrnes, in *East European Quarterly* (Jan. 1997), Box 29 Regent Hall, Univ. of Colorado, Boulder, Colo. 80309.

It is hard to imagine a more Catholic country than Poland. Not only does it owe its freedom in part to the boldness of Pope John Paul II but the church, through Primate Józef Cardinal Glemp and the other bishops, has remained actively involved in Polish politics. It now appears, however, that the church may have overplayed its hand. The ex-communist (and anticlerical) Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) now dominates the governing coalition in the Sejm (parliament), and the SLD’s Aleksander Kwasniewski overcame the church’s open opposition to defeat Lech Walesa in the 1995 presidential election. Last year, despite strong church

protests, President Kwasniewski signed into law a liberalized abortion measure. Surveys show that a majority of Poles consistently dissent from the church’s stand against abortion, and 75 percent think that the church should stay out of politics.

“Why does the church continue to assert itself so aggressively in Polish politics?” asks Byrnes, a political scientist at Colgate University. The answer, he contends, is that it is looking far beyond Polish politics to “the future shape of European society.”

During Poland’s agony of the last two centuries—its history of partition, occupation, and foreign domination—the Catholic



Lech Walesa, who was a Solidarity hero in 1980, lost the presidency in 1995, despite the Catholic Church's support.

Church there has been strongly linked with Polish nationalism. In popular folklore and nationalist literature, Poland is the “Christ of nations,” its suffering and serial dismemberment to be followed by national rebirth and international Christian renewal.

“Pope John Paul II and many of the Polish bishops see their homeland as sitting once again astride the great religious and political divisions of the European continent,” Byrnes writes. “They want an authentically Catholic Poland to serve as an instrument of the re-evangelization of the Orthodox East, and as a spiritual and moral exemplar to the secular West.” Church leaders see their agenda in Poland—banning abortion, reintroducing Catholic instruction into public schools, and ensuring a legally protected role for the church—not only as morally right but as “essential prerequisites to Poland’s playing its proper role in the European community of nations.”

Asia's Senior Citizen

“Japan’s Aging Economics” by Milton Ezrati, in *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 1997), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Japan’s population is aging so fast that the nation may soon resemble an Asian Leisure World. In the early 21st century, thanks to low birthrates and longer life spans, fewer than two Japanese will be at work for every retiree. Unlike the United States, Japan has no influx of youthful immigrants to replenish the work force. The result will be a radically reshaped Japan, with a new role in the region and the world, contends Ezrati, chief investment officer at Nomura Capital Management, in New York.

Japan built its postwar economic success on the prodigious saving of its citizens, who now put away 12–15 percent of income. But as Japan goes gray, more and more Japanese will be consuming their savings. At the same time, meeting the government’s public pension obligations will probably put Tokyo’s budgets more deeply in the red, Ezrati says. “The combined impact on public and private budgets could cut the nation’s savings rate in half.”

With a shrinking pool of workers, moreover, Japan will lose the surplus output that it has been exporting. Retirees will keep consumer demand up, increasing imports. Tokyo

will be forced to abandon its postwar policy of promoting exports while limiting imports with regulatory barriers. Japan’s \$130 billion global trade surplus of early 1993 fell to \$77 billion last year; in time, Ezrati predicts, it will turn into a deficit.

Labor shortages will drive up wages, prompting Japanese industry to set up production in other Asian countries. This, too, has already begun to happen. Eventually, Ezrati says, Japan will become a “headquarters nation.” Already, manufacturing there has shrunk from nearly 50 percent of gross domestic product during the 1960s and ’70s to little more than half that.

Since World War II, Japan has been content to remain under the U.S. defense umbrella. But no nation, Ezrati says, can afford to put its industrial base on foreign soil without being able to protect it. Japan “will have to act for itself, diplomatically and, if necessary, militarily.” The change is bound to cause unease not only in Japan, long a reluctant power in its region, but throughout Asia, where memories of Japanese military aggression in the 1930s and ’40s are still fresh.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

“Child Rearing Time by Parents: A Report of Research in Progress.”

Cornell Consumer Close-Ups, Dept. of Consumer Economics and Housing, Cornell Univ., Van Rensselaer Hall, Ithaca, N.Y. 14853. 6 pp. \$12

Authors: *W. Keith Bryant and Cathleen D. Zick*

Do two-income couples spend as much time rearing their children as those in which the wife stays at home? Apparently not, say Bryant, of Cornell University, and Zick, of the University of Utah.

Their analysis of data from an 11-state survey done in 1977–78 (the most recent detailed data available) indicates that stay-at-home mothers in two-parent families with two children three years apart spend an average of about 38,692 hours rearing them to age 18. (“Child rearing” includes not only such activities as feeding, dressing, and helping with homework, but also playing, eating, and doing chores together.) Fathers spend 20,390 hours. Total child-rearing time: 59,082 hours. Employed

mothers spend 4,709 fewer hours, while their husbands spend 1,804 more. Their total: 56,177 hours.

Child rearing demands the most parental time when the children are young. Consequently, in families in which the mother delays entering the labor force until her youngest child is six years old, much less child-rearing time is lost. Mothers in such families spend an average of 36,352 hours engaged in child rearing, only 2,340 fewer than never-employed mothers. The fathers spend 20,961 hours. Thus, this kind of family devotes 57,313 parental hours to child rearing, only 1,769 fewer than the “traditional” family. That difference is the equivalent of 14 minutes per day.

“The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration.”

National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418. 441 pp. \$55

Editors: *James P. Smith and Barry Edmonston*

It is often assumed that black Americans have been especially hard hit by the influx of unskilled immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Asia, and elsewhere in recent years. This is not the case, according to this study by a National Research Council panel of economists, demographers, and sociologists headed by RAND Corporation economist Smith.

The immigrants are concentrated in six states: California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. While some blacks in New York City, Los Angeles, and elsewhere have lost their jobs to the newcomers, most black Americans (63 percent) live in the other 44 states, where only four percent of the population are recent immigrants.

“The one group that appears to suffer substantially from new waves of immigrants,” the panel says, “are immigrants from earlier waves, for whom the recent immigrants are close substitutes in the labor market.”

Indeed, black Americans are somewhat

less inclined than others to favor new restrictions on immigration. According to recent polls, 57 percent of blacks would like to see immigration reduced, compared with 68 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 50 percent of Hispanics.

Legal immigration has been running at high tide in recent years, thanks to the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, which removed quotas for immigrants based on national origins and set up a system based mainly on family unification. In 1994, nearly 800,000 legal immigrants arrived in the United States—still a far cry from the 1.3 million who came to these shores in 1913. As many as 300,000 illegal immigrants also enter the country each year.

Immigration benefits the American economy as a whole, possibly adding as much as \$10 billion a year to the gross domestic product (GDP), the panel says, but its impact on the \$7.6 trillion economy is very slight compared with other factors, such as savings, investment, and education and training.

Some groups do suffer, however. Immigration has expanded the pool of high school dropouts, causing the wages of this group to drop five percent between 1980 and 1994—somewhat less than half of the total decline these workers suffered during the period.

During the 1980s, immigration increased the labor supply in the country by about four percent, and this might have slightly reduced the wages of all competing native-born workers, perhaps by one or two percent, the panel says.

In the long run, the recent immigrants are expected to contribute more in taxes to the federal government than they receive in services. At the state and local levels, how-

ever, costs will likely exceed revenues, particularly in those states where the newcomers are concentrated. In New Jersey, a native-born household pays an average of \$232 a year to cover the net cost of services used by immigrants; in California, the figure is \$1,178.

Immigration now accounts for 37 percent of U.S. population growth, partly because of the decline in the fertility rates of native Americans. If net immigration continues indefinitely at its current levels, the panel says, the U.S. population will reach 387 million in 2050—about 124 million more than it is today. Immigration will account for two-thirds of that increase.

“Workforce 2020: Work and Workers in the 21st Century.”

Hudson Institute, Herman Kahn Center, P.O. Box 26-919, Indianapolis, Ind. 46226. 160 pp. \$16.95

Authors: *Richard W. Judy and Carol D’Amico*

Think tanks seldom produce hot books, but the Hudson Institute’s 1987 study *Workforce 2000* proved an exception, selling nearly 80,000 copies. The report predicted a growing gap between the skills that American workers would need in the changing economy and the skills that schools were imparting to them. The authors of this sequel foresee “a bifurcated U.S. labor force in the early 21st century,” with “the skills premium” being even more powerful.

“Millions of Americans with proficiency in math, science, and the English language will join a global elite whose services will be in intense demand,” write Judy and D’Amico, Senior Research Fellows at the institute. But while some Americans will get low-skill jobs at “decent” wages, many others “will face declining real wages or unemployment, particularly in manufacturing.”

Almost 20 percent of U.S. manufacturing workers have jobs dependent on exports, and that figure will increase as overseas demand for U.S. products grows. Although manufacturing’s share of total U.S. employment will continue to fall, thanks to automation and globalization, “the millions of high-productivity manufacturing jobs that remain will be more highly skilled and therefore better paid than at any other time in U.S. history,” Judy and D’Amico say. “Employment growth, meanwhile, will remain concentrated in services.” Among the fastest-growing groups of service workers: home health aides and special education teachers.

For unskilled people, however, it’s a different story. Between 1975 and 1994, average annual earnings of high school dropouts failed even to keep up with inflation, while earnings of high school graduates, adjusted for inflation, increased only marginally. Increasingly, the authors say, low-skilled or unskilled workers will be competing with other such workers around the globe.

To meet the demand for a much more skilled work force and avoid the formation of a large pool of unemployable workers, the authors say, government and corporate leaders mainly ought to promote upward mobility through education. It is a mistake, however, to look to a college entitlement as a remedy, they believe. “The crucial factor . . . is a basic education provided at the primary and secondary levels—encompassing the ability to read and write, do basic math, solve problems, and behave dependably.” To address schools’ shortcomings, they urge the introduction of competition, in the form of charter schools and voucher programs.

Another way “to ensure that America’s jobs get done,” the authors say, is to get more already-skilled workers into the labor force. By adopting flexible hours and other arrangements, firms can attract parents with developed job skills. Also, the United States can modify its immigration policy (which, they say, “serves primarily to increase the number of U.S. residents who lack even a high-school degree”) to give preference to immigrants who are skilled.

ability to transform the very nature of a familiar, even somewhat shopworn debate by looking at a problem in an entirely new way. Two utterly disparate examples must suffice here. One comes from 1966, when he published an article in the *Public Interest* with the unlikely title, "Traffic Safety and the Body Politic." His seminal insight was that traffic accidents were in fact not accidental and would not be abated by a regime of state troopers and legal sanctions. Rather, the problem should be viewed in terms of epidemiology, in which "the primary units of concern are groups of persons, not individuals." In other words, little could be accomplished without identifying the types of drivers most prone to accidents. "Just as classical forms of disease were in general treated by magic until perhaps two centuries ago," Moynihan wrote, "accidents have until this moment been thought of as somehow 'wild' occurrences which do not conform

to the sequential chain of causal events that define the way things in general take place."

Recently, Moynihan again transformed our understanding of a public problem with his great insight that secrecy as practiced by governments is a form of regulation, indeed regulation of the most precious commodity in any polity: information. There is little question that the recent report of a bipartisan commission on secrecy that he chaired will transform the way in which our government classifies and declassifies "secret" documents.

Much more could be said in praise of Pat Moynihan, but Michael Barone, co-author of *The Almanac of American Politics* and a participant in our conference, put it well: "No American politician since Thomas Jefferson has contributed as much to scholarship and no American scholar since Woodrow Wilson has contributed as much to politics."

Charles Blitzler
Director

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FROM THE CENTER

Last March, Saint Patrick's Day at the Wilson Center was also Daniel Patrick Moynihan Day. To mark the senator's 70th birthday, a select group of academics, government officials, and journalists gathered here to assess, and in most cases to celebrate, the many contributions this extraordinary man has made to our national life over the past four decades.

The Wilson Center, instructed by its founding legislation to strengthen relations between the world of learning and the world of public affairs, was the natural setting for such an event. As the daylong conference on "The Intellectual as Public Servant" underscored, the two worlds are united in Senator Moynihan. During his career, he has been engaged in both the theory and the practice of matters ranging from architecture and urban planning to poverty and the family, from international relations to traffic safety, from ethnicity to government secrecy. Many men and women have moved back and forth between academia and government, but few have consistently inhabited both worlds at once, and none with such distinction.

Because I have been a friend of Pat Moynihan's since we worked together on the creation of the Wilson Center—in addition to being a founding father, he was its first vice chairman—and because I have read 17 books he has written and many of his other writings, I did not expect to learn much about him that I did not already know. As the day unfolded, however, it turned out that I was quite mistaken. In part this was due to the insights provided by scholars such as Nathan Glazer (on ethnicity) and Seymour Martin Lipset (on social structure), and by people who had worked with Moynihan in a number of his public positions, such as Stephen Hess (at the White House), Suzanne Garment (at the United Nations), and Bill Bradley (in the Senate).

But the day also produced a whole far greater than the sum of its parts. The analogy that comes to mind is a retrospective exhibition of the works of a well-known artist. Some artists are diminished by this

exposure, as it reveals the thinness or repetitiousness of their oeuvre. Others are suddenly revealed, as Pat Moynihan was, as greater than we had imagined.

In the course of that day, a number of characteristic Moynihan qualities became clearer to me than they had ever been. I mention just three. (Readers will be able to discover others in the book containing all the conference papers, edited by the very able conference organizer Robert Katzmann of Georgetown University, which we hope to publish in about a year.)

The first is Moynihan's almost uncanny ability to fix upon issues that are not yet widely noticed or discussed, but that soon come to occupy center stage in our national consciousness. A memorable instance of this gift is his report, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," which he wrote while at the Department of Labor in 1966. After earning him considerable vilification, that prescient analysis is now generally recognized as the bedrock upon which much of our discussion of social pathology must rest.

The second characteristic is Moynihan's consistency over the years. Although he is more than occasionally criticized by former allies on the left and on the right for having abandoned or betrayed their common cause, the examination of his entire career showed that he has never ceased to use the best data he can find to illuminate the issues. If the data fail to support positions he has previously espoused, he will follow the data; when the data confirm his earlier views, he will inform us of that fact with unrivaled credibility and eloquence; if the data are insufficient, he will counsel caution. Today, confronted with seemingly insoluble problems and with politicians and pundits guided more by ideology or polls than by hard realities, perhaps his favorite saying is the ancient medical precept, "Above all, do no harm."

The third characteristic, and to me the one most underappreciated before, is his

Continued on page 143



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